

Kelly Carroll

Problem 3: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis

Profs: Andrew Dolkart, Françoise Bollack, Cleary Larkin, & Ward Dennis

Accompanying Paper - C.P.H. Gilbert Mausoleum, 10/18/10

Charles Pierrepont Henry Gilbert was born in 1862 in New York City. He was of English lineage; his grandfather emigrated from Somersetshire, England to Dorchester, Massachusetts in the early seventeenth century. C.P.H. Gilbert's father was a wealthy commission merchant in New York City. His father's wealth allowed Gilbert access to a world class architectural education at Columbia College in New York and later in France at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. In addition to his pursuit of the study of architecture, Gilbert also excelled in civil engineering, painting and sculpture.¹

After Paris but before returning to New York, Gilbert practiced architecture in mining towns of Colorado and Arizona.² By 1885, Gilbert was back in New York City and had his own practice in the Upper West Side and specialized in domestic architectural work such as houses, townhouses, and apartments.³ His style was reflective of his Beaux Arts education, his architecture deeply steeped in classicism with heavy ornamentation and adornment. Gilbert's popularity increased in 1897 because of the commission for the Isaac D. Fletcher Mansion at 79th Street and Fifth Avenue. This house occupied the entire corner block and "the Françoise I style of the mansion, based on early French Renaissance architecture, was perhaps Gilbert's hallmark."⁴ This house was so loved by the Fletchers that they commissioned French Impressionist Francois Raffaelli to paint a portrait of their house, which now is in

¹ Harrison, Mitchell C. *Prominent and Progressive Americans: An Encyclopedia of Contemporaneous Biography, Volume I* (New York: The Tribune Association, 1902), 132.

² "Charles P.H. Gilbert: Special to The New York Times" *New York Times*, October 27, 1952, 27.

³ Placzek, Adolf K., ed., *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (London: The Free Press, 1982).

⁴ "The Prentiss Residence, 1 Riverside Drive, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1899-1901; C.P.H. Gilbert, architect." *Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 231, LP-1715*, January 8, 1991.

the Metropolitan Museum of Art's permanent collection.⁵ By 1900, Gilbert was known as a mansion specialist and through this career he designed over one hundred large residences and mansions in New York City and continued to build through the 1920's.⁶ In 1912, Gilbert also designed a mausoleum to be erected in Woodlawn Cemetery for himself, his wife, and son.

The mausoleum appears simple and unworthy of attention initially, but with closer investigation much is revealed about the building. Merely by comparison to neighboring mausoleums, Gilbert's mausoleum appears to be the most solid because of how few pieces of granite were used in its construction. Gilbert's mausoleum is a neo-classical Roman temple. It has a portico which is supported by two free standing Ionic columns and Doric pilasters that are part of the supporting side walls which assigns the mausoleum to the classification of a temple in antis.⁷ There is a single entrance between and behind the two Ionic columns and the building is symmetrical. Ionic temples in antis were popular toward the end of Hellenistic Greece and the rise of the Roman Empire, and a nascent prototype of Gilbert's mausoleum is the Roman Temple of Isis in Greece.⁸ Gilbert's mausoleum has many features that adhere to the classical Ionic order. Ionic temples have a column base diameter to column height ratio of one to eight, have an intercolumniation ratio of one to three, and the height of the bases of the Ionic columns should be one-third of the width of the Ionic column. There also should always be twenty-four flutes in the Ionic columns.⁹ In each of these cases, Gilbert's mausoleum is precise:

In ancient Greece and Rome, as well as today, temples and in this case mausoleums are religious buildings. Whether one enters a temple or mausoleum to worship or mourn the dead or both, the

⁵ Tauranac, John. *Elegant New York: The Builders and the Buildings 1885-1915* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985), 183.

⁶ Gray, Christopher. "A Designer of Lacy Mansions for the City's Eminent" *New York Times*, Feb. 9, 2003.

⁷ Tzonis, Alexander and Liáné Lefaivre. *Classical Architecture: The Poetics of Order* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1986), 18.

⁸ Stamper, John W. *The Architecture of Roman Temples: The Republic to the Middle Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 52. An intercolumniation of two or more evolved over time in the design of temples to allow enough space between columns to allow easy entrance.

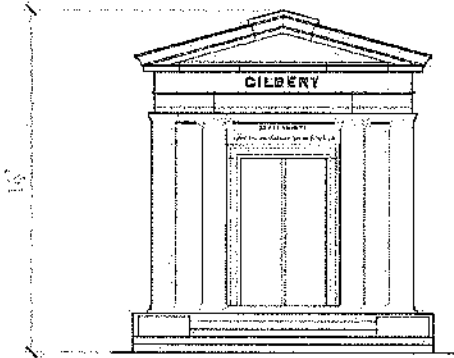
⁹ Stamper, 52, 63-65.

interior is the most vital part of the building. The significance of the interior of Gilbert's mausoleum is indicated by heavy emphasis to the building's entry which is evident in the siting and grand granite stairway approach. Gilbert's mausoleum sits in the center of its plot between two other mausoleums, and with two behind it. It sits nearest the street and it dominates the plot visually from multiple perspectives. As one follows the stairs and enters between the two Ionic columns onto the portico, it is essential to enter the building because the portico is too small for social space. Directly inside are the catacombs to one's left and right, and in front a stained glass Tiffany window. The interior is completely clad in Tennessee Pink Limestone, with the exception of a bronze ventilating rosette on the ceiling.

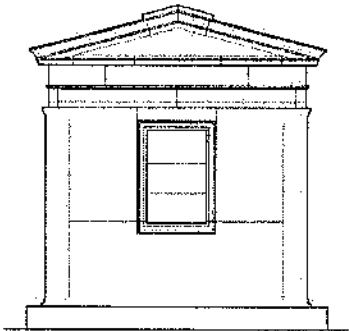
For a quick passerby, Gilbert's mausoleum does not seem that unique especially set amongst several temple-style mausoleums. This was my incipient opinion when I first encountered my assignment. I was further perplexed when I discovered that Gilbert's professional architectural works were heavily ornamented while in his mausoleum he chose to be austere. After researching classical temples, it became evident that Gilbert's mausoleum was not simple after all. This type of simplicity is refinement. I am developing an architectural eye-in-training; I am now able to discern the high design, level of history and order, and construction of Gilbert's mausoleum from the other "similar" temples that are nearby. As for the lack of ornamentation - classical temples were not exuberantly decorated. Gilbert's design is consistent with what classical temples have outlaid for centuries. After all, he was building a mausoleum not a mansion. I have concluded that Gilbert is a classicist. His admiration for architectural antiquity is apparent in both his career architectural projects and his final resting place. C.P.H. Gilbert died in New York City in 1952.

C.P.H. GILBERT MAUSOLEUM

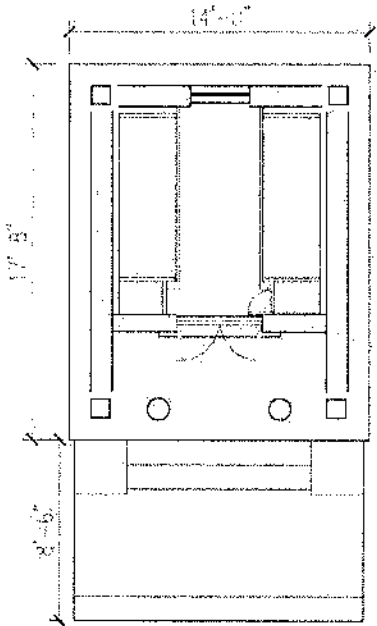
Elevation



Rear elevation



Plan



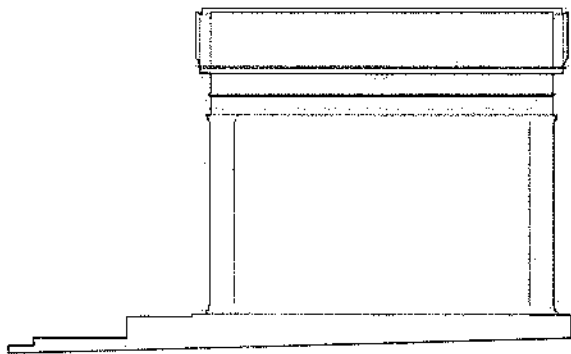
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Kelly Autumn Carroll.
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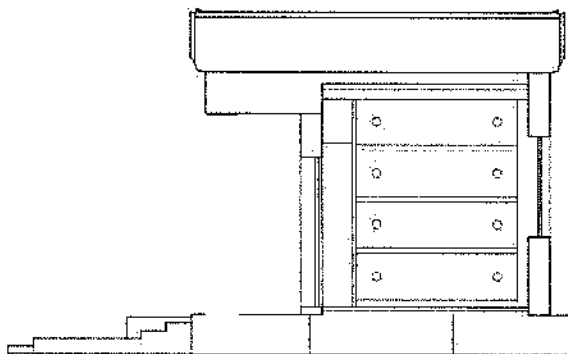
C.P.H. GILBERT MAUSOLEUM

Scale: 1/2" = 1'0"

Side Elevation



Section

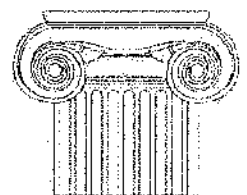


Detail Scale:
3" = 1'0"

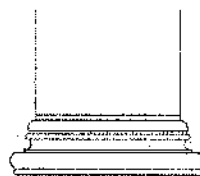
Detail Upper
Pilaster



Detail
Ionic Capital



Detail
Pilaster Base



Detail
Ionic Base





