

RESTORATION

BY KATHLEEN LANDIS



BEFORE

AFTER



Mediterranean Revival

In 1920, Dr. Hutchinson Yerkes was laid to rest in a small, stuccoed mausoleum in the lush garden surroundings of Doylestown Cemetery in Bucks County, Pa. His wife, Elizabeth, was entombed beside him nine years later. In the ensuing 90 years, the rare Mediterranean Revival-style building, similar in architectural style to the nearby home of renowned writer and world adventurer W. Edgar Geil, also buried in Doylestown Cemetery, had suffered the ravages of age, weather and neglect.

“In the 1920s, the custom was that families would maintain the grave plots, which included any structures on or around the graves,” said cemetery Superintendent Jim Althouse. “But in 90 years, families disappear, or, as in the case of this couple, there aren’t any descendants.” Althouse said that the cemetery staff had kept the building painted every 10 years or so until it recently got to the point where it needed “serious attention.” There were cracks and fissures on all of the walls, the surface had begun to crumble and fall off around the fascia, some of the detail was badly deteriorated and some of the glazed, red clay roof tiles had become cracked and broken from years of water seeping under them and constantly freezing and thawing.

The cemetery hired MFL Masonry Restoration of Doylestown to handle the project. MFL began with the delicate job of grinding out the areas of the decaying concrete to rough the surface before applying a bonding agent, installing mechanical fasteners and stainless steel wire where the deterioration was especially bad, rebuilding the damaged or missing concrete surface, then finally finishing the entire structure with a protective elastomeric coating to replicate the



original concrete stucco in color and finish.

MFL owner Mike Leibensperger said, "In old concrete like this the mix is inconsistent and the aggregate unevenly distributed, leading to the breakdown of the material in some locations." MFL hired local clay tile artisan Katia McGurk to repair or replicate the broken or missing roof tiles. The installation of the new handmade tiles is a challenge, as they are laid directly on top of the mausoleum's concrete roof – an atypical construction for a roof. A new copper drip cap will keep the moisture from seeping back up under the roof's edge.

"The best thing you can do for masonry is keep water off or away from the building," said Leibensperger, who began his love of architectural masonry restoration more than a quarter of a century ago when he was

a mason on a crew restoring the stone steeple of St. Francis Xavier Church in Philadelphia.

"Our motto is, 'Maintaining the integrity of historic masonry.' We only fix what needs to be fixed, using materials as close as possible to the original, and leave the rest of it alone," Leibensperger said.

The restoration of a private mausoleum of this sort is unusual for the cemetery. "If a monument, marker, other grave structure or ornamentation is not made of granite or marble, we don't consider it a permanent fixture, and when it breaks down we remove it," Althouse said. "But in this case, we considered the structural integrity of the building, its unusual architectural style and its importance to the landscape of the cemetery, and we decided to preserve it."

Mediterranean Revival, sometimes mistakenly misrepresented as Spanish

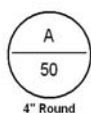
Revival but having its own distinct features, was an eclectic design style movement first introduced in the United States around the turn of the 19th century. Rare in Pennsylvania, especially as cemetery architecture, it was predominately popular in the 1920s and '30s in Florida and California. It is generally characterized by stuccoed wall surfaces, flat or low-pitched terra cotta tiled roofs, scrolled or tile-capped parapet walls, arches and articulated door surrounds. Feature detailing is occasionally executed in a keystone.

According to Althouse, "It's a great improvement over what it was, and it looks better than it ever has. Hopefully, it will be here for another hundred years." Althouse said the restoration cost about \$2,000. The 33-acre garden cemetery, founded in 1850, is a private, nondenominational, nonprofit cemetery. •

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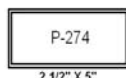
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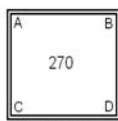
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