

Emily Barr
Arch A4510: HP Studio I
Faculty: Françoise Bollack, Ward Dennis, Andrew Dolkart
October 15, 2012

Problem 3: Nauss Family Mausoleum

The Nauss family mausoleum was built in 1923 for Florence Hildebrand and Charles Nauss, children of Wendolin and Anna Nauss (Figure 1). The lot at Woodlawn was purchased by Wendolin Nauss, Sr. in 1914 but the mausoleum was not constructed until nine years later.¹ At the time of completion four members of the Nauss family had already passed and were then moved into the mausoleum from the receiving tomb at Woodlawn Cemetery: Wendolin J Nauss, Sr, Anna H Nauss, their son Edward N Nauss, and son-in-law Henry Hildebrand. To date, Wendolin and Anna Nauss are joined in the mausoleum by 13 members of their family; this includes all six of the Nauss children, three of their spouses, two of the Nauss' grandchildren, as well as each of their spouses.

During the early 20th century, the Nauss family lived at 17 East 94th Street in the Upper East Side neighborhood of the Borough of Manhattan, New York (Figure 2). Continuing the trade of his family, Wendolin J. Nauss, Sr. was a butcher; he owned and operated three locations for Nauss Brothers Company Meats located in the East Village, Upper East Side, and East Harlem neighborhoods.² Originally from Germany, Wendolin, Sr. raised his family and located his businesses in communities that were, at the time, characterized by large German populations.³ Wendolin, Sr. passed away in 1918 shortly after his wife, Anna, and left his businesses to his children. His will indicates that he hoped his children would continue to operate Nauss Bros. Co. Meats so long as it remained profitable.

The Nauss family mausoleum is designed by Farrington, Gould, Hoagland who were also responsible for more than 200 other mausoleums and monuments at Woodlawn Cemetery. The structure consists of a

¹ Woodlawn Archives indicate lot owner is Wendolin Nauss, purchased May 13, 1914

² 1870 US Census: Therese Nauss, was a dealer in meat, retired. Nauss Bros. Co. Meats were located at 87 and 1538 2nd Avenue, and 2291 3rd Avenue. Source: Trow's General Directory of the Boroughs of Manhattan and Bronx, City of New York: Volume CXVI (July 1, 1903)

³ 1870 US Census: Therese Nauss and three eldest children born in Baden, Germany; the youngest was born in New York

Barre granite exterior, chosen to match the neighboring Dreicer mausoleum, Tennessee Pink Limestone interior, bronze ornamentation and window frames, and three art-glass windows.⁴ Details of note include the sculpted bronze door and the interior leather area rug that is likely original to the mausoleum.⁵ The bronze door, titled the Figure of Silence, is signed by Gaetano Federici and is also initialed F.G. & H., suggesting the door was commissioned through the monument company. The door provides an immediate focal point on an otherwise simple front façade.

The mausoleum is a simplified, unornamented design of neoclassical architectural style. The rectangular façade forms five vertical sections marked by the moldings at the building edge, the center section of doorhood, sign, and bronze door, and the two plain sections in between (Figure 3). The roof is stepped in three levels; the top two slope downwards, creating a slight pitch. The entablature at the roofline consists of a blank frieze framed by the cornice and architrave. Generally, in classical architecture the entablature appears supported by pilasters or columns; the edge moldings here are very simplified replacement for a pilaster, as they do not have a capital. A flat door hood and scroll-like brackets sit just below the architrave and project from the otherwise flat front façade. The battered and crossetted door surround frames the Nauss family name and bronze door that includes the figure of a woman and small triangular windows that glow with the light from the art glass rear window.

The landscaping surrounding the mausoleum includes two large cedar trees flanking the entrance, as well as two Japanese Maples on each side of the building (Figure 4). Original landscaping plans included additional plants and flowers that have since been removed due to poor upkeep and the increasing cost of maintenance.⁶ Even without the additional plants, the current landscaping greatly affects how one experiences the mausoleum. Upon approach, the several large surrounding trees seem to dominate the small and simple appearance of the Nauss mausoleum. In fact, the placement of the cedar trees hide the front façade so much so that one is not able to even read the family's name until standing directly in front

⁴ As indicated in the original building plans, Avery Archives

⁵ The leather rug appears in correspondence between the family and Woodlawn as early as 1935, Avery Archives

⁶ Woodlawn Care Cards, Avery Archives

of the mausoleum. The trees, as well as the layout of catacombs inside, constrict the entryway and create a narrow path that leads into the mausoleum and ends at the resting place of Wendolin and Anna Nauss (Figure 5). At this interior wall are two pedestals which appear to have been lamps at some point, four Ionic pilasters frame a sill above the tombs, and an art glass window depicts the horizon at sunrise and reads “Until the day break and the shadows flee away.”⁷ Sixteen additional catacombs are located in the walls opposite the graves of Wendolin, Sr. and his wife, Anna. The layout creates an open space surrounded by members of the Nauss family. Interior details such as the leather rug, the bright art glass windows, and at one time, the two lights, create an appealing and comfortable space.

The Nausses likely chose the classical style to portray a certain sophistication and status. However, the comparatively small and oversimplified design results in lack of personalization from the exterior. Customization is more apparent in the site plan and interior layout, which reflect the Nausses’ strong family values. Both coming from large families, Wendolin, Sr. and Anna had six children of their own and also ran a successful family business.⁸ Travel documents indicate Wendolin, Sr. travelled to Bremen, Germany with his son, Frederick, in 1906, perhaps to visit his hometown of Baden nearby, further suggesting strong family ties.⁹ The mausoleum and landscaping are arranged to create a narrow path that welcomes one directly into the heart of the mausoleum. The vibrant colors of the art glass, light posts, and leather area rug create a warm, welcoming space surrounded by three generations of the Nauss family.

⁷ A gold box has been placed on the window sill, thought to be the urn of Dorothy Morris (formerly Dorothy Nauss Hildebrand).

⁸ 1870 US Census records indicate Wendolin and Anna both came from families of four children

⁹ Ancestry.com New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957: SS Bremen, departed August 11, 1906

Figures



Figure 1: Nauss Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery



Figure 2: Nauss House

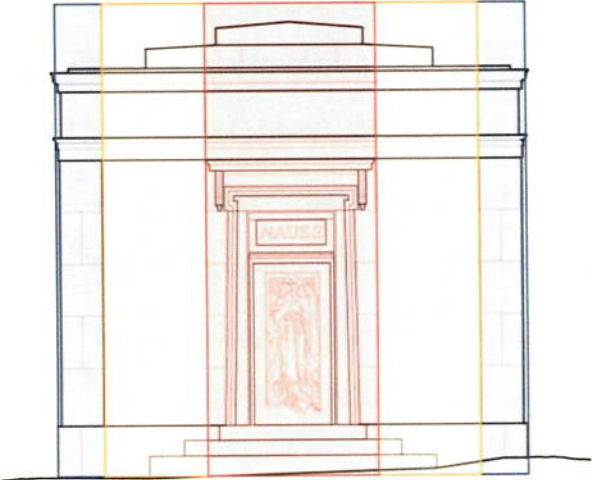


Figure 3: Sections of Front Façade

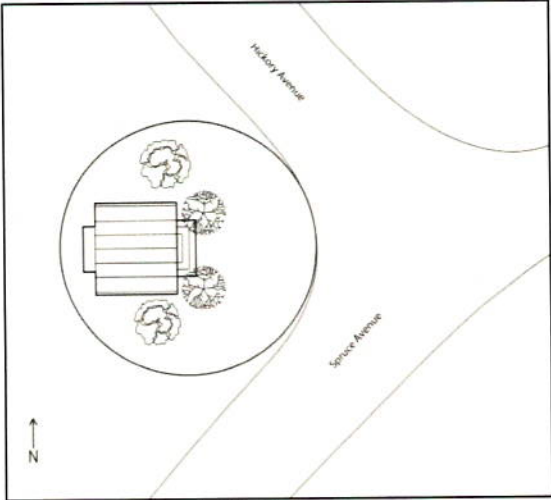


Figure 4: Site Plan

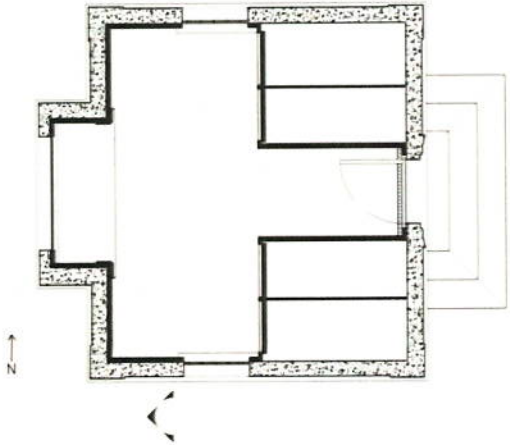


Figure 5. Nauss Mausoleum Plan