

The Flanagan Mausoleum



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Studio I

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Located in Woodlawn Cemetery, Dogwood plot, the Flanagan Mausoleum is surrounded by a grove of trees. In 1907, Elizabeth Flanagan commissioned the Leland and Hall Company to construct the mausoleum as the place of her beloved husband in particular and for the family in general. Besides the couple, their daughter, Kathleen Flanagan, and a sister of Elizabeth Flanagan were also buried in the mausoleum.

Mr. Flanagan was born in New York; his father and mother were immigrants from Ireland. After getting married to Elizabeth M. Byron, Mr. Flanagan had two children Kathleen M. E. Flanagan and William J. Flanagan Jr.,¹ who was not buried in the mausoleums.² When Mr. Flanagan was alive, his residence was in Yonkers, Westchester County. Although his experiences in the early years remain unknown, it is known that from 1900, Flanagan was an active contractor who finished many civic transportation projects, mainly for Westchester County. According to John J. McLaughlin, who had 34 years of work experience in contracting and who was the former manager for Mr. Flanagan, from 1900 to 1907, Mr. Flanagan participated in building trolley roads, highways, and bridges in the Croton Valley, including 13 concrete bridges, 3 stone bridges, and 28 miles of highway.³ One of the most significant projects under the management of Flanagan is the construction of the Muscote Reservoir in Muscote Mountain, in Westchester County (Fig. 1). Although the Williams & Gerstle company won the first bid for construction, the company failed to follow the contract, which provided an opportunity for Flanagan.⁴ Later, he won in the second bid, and the reservoir was successfully established in 1905. The reservoir is essential for the system of water supply for New York City. As one of the twelve reservoirs in the Corton

¹ "1880 United State Federal Census." Ancestry Library n. Ancestry Library. Web. 12 Oct. 2021. <<https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/24086679:7163>>

² Letter from Jack O' Conner to Woodlawn Cemetery. William J. Flanagan Mausoleum. Woodlawn Archives. Avery Library, Columbia University. 23 Feb. 1996.

³ New York Court of Appeals. Records and Briefs. Google Books. Web. 12 Oct. 2021. <https://www.google.com/books/edition/New_York_Court_of_Appeals_Records_and_Br/Hm_I2UFF1YsC?hl=en&gbpv=0>

⁴ Report to the Aqueduct Commissioners. Google Books. Web. 12 Oct. 2021. <https://www.google.com/books/edition/Report_to_the_Aqueduct_Commissioners_by/faPVISI4Gtc?hl=en&gbpv=0>

River system, Muscoot Reservoir receives water from other reservoirs and passes it to the New Croton reservoir.⁵ The water subsequently reaches Jerome Park Reservoir in the Bronx and New York City's water distribution system.⁶

During Flanagan's whole career as a contractor, the estimated cost of work under his contract was \$635,845.36.⁷ After Mr. Flanagan died, his wife, as the administratrix of the estate, assumed the management of his contract for the establishment of a storm relief tunnel sewer⁸. However, the disagreement between Mrs. Flanagan and the officials in charge of the work led to the eventual abandonment of the contract.⁹

The mausoleum is located in a circular lot, one of a group of six circular lots. Although the mausoleum faces towards Fren Avenue, the distance between the avenue and the mausoleum is approximately forty feet, with the route leading to its facade hidden behind green leafy bushes (Fig.2). The mausoleum is located in a tranquil place, which seems to be secluded from the outside. Plants play an important role in creating the tranquil setting, which can be noticed in four directions of the mausoleum. Trees on the northwest isolate the mausoleum from Fren Avenue. Cedar, azalea, and maple trees respectively cover the western, southern, and eastern sides of the mausoleum, functioning as a soft boundary between the mausoleum and other lots.

The plan of the mausoleum is a square, 12 feet in length and 12 feet in width with 16 feet height in total.¹⁰ Such proportions make the mausoleum stable and cozy. The whole

⁵ NYC Environmental Protection. Web. 12 Oct. 2021
<<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dep/water/muscoot-reservoir.page>>

⁶ NYC Environmental Protection. Web. 12 Oct. 2021
<<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dep/water/muscoot-reservoir.page>>

⁷ "Journal of Proceedings." Google Books. Web. 12 Oct. 2021
<https://www.google.com/books/edition/Journal_of_Proceedings/QsUzAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0>

⁸ "Journal of Proceedings." Google Books. Web. 12 Oct. 2021
<https://www.google.com/books/edition/Journal_of_Proceedings/QsUzAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0>

⁹ "Journal of Proceedings." Google Books. Web. 12 Oct. 2021
<https://www.google.com/books/edition/Journal_of_Proceedings/QsUzAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0>

¹⁰ Drawing of Mausoleum plan and landscape. William J. Flanagan Mausoleum. Woodlawn Archives. Avery Library, Columbia University.

building, standing on the six-feet-depth foundation¹¹, is symmetrical, with the axis coinciding with the diameter of the circular lot. At the portico, a bronze door with floral patterns and a letter “F” in the center leads visitors to the interior. Also, two columns with floral-pattern capitals support an arch with an engraved rosette decoration on the top. Above the archway, the square raised polished letters “William J. Flanagan” are carved. The roof is decorated by coving with all mitres and arrises sharpened.¹² A cross is erected at the highest point of the mausoleum. Judging from its exterior, the design of the mausoleum is eclectic, which seems to involve Classic style, Romanesque style and Gothic style. With the symmetrical facade and the columns, it adopts the features of Classic style. The rounded arch on the front facade suggests Romanesque style. With the steep roof, the cross and the pointed-arch window, the whole structure of the mausoleum bears similarity to a simplified, miniature Gothic chapel.

The exterior of the mausoleum is constructed of high-quality Barre Vermont granite¹³ from the Westmore-Morse Quarry, which was called “the world's largest monumental granite quarry”¹⁴ when the stone was quarried. Such high-quality material provides uniform grain, a light color, stability, and durability for the mausoleum. What is worthy of note is the various textures on the facade. The body of the building is rusticated with carefully chiseled granite. However, the rock-faced texture is replaced by a smooth texture on the roof (Fig.3). In addition, the majority of the projecting entrance pavilion has a smooth texture, except for the polished shafts and the polished letters of “William J. Flanagan”. The difference between the texture of the body and that of the roof continues on the rear facade. The granite around the windows is also smooth, imitating an outer window frame (Fig. 4). These various textures on the facade are decorative, distinguishing this mausoleum from others. Different textures also

¹¹ Drawing of Mausoleum plan and landscape. William J. Flanagan Mausoleum. Woodlawn Archives. Avery Library, Columbia University.

¹² Drawing of Mausoleum plan and landscape. William J. Flanagan Mausoleum. Woodlawn Archives. Avery Library, Columbia University.

¹³ Subscriptions: for mausoleum to be erected in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York City. Woodlawn Archives. Avery Library, Columbia University.

¹⁴ Office of the Secretary of State, Vermont Legislative Directory and State Manual, Biennial Session, 1993-1994, p. 23.

create different visual impressions. Rusticated granite makes the body of the mausoleum seem heavy and massive, the roof seems to be lighter with the smooth texture, and the shiny, polished texture highlights the shafts of columns and the name of the mausoleum.

As for the interior, a narrow corridor leads to the window on the rear facade. Highly-polished white marble with light veins (Fig. 5) is used to cover the wall and the ceiling, while the floor is made of polished granite.¹⁵ The interior decoration is highly religious. The Latin inscription, “Fiat Voluntas Tua”, translates as The Bible, saying “Thy will be done”. The dates of birth and death of William J. Flanagan are engraved on the surface of the panel for Mr. Flanagan. “Fiat Voluntas Tua” is one of the seven petitions directed to God, the so-called “Lord’s Prayer”, from The Bible: Book of Mathew.¹⁶ As the third request of the petitions, it indicates God's will occurs, so that people align their will with God's will and submit themselves to Him.¹⁷ It gives families of Mr. Flanagan comfort that the pass-away of Mr Flanagan is also God’s will, or a part of the bigger plan that they cannot control. Additionally, the portrait of Jesus and his words “I am the resurrection and the life” are on the stained glass. These religious symbols coincide with the chapel-like structure of the mausoleum, converting the mausoleum into a mini-chapel from the inside to the outside and reflecting the beliefs of the family.

In general, the exterior of the mausoleum remains intact except for biological growth. Although plants are vital for creating a tranquil setting, they become a potential hazard to preservation. Hardly being pruned, the branches of two maple trees and the cedar almost cover the whole roof and the portico, so that they are vulnerable to the damage caused by moisture. Facing towards the northwest worsens the situation, as the facade is hardly exposed to sunlight, and the moisture hardly evaporates. Therefore, biological growth appears on the

¹⁵ Subscriptions: for mausoleum to be erected in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York City. Woodlawn Archives. Avery Library, Columbia University.

¹⁶ <https://byrslf.co/7-petitions-in-the-lords-prayer-simplified-24039cdf8e4>

¹⁷ https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/commentary/thy_will_be_done.html

roof, the coving, the portico, the capitals, and the bases of columns (Fig.6, Fig.7). As granite has extremely low porosity, moisture can hardly seep into the material. Therefore, the biological growth on the surface may not cause deterioration. However, the biological growth around the mortar joints (Fig.8) can be a problem because moisture may infiltrate and result in other damage. On the coving of the rear facade, another issue called spalling appeared (Fig.9). Considering this problem does not happen on other parts of the mausoleum, it may be caused by an accidental hit, which needs to be restored in case of moisture seeping through the exposed part.

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Figures



Fig. 1 Muscote Reservoir in Muscote Mountain, in Westchester County



Fig. 2 The route leading to the facade of the Mausoleum

Texture

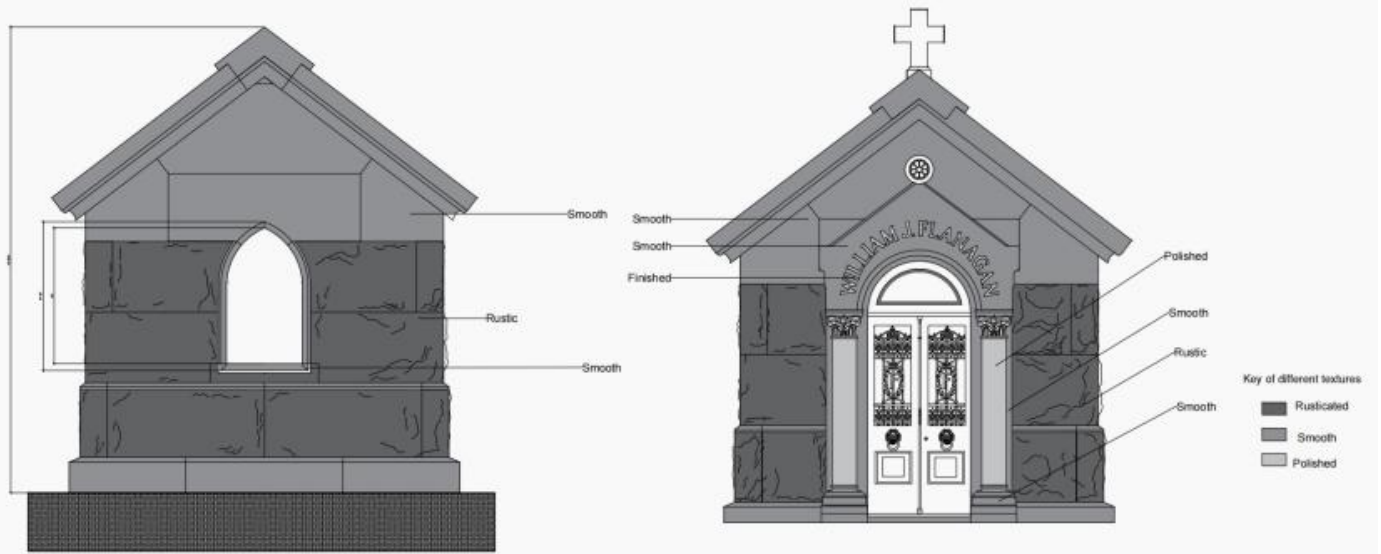


Fig.3 The rock-faced texture and the smooth texture



Fig.4 The granite around the windows imitating an outer window frame

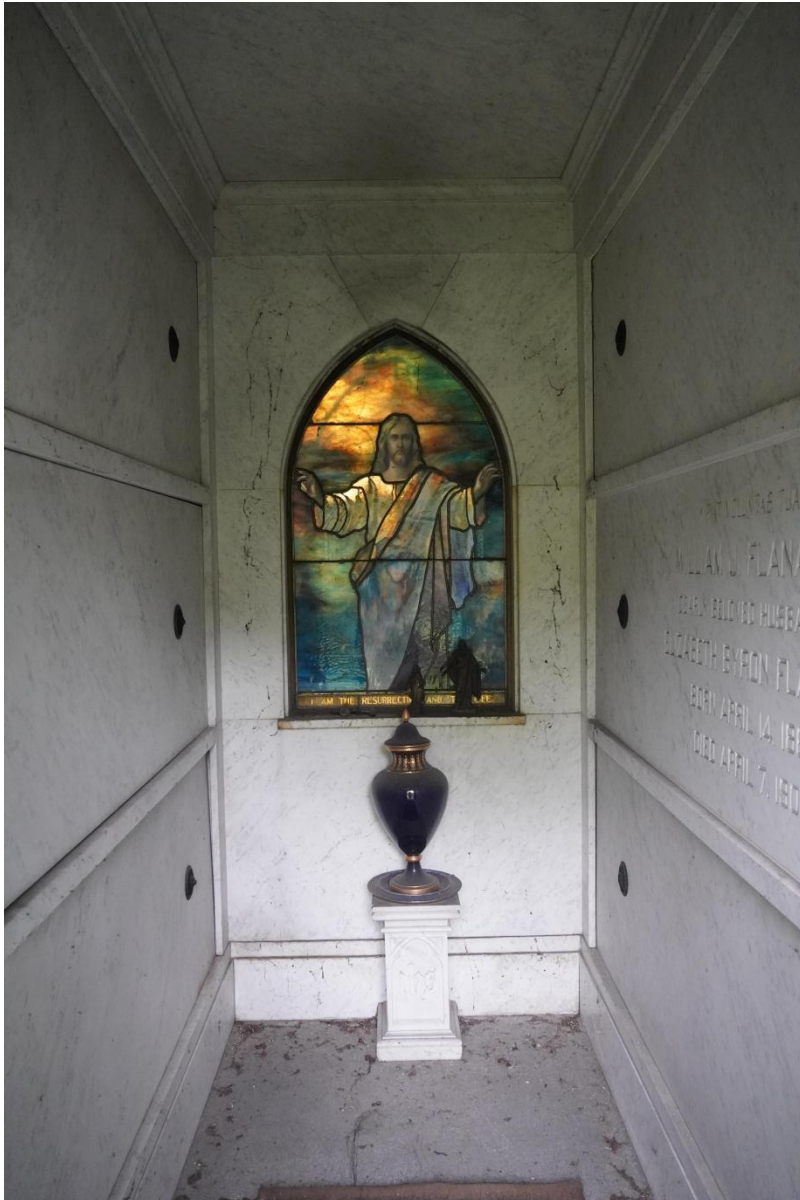


Fig.5 The interior of the mausoleum



Fig.6 Biological growth on the roof



Fig.7 Biological growth on the entrance



Fig.8 Biological growth around the joint



Fig.9 Spalling on the coving