

106 SUCCESS STORY

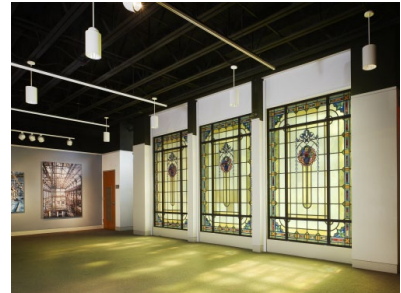
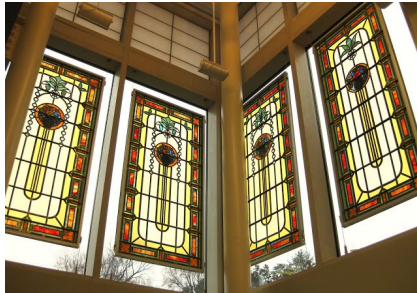
Salvage Leads to Unexpected Discovery of Louis C. Tiffany Windows

Arlington County, Virginia



“By 2000, the government had decided to demolish the condemned building and began to move the remains of the deceased to other burial sites, at which time they gave the county an opportunity to rescue anything they felt was worth salvaging. At this time, amidst great shock and excitement, the windows were discovered. Six of them were damaged beyond repair and were taken apart to help restore the other seven. Today, three of the windows are installed here at the Arlington Arts Center and the other four are installed at the Westover Library.”

— ARLINGTON ARTS CENTER
blog post 2014



THE STORY

In 1924, the U.S. Mausoleum Company started construction on Abbey Mausoleum, intending it to be the most well-appointed mausoleum in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Located near Arlington National Cemetery, this privately owned mausoleum was completed by 1927 in the Neoclassical style using reinforced concrete, granite, and marble. The 50,000-square-foot mausoleum included crypts, casket vaults, and couch vaults. Almost immediately, the U.S. Mausoleum Company encountered financial difficulties which led to a succession of new owners. In 1941, the United States Marine Corps (USMC) moved its headquarters to the Navy Annex Building adjacent to the Abbey Mausoleum. The USMC began acquiring property to the west and northwest eventually encompassing the Abbey Mausoleum in establishing Henderson Hall. During World War II, the USMC denied access to the Abbey Mausoleum for security reasons, and eventually new interments were barred. The last owner of the Abbey Mausoleum declared bankruptcy in 1966, and the mausoleum fell into disuse, disrepair, and was routinely vandalized.

THE PROJECT

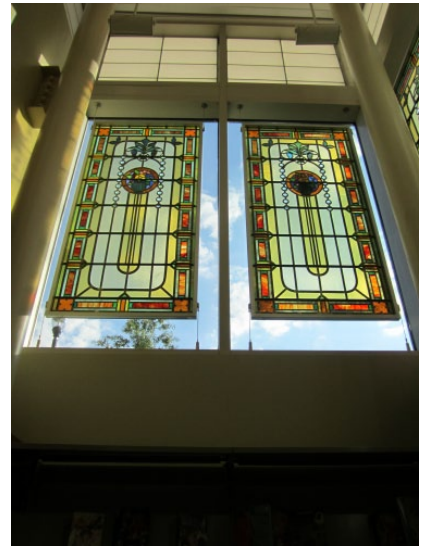
After World War II, the USMC began to petition Congress for the funds necessary to purchase the property of the Abbey Mausoleum. In 1995, it was finally granted the funds. The reasons for purchasing the property did not include using or maintaining the mausoleum, and the USMC started planning for the disinterment of remaining individuals and the demolition of the mausoleum.

THE 106 PROCESS

The USMC, the federal agency carrying out this project, was responsible for conducting the Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires that federal agencies identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the outcome of the property when adverse effects are likely to ensue.

Photos: Above, skylight restored and installed in the lobby of the Fairlington Community Center, Right, stained glass reinstalled (photos courtesy Arlington County government)

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Photos: Above, looking north at the front of Abbey Mausoleum at the corner of Hobson Drive and Military Road in Arlington County, Virginia; Right, stained glass reinstalled and working to restore the windows (photos courtesy Arlington County government)

Initiating the Section 106 process, the USMC found the mausoleum to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Alternatives to demolition were limited since the USMC had no use for a mausoleum. Arlington National Cemetery would not accept responsibility for it, and reuse options were constrained due to the facility's design as a mausoleum. In consultation with the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, it was agreed that the USMC would demolish the mausoleum. To offset the loss, the USMC would document the mausoleum using Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscape Survey standards, and architectural fragments and stained glass windows would be salvaged and made available to interested parties. The final Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was executed in 1997.

THE SUCCESS

The salvage of architectural materials during demolition too often results in artifacts forgotten and deteriorating in a storage facility. In the case of the demolition of Abbey Mausoleum, the USMC began to identify those parts of the facility that would be salvaged in accordance with the MOA and even identified a partner, Arlington County, Virginia. While not originally a part of the consultation, the county worked with the USMC starting in 2000 to identify 13 stained glass windows and exterior architectural features to be salvaged. In 2001, the USMC had completed the salvage of these items and provided them to the county at no cost. The county subsequently undertook the restoration of the stained glass windows at its own expense in 2004 and discovered a signature pane on one of the windows that read "Louis C. Tiffany, NY." Based upon consultations with experts and examples of Tiffany's signature from the same time period, the county determined that the windows were, in fact, all produced by the famed studios of Louis Comfort Tiffany. Since 2004, the restored windows have been installed at the Arlington Art Center and the Westover Public Library for the public to enjoy. In the end, the loss of the little-appreciated and publicly inaccessible Abbey Mausoleum yielded an unknown treasure that now is being shared with the community at large.



Consulting Parties:

United States Marine Corps

ACHP

Virginia State Historic Preservation
Officer

For more about Section
106 and the ACHP go
to www.achp.gov

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