

PROVIDENCE ATHENAEUM – Wheaton College student essay, 2016.

Unknown artist, *Temple of Castor & Pollux* (architectural model). Marble. Donated by Dr. Alexis Caswell in 1861.

The Athenaeum's marble replica of the Roman *Temple of Castor & Pollux* sits well with the other two architectural models that sit adjacent to the small but detailed replica. While small in size (the model stands at around 25 centimeters tall) for an architectural model, the work is quite large. The marble it is carved out of is the same variety of which the actual temple is made of in the Roman Forum, which lends to its authenticity and has yellowed over the years as the temple would have.

The model is in excellent condition save some mild damage to the left side of the base where a chip and a series of abrasions are visible. There is some dust and spots along the base that do little more than hint at the age of the work. The yellowing color and mild wear only adds to the accuracy of the replica in its depiction of the original temple ruins. The three central columns, a small piece of the entablature and the podium are all that remain of the temple. The fluted corinthian columns with their intricate carvings are the feature which stands out the most but the entablature above them shows layers of pattern and carving that would have been crucial to the building's overall aesthetic and is not to go unnoticed.

In Greek and Roman mythology, Castor and Pollux were twin brothers, Castor being the mortal son of a Spartan king and Pollux being the divine son of Jupiter. Both brothers have a strong affiliation with cavalry. The original *Temple of Castor & Pollux* was dedicated to a Roman general after a great victory against the Latins in the fifth-century BCE. During the battle, two

men atop white horses were said to have been seen guiding the Romans to victory, hence the dedication of the building to the twins best associated with cavalry. Centuries later, in the devastating fire of the first-century BCE, Augustus rebuilt the temple and in doing so, sought to associate his two sons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar with Castor and Pollux, the original heroes of the temple. Tragically, both of Augustus' children passed before the construction had been completed so when Tiberius became ruler, he not only completed the temple, but he reassociated the mythological twins with himself and his brother Drusus.[1] The temple gradually turned to ruin after the fourth-century CE and today, three columns stand solemnly evoking images of the grandeur it once possessed.

The Athenaeum's marble models of the *Temple of Castor & Pollux* speak to the importance of the study of the Classical Antiquity, mythology, and architecture. While there is no date of creation for any of these architectural models, we must assume they were created in the first half of the nineteenth-century as they were donated by Dr. Alexis Caswell in 1861. Caswell served as the president of Brown from 1868-1872. He was also a director of the Athenaeum for eight years and a vice president for eight more. Architecture was one of his greatest passions and was a primary reason for his presidency at Brown, as the faculty hoped that his term would inspire "correct architectural taste among us." [2] This piece fits marvelously in the Athenaeum's collection of antiquities and the pervading neoclassical style of the library.

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[1]CHAMPLIN, EDWARD. 2011. "Tiberius and the Heavenly Twins". *The Journal of Roman Studies* 101. [Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, Cambridge University Press]: 73–99. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41724873>.

[2]Jane Lancaster, *Inquire Within: A Social History of the Providence Athenaeum since 1753* (Providence: The Providence Athenaeum, 2003), 125

[3]*Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Providence Athenaeum to the Corporation*, submitted September 23, 1861. 14.