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Problem 3: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis

FALL 2011 HP STUDIO I:

Reading Historic Buildings // Faculty: Francoise Bollack, Ward Dennis, Andrew Dolkart

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As the passerby travels down Central Avenue at Woodlawn cemetery, he will stumble upon a large plot of land with a relatively small mausoleum set in the middle. A welcoming walkway, outlined by two brackets, guides the visitor to the entrance. Constructed in 1904 for George C. Taylor, this mausoleum is a simple ionic temple. Two equally spaced ionic columns frame the door on each side. The temple is only a step up from the foundation which gives it a modest feel because there is no elaborate ascent. This makes it comparable to a Greek temple that was not mounted on grandiose pedestals. The Taylor mausoleum only has a concrete base and one stone slab which is fewer than many temple examples from Greece. By observing the example of an Ionic temple on the Illissos, the forms are immediately apparent on the mausoleum (See Figure 1).¹ The mausoleum shares the symmetry, ionic columns, and triangular pediment as seen on the Greek temple. The form of the mausoleum is definitely influenced by Greek design, but the texture mirrors stone from another region on the Mediterranean.

Rock-face is not a completely unique finish, but is more uncommon than the smooth surfaces found on the majority of mausoleums in Woodlawn. As the Presbrey-Leland catalogue of 1952 advertises in reference to rock-face, it “reflects the native tomb-like character for which many architects strive, maintaining that the very appearance of a structure should proclaim its purpose.”² The monument company cites the Phoenicians as inspiration for this technique. “They laid their courses of stone horizontally in colossal blocks, rough hewn in the main, but smoother and carefully beveled at the edges, a style of building which, more markedly than any other, pushes into notice the size of the blocks, their variety, and the harmonious arrangement of

¹ P96 Lawrence, Arnold Walter and Richard Allan Tomlinson. *Greek Architecture*. Ed. 5. Yale University Press, 1996.

² P 14 Presbrey-Leland Catalogue 1952. Woodlawn Collection. Avery Classics. Columbia University.

their sutures or vertical divides.”³ The sketch of the Gebeil Wall and segment of a photo of the north elevation clearly compare in style of stone masonry (See Figure 2).⁴ The Taylor Monument takes similar form using a smooth one inch border around the rough-hewn stone to accentuate the cut. This technique gives the building a heaviness and massive quality. The smooth columns on the façade contrast the rough face of the stone. Although both materials are made of granite, the finishes on the surfaces create different effects on the exterior. The texture of the building directly ties in with its relationship to the landscape.

The landscaping of this mausoleum is significant to the overall design. The small temple sits in the middle of an otherwise empty plot. The mausoleum has the sense of a field stone that could be found in the middle of a grassy lawn. The natural cut of the stone takes away from the monumentality of the structure and helps it to blend into the landscape. Although the front entrance is the main focus, the east and west elevations have decorative bronze work surrounding the windows suggesting that those elevations were meant to be seen and experienced by the visitor. The back of the mausoleum remains austere and hidden for visitor view, but maintains the same stone cut.

Leland & Hall Co. was a monument company working out of the Flatiron building and using Barre granite from Vermont, the primary construction material for the Taylor mausoleum. Although there are several ads remaining from their company, they are for a diverse type of products such as garden statues, benches and fountains rather than monuments. The company constructed about thirty buildings at Woodlawn between 1904 and 1909.⁵

³ P. 253-255 P. 254 Rawlinson, George. *The Story of Phoenicia*. Putnam's: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1889.

⁴ P. 254 Rawlinson, George. *The Story of Phoenicia*. Putnam's: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1889.

⁵ Woodlawn Cemetery Database: Avery Library. Columbia University. Accessed 10 October 2011.

The patron of this mausoleum, George C. Taylor, is buried alone in the building. Although technically dying a bachelor, his assumed lover and secretary, Betsy Head, rests in a mausoleum on a nearby plot. The two buildings were commissioned by the same company, Leland & Hall Co. and constructed in the same year (even though he died three years later in September 1907)⁶. The mausoleums are compatible in form and material. Rock-face, triangular pediments, and the interior tile patterns are all common features between the two. Because Taylor was alive during the construction, it may be speculated that he made the decision to have similar mausoleums on neighboring plots. However, there is no correspondence to confirm how much input he had on her mausoleum.

A contract outlining the specifications of the George C. Taylor's mausoleum exists for the site. From this, the decisions that Taylor had about his own site are apparent. Some of his input includes the choice of plot, orientation of the mausoleum, interior marble color as well as the ability to oversee and access the building during its construction⁷. The specifications go into great detail about all aspects of the mausoleum including, clear descriptions on the quality of the material, which materials will be selected, how the material will be cut, which companies will be used, outlines of the installation and the promise of quality craftsmanship. The building has six main construction materials granite, concrete, marble, bronze, glass, and tile (See figures 3a-f).

Taylor, leaving no descendents, only needed room for himself. As the son of the wealthy merchant, Moses Taylor, George inherited twenty million dollars, so was a very wealthy man.⁸

A picnic on the lawn outside of the building would be enjoyable, but the space inside is cramped.

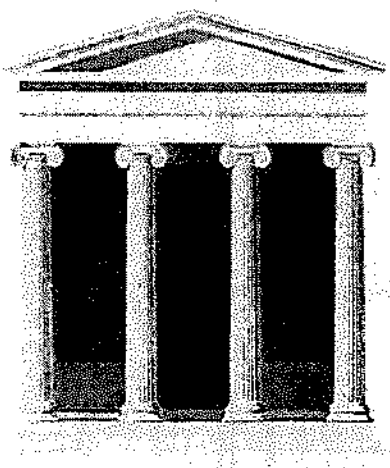
⁶ Registration of internment. Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

⁷ Leland & Hall Co. "Specifications for mausoleum to be erected in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York, For Geo. C. Taylor, Esq. Islip, L.I." Woodlawn Cemetery Collection. Avery Archives, Columbia University. New York, NY.

⁸ "George C. Taylor Dead. Wealthy Recluse Expires in His Long Island Home." *New York Times*, NY. 18 September 1907.

The interior has small tiled floor with a floral border. Because Taylor left no heirs or endowment, his mausoleum has little structural integrity. The white and blue marble ceiling is bowing and needs to be supported by wood scaffolding. Looking past the construction flaws, the use of color and materials in the interior is actually quite beautiful. The sarcophagus is a white marble that sits on a raised slab of peach marble. The paneling on the walls, ceiling, and around the window is a blue and white marble. The bronze brackets supporting the ceiling are a decorated floral design blending the theme from the floor. These were made by Yale and Towne Bronze.⁹ The stained glass is not very impressive, but it would be hard to imagine the mausoleum without any decoration in the window.

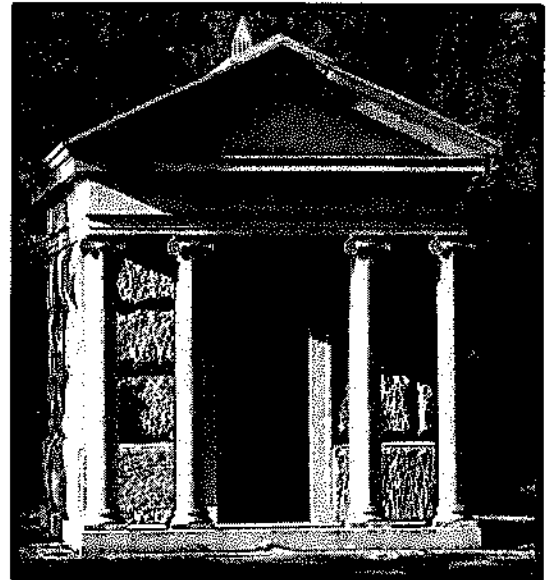
The George C. Taylor mausoleum, although not very elaborate, shows inspiration from classical architecture, uses a nice mix of materials and is set on an interesting plot.



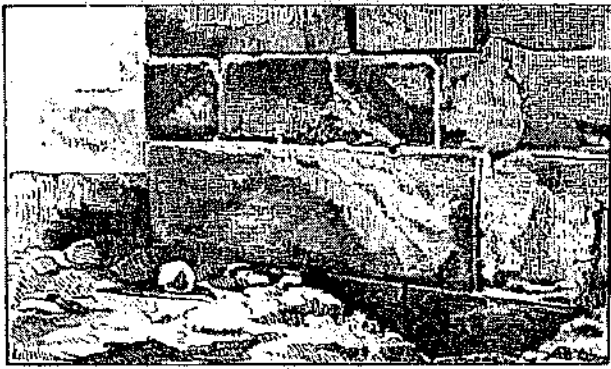
139. Athens, temple on the Ilissos, c. 450 or later (B); restored elevation

Figure 1: Temple on the Ilissus from Tomlinson and Lawrence's *Greek Architecture*

Figure 1a: Comparison to Taylor Mausoleum



⁹ Leland & Hall Co. "Specifications for mausoleum to be erected in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York, For Geo. C. Taylor, Esq. Islip, L.I." Woodlawn Cemetery Collection. Avery Archives, Columbia University. New York, NY.



WALL OF GEBEIL.

Figure 2: Wall of Gebeil *The Story of Phoenicia* by George Rawlinson
Figure 2a: Comparison of rough hewn stone Taylor mausoleum

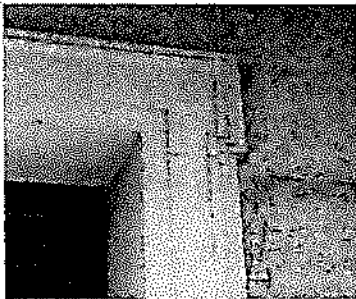
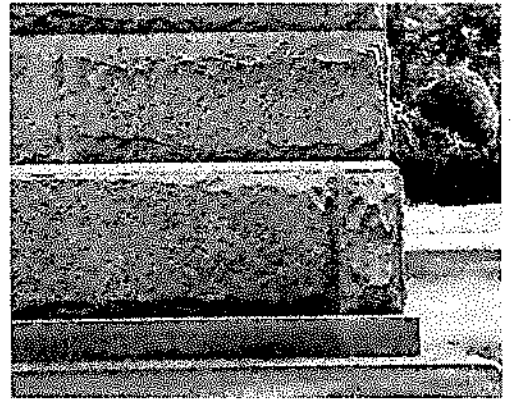


Figure 3a: Granite



Figure 3b: Concrete

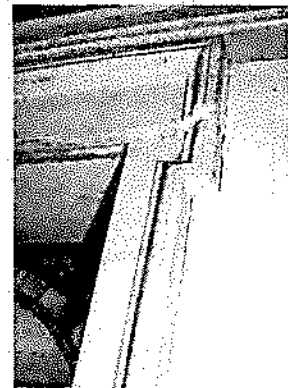


Figure 3c: Marble



Figure 3d: Bronze

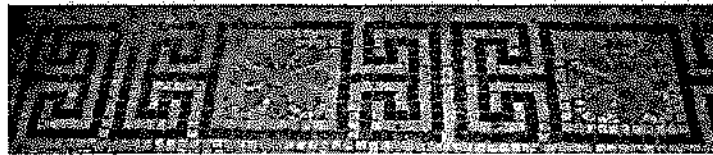


Figure : Tile



Figure 3f: Glass