

**Charles Bathgate Beck's
Mausoleum Research**

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Studio I: Historic Preservation

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Charles Bathgate - Beck Mausoleum

The Charles Bathgate Beck Mausoleum is located in Lot 9504–9523 in the Oak Hill Plot at Woodlawn Cemetery. This beautiful and complex structure has stood for over 100 years, hiding within its thick and heavy walls the secrets and stories of the wealthy Bathgate family. I believe that we, as human beings, experience two deaths: the first is physical (when our body disconnects from our soul) and the second is when we are completely forgotten. This report is a way to honor and remember Charles, who was a lawyer and, after his death, donated a large part of his fortune to charity and to the Law School at Columbia University. It also explores his family's history and influence in the Bronx, and how that history is reflected in both the design and the deterioration of the mausoleum that holds the family. I want to show how the architecture stands not only as a monument to the past, but also as a reminder of how history is preserved.



Front Facade of Mausoleum - Photo by author. (1.0)

Charles Bathgate Beck (1854–1893) was a prominent lawyer who lived in West Farms, in the Bronx. He was the primary heir of the Bathgate family and the last family member to be interred in the burial chamber. To better understand the relationships among the members of the Bathgate family, the Diagram 1.1 provides a visual representation. Therefore, to appreciate the trajectory of Charles’s life, it is essential to trace the roots of his family background. Beginning with Charles Bathgate Sr. and Margaret Bathgate who according to an 1891 *New York Times* article were “(...) The parents of the present generation of Bathgates of whom Mrs. Beck is the last survivor of worthy Scotch people, Charles Bathgate and his wife Mary, who came to this country early in the present century and became tenants of Gouverneur Morris, on his estate in West Farms(...)”.¹We could assume from this article that this family might have already a fortune

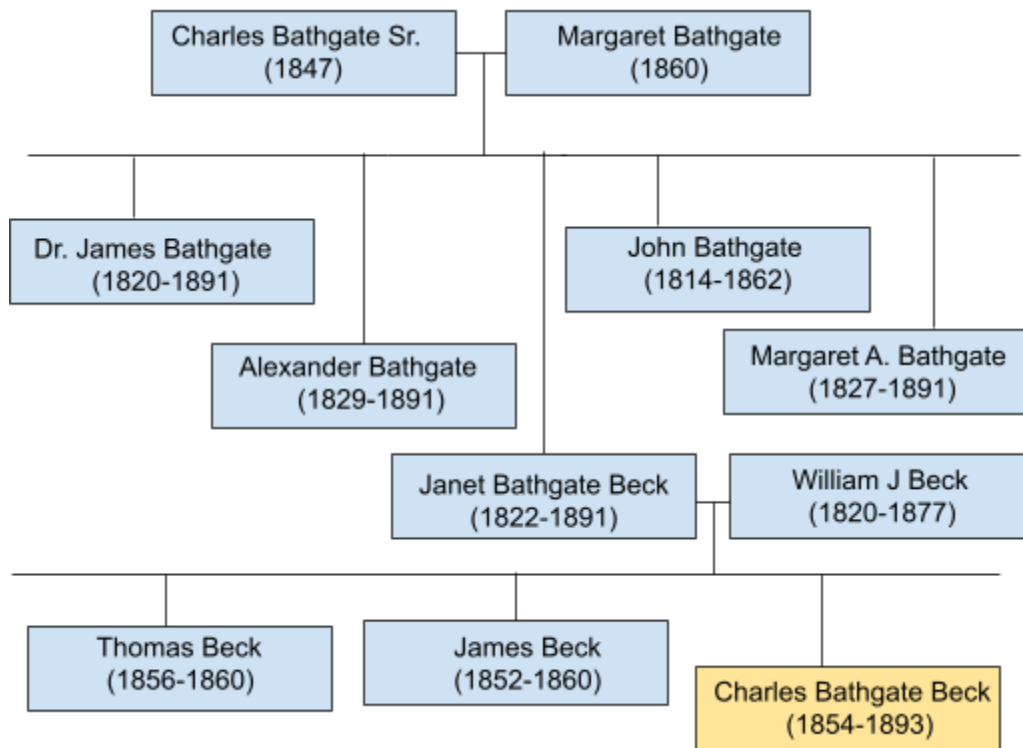


Diagram 1.1 (The family buried in Charles Bathgate Beck’s Mausoleum)

¹ “Ravaged by Pneumonia: Three of the Bathgate Family Die Within Three Weeks. Funeral of Dr. James and His Brother Alexander -- a Sister Died Early in March and Another Is Not Expected to Live.” *New York Times*, March 30, 1891.

before coming to the states and that by having a connection/relationship with Gouverneur Morris (one of the Founding Fathers), they were already situated in a position of privilege to acquire influence.

However, when it comes to privilege the member who stands out the most was the farmer Alexander Bathgate. According to the Lehman College Art Gallery, along with his parents (Charles Sr. and Mary) Alexander came from Scotland and eventually he started working in the land of the Morris estate which gave him the chance to later buy 140 acres.² He bought the land that today is known as Crotona Park which is located between Third and Arthur Avenues on the west and east. This place was known as the Bathgate Woods for its incredible views and it was permitted to picnic here by the public.³ However, later on, in 1888, Alexander gave it to the City of New York as part of a consolidation of the Bronx Park System, and even the first plan was named it “The Bathgates”, however due to a dispute with the family, the engineer to name it Crotona, after “Croton”.⁴ Besides real estate, he (Alexander) also “(...) had been a farmer nearly all his life, devoting himself almost entirely to carrying on the scientific breeding of horses and cattle, which his father and his brother Charles had been successful before him.”⁵ (The Charles mentioned in the previous sentence was another Alexander’s brother, but he is not buried in the family’s Mausoleum). With all the wealth that this family had, it is very interesting how they were passionate about farming, and perhaps that was another way to make profit besides buying and selling land. Unfortunately in 1891, Alexander along with his 3 siblings including Janet

² “Lehman College Art Gallery.” Accessed September 30, 2025.
<https://www.lehman.edu/vpadvance/artgallery/publicart/neighborhoods/Bathgate.html>.

³ “Crotona Park Highlights - Bathgate Playground : NYC Parks.” Accessed September 30, 2025.
<https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/crotona-park/highlights/11151>.

⁴ “Crotona Park Highlights - Bathgate Playground : NYC Parks.” Accessed September 30, 2025.
<https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/crotona-park/highlights/11151>.

⁵ “Ravaged by Pneumonia: Three of the Bathgate Family Die Within Three Weeks. Funeral of Dr. James and His Brother Alexander -- a Sister Died Early in March and Another Is Not Expected to Live.” *New York Times*, March 30, 1891.

(Charles's mom) died of pneumonia. "The heir to the Bathgate estate was Charles Bathgate Beck, the son of Mrs. Beck and a young lawyer."⁶

Charles inherited land and fortune mostly from Janet Beck (his mother) and Alexander Bathgate (his uncle). According to the *New York Times*, Alexander was considered a bachelor until his housekeeper named Delia Malloy claimed to be his wife and the mom of his two children after his death. Therefore, Charles Bathgate Beck was sued for not sharing the money with them, but the lawsuit was denied.⁷ Notably, there is not enough record of Charles Bathgate's life; the primary available information derives from the *New York Times*, particularly concerning his will and charitable donations. He was well known as a big fan of breeding horses and horse races. Sadly, he passed away at a young age in 1893 due to "(...) a complication resulting from the grip, which he had in April, and his symptoms were much like those of his relatives(..)".⁸ Bathgate's estate was estimated at around \$6,000,000, and after his death he wanted a part of the estate to be equally divided to the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Hospital, the Society for the Prevention of Crime and the New York Hospital.⁹ On top of that, he made donations to charity; he gave money to erect a church in memory of his mother Janet Bathgate; and he also donated to Columbia around \$10,000 of which \$2,000 is to be for free scholarships and the remain is to be invested, the

⁶ "Ravaged by Pneumonia: Three of the Bathgate Family Die Within Three Weeks. Funeral of Dr. James and His Brother Alexander -- a Sister Died Early in March and Another Is Not Expected to Live." *New York Times*, March 30, 1891.

⁷ "Charles Bathgate Beck's Millions.: Suit Brought to Have the Court Declare His Will Valid." *New York Times*, October 8, 1894.

⁸ "Death of Charles W. Bathgate.: He Was Well Known by Horsemen Here and in Europe." *New York Times*, May 18, 1891.

⁹ "Millions Given to Charity.: Charles Bathgate Beck's Fortune Left for the Public Benefit." *New York Times*, October 21, 1893.

income being used for an annual prize to be known as the “Charles B. Beck Prize”.¹⁰ In order to do so, the Farmers Loan and Trust Company (Today Citibank) was the main executor.

A few years later after Charles Bathgate’s death, the mausoleum was completed according to his will in 1898 and some of his late family members were relocated here (exactly from where was not found). “It looks like the fabricator was a firm called Casey and Sherwood, who were based out of Groton, Connecticut. According to records the lot itself was purchased for \$ 18,000 in 1898.”¹¹

This majestic mausoleum stands out among its neighboring structures due to the variety of forms that can be appreciated both from the exterior and upon entering the interior. The main material that we can observe from outside is granite, with bronze doors and exterior windows grills.



Perspective view of Mausoleum to see materials - Photo by the author (1.2)

¹⁰ “Millions Given to Charity.: Charles Bathgate Beck’s Fortune Left for the Public Benefit.” *New York Times*, October 21, 1893.

¹¹ *Email sent by Jesse Ludington from Woodlawn Cemetery, September 30th, 2025*



Bronze Door - Photo by the author (1.3)



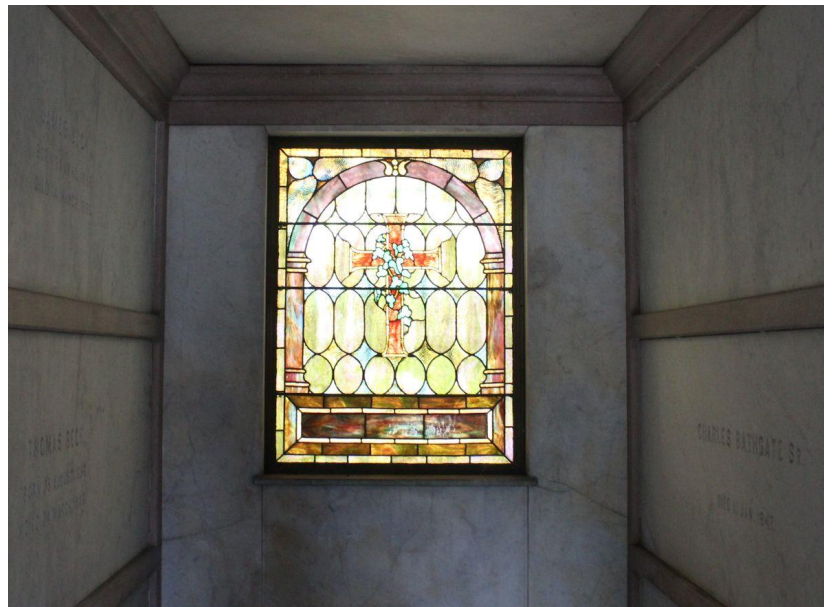
Outside of window decoration - Photo by the author (1.4)

Upon entering the mausoleum, one immediately notices the intricately detailed tile mosaics on the walls, arranged in circular patterns and incorporating two Christian symbols (Photo 1.8):

From left to right, the first symbol is the Chi-Rho, a monogram representing Christ formed from the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ. The second symbol combines Alpha and Omega, representing God's eternal and all-encompassing nature as the beginning and the end of everything. The floor is made of stone tiles, and the windows appear to be Tiffany-style. The entrance window features a white lily, symbolizing purity and innocence, while the rear window displays a cross. These Christian symbols reflect the family's Protestant faith. Additionally, each interior opening is framed with marble, adding to the monument's elegance and refinement.



Stained Glass Tiffany Style Window with a Cross in the flower next to entrance - Photo by the author (1.5)



Stained Glass Tiffany Style Window with the back - Photo by the author (1.6)



Tile Mosaics on the wall - Photo by the author (1.7)



Tile Mosaics and symbols - Photo by the author (1.8)



Each interior opening is framed with marble - Photo by the author (1.9)

The architectural style chosen to honor Beck's legacy appears to be a variation of a Roman round temple. The combination of the dome, columns, and the grand entrance of the building's first space evokes the feeling of a Renaissance tempietto. At the same time, elements of Art Nouveau are still visible in the shapes of the stained glass windows and the decorative patterns on the doors and window grills. Additionally, the Doric columns reflect a distinctly Greek influence.. In addition, the mausoleum presents a large, symmetrical design that, from the outside, gives the impression of a single monumental structure uniting two distinct parts. This effect becomes especially evident when comparing the form of the main entrance with that of the rear façade, where the contrast in design is striking. Inside, this duality is also apparent: visitors first encounter a majestic, colorful entrance space, which then transitions into a darker, more somber area where the catacombs are located.



Back area where the catacombs are located - Photo by the author (2.0)



Somber feeling of the back area - Photo by the author (2.1)

I also found it noteworthy that the mausoleum reveals a clever relationship between its exterior and interior forms. From the outside, the first section appears pentagonal, while from within it transforms into a circular space, where the architects incorporated two small niches (*Photo 1.9*). These niches may have been intended to hold statues or perhaps urns, allowing for additional family members to be interred, though potentially at the expense of the overall elegance of the design.

However, the key question regarding the design is: was the inclusion of two very different buildings an intentional choice? There are no records to confirm this, but if one were to speculate based on common sense, it seems unlikely that a wealthy family capable of commissioning a meticulously detailed, Roman-inspired mausoleum would simply add a plain, box-like structure at the end, especially when there is no natural visual transition between the two buildings. The designs do not harmonize seamlessly, which suggests that one space may have been constructed before the other. However, this remains purely speculative.

Even though it is a magnificent work of architecture, time spares nothing. The deterioration is evident in certain corners of the structure, where natural forces such as water and other environmental factors have taken hold, accelerating the deterioration of the materials. For example, in the *Photo (1.0)* we can see an evident deterioration on the stone on the steps and prominent area next to them. I assume that the dark area is biological growth that was there once but it was washed out by the water. We can see this too in some areas of the roof. Also, in *Photo (2.2)* we can appreciate the point explained much closer. Here we can observe that there is a gap in the joints where the mortar was eroded, which could be a problem allowing grass to



grow in the gap. Additionally in the *Photo (1.3) and (1.4)*, we can notice very easily the corrosion of the bronze in both the window and door, where there is a formation of patina in some spots. Then in the *Photos (1.5), (1.6), (1.7), and (1.8)* we see some cracking coming either from the ceiling, the window and the door frames. This does not necessarily mean there is structural damage, but there is a decay of the material that needs to be taken care of. But especially in *Photo (1.8)*, assuming that the

Biological growth on stone and eroded mortar in joints -

Photo by the author (2.2)

ceiling is marble, we can see some brown stains that could be damage caused by moisture. And the last deterioration that it is noticed was that the door has a missing part where without it, people can see inside the mausoleum without opening it. That missing part is actually inside and needs to be fixed.



Missing part of the door, where you can see inside - Photo by the author (2.3)

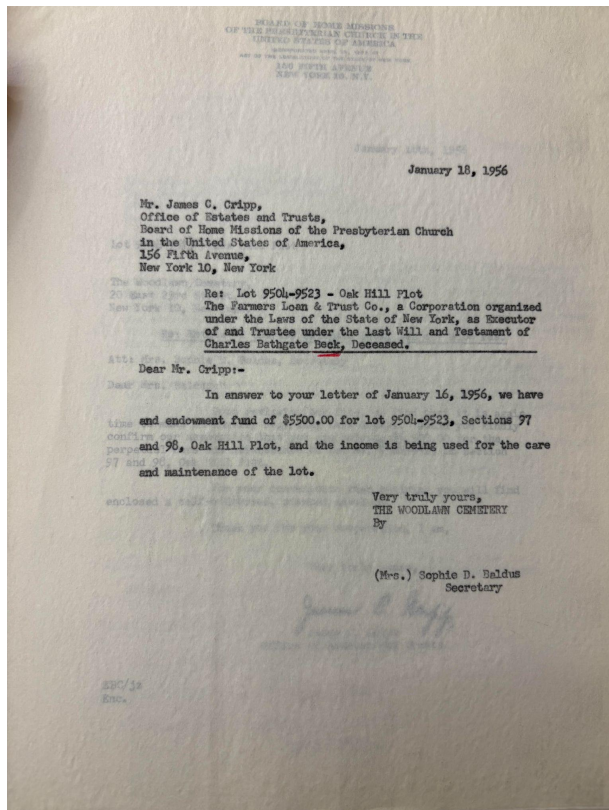


The missing part is leaning in the niche inside - Photo by the author (2.4)

This mausoleum, built over a century ago, has withstood the passage of time remarkably well and does not appear to be in an advanced state of deterioration. Unfortunately, I was not able to access the roof to examine it for further signs of decay. Overall, however, the structure remains in good condition, though it would certainly benefit from a thorough cleaning, as a noticeable layer of dust has accumulated. Also, it is being constantly maintained for a for few

decades after its construction because there is evidence of the Farmer Loans and Trust Company (the executor of Charles's will) mentioned in the letters from Woodlawn in regards to the perpetuance care paying a total of \$5,500. *Photo (2.5)*.¹²

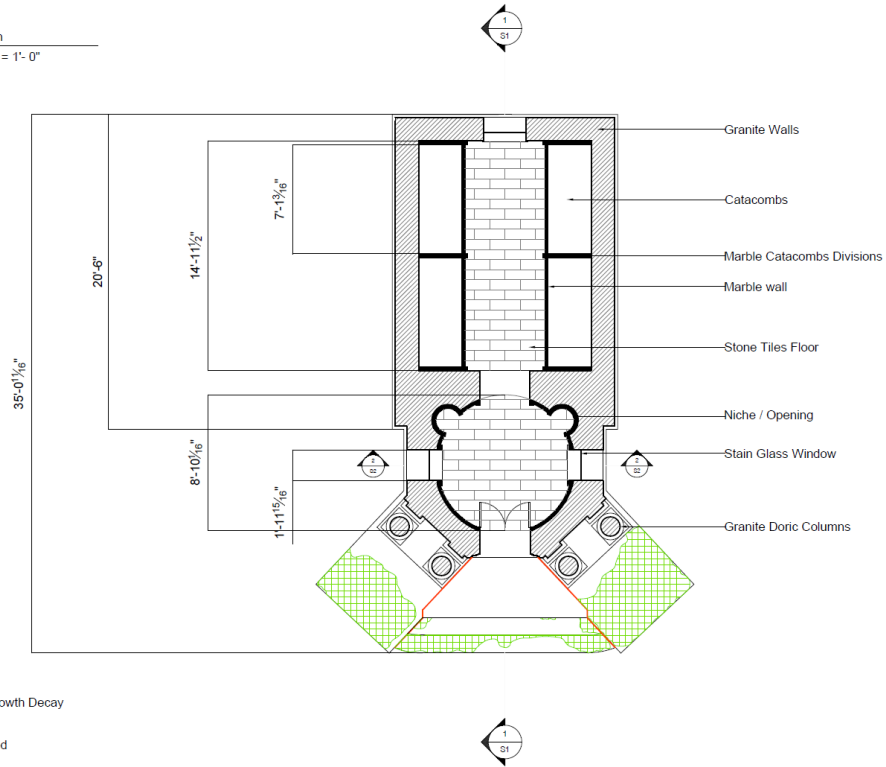
To further support these observations, I present architectural drawings that reveal additional details of the mausoleum design, offering a more comprehensive understanding of its structure and features:



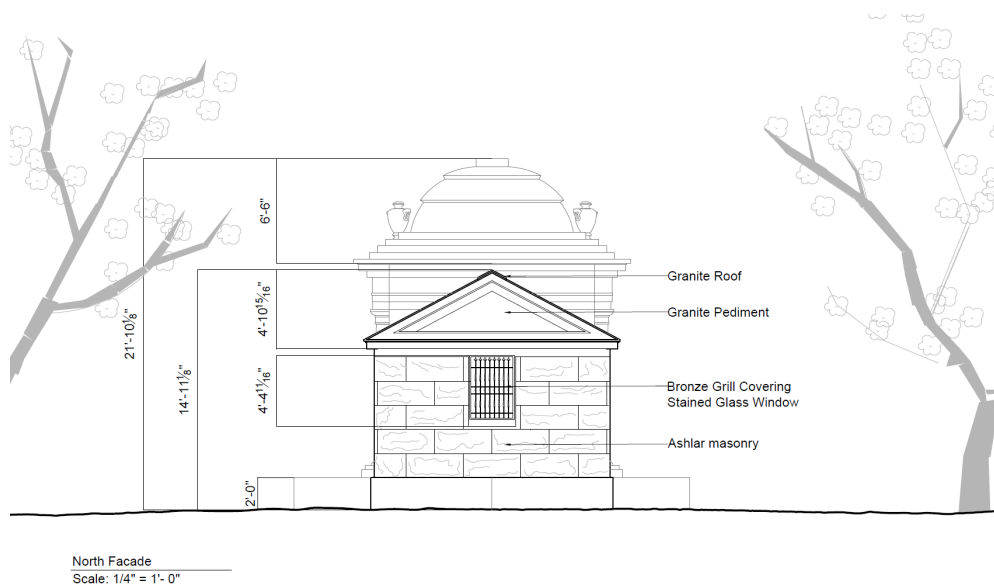
Letter from Woodlawn about the Perpetual Care
- Avery Archives (2.5)

¹² *Bathgate Beck, Charles*, Woodlawn Cemetery Archive, Avery Architecture Library Columbia University.

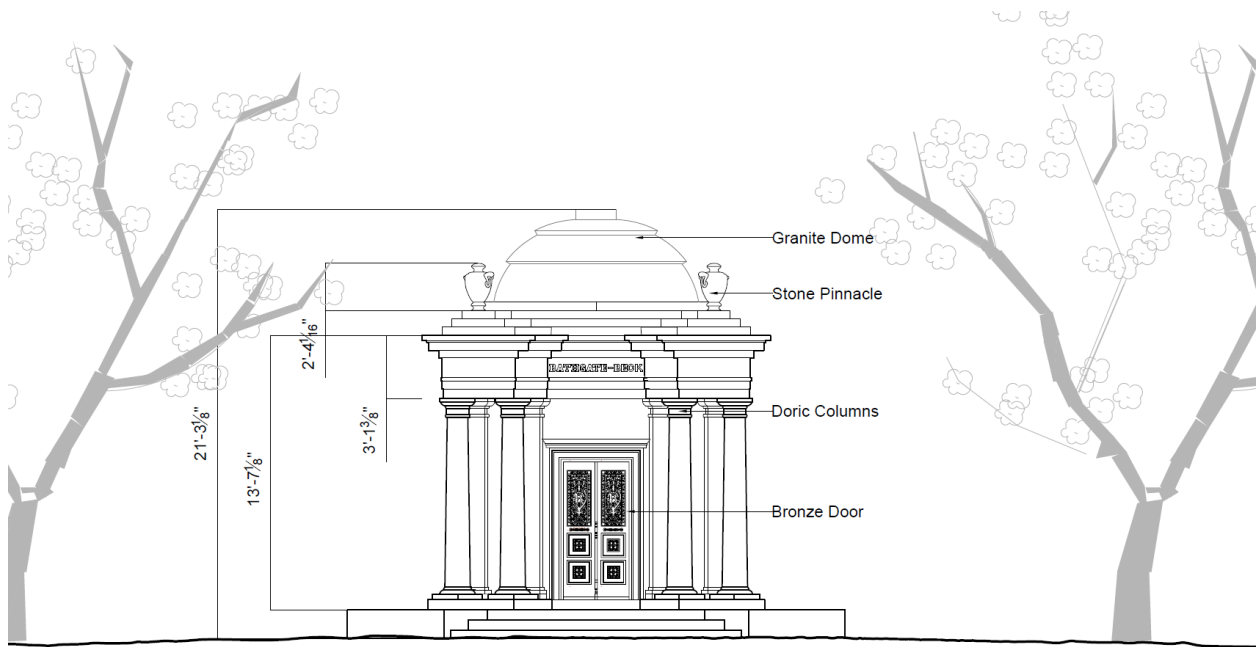
Floor Plan
Scale: $\frac{3}{16}" = 1'-0"$



Floor Plan - Drawing by the author

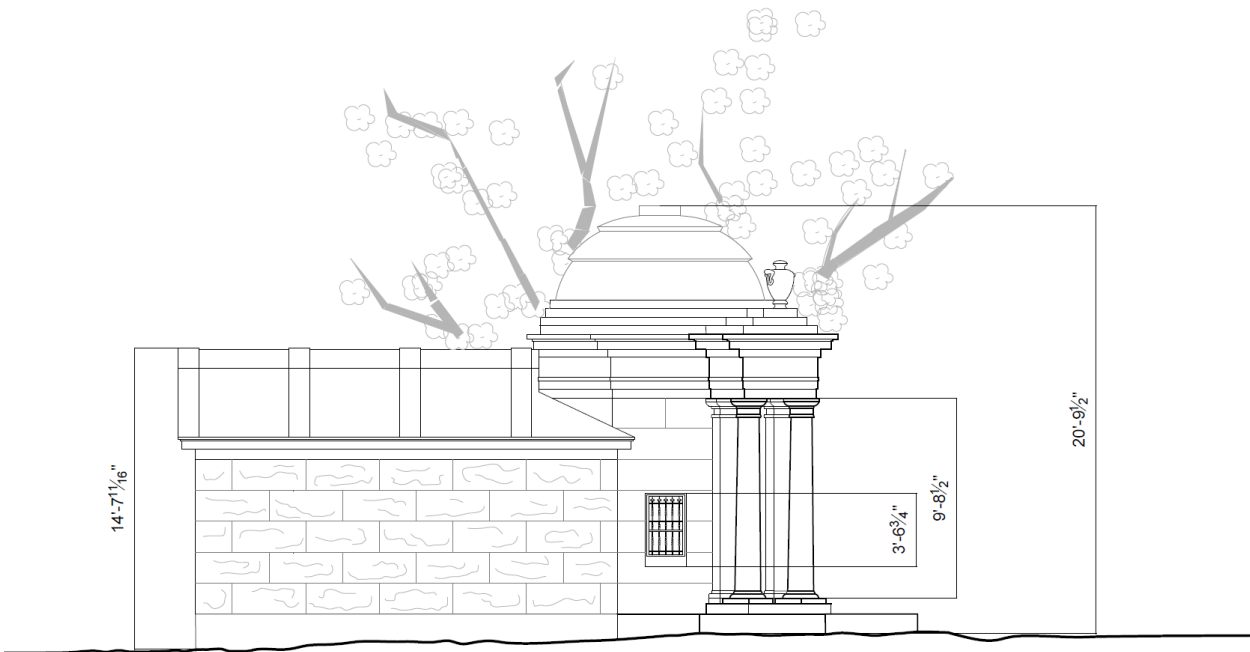


North Facade Elevation - Drawing by the author



South Facade
Scale: 1/4" = 1'- 0"

South Facade Elevation - Drawing by the author



West Facade
Scale: 1/4" = 1'- 0"

Architectural elevation drawing of a building facade. The drawing includes the following dimensions and features:

- Overall height: 20'-9 1/2"
- Height of the main section: 9'-11 3/4"
- Height of the lower section: 3'-6 3/4"
- Height of the rightmost section: 14'-8 7/8"

The facade features a central dome structure supported by four columns. To the right of the columns is a small window with a decorative grille. The building is surrounded by stylized trees and foliage. The drawing is a line art illustration with no shading.

10'-4 $\frac{1}{8}$ "

Assumed the roof is empty inside and we are able to see the joints from inside

Marble Wall

Marble Frame

8'-1 $\frac{3}{4}$ "

2'-4 $\frac{1}{8}$ "

John Hathorne
Born 14 April 1634
Died 24 March 1682

Andrew Davis
Born 14 April 1682
Died 14 January 1822

Charles Hathorne Davis
Born 18 July 1834
Died 11 June 1884

Thomas Davis
Born 23 August 1832
Died 24 January 1882

Robert Hathorne Davis
Born 10 March 1832
Died 4 April 1891

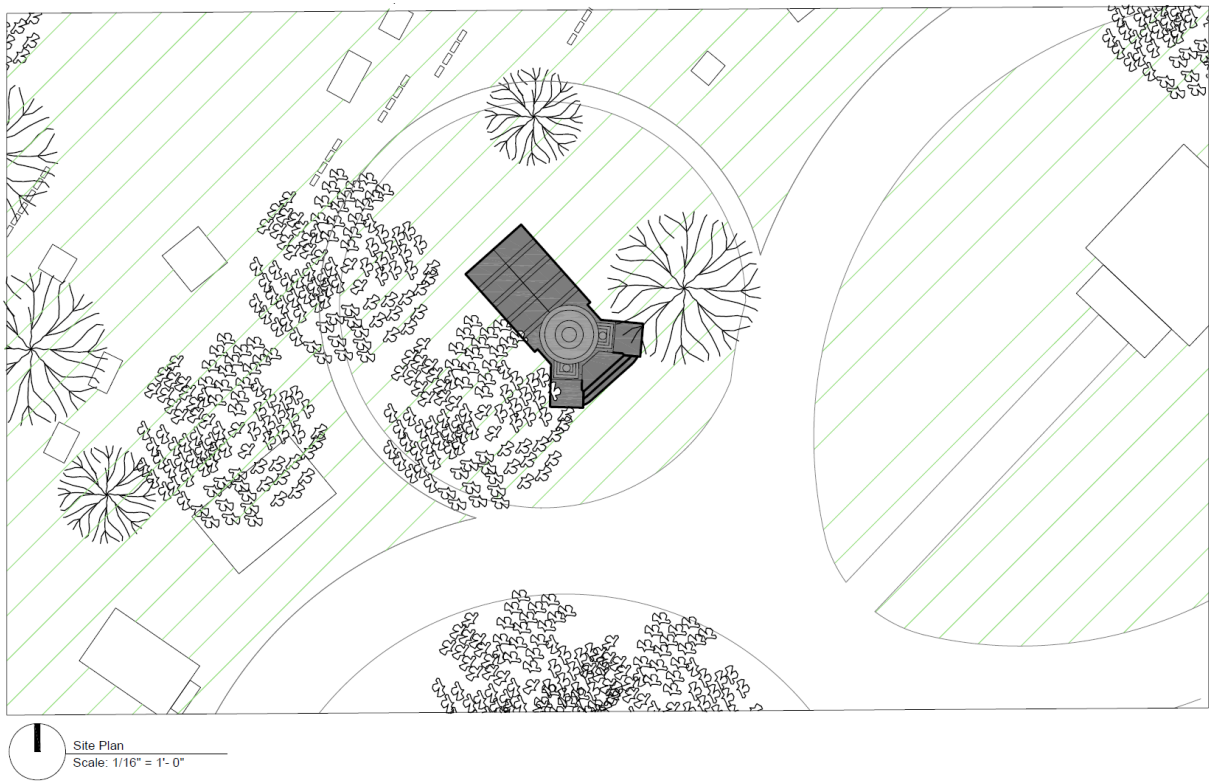
Margaret Ann Hathorne
Born 14 March 1827
Died 4 January 1891

6'-11 1/4"

2'-10 3/4"

 Cracks on wall

Section Cuts - Drawing by the author



Site Plan - Drawing by the author

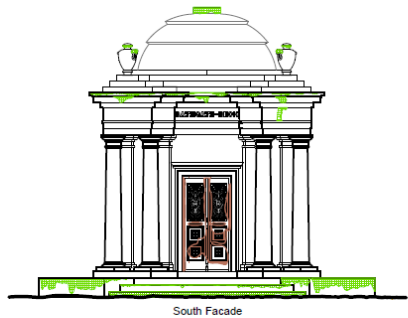
Details
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"



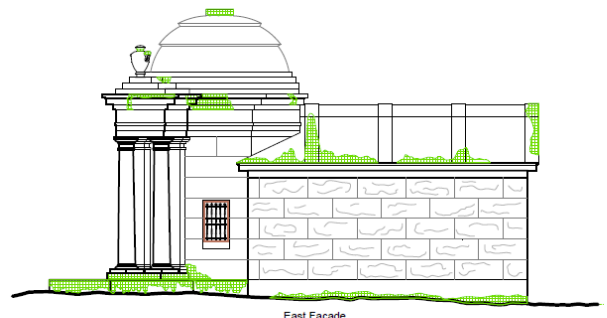
Details - Drawing by the author

Deterioration

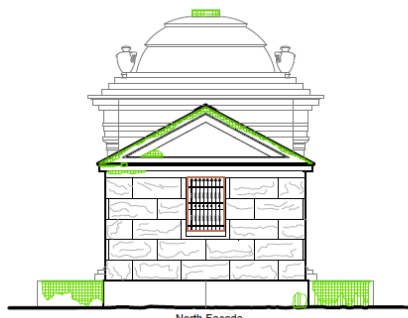
Scale: 1/8" = 1'- 0"



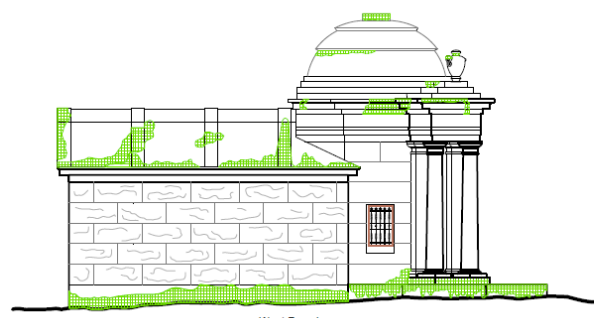
South Facade



East Facade



North Facade



West Facade

 Biological Growth Decay

 Bronze Corrosion

Deterioration - Drawing by the author

In conclusion, this report has connected the story of Charles Bathgate Beck and his family with the mausoleum where they were laid to rest, highlighting the importance of preserving such legacies. Through careful observation of the mausoleum's shapes, scale, and materials, one can sense an air of dignity and prestige. These features suggest that those buried within belonged to a wealthy and prominent family, and that Charles intended the monument to communicate this status to all who passed by. The mausoleum thus serves not only as a place of rest but also as a deliberate statement of the family's social position.

I learned that the study of historic preservation goes beyond the artistic care of buildings; it is about engaging with the stories they embody. Understanding the lives, achievements, and intentions of those commemorated makes the act of preservation meaningful, ensuring that their narratives are not lost to time. In this way, architecture becomes a bridge between life and death—a means by which memory endures, allowing those who have passed to be remembered rather than forgotten. The Bathgates made history, and through the preservation of their mausoleum, their story continues to speak across generations.

Bibliography

1. *Bathgate Beck, Charles*, Woodlawn Cemetery Archive, Avery Architecture Library Columbia University.
2. "Crotona Park Highlights - Bathgate Playground : NYC Parks." Accessed September 30, 2025. <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/crotona-park/highlights/11151>.
3. "Death of Charles W. Bathgate.: He Was Well Known by Horsemen Here and in Europe." *New York Times*, May 18, 1891.
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5. "Millions given to charity".: Charles Bathgate Beck's Fortune Left for the Public Benefit." *New York Times*, October 21, 1893.
6. "Ravaged by Pneumonia: Three of the Bathgate Family Die Within Three Weeks. Funeral of Dr. James and His Brother Alexander -- a Sister Died Early in March and Another Is Not Expected to Live." *New York Times*, March 30, 1891.