

WALTER HAYS MAUSOLEUM



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY HISTORIC PRESERVATION STUDIO 1 - FALL 2021

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PROJECT 4: Measuring, Drawing, and Graphics

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Walter Hays Mausoleum

Walter Hays was the exhibitor and vice president of the Stanley-Mark Strand Corporation, a famous chain theatre company in the 1920s. He was born in Rochester and before entering the theatrical business was in the clothing business with his father, who was a clothing merchant from Germany. With the brothers Mitchell H. Mark and Moe Mark, Walter Hays founded the Mark Strand Theatre corporation as a director in 1912, and two years later in New York, he helped build the first Mark Strand Theatre which was well known as the first lavish movie palace built only to show motion pictures. Later, the company purchased theatres in Syracuse, Utica, Albany, Rochester, and other eastern cities and Hays was a stockholder in most of the enterprises.¹ Walter Hays first made his headquarters in Buffalo. In 1925, the corporation was consolidated with the Stanley Company of America under the new name of Stanley-Mark Strand Corporation, and Hays moved into New York. He was then elected vice president of the new company.

Unfortunately, Walter Hays died suddenly of heart disease in his apartment in the Hotel Alden at fifty-seven, just two years after becoming the vice president. As one of the motion picture house activity pioneers, Walter Hays's death shocked film circles. During his funeral, a moment of silent play for Hays was observed in the fifteen Mark Strand theatres in the New York State. In each theatre, an announcement of the death of Hays was made either orally or from the screen, and a hymn was played on the organ before the performance proceeded.² Walter Hays left a gross estate of \$290,998 and a net of \$241,467, according to a transfer tax appraisal.³ He left \$111,510, half the residue to his widow, Bessie I. Salter, and the remainder to his two children Alan and Jean Elizabeth.⁴

Walter Hays's son, Alan S. Hays, a prominent lawyer specializing in international trade, was also very successful. After graduation from Harvard College and Harvard

¹ "Walter Hays, 57, Theatre Man, Dies: Vice President of Stanley-Mark Strand Corporation Suffers Heart Attack." *New York Times* (1923-), Sep 28, 1927.

² "Funeral of Walter Hays.: Leaders in Film World Mourn Official of Chain Theatres," *New York Times* (1923-), Sep 30, 1927.

³ "Pictures: Walter Hays Left \$241,467." *Variety* (Archive: 1905-2000), Jul 02, 1930, 31.

⁴ "Pictures: Walter Hays Left \$241,467." *Variety* (Archive: 1905-2000), Jul 02, 1930, 31.

Law School, he practiced law as a partner in the New York firm of Hays & Busby. After World War II, he established his own firm in Paris and finally died there.

The Walter Hays mausoleum houses Walter Hays, Bessie I. Salter, Jean Elizabeth Hays, Bell Florence Hays Erb (Alan's daughter), and Florence Wakefield Hays Golenko(Alan's ex-wife). The last two people were buried together. From the correspondence among Woodlawn, the design company, and Bessie, the mausoleum was ordered on June 26th,1929, from Presbrey-Leland studios, a well-known company that had designed over 3,000 memorials and 1,300 mausoleums by that time.⁵ As an organization of designers, manufacturers, and builders, the company offered a comprehensive, efficient service, especially a trade catalog with detailed instruction and various styles of memorials for customers to choose from.⁶

The Walter Hays mausoleum is located on the Clover Plot, Section 149, Lot 16643 of the Woodlawn cemetery. It is oriented towards the southeast, with the entrance facing Filbert Ave. There is a beautiful tree in the front right of the mausoleum, which might not be planted originally according to the site plan.

The mausoleum is simple but charming, and it was designed in the Gothic style (Figure 1) with symbols like a pointed-arch entrance, steep roof, Celtic patterns door on the façade, and Gothic letters above the door. The material for the exterior of the building is Greens Landing granite and the finish of the exterior is rock faced and fine hammered, except the enframingent.⁷ The rustic surface gives an interesting texture to the walls and makes people want to touch them.⁸ The enframingent in the form of a pointed arch was smooth finished, but it is still possible to see a little bit of the tool marks. The mortar joints between the stones have been repointed, but where the new mortar has deteriorated, the original earlier mortar is visible. The door is probably made of a copper alloy and has been refinished recently with a brown appearance. (Figure 2)

When walking into the building, the first thing that catches one's eye is the notable stained-glass window with pleasant scenery. (Figure 3) Different from religious

⁵ General Conditions Specifications and Agreement for a Mausoleum. Walter Hays Mausoleum. Woodlawn Cemetery Records. Avery Drawings and Archives, Columbia University. June 26th,1929.

⁶ *Presbrey-Leland, Inc. (New York, N.Y.)*. The book of Presbrey-Leland memorials. 1932. P11.

⁷ General Conditions Specifications and Agreement for a Mausoleum. Walter Hays Mausoleum. *Woodlawn Cemetery Records*. Avery Drawings and Archives, Columbia University. June 26th,1929.

⁸ *Presbrey-Leland, Inc. (New York, N.Y.)*. The book of Presbrey-Leland memorials. 1932. P47.

related window motifs for many other mausoleums, the subject of the window in this mausoleum is pastoral. And it indicates that the most significant innovation in stained-glass windows for mausoleums during the late nineteenth century was the introduction of landscapes as a subject.⁹ The material for the exposed surfaces of the interior is light pink Tennessee marble, which is quite common in the late 19th and early 20th century in New York. The finish of the exposed interior is highly polished. The floor is made of polished Greens Landing granite, the same material as exterior walls.¹⁰

For the present conditions of the Hays mausoleum, biological growth can be found on the side facades. (Figure 4) This is probably because the building is shaded under trees nearby which block some sunlight out. Additionally, with the rustic surface, some stones protrude a little bit so that it is easier for moss to grow in the fissures. The vents at the bottom might not work very well because there is still some trace of water on the wall. Slight evidence of water getting in and drip marks can be seen with close observation at the corners of the top inside the mausoleum. There is a small crack at the corner of the window and sidewall. Overall, the interior of the mausoleum looks quite good and the stones seem quite stable even though they might move a little bit due to minor gaps between exposed walls of coffins.

Today, nearly one hundred years since its erection, the Hays mausoleum is well maintained and in a good condition. Walter Hays died suddenly at the height of his career and his departure was a loss to the film business. Now he lies here with his family in Woodlawn cemetery. “Till time shall every grief remove with life, with memory and with love.”¹¹

⁹ *Avery Architecture & Fine Art Library. The Woodlawn Conservancy. Sylvan Cemetery Architecture, Art & Landscape at Woodlawn.*

¹⁰ General Conditions Specifications and Agreement for a Mausoleum. Walter Hays Mausoleum. *Woodlawn Cemetery Records.* Avery Drawings and Archives, Columbia University. June 26th, 1929.

¹¹ *Presbrey-Leland, Inc. (New York, N.Y.). The book of Presbrey-Leland memorials. 1932. P2.*



Figure 1 Front elevation with the Gothic style



Figure 2 The copper alloy door



Figure 2 Stained-glass window



Figure 3 Biological growth on side facade