

The mausoleum was built by Coddington and Mary Williams Billings to house the remains of their son, Coddington Billings, Jr. "Coddie" was born in Stonington, raised in Chicago, graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic, and in 1877 with the help of his maternal grandfather, C.P. Williams, became a partner in a banking venture in Independence, Kansas. About that time the young man began to display symptoms of tuberculosis. The disease quickly progressed and his worried parents moved with him to Europe in the fall of 1880 searching for milder climates in an effort to restore his health. Unfortunately, Coddie's condition worsened and he died in Paris in November 1881 at age 24.

In the fall of 1882, Coddington and Mary began to search for a resting place for their son's remains. They were drawn to the cemetery in Stonington that their family had helped to create. The pre-eminent firm of J. & R. Lamb was engaged to create a suitable monument. Lamb's own architect, Manly N. Cutter, was commissioned to design a mausoleum. Smith Granite Company of Westerly supplied the stone. The once magnificent stained glass windows and hemisphere ceiling dome that were an integral design feature were also the work of J. & R. Lamb - who at the time rivaled Tiffany as a designer and manufacturer of religious glass.

Coddie was not alone for long. When his mother died in 1887, her remains were placed in the mausoleum. Coddington Billings Sr., re-married and moved to Philadelphia, but upon his death in 1896 he was interred in the mausoleum with his son and first wife. Inside the mausoleum is a sarcophagus where Coddington Billings, Jr. is interred. Two pillars in the wings hold the remains of Mary and Coddington, Sr.

Sadly, years of neglect have resulted in structural deterioration. The lead glass windows are boarded over from the outside but remain largely intact inside. The lead glass dome has been safely lowered to the floor where it sits encased in a wood frame. A 2016 evaluation of the dome showed it to be in good condition but lacking much monetary value owing to a general lack of interest in the market for religious glass plus the easy availability of glass from de-sanctified churches. J. & R. Lamb glass is less valued now than Tiffany glass.

A recent assessment of the mausoleum has stressed the need for significant repairs. Water intrusion from the roof has damaged the interior trusses and weakened exterior support elements. Steps to stabilize the structure and prevent further damage will require funding to hire a structural engineer and a masonry firm knowledgeable in historic preservation.

Attempts were made in the 1990's to contact Billings family members for assistance with a restoration. Little or none was offered. However, the Cemetery Association was able to acquire the mausoleum. This landmark is ours to restore and preserve. Estimates for total restoration range from \$600,000 - \$900,000. Stabilization of the exterior - including an engineering study - would cost less and would serve as the basis for total restoration. A capital campaign dedicated to the effort will be necessary. While some cemeteries have converted their chapels for income producing locations, the Billings Mausoleum is an active tomb and as such will be available only for tours.

