

THE GEORGER MAUSOLEUM AT WOODLAWN CEMETERY



Figure 1¹: Front Façade of the Georger Mausoleum

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¹ Charlotte Crum, *Georger Mausoleum*, Personal photograph, September 15, 2023.

Located in the historic Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx of New York City, the Georger Mausoleum sits as a final resting place for five family members and relatives. It was designed and constructed in 1907 by the C. E. Tayntor Granite Company. This mausoleum was built in a classical style with two polished granite Doric columns flanking the ornamental US bronze door. The rusticated exterior ashlar was said to be “C. E. T.’s finest light granite” and has a rock face finish.² Honed granite is used to accentuate the geometric roofing design, as well as a backdrop for the main façade and the frieze on which the polished granite “GEORGER” lettering sits. Portland cement was used to lay the foundation.³ Inside the mausoleum, the floor (sand rubbed) and walls (highly polished) are finished in a light Italian marble.⁴ A multi-colored stained-glass window is centered on the back wall. Current conditions which have been observed on the mausoleum include some minor staining on the honed granite under the overhang and some soiling on the east façade where it is situated underneath a tree. The bronze finish of the door and back window gate have green patina and some deterioration. A small rectangle of the stained glass is missing from the window’s bottom eastern corner (see Figure 2).



Figure 2⁵: Mausoleum Conditions (left to right)- Staining of Honed Granite, Soiling of East Façade, Missing Stained Glass Fragment

² Mausoleum construction description card, Box MM 7: Folder 7, Woodlawn Cemetery, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

³ Mausoleum construction description card. Woodlawn Cemetery Archives.

⁴ Memorandum of agreement, Box MM 7: Folder 7, Woodlawn Cemetery, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

⁵ Charlotte Crum, *Georger Mausoleum*, Personal photographs, September 19, 2023.

When the Georger Mausoleum was first commissioned in April of 1907, it was planned to be in the Prospect plot of the cemetery.⁶ However, letters between C. E. Tayntor Granite Co and Woodlawn Cemetery show that a new location in Hickory Knoll was selected in September of 1907, while keeping the original mausoleum design.⁷ During the fall of 1932, a landscape plan was developed for the Georger plot on Hickory Knoll. At the time, the existing trees included a Malus (or more commonly known as a Crabapple), a Golden Rain tree, and a Viburnum. Landscaping planted included multiple rhododendrons and azaleas along the back of the lot and two Japanese Yew conifers in front of the mausoleum (see Figure 3).⁸ Today, the Crabapple tree still stands next to the eastern wall and one rhododendron survives near the western rear of the lot (see Figure 4).

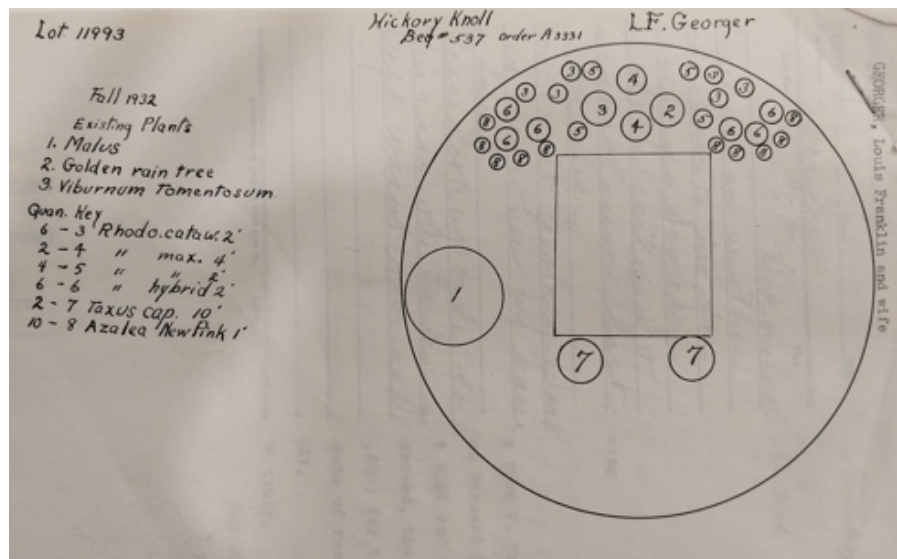


Figure 3⁹: 1932 Landscape Condition/Plan at Hickory Knoll

⁶ Georger Mausoleum plot plan, Drawer MM 3.3, Folder 56, Woodlawn Cemetery, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

⁷ Letter sent from C.E. Tayntor Granite Co. to Woodlawn Mausoleum on 19 September 1907, Box MM 7, Folder 7, Woodlawn Cemetery, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

⁸ Georger Hickory Knoll landscape plan 1932, Box MOC 07, Folder 12, Woodlawn Cemetery, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

⁹ Georger Hickory Knoll landscape plan 1932. Woodlawn Cemetery Archives.



*Figure 4¹⁰: Georger Mausoleum in Existing Landscape
(Crabapple Tree to the left, Rhododendron Tree to the right)*

The C.E. Tayntor Granite Company, which designed and built the mausoleum, had two offices, one at 239 Broadway which had been in use starting in 1886 and another at 29 West 34th Street in New York City. The company specialized in planning and constructing mausoleums and monuments. Their quarries from which they sourced their granite were located in Hallowell, Maine and Barre, Vermont.¹¹

Charles E. Tayntor, owner of the company, was commissioned for significant mausoleums and monuments both locally and internationally. When a Confederate Veterans' Monument in Mount Hope Cemetery in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, was proposed in 1895, he contributed \$2,500 to its fund, securing the bid for its construction. The granite obelisk was to be 60 ft high, said to be “the tallest shaft in any cemetery in the vicinity of New York” at the

¹⁰ Charlotte Crum, *Georger Mausoleum*, Personal photographs, September 19, 2023.

¹¹ Letter sent from C.E. Tayntor Granite Co. to Woodlawn Mausoleum on 19 September 1907. Woodlawn Cemetery Archives.

time (see Figure 5).¹² The C.E. Tayntor Granite company worked across borders in Canada to complete a mausoleum for former Senator W.E. Sanford in Hamilton, Ontario following the deaths of both of his sons. This Vermont granite structure was crafted into a Corinthian style and had dimensions of 30 ft by 16 ft by 29 ft, topped with a figure of Hope.¹³

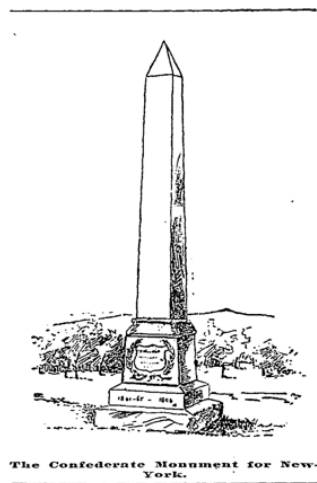


Figure 5¹⁴: Sketch of a C.E. Tayntor Granite Co. Monument

Perhaps the most influential contribution of Charles E. Tayntor to the granite industry was his erection of the world's largest quarry derrick at the time. Wood was still the dominant choice of material for derricks, but Tayntor had expressed frustration with its limitations following a breakage on the job. He partnered with the Milliken Bros, who had patented a design for a steel derrick. They worked together to build one according to his standards, which was ready for use in 1891. Tayntor slowly increased loads on the derrick to assess its strength, and by 1896, it was said that "Mr. Tayntor has the only derrick in America large enough to handle a single piece of granite weighing over 150,000 pounds."¹⁵ Since then, the granite industry has

¹² For A Confederate Monument: To Be Erected In Mount Hope Cemetery Under The Auspices Of The New-York Camp Of Veterans, (1895, Dec 08), *New York Times* (1857-1922), 2.

¹³ Death Of Senator Sanford, (1899, Jul 13), *New York Times* (1857-1922), 7.

¹⁴ Death Of Senator Sanford, 7.

¹⁵ Andreas Kuehnpast, "Granite Column: The World's Largest Derrick", *The Barre Montpelier Times Argus*, August 4, 2014.

switched completely to the use of steel derricks and the last wooden derrick was demolished in 2003.¹⁶

The Georger Mausoleum was commissioned by Louis F. Georger and Arney A. Georger following the sudden death of their son-in-law Walter P. Bigelow. He died overnight on March 8th, 1907, due to a heart attack at age 40 in his home at 325 West 70th Street.¹⁷ Bigelow was placed in the top eastern catacomb when the mausoleum was completed in October 1907, while the four members of the Georger family entombed here, Louis, Arney, Francis, and Anna (see Figure 6 for a family tree) fill the western catacombs.

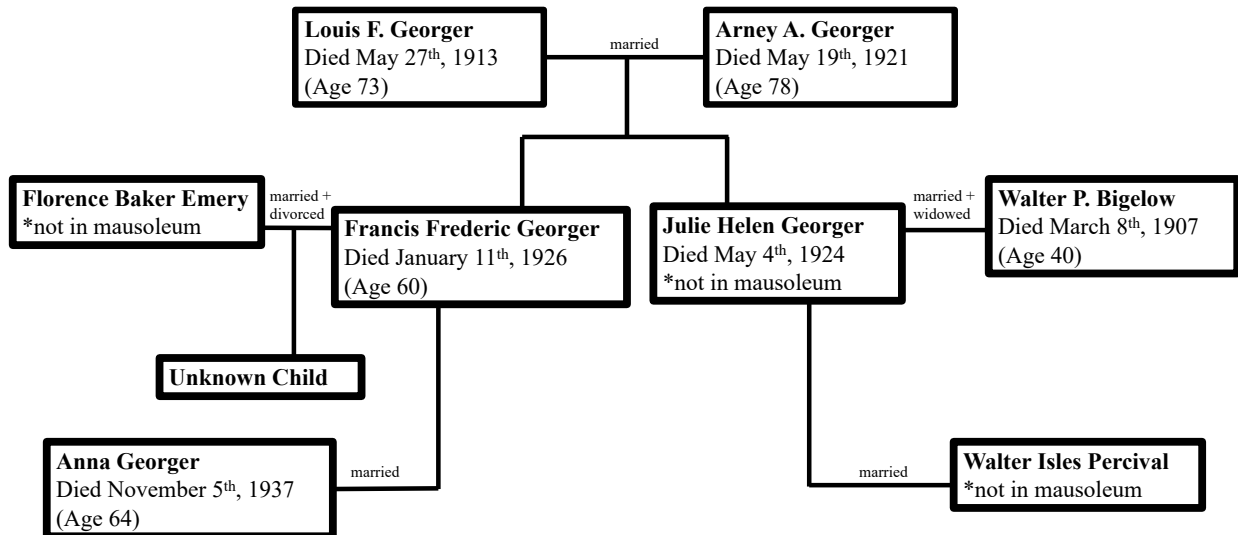


Figure 6¹⁸: Georger Family Tree

¹⁶ Kuehnpast, “Granite Column”.

¹⁷ “Obituary: Walter Pierrepont Bigelow,” *New - York Tribune (1900-1910)*, March 9, 1907, 10.

¹⁸ Georger Family Tree, compiled by Charlotte Crum.

Walter Bigelow joined the Georger family when he was married to Julie H. Georger on January 28th, 1891.¹⁹ Prior to his marriage, he graduated from the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale University in 1887. He started working in his father's hardware manufacturing firm immediately upon finishing school and at the time of his death was in charge of the New York office and had served as vice president for many years.²⁰ After Bigelow's passing, Julie Georger remarried Walter I. Percival. She died on May 4th, 1924 as Julie Helen Georger Percival and was entombed elsewhere.²¹

Louis F. Georger was the primary commissioner and funder of the mausoleum. He passed away in the home he shared with his family at 115 Pelham Road in New Rochelle, New York on May 27th, 1913, at the age of 73. Louis Georger was a nephew of the ex-mayor of New York, Charles Godfrey Gunther, and had worked for the Gunther family business, C.G. Gunther's Sons furriers, for 60 years.²² In his will, he left his estate and \$20,000 to his wife, Arney, an equal \$16,000 to each of his children, Francis and Julie, and \$2,000 to the family's housekeeper Louise Eggenberger, with an addition sum if she continued to be employed by them.²³

¹⁹ "Three Weddings Of Note: Many Prominent Society People In Attendance," *New York Times (1857-1922)*, January 29, 1891, 5.

²⁰ "Obituary: Walter Pierrepont Bigelow."

²¹ "Obituary 1: Julie Helen Georger Percival," *New York Times (1923-)*, May 05, 1924, 15.

²² "Obituary: Louis F. Georger," *New - York Tribune (1911-1922)*, May 28, 1913, 9.

²³ "Wills For Probate," *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Jun 03, 1913, 15.



Figure 7: C.G. Gunther's Sons Evening Coat²⁴ and Advertisement²⁵

C.G. Gunther's Sons furriers was established in 1820 by Christian G. Gunther.²⁶ At its first location on Maiden Lane, Christian started with his four sons as his employees. Charles Godfrey was the eldest and began work after he studied at the Moravian Institute in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, and the Columbia College grammar school in New York. In addition to working as a furrier, he became heavily involved in Democratic politics within the city and earned the mayoral seat in 1863.²⁷ He passed away on January 22nd, 1885, but the C.G. Gunther's Sons continued to run one of the most successful fur businesses in the city. While Louis Georger was employed by the Gunthers, one of their most famous patrons was then vice-president, Theodore Roosevelt. The *New York Times* writes "He came to inspect the skins of twelve mountain lions

²⁴ "Evening Coat" by C.G. Gunther's Sons, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Mrs. J. W. Post, 1944, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Digital Collections, Accessed November 2, 2023.

²⁵ "C. G. Gunther's Sons furs," The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collections, The New York Public Library, Accessed November 2, 2023.

²⁶ "Century-Old Store Goes Again Uptown; C.G. Gunther's Sons Move Forth Time Since Formation in Maiden Lane in 1820," *The New York Times*. April 7, 1929, 6.

²⁷ James T. White, "Gunther, Charles Godfrey," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, United States: 1892, 69.

and five lynxes he had sent there to be turned into rugs and mounted trophies of one of his hunting trips to the Rocky Mountains.”²⁸ C.G. Gunther’s Sons eventually joined with Jaeckel, Inc. in 1949 and was bought by the Hoving Corporation in 1959.²⁹

Arney A. Georger passed away on May 19th, 1921 at the home which she shared with her son at 981 Madison Avenue. Most of her inheritance went to her son, citing the following reasons:

“Because of my sincere belief she would not appreciate or value the gift of any of my personal belongings, and because for the period of nearly a year last my daughter has failed to visit or have direct communication with me. The misunderstandings that have arisen with my daughter during my declining years are a constant source of worry and regret to me. But I find myself unable to attempt a reconciliation, in view of the apparent desire on the part of my daughter to have the situation remain as it is.”³⁰

Her daughter contested Arney’s will, claimed that her mother was unduly influenced and no longer had the mental capacity to make her inheritance decisions.³¹ Results of the October 1921 trial have not been located through public record research.

Francis F. Georger was the only son of Louis and Arney. He graduated from Yale University in 1887 and worked as a real estate broker for the firm of Brooke & Georger.³² On

²⁸ “Century-Old Store Goes Again Uptown.”

²⁹ The Metropolitan Museum of Art. “C.G. Gunther’s Sons, Evening Coat.” Accessed October 4, 2023.

³⁰ "Daughter Files Contest of Mrs. Georger's Will," *New - York Tribune (1911-1922)*, October 1, 1921, 7.

³¹ "Daughter Files Contest of Mrs. Georger's Will."

³² Special to the, H. T. “Last of Emery Claimants Lose \$325,000 Fight: Legacy of Missing Son of F. F. Georger Given to English Cousin in Trust Child 'Forsaken' at Birth Jersey Heiress

September 25th, 1895, he married Florence Baker Emery. Francis gifted Florence a diamond tiara as a wedding present and the pair started their honeymoon trip across the US and Canada that evening by train.³³ The two ended their relationship in divorce in 1910.³⁴ Francis Georger remarried Anna Georger. They lived in Great Neck, Long Island until both of their passings. He died on January 11th, 1926³⁵, and she died on November 5th, 1937.³⁶

Francis Georger's first wife, Florence Baker Emery, remarried to Henry E. Billings. Shortly before her death on August 28th, 1928, she admitted to the family attorney to have had a child with Francis Georger in 1896. When it was announced that \$325,000 was to be left with the unknown "infant Georger" following the death of William E. Emery, a slew of information became uncovered on the personal life of Francis and Florence. The two were secretly married under false names of Fred Graye and Florence Baker in Brooklyn on July 15th, 1895, two months before their public wedding. On February 11th, 1896, Florence gave birth to a son at a private hospital in Washington, D.C. registered as Mr. and Mrs. Francis Graye, as it had not quite been five months since they were publicly wed. The *New York Herald Tribune* writes,

Sought to Conceal Secret Marriage". *New York Herald Tribune (1926-1962)*, August 29, 1931, 4.

³³ Georger – Emery, "Yesterday's Weddings," *New York Times (1857-1922)*, September 26, 1895, 8.

³⁴ "11 Claim \$325,000 As Long-Lost Heir.: Newark Court Seeks To Decide Which, If Any, Is Grandchild Of Late W.E. Emery. One Petitioner Is A Girl But Missing Child Of Testator's Daughter Is Reported To Have Been A Boy. Mother Feared Being Disinherited. Learned He Was Adopted." *New York Times (1923-)*, October 28, 1930, 11.

³⁵ "Deaths: Francis Georger," *The New York Herald, New York Tribune (1924-1926)*, January 13, 1926, 27.

³⁶ "Deaths: Cards of Thanks in Memoriam Unueilings." *New York Times (1923-)*, November 07, 1937, 51.

“When Mrs. Georger was about to become a mother, her husband persuaded her to remain silent. He reminded her that talk would involve the revelation of their marriage under assumed names, and might end with her father disinheriting her. Georger had his eyes on the millions, as his father-in-law had only one other child, May Emery.”³⁷

The child was supposedly given to Sophie Landgraf to be put up for adoption, with instructions to never let the child know his own name.³⁸

Twelve claimants stepped forward as the “infant Georger” in the year of 1930. As each went to court in attempts to prove their relation, two went as far as to dislocate their thumbs to prove a relation to the testified fact of Francis Georger’s double-jointed gene.³⁹ In the end, the court was unable to find enough proof that any of the claimants were the unknown child. The sum was distributed as a trust to a cousin, Vivien E. Cornelius.⁴⁰ The identity of the child conceived out of the official wedlock of Francis Georger and Florence Emery has yet to be uncovered. The search for if or with who the Georger family legacy continues today. Whether the three empty catacombs in the Georger mausoleum may ever be someone’s final resting place remains unknown.

³⁷ Special to the, H. T., “Last of Emery Claimants Lose \$325,000 Fight”.

³⁸ Special to the, H. T., “Last of Emery Claimants Lose \$325,000 Fight”.

³⁹ "Dislocates Thumb To Prove He Is Heir: Claimant To \$350,000 Of Emery Fortune Exhibits His Inherited Characteristic In Court. Physicians Support Him Witnesses Declare Daughter Of Flemington Man Married Into Double-Jointed Family," *New York Times (1923-)*, October 29, 1930, 20.

⁴⁰ Special to the, H. T., “Last of Emery Claimants Lose \$325,000 Fight”.

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