

Benjamin F. Yoakum Mausoleum

Woodlawn Cemetery

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PROJECT 3: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis

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Benjamin F. Yoakum

Benjamin Franklin Yoakum (August 20, 1859 - November 28, 1929) was a celebrated railroad executive in late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Yoakum became enthusiastic in railroad since his childhood. He began his practice from surveying gang on the International & Great Northern. Step by step, in 1909,

when Yoakum controlled 17,500 miles of railroad, Railway World magazine called him an "empire builder". Yoakum was also interested in agricultural problems. One of his contributions to the nation was that he attracted millions of European peasant immigrants to the countryside along his railroad. This effectively

prevented the immigrants crowded to New York. B. F. Yoakum came to New York City from Texas in 1907 and operated the Empire Bond and Mortgage Company. He died of heart attack in his home, 1,120 Fifth Avenue, New York on November 28, 1929.

Yoakum Mausoleum

The Yoakum Mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York City, was built in 1927 by Adler's Monument and Granite Works Inc., New York. Here lay the remains of Benjamin Franklin Yoakum (August 20, 1859 - November

28, 1929); his wife, Elizabeth Yoakum (1858 - March 9, 1926); his daughters, Katheryne Y. Fosdick (died on April 17, 1959) and Bessie Y. Larkin (April 25, 1889 - October 20, 1981); his son-in-law, Francis R. Larkin (January 23, 1889 -

December 10, 1931); his granddaughter, Anita Yoakum Fosdick; his grandson-in-law, Robert C. Wilson (July 17, 1912 - March 8, 1991).

Building Siting

When walking down from Whitewood Avenue to Wintergreen Avenue, one could see the Yoakum mausoleum at first glance. It is in the northwest of the Sassafras. Yoakum mausoleum is dominant in many aspects. First, it uses very light grey granite compared to all the other mausoleums around it. For example, Curran mausoleum uses dark grey granite; Schwartz and Larkin mausoleums use dark yellowish grey granite. If one takes the scene as a black-and-white color picture, Yoakum's is

the white tone; other mausoleums are grey tone; the trees forming a black tone background. Second, Yoakum's mausoleum uses larger pieces of stone. There are only two pieces of granite in each elevation, three pieces in the roof, and one for each column. Third, Yoakum's lies in the rear circle in a group of the three circles. There is no landscape except a small tree in the center of the circles. It makes the site open and bright. Fourth, the terrain behind the mausoleum is a little lower. There are only some

small graves. This also strengthens the dominant place of Yoakum mausoleum.

Yoakum mausoleum is away from the main avenue, in the rear circle of the group. If connected the centers of the two circles along the avenue, and draw the perpendicular bisector of the line, it would coincide with Yoakum mausoleum's midcourt line. That might be how the designer decided its orientation.

SITE VIEW



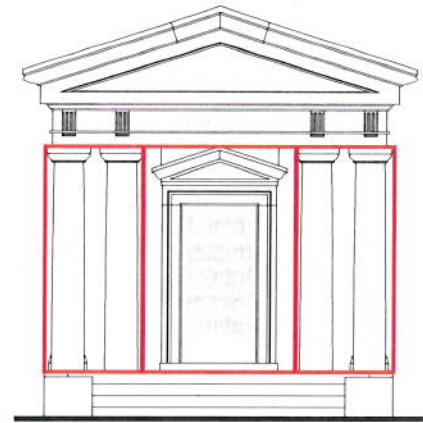
SITE PLAN



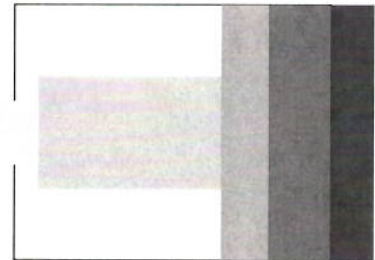
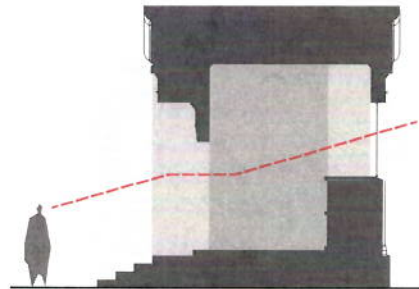
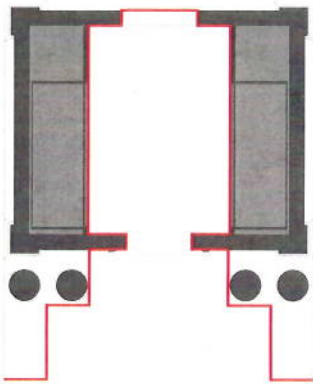
Façade Design

Yoakum mausoleum is 20'-1" feet long, 16'-4" feet width, and 19'-3" feet high. It has an appearance of an ancient classical temple. The façade is symmetrical. Four simplified Tuscan order columns form the portico of the mausoleum. The height

of each column is six of the diameter of the base of column. The distance between two columns on one side is half the diameter. The width between the two columns in the middle is much wider than the one on the side. These features



have made the mausoleum quite frontal. The image of a temple, would lead one to imagine the plan be rectangular. And it does have a rectangular plan.



Plan and Section Design

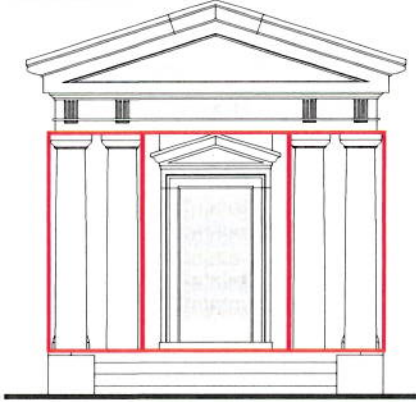
The interior of Yoakum mausoleum has a polished granite floor, a marble roof. The sarcophagi enclose a space for descendants to memorize the Yoakum. The sarcophagi of Benjamin F. Yoakum and his wife Elizabeth Yoakum lie in the middle. Katheryn Y. Fosdick, one of

Yoakum's daughter, as well as her family lie on the left side. Bessie Y. Larkin, Yoakum's second daughter, and her family lie on the right side.

The plan is arranged in a series of transitional space: stairs, semi-open

space of columns, interior space, the space formed by light shining through a stained glass window. This could also be recognized from the longitude section.

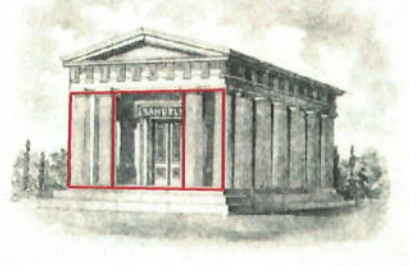
Facade of Yoakum Mausoleum
AD 1927



Bronze Coin from Samos,
Domitian, AD 81-96



Adler's Monument and Granite
Works, Inc. Ads. AD 1927



Temple of Concordia, Agrigento, c.440-
430 BC



Design Precedents

The front façade of Yoakum mausoleum is similar to the image shown on the writing paper of Adler's Monument and Granite Works Inc., which is an ancient classical style temple. Back into that time, the columns of the portico were likely to be equal distance or a little wider in the middle to emphasize the main entrance. In these monuments, however, the distance of the two middle columns is quite wide, as if the designer had removed two columns in the middle to accentuate the entrance. The monument's proportion on the writing paper looks like the precedent of Temple of Concordia, Agrigento (Greek: Harmonia), built c.440-430 BC, an ancient Greek temple of the ancient city of Akragas, located in the Valle dei Templi in Agrigento.

But Yoakum mausoleum has Tuscan

columns, which have not shown up until ancient Roman time. A temple image showing on one side of coin in Domitian area has the same proportion as Yoakum's Mausoleum. It still remains the Greek style. Unfortunately I couldn't find any remaining specific example such as a temple. The image on the coin may not be a real building, however, it could be changed in proportion to emphasize the statue in the middle.

This may indicate the monument company has altered the proportion of the precedent to underline the entrance of mausoleum. It could also be because the scale of a mausoleum is quite small, keeping the equal distance of the columns would be inconvenient for people to enter the mausoleum.

When I researched other mausoleums in Woodlawn Cemetery, I found the form of classical temple is common. I am curious as to why this form was commonly used for funerary architecture. The primary influence of historical archetypes was not on precise architectural design, but on their identification as monuments by name and the implication of their memorializing function. The purest form of building is funerary architecture, intended to commemorate, and not distracted by any social functions. Thus, cutting out the functions of everyday life, mausoleum expresses a most ideal architecture. That may be a reason for mausoleums to adopt the form of the pure form of ancient temples.