



For my first venture in field documentation and formal analysis, I worked on the Moritz Rosenthal mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery. Woodlawn Cemetery is located in the Bronx; my mausoleum is located near the center of the cemetery at the intersection of Myosotis and Walnut Avenue. It faces north on Walnut Avenue and sits on the Columbine plot, which is approximately 3,586.4 square feet. The size and location of the plot, as well as the privacy offered by the few trees surrounding it, give it enough room to be taken in by itself. The presence of the nearby mausoleums does not encroach upon its space. Originally, the owners intended to surround the mausoleum by tall trees such as elms, cedars and hemlocks, flowering bushes such as rhododendrons and Japanese holly, and flowerbeds. Today, there are only two remaining trees. The marble bench that sat in the middle of the plot, facing the mausoleum, was stolen in 1994.¹

The rectangular mausoleum is constructed so as to appear monolithic. All four exterior facades are blocks of fine-hammered white Vermont granite. The interior walls are removable slabs of polished Tennessee pink. The floors are removable slabs of polished white Vermont granite and the door is bronze. The exterior of the mausoleum is 16'-11 1/2" by 13'-4". On the back façade, there are three windows, which had a stained glass landscape scene. The glass was stolen in 1992, and was replaced with a tinted covering.² The right wall contains the crypts of Edna, John, Enid and Edward Rosenthal. The names of Frederick, a stock broker, and Jane Heimerdinger, Joan Sovern and Paul Marshal Rosenthal are on the left wall.³ There is a bit of question as to who is located where. The top left crypt says Frederick, Jane and Joan; however, mausoleum records have Joan's remains located in an urn on the counter of the back wall. The left wall also

Problem 1: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis: Moritz Rosenthal Mausoleum
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contains two blank crypts. The back wall, below the countertop, houses the original owners, Moritz and Virginia Rosenthal, who purchased the mausoleum in June 1933.⁴

Moritz was a wealthy senior partner at the New York law firm Ladenburg, Thalmann & Co, as was at least one of his sons. As a broker, Moritz also fought President Theodore Roosevelt's antitrust campaign.⁵ He and Virginia are the parents of Paul, Jane and John. Enid and Edna are both wives of John Rosenthal; Frederick is Jane's husband. It is not clear how Edward and Joan are related to the main family, though their birth and death dates imply that Edward is Moritz's brother and Joan is Edward's daughter. According to Joan's obituary, she has a brother, also named Edward, who died in 2009, but is not interred at this location.⁶ Joan was married to Michael Sovern, seventeenth president of Columbia University, until she died of cancer. She was an abstract bronze, marble, driftwood and terra cotta artist. It is possible, though nowhere implied, that she could have designed the bronze mausoleum doors.⁷ Meanwhile, Jane was chairman of the women's division of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. Both women were active in academia and have scholarships named after them.⁸

The original drawings, located in the Woodlawn Archives at Avery Library, indicate that there are at least six additional empty crypts located underground.⁹ The mausoleum was designed by the still existent Presbrey Leland Memorials. According to the company's 1933 catalogue, the Rosenthal design used the same granite as the Lehman mausoleum and followed the Oblong Plan: Classic and Modern Detail template, which was advertised as an economical choice for a "large number of interments."¹⁰ The mausoleum and plot also had a \$28,744 endowment for quarterly cleaning and repointing, though by 1975 annual care to the mausoleum was cancelled and most of the plants were removed due to disease or high maintenance cost.¹¹ There are also many letters between Woodlawn and the Rosenthals in which the cost of the plants is discussed. In 1942, when they no longer had a personal gardener, Virginia took over care of the lot. It seems the Rosenthals were looking for a final resting place that balanced grandeur with economy.¹² After Virginia's death her furniture was auctioned for almost \$43,000, which could indicate her family's need for the money.¹³ When the price of the lilies Virginia requested for the mausoleum every week rose, it was agreed that the cemetery should find a cheaper alternative.

Wealthy, but not extravagant, nature must have been important to the Rosenthals. Enclosed in vegetation, the mausoleum might have seemed cabin-like. The doors also have carvings of stars, moons, flowers and seashells. The now nonexistent stain glass windows once depicted a landscape scene. The mausoleum design is very simple, with the doors, windows and corner urns, on the steps, the only decoration. Compared to other mausoleums with much more complicated designs and ornamentation, this one is unassuming. It doesn't try to edify the family anymore than necessary.

When I couldn't find any proportional relationship between the elements, I began to realize that there was one between the form and function of the building. The form seems to follow the function. First of all, the building style was chosen so that a great number of crypts could be housed in the same mausoleum. Therefore, all of the building elements had to allow for that. The shape and size of the walls are only big enough to allow for the size of the crypts—seven on each side and two in the center of the back wall, which explains the building's symmetry and horizontal and vertical composition. Any other nonrectangular, nonsymmetrical shape would have made it harder and more expensive to fit so many crypts. Family structure also seems important. The parents' place under the counter of the back wall, with the children lined up on both sides of them draws your attention first to them and then to the children's crypts. It creates a metaphorical family circle or dinner table arraignment with the parents at the head of the configuration.¹⁴ From the outside the building can be broken into four horizontal elements: the roof, the top half of the building, the bottom half, and the stairs. Even though the building is not very big, your eye is drawn across the façade. The half pillars on the sides of the door also make the building seem wider than it is. On the inside walls, the crypts are stacked on top of each other so your eyes are drawn up from one name to the next, creating the illusion of height. The only other elements are the doors and the windows, which are necessary both for entry and lighting.

The mausoleum is an example of 1930s mausoleum architecture that is still in very good condition. It also a good example of using space economically, without looking at the original blueprints, I would never have guessed that it contains 16 crypts. However, the design is not very unique as it, and the windows and doors, were chosen from the Presbrey Leland catalog. According to the catalog, customers could have personal designs incorporated into the art but there is no record that the Rosenthals requested this. The building style was also present in Presbrey Leland's previous catalogues and similar styles are still on its website today.¹⁵

What is interesting is that the website doesn't feature as many mausoleums as it does markers, which could imply that people are no longer as interested in purchasing grand mausoleums, but are instead opting for cheaper markers. While the catalogues of the 1930s explained why one should purchase a mausoleum with a simple and traditional architectural style, like classic or gothic, which would stand the test of time and express the family's dignity, the present website only has bullet points and pictures. Under "Multicultural" and "Traditional", Presbrey Leland now has pictures of Latin and Asian family markers that reflect cultural diversity.¹⁶ Therefore, rather than coming to the conclusion that the Rosenthal mausoleum is singularly important to historic mausoleum architecture, I believe that its importance lies in what it tells us about the people who purchased it—if they were interested in aesthetics over function, being buried alone or with many—and the general trends in cemetery monuments leading up to today.

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New York Times, *Paid Notice: Deaths-Rosenthal, Edward J.* December, 2 2009
Presbrey Leland Memorial catalogues from 1929 and 1933 in Avery Classics at Avery Library
Presbreyleland.com
Unwin, Simon. *Analysing Architecture*

¹ Moritz Rosenthal Mausoleum files in the Woodlawn Cemetery Archives at Avery Library

² Ibid

³ New York Times, *F.M. Heimerdinger*. March 21, 1950

⁴ Moritz Rosenthal Mausoleum files in the Woodlawn Cemetery Archives at Avery Library

⁵ New York Times, *Moritz Rosenthal Dies; Lawyer*, 68. November 13, 1934

⁶ New York Times, *Paid Notice: Deaths-Rosenthal, Edward J.* December, 2 2009

⁷ New York Times, *Joan R. Sovern Dies; Abstract Sculptor*, 57. September 8, 1993

⁸ Ibid; New York Times, *Heads Federation Group*. April 17, 1945

⁹ Moritz Rosenthal Mausoleum files in the Woodlawn Cemetery Archives at Avery Library

¹⁰ Presbrey Leland Memorial catalogues from 1929 and 1933 in Avery Classics at Avery Library

¹¹ Moritz Rosenthal Mausoleum files in the Woodlawn Cemetery Archives at Avery Library

¹² Moritz Rosenthal Mausoleum files in the Woodlawn Cemetery Archives at Avery Library

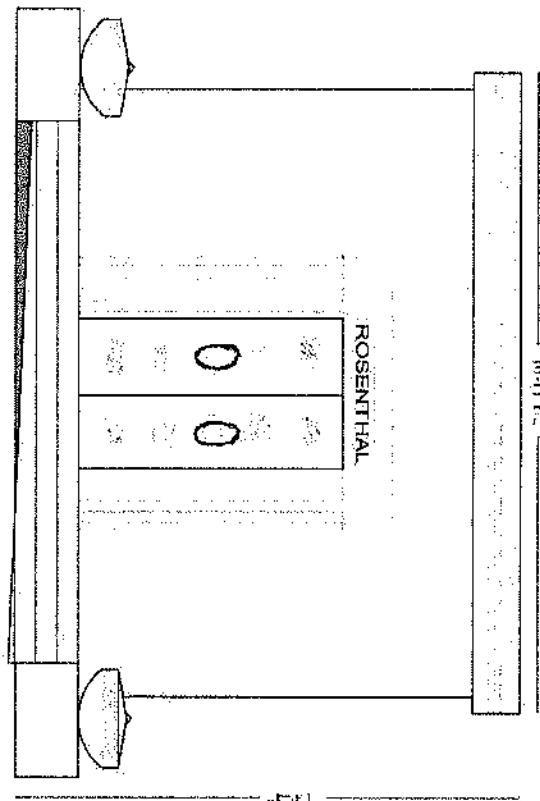
¹³ New York Times, *Auction Brings \$42,732*. April 14, 1945

¹⁴ Unwin, Simon. *Analysing Architecture*

¹⁵ <http://presbreyleland.com/portfolio.htm>; Moritz Rosenthal Mausoleum files in the Woodlawn Cemetery Archives at Avery Library

¹⁶ Ibid

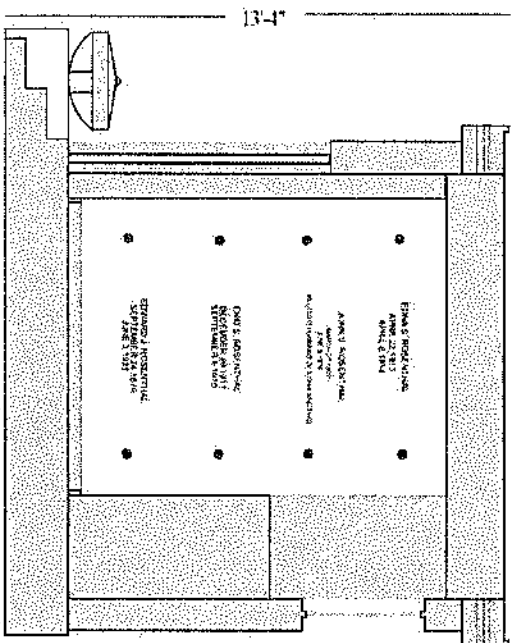
16'41" E2"



Scale is 3/4"=1'
Building faces North

Problem 3: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis
 Morris Rosenthal Mausoleum, Columbine Pike-Woodlawn Cemetery
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13'-11" 1/2"



13'7"

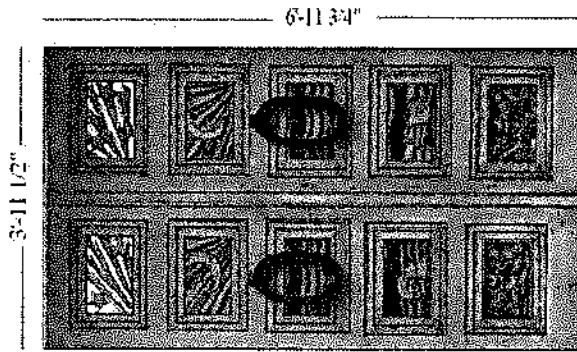
FRANK S. ROSENTHAL
 BORN 1871
 DIED 1910

ANNE S. ROSENTHAL
 BORN 1872
 DIED 1910

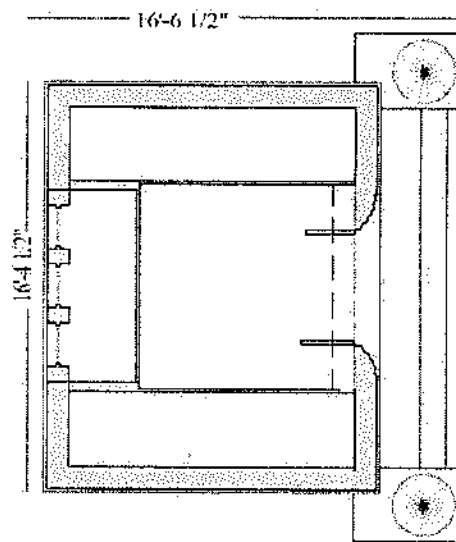
DAVID S. ROSENTHAL
 BORN 1873
 DIED 1910

ESTER J. ROSENTHAL
 BORN 1874
 DIED 1910

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Scale is 1/2"=1'



Scale is 1/2"=1'
Building Faces North