

Historic Preservation Studio 1 - Fall, 2015
Project 3: Documentation and Analysis of Historic Buildings
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Woodlawn Cemetery - Cole Mausoleum
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Up until this past winter, the Cole Mausoleum had been locked for 75 years, because of a missing key. It must have been truly incredible to finally open its heavy brass door and discover the extravagant interior that contrasts so sharply with its exterior. It must have been like finding buried treasure or a time capsule when first seeing the mosaic that coats the Romanesque groin vaulted ceiling and walls and it must have magical to read the lines from John Greenleaf Whittier's haunting poem "Snow-Bound" written on the arches in gold mosaic.

"Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust,
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
That Life is ever lord of Death,
And love can never lose its own."

To begin to unravel the history of the Cole Mausoleum, this paper will research the people buried there, the architect, and the mausoleum's upkeep and construction problems. It will then give a visual analysis and finally attempt to locate the design within American architecture history.

It is the final resting place for Edward Franklyn Cole, Evelyn Jennie Elliot, Mary Lee Cole and Hazel Mae Whithers. Edward F Cole, who commissioned the Cole Mausoleum, worked as a manufacturer in a steam fitting and heating supply company. He was a partner in in the Eton-Cole-Burnham Company in Bridgeport, CT, a company that he had inherited from his father. In 1919 he was chairman of the executive committee of the Board of Trade and Transportation. (*New York Herald Tribune*, 1936) (*The Sun*, 1909)

Edward F. Cole was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1862, and later Graduated from Columbia University. He was the son of Edward H. Cole and Kate B. Chase Cole from Massachusetts. In 1883, he married Evelyn Jennie Elliot and they were living with Edward's father Edward E. Cole, aged 68, in Manhattan at the time of the 1900 Federal Census. Evelyn Cole passed away in 1904 and is presumably why Cole had the Mausoleum commissioned in 1905. At his death at age 72 of pneumonia, only his second wife Mary Lee Cole survived him. (*New York Herald Tribune*, 1936) (*The Sun*, 1909)

Mary Lee Cole, also known as Marylee "Mae" Withers Cole, was born in Clarksville, Tennessee in 1866. Her first marriage was at the age of 16 to the successful stage actor and screenwriter, James Halleck "Hal" Reid. (*Trenton Evening News*, 1920) They lived in Cincinnati, OH and had one child together, Hazel Negbaur on June 13 1882, before their marriage ended in divorce. (*Find A Grave*) By the 1910 census, Mary had married Edward F. Cole and they were living together in Manhattan and by the 1925 census they lived at 3 Canyon Circle Yonkers Ward 08, Westchester.

Hazel, who is also buried in the Cole Mausoleum, was an actress and had two half siblings, one of which was William Wallace Reid, a relatively famous silent film star. (*Find A Grave*) By the 1920 census, Hazel Negbaur was also living in New York. It states that she and her husband, Edward Negbaur, a manager in the meat industry, were boarding with Mary Woodhead, a 27 year old English Musician in Manhattan. She and her husband married, but never had children and she passed away at age 38 in Manhattan on January 15, 1921. (*Find A Grave*) (Negbaur, Index Card)

The architect's name, Washington Hull, is memorialized on the brass door. He was a New York architect who built only a few buildings during his short career. He lived in Brooklyn, New York his whole life and graduated from Columbia University's Architecture program in 1882. (*New York Times*, 1936) After working for McKim, Mead and White, he began working independently and was chosen to design Senator William A. Clark's luxurious mansion. In 1904, the year before the Cole Mausoleum was designed, and also when the Clark Mansion was still under construction, Washington Hull's plans for Brooklyn's new Municipal Building competition were accepted. (*New York Tribune*, 1903) These triumphs, in obtaining both the Clark Mansion and The Brooklyn Municipal Building projects, were wrapped in scandal, ending in the rejection of his plans for the Brooklyn Municipal Building. These commissions and the scandals surrounding them raised the young architect out of obscurity to relative fame and eventual disrepute. (*Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1906) (*New York Times*, 1905) (*New York Tribune*, 1906)

Only four years after designing the Cole Mausoleum, Washington Hull mysteriously disappeared on November 7th, 1909, at 43. On a light breezy day he set out in good health, had taken off from Long Island and was heading for New York to winterize his 30-foot seaworthy sailboat named "The Commodore." Hull never completed this voyage and "The Commodore" was not found until mid-

December floating off Manhattan Beach. (*The Christian Science Monitor*, 1909) (*The Sun*, 1909) (*New York Times*, 1909)

To talk about the Cole Mausoleum's construction, it is necessary to touch upon some of its waterproofing issues that are common for mausoleums. It is common for waterproofing issues to arise in mausoleums that were done by small architecture firms that were not accustomed to dealing with the needs of mausoleums. (Dolkart, pg. 58) This turned out to be true in the case of the Cole Mausoleum. In 1911, the interior of the mausoleum was inspected by Harrison Granite Company. They identified the marble as Alabama marble, a marble that disintegrates very quickly. They also warned of moisture on the mosaic work, and that they would need to remove a portion to see if it is waterproofed. They also wanted to waterproof the concrete floor beneath the granite tiles and replace the marble with "good Quality Italian Granite" and the floor with more permanent granite pieces. They did replace the flooring and installed the ventilation and waterproofing, but it does not seem that the marble has been replaced as it is presently deteriorating. They also put in a bronze ventilator on the center ceiling, which replaced the original hanging candleholder. (Avery Archives, Woodlawn Cemetery Collection)

After this was completed, in August 21, 1912, Woodlawn found moisture on windows and mosaic, which they believed to be from leaks in roof joints allowing water to come through. They waited to fix this until 1931 when they repointed the defective exterior joints with Portland cement and cleaned the exterior. This was done again in 1943 and was projected to have to be done more often than is usual, every seven years, because the recessed pointing in the exterior accumulates water in the winter and causes the joints to open up when the water freezes. It seems like the more recent un-recessed repointing has been done to possibly correct this issue. (Avery Archives, Woodlawn Cemetery Collection)

Here we will explore the relationship between the mausoleum, its viewer and its environment. The Cole mausoleum is located on the Larch plot in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. The site is on Hawthorn Avenue, close to where it intersects with Park Avenue. If a visitor were to enter Woodlawn from the Jerome Avenue Entrance, and proceed down Central Avenue he or she would see impressive mausoleums, followed by smaller, more modest ones that are often shrouded in trees and bushes in the immaculately manicured landscape. This mix of small to large mausoleums continues throughout this section of the cemetery. Turning left at Park Avenue the scenery changes with less grand landscaping, smaller plots and

rows of more modest, mausoleums. These are similar in scale and style and create a repetition that one might see driving through a suburban neighborhood. Their repetition draws the visitor down the road toward the grand Joseph Milbank mausoleum that sits on the corner of the Park Avenue and Hawthorn intersection. To the right one would get a first sight of the Cole mausoleum, sitting beside an obelisk and smaller grave markers.

The mausoleum is performing several balancing acts for its visitors, all of which balance a severe sense of gravity with an acute sense of the sublime. From several yards away one sees it more like a monument than a mausoleum and feels the first of these balances. One is immediately confronted by its stark, massive monumentality that connotes permanence, and durability, keeping it immovable and firmly placed on the earth. Next one feels its height in the way that its battered walls, stepped roof and pinnacle lantern reach and point up to the firmaments. At the top of the mausoleum the horizontal joints are much closer together than those at the bottom. This acts as an optical trick, emphasizing verticality by making the top of the mausoleum seem further away. This first juxtaposition is using these forms to connote balance between the heaviness of earth with the sublimity of the hereafter.

The second prevailing balancing act happens as one comes around the front, walks between the two slender pines, one placed to either side of the entrance, shrouding the facade deliberately and creating a processional feel as the visitor approaches the main entrance. Through this natural gateway one is placed right at the foot of this sparsely, but elegantly, decorated heavy and severe form. One notices the unusually huge slabs of granite that make up its structure. These are placed on inset-mortared joints that are relatively thin when scaled to their massive size and the scale of the entrance and the trapezoidal massive brass door. These heavy components are juxtaposed with well placed and elegantly ornamental detail on the door and the band that wraps around the top of the mausoleum containing lateral, winding chords, short, repetitive fluting, and two large symmetrically placed torches.

As the visitor steps over the threshold into this immensely private space of eternal rest, there is a third juxtaposition. For as much as the detail is withheld and sparse on the exterior, it is that much more generously applied to the interior. The interior is a palace for the deceased. Its beautiful groin vaulted ceiling, corner abutments and walls are completely covered in an ornate, greenstone and gold leaf illuminated mosaic. The mosaic is the most striking feature of the interior. It contains poetry, arabesque

designs, small flying orbs, Greek crosses, vines and lamps that reflect the modest exterior decoration. This again is creating a balance between the decorative austerities of the exterior with the sublimely ornate decoration. The details that connect the interior and exterior motifs, such as the small Greek crosses and lamps, are used sparingly and subtly, perhaps adding to the visual drama that is achieved by this intense contrast one experiences when entering the mausoleum.

Finally, we will present the mausoleum's design within the context of American architecture history. When wooded cemeteries were becoming established in the United States during the first half of the 19th century, Egyptian revivalism was also hitting its peak and Americans were looking to Europe to see how they were using ancient Egyptian forms. Americans began learning about Egypt through American museums and publications such as *The North American Review* and Mrs. C Tuthill's *History of Architecture* and Pere-Lachaise's published funerary monuments in August Charles Pugin's *Paris and its Environs* that promoted Egyptian Architecture's strength, durability, massiveness, and sublimity and offered models. (Carrott, pgs. 47, 55, 51) (Curl, pg.292) By the 1830's the obelisk had been established within American architectural vocabulary as monumental with projects such as Mills design of the Washington National Monument in Washington DC in 1833. The 1815-1825 Battle Monument in Baltimore by Maximilian Godfrey shows the spread and influence of the Egyptian revival in America. (Cull, pg.300) James Gallier testifies to the nature of American interest in Egyptian Revival, stating that it is, "solid, stupendous and time defying... heavy... stern and severe proportions seem to speak of eternal duration." (Carrott)

Egyptian themes for tombs were also starting to reach American cemeteries, with both approval and disapproval. The Egyptian Revival answered ambivalent needs, those for originality and connection with tradition, but it also faced disapproval from Christians who believed the references to ancient Egypt to be "pagan and idolatrous." Because of this dilemma, the Egyptian revival designs, were sometimes accompanied with "Christianizing detail," to make the trending "Egyptian" styles seem more appropriate. "The architect designing in the mode took extra precautions to indicate their work." (Carrott, pgs. (84, 95,96) This could possibly explain the Cole Mausoleum's Greek crosses that are present on the exterior's horizontal decorative band and its interior.

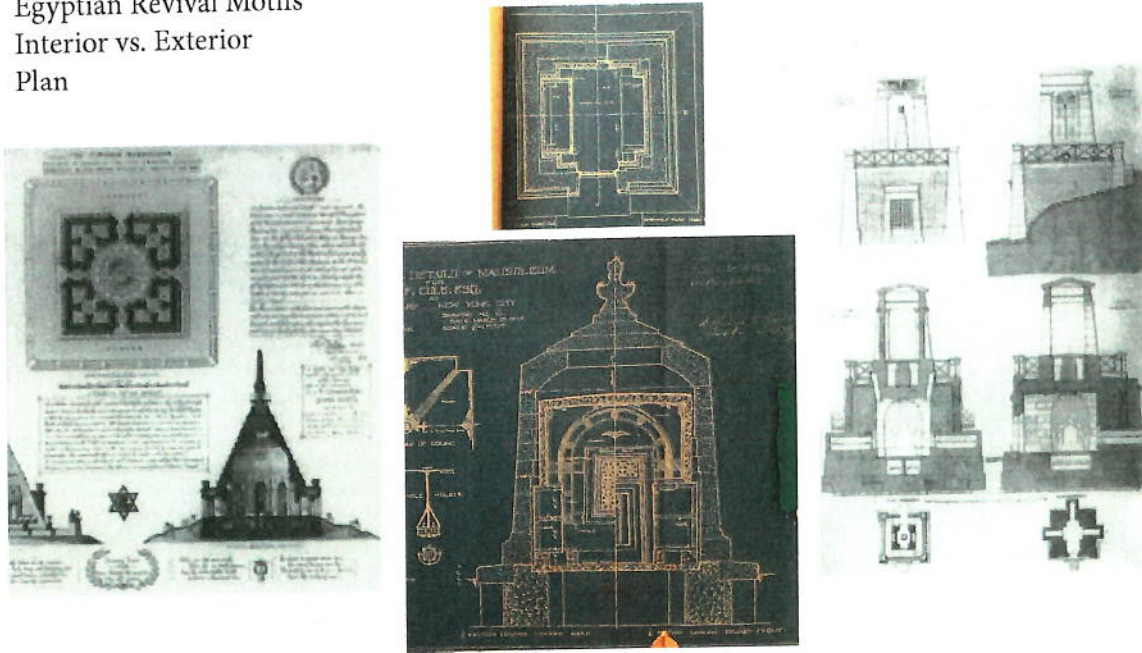
The doorframe, with its suppressed triangular Greek pediment and battered jambs, gives the entrance its trapezoidal shape that mirrors the battered exterior walls. This doorframe recalls Greek as well

as ancient Egyptian entrances, which are later epitomized in America through the Greek and Egyptian revival. It is a key feature of the Egyptian revival to synthesize Egyptian motifs with "a robust, primitive, elemental Classicism," as Tatham does in his Leveson-Gower's "Graeco-Egyptianizing" Mausoleum (Cull, pgs.292,293) (Harris) This chambranle entrance is reminiscent of the Egyptian revival style, which was attempting to crystallize such aspects of Romantic Classicism (Carrott, pg 54) by clarifying and simplifying geometric forms, however it also reveals heavy Greek influence that was initially brought to the United States during the Greek Revival from 1785 to 1820 (Roth, 582).

Although this mausoleum would have been built a half a century after the beginning of the Egyptian revival in the United States, this movement would still have been relatively active. Looking at the 1882 design for the assassinated U.S. president James Abram Garfield's Mausoleum by Thomas John Wilson, one can see that the Egyptian Revival was still going strong and how it echoes the radial Palladian symmetry of the Cole mausoleum. (Curl, pg. 307) The Cole Mausoleum uses Egyptian and Egyptian Revival motifs in a number of ways. The form's heaviness, geometric simplicity and "a feeling of vastness which is emphasized by the bare wall surfaces," and the monolithic slabs of cut granite recall ancient Egyptian and Egyptian revival motifs. (Carrott, 53) The battered walls, the stepped roof and heavy monumentality recall a truncated obelisk while its geometry while referencing the great tombs of the distant past with the pyramidal form and lavish interior room for the deceased. This ornate, curving interior contrasting with the sparse and sharp geometric exterior can be seen in Wilson Mausoleum design, as well as in the 1820 Tomb of Gaspard Monge by Pierre-Clochard in Paris. (Curl, pg. 289)

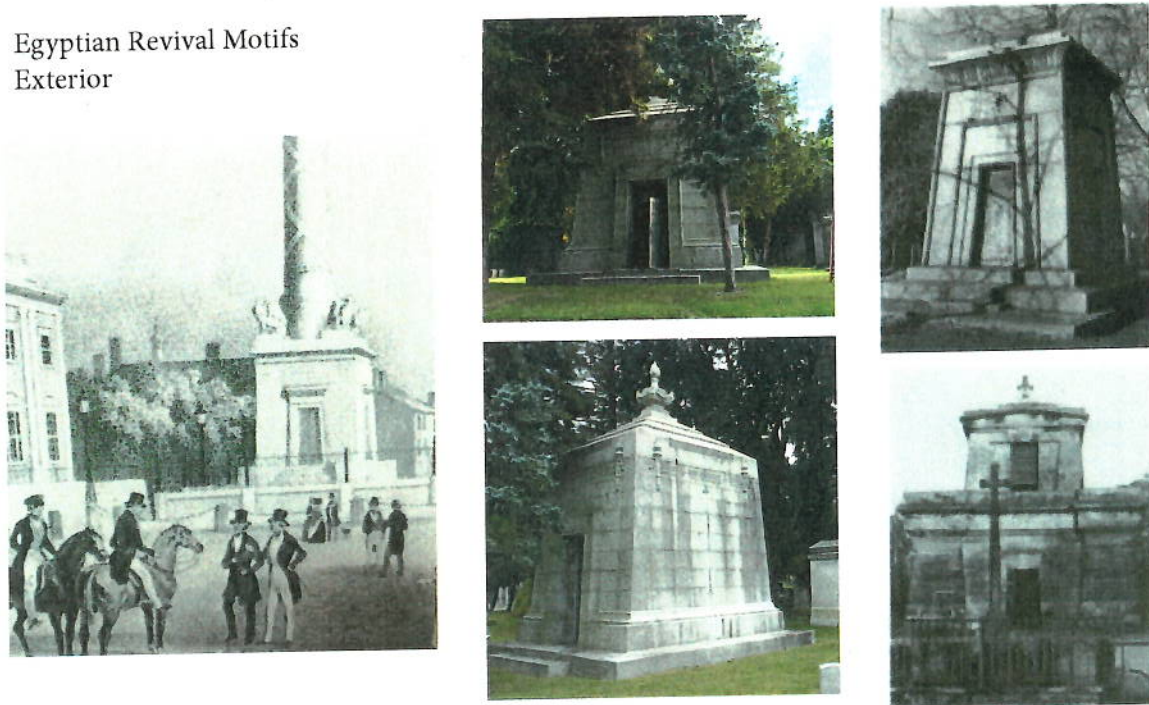
Andrew Jackson Downing in *Cottage Residences* advocates, "an expression of purpose should grow out of a quality that is connected in the mind with the use, in effect an *architecture parlante*." (Cull, pg. 300) This connection with the mind and use is exactly what the Cole Mausoleum is achieving with its juxtapositions, and it does this through its brilliant use of the Greek and Egyptian Revival. Through form the Cole mausoleum bridges the world of mortality with the world of the eternal, sternness with grace, and the earthy with the sublime.

Egyptian Revival Motifs
Interior vs. Exterior
Plan



Above
Left: 1882 Design for Assassinated U.S. president James Abram Garfield's Mausoleum by Thomas John Wilson (Curl, pg. 307)
Middle: 1905 Cole Mausoleum, Washington Hull blueprint (Avery Archives)
Right: 1820 Tomb of Gaspard Monge, Comte de Péluse, by Pierre-Clochard in Père-Lachaise Cemetery, Paris (Curl, pg. 289)

Egyptian Revival Motifs
Exterior



Above
Left: 1815-1825 Battle Monument, Baltimore by Maximilian Godfry (Carott)
Middle: Cole Mausoleum
Top Right: Courtoy mausoleum in Brompton, England "probably by" Avis of Putney (Curl, pg. 182)
Bottom Right: 1807-8 George Granville Leveson-Gower's Mausoleum in Trentham, Staffordshire by C. H. Tatham (Curl, pg.293)

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