

Lamon V. Harkness Mausoleum

Located just off Chestnut Avenue in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, the Lamon V. Harkness Mausoleum is a Greek Revival structure built for Harkness and his family as a final resting place. Lamon Harkness commissioned the mausoleum shortly before his wife's death in 1905. Lamon, who died in 1915, is buried alongside his wife, son, and son-in-law.¹ The architect, Collins Marsh, designed an austere, modest structure, which suits the private character of Mr. and Mrs. Harkness. Little is known about Marsh, the architect, other than that he had a small office on West 34th Street in the city and designed a large residence in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.² The simple design of the Harkness Mausoleum and its unassuming architect are a testament to the quiet lifestyle of its patrons, Mr. and Mrs. Harkness.

The plot of the Harkness mausoleum is circular in shape and is not located directly on Chestnut Avenue. The plot is set back from the road, with enough space in front of it to fit another circular plot of the same size. Early photographs of the mausoleum from shortly after it was constructed show that the plot was not landscaped at all, and that it was not surrounded by any other mausoleums at the time (Fig.1). At some point, large yews were planted on either side of the mausoleum's front steps, and are now severely overgrown and obstruct most of the front of the structure. In addition, grass has grown over the original walkway to the site, and a large cross-shaped gravestone lies just to the side of this walkway in front of Harkness. If one were not looking for this mausoleum, it would be easy to miss it entirely when walking by (Fig.2).

When walking towards this mausoleum, it is hard to see its façade until one is on its front steps. Here, one can see that the mausoleum is in a classical, Greek Revival style. The exterior structure notably features Ionic columns, pilasters, and a roof pediment with a low pitch. One of the most striking aspects

¹ Specifications sheet, Lamon V. Harkness Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery Collections, Avery Library, Columbia University.

² "A Striking Stone Residence", *Stone*, Vol. 20, Issue 2, Page 121. Stone Magazine Review Publishing Company: Indianapolis, 1 January 1900.

of the building is its use of various granite textures. The building is constructed with a medium gray color granite from Portsmouth, New Hampshire which is finished in three different ways.³ The four columns that support the entry portico and the pilasters at each corner of the main structure are made from a glossy, polished granite. The large stone blocks that compose the walls are finished in a rough, rock face texture. Finally, the pediment, roof, moldings, column bases and capitals, and base of the structure are all finished with a smooth, unpolished granite. This play between granite textures makes this simple mausoleum more visually interesting when one takes a closer look past the trees that hide it.

The interior is very different from the building's façade. Upon entering through large, imposing, heavy bronze doors, made by the U.S. Bronze company, the interior presents itself as a bright and peaceful place.⁴ A small floor space is flanked on both sides with catacombs, four on each side that are stacked on top of one another. The catacombs and walls are clad in a Bianco P. variety of Carrara marble⁵, which is a shockingly bright white color. This white, clean interior is not what one would expect from looking at the shadowy, dark exterior. Finally, the eye is drawn to the stained-glass window on the rear wall, with its Greek "Flame of Eternal Light" motif, underneath which is the word "peace" inscribed in Greek letters. This "peace" motif is a direct representation of this classic, simple, serene, and bright interior space.

Both the exterior and interior are clearly influenced by Classical Greek and Renaissance design. The prostyle temple, a square or rectangular main structure with an entry portico supported by four columns, was commonly used as the inspiration for many mausoleums at Woodlawn. The classical prostyle form symbolizes tradition, stability, and culture – qualities that most of the upper-class, high society families at Woodlawn prided themselves on. Its Ionic columns, as described by Vitruvius, are a "feminine" order, resembling the curves and slender figure of a female body.⁶ These feminine columns could possibly have been influenced by Martha, Lamon Harkness' wife for whom the mausoleum was

³ Specifications sheet, Avery Library

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, Trans. Ingrid D. Rowland, III, Thomas Noble Howe, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 214

designed. The columns are coupled at either end of the façade, rather than being spaced evenly.

Renaissance architect Donato Bramante was one of the first to commonly use paired columns in his designs, as, for example, at the Raphael House, and later became re-popularized by Claude Perrault's design for the Colonnade of the Louvre in 1672 (Fig 3 and 4).⁷ Paired columns supporting a pediment became a common style for porches and porticos in many forms of architecture, especially British and American.

Lamon Harkness could afford the finest, most lavish mausoleum at Woodlawn, yet chose to commission a simple, austere building instead. Lamon, the son of Standard Oil co-founder Stephen Harkness, died with a fortune of almost one hundred million dollars. Lamon himself owned a large share of Standard Oil after his father's death, and in addition he ran a large Standardbred horse breeding farm in Kentucky and was a well-known yachtsman.⁸ When researching both Lamon and his wife, it is apparent that they were not as active in New York's social circles as Lamon's two half-brothers, Edward and Charles were. Both Edward and Charles Harkness were often in the press for their philanthropic endeavors, yet Lamon and his wife seemed to enjoy a quieter life. Lamon was a country boy— he had started his life on a cattle ranch, and often spent most of his time at his son-in-law Kingsley Macomber's working ranch in Paicines, California, which was also the place of his death.⁹ Macomber, husband of Lamon's daughter Myrtle, was an early-twentieth-century renaissance man and is also buried alongside Mr. and Mrs. Harkness in the mausoleum. A jack-of-all-trades, Macomber explored Zimbabwe, started the Los Angeles Trust Company, built a subdivision in Pasadena, operated a coal mine, and owned racehorse stables in America and France. As "the undisputed head of American society in Paris", Macomber was influential in strengthening the relationship between France and America, and commissioned statues honoring French soldiers who fought for the U.S. in our Revolutionary War.¹⁰ In addition, Lamon's son, Harry, is also buried in the mausoleum. Harry, like Macomber, lived an exciting

⁷ John Summerson, *The Classical Language of Architecture*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1980.

⁸ "Lamon V. Harkness Dies In California", *New-York Tribune*, 18 January 1915.

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ "Old Southern Depot is Celebrating Centennial", *Knoxville News Sentinel*, 5 October 2003.

"A Roundup of the Week's News", *Sports Illustrated Magazine*, 17 October 1955.

life as a racecar driver and aviator. Unlike his son and son-in-law, Lamón and his wife were of a quieter, more modest disposition, which is reflected in this unassuming mausoleum.

Overall, the simple, classical design of the Harkness mausoleum is typical of many other mausoleums at Woodlawn Cemetery. The building's setback location, shrouded by trees, makes it an unassuming site. Upon further inspection, though, one can see the details in the use of texture and materials, and the dichotomy between the dark exterior and the bright, peaceful interior. This mausoleum suits the private life of Mr. and Mrs. Harkness, and this Greek Revival building shows that they possessed traditional taste.

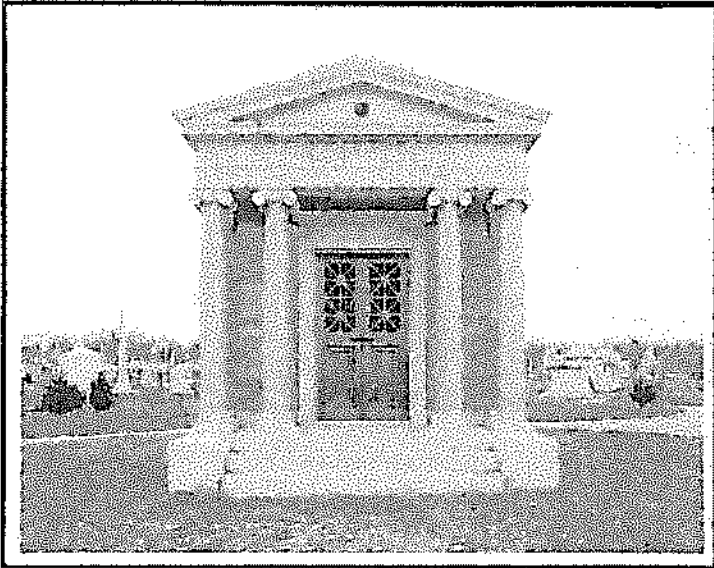


Fig. 1. Harkness Mausoleum, front façade, c. 1905 (from Museum of the City of New York)



Fig. 2. Harkness Mausoleum, front façade, photo taken October 1, 2013

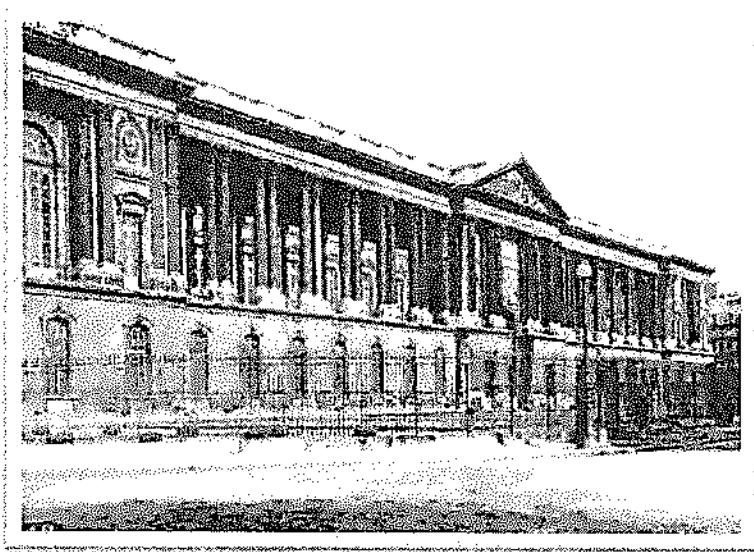
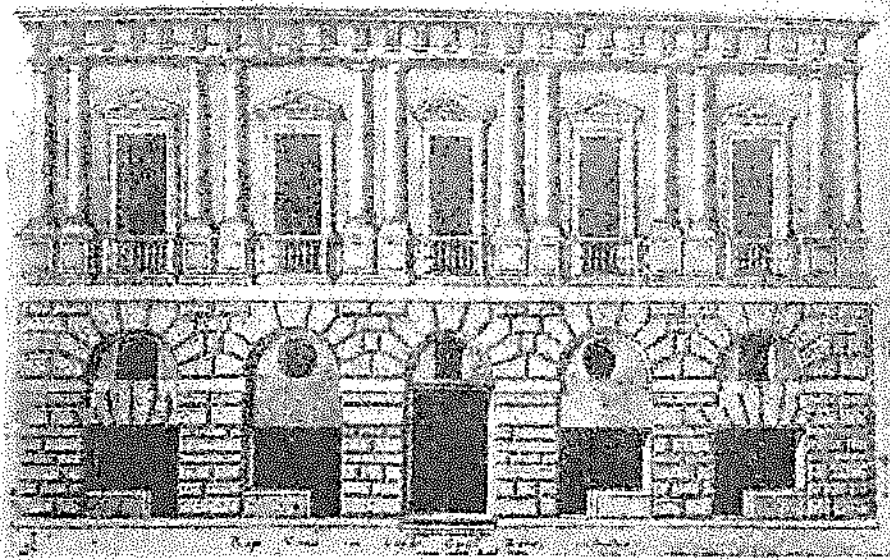


Fig. 3 & 4, Top: Bramante, House of Raphael, 1510, from Summerson's *The Classical Language of Architecture*

Bottom: Perrault, Louvre Colonnade, 1667, from Summerson's *The Classical Language of Architecture*

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