

WOODLAWN RESEARCH PROJECT:
GRAVES MAUSOLEUM



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10-03-2025

INTRODUCTION

How we conceive of life, death, and legacy, deeply affects the physical spaces that we design to preserve those who have passed. We can understand what was important to the owners through careful analysis of how they chose to celebrate and mourn those that have passed through aesthetic and

functional choices, and in our case, ascribed value to it through endowment for future preservation. Here we document the Graves Mausoleum which was commissioned by Robert Graves for his wife who passed away in 1909.



Drawings of Nasturtiums in Tiffany Flora, John Loring

“the endless wealth of percept and suggestion... in air and water and earth, in all the vast, teeming bosom of nature”

- Louis C. Tiffany in *the Quest of Beauty*

BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH



Figure 1: Robert Graves (Left), Margaret J. Graves (Middle), Ghislani Durant as cremated in Graves Mausoleum (Right)

Here we aim to introduce the figures commemorated in the Graves Mausoleum. There are three people buried in the mausoleum, Robert Graves, Margaret J. Graves (née Loughman), and Jules Ghislani Durant. Robert Graves was born on July 2nd, 1866 in New York and passed away on November 27th, 1931 by two gunshots through the head. He is buried with his second wife Margaret, who was born June 29, 1844 and died May 30th 1909. A third, non-biologically related person is additionally buried on the site, Jules Ghislani Durant, who was born April 11, 1836 and passes away in September 1908 at the age of 72, although records in the mausoleum note his age of 74. Robert Graves and Margaret Loughman were both buried in the sarcophagi in the middle of the mausoleum, while Jules Ghislani Durant was cremated and buried in the back.

old New York family originally from Ireland that was one of the oldest wallpaper manufacturing companies in the USA (Figure 1). Robert's father, also named Robert Graves, was the founder of The Robert Graves Co., manufacturers of fine wall papers with the factory in South Brooklyn at Third Avenue 34th and 35th street. In Robert Jr.'s adult years he worked as treasurer of the company. His mother Charlotte was of French descent but born in New York, and was the second wife of his father, Robert Graves.¹ On his free time, he was a big fan of yachting. Robert frequently travelled between Europe (UK, Germany, and France) and America, as shown by census documents of arriving passengers and crew lists.² After Margaret's passing in 1909, he remarried Mrs. Kingsley Swan, however they were divorced in 1922.³

Robert came from a socially prominent

Margaret was the widow of Henry B. Plant, the founder of the Southern railroads, steamships,

¹ "Robert Graves," United States Census, 1900, New York, NY, ED 072, Sheet 21.

² National Archives and Records Administration, *Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1897-1957*, Microfilm Serial T715, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004, Record Group 85, Washington, DC.

³ Special to The New York Times, "Trust for Neediest Set Up by Graves: Will of Retired Wall Paper Man Provides \$50,000 for Annual Gift to the Times Fund," *New York Times*, December 11, 1931, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.



Figure 2: Robert Graves Co. Letterhead from Avery Library. Pictured is the Brooklyn factory located at Third Avenue 34th and 35th Street.

and hotels, of which she was estimated to have received around \$8,000,000 after an extensive lawsuit which changed her inheritance from an income of \$30,000 a year to \$8,000,000, and post fees \$6,000,000.⁴ She had been ill for a full year and passed from arterio-sclerosis.⁵ She was also Catholic and gave generously to the church during her life and after her death, although in her will she gave to a number of non-Catholic organizations⁶. After her death, her will stipulated a portion of her estate to charity bequests, mostly to a series of Catholic and non-Catholic institutions in education and healthcare⁷. Robert inherited her fortune which included \$1,000,000 and the house on No. 7 West 51st street with its furnishings, horses, carriages,

and automobiles.⁸

There is a third person in the mausoleum named Jules Ghislani Durant who was a doctor from Paris. He had written papers on different forms of activities from a clinical point of view, an interesting one being on the hygiene of the voice where he documents the physiology and mechanism of tonal sounds from humans as well as the different methods vocalists use to upkeep their voices⁹. Judging by Margaret's connections and philanthropy in healthcare and their close proximity in passing away, we can surmise that there may have been some connection between them through Jules Ghislani's clinical practice.

4 "Mrs. Plant's Will Filed: Leaves \$200,000 to Charitable Institutions, Some Non-Catholic," *Detroit Free Press*, June 4, 1909, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

5 "H. B. Plant's Widow Dead: Married Again and Won Million by Will Contest," *The Sun* (New York), June 1, 1909, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

6 "Obituary," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 31, 1909, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

7 "Mrs. Graves's Will: Bequeaths \$185,000 of \$6,000,000 Estate to Charity," *New-York Tribune*, June 4, 1909, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

8 "Mrs. Graves's Will: Bequeaths \$185,000 of \$6,000,000 Estate to Charity,"

9 "Our Book Column: Ghislani Durant's Hygiene of the Voice," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 15, 1879, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

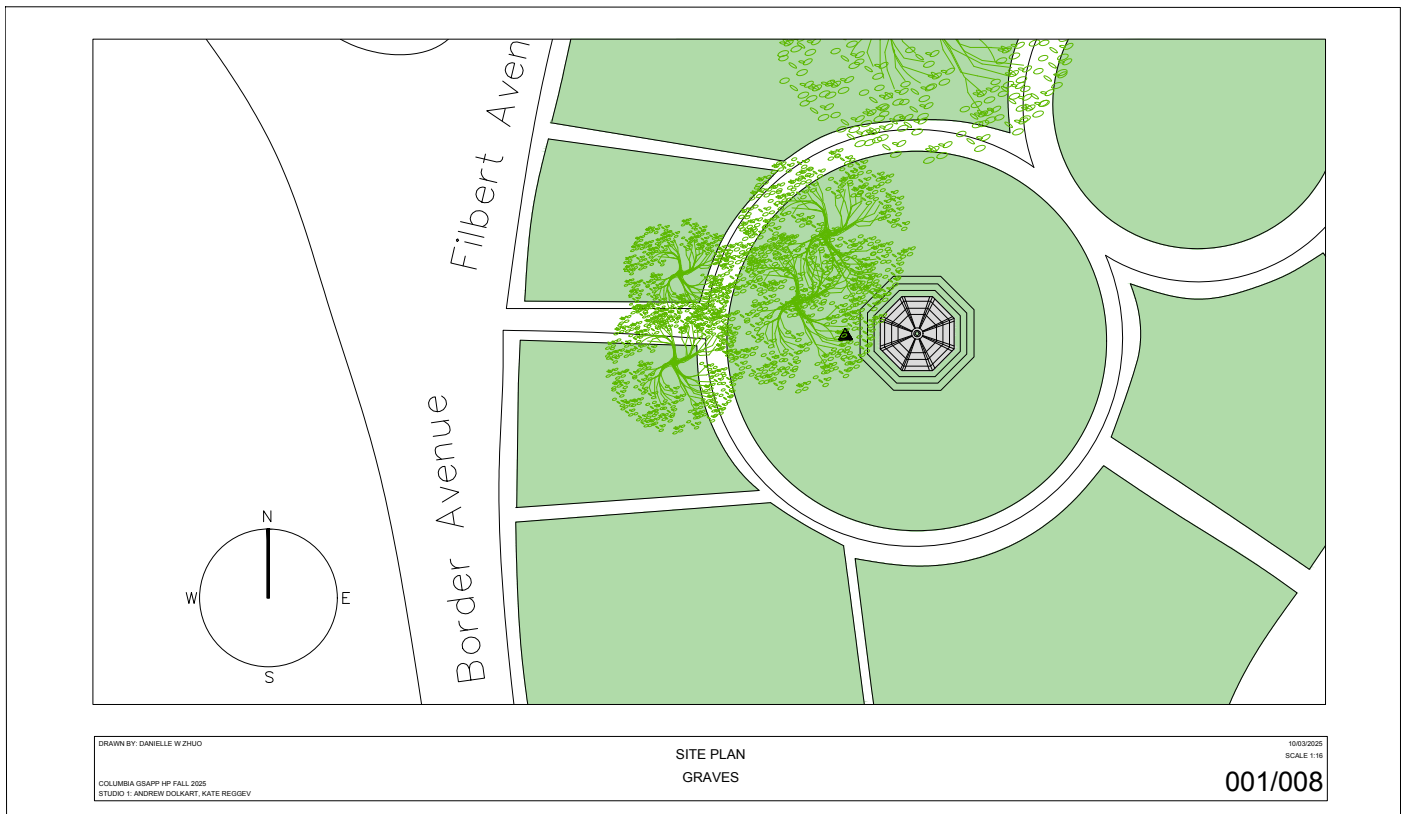


Figure 3: Site Plan of Graves Mausoleum

1/ PLOT

The Graves mausoleum is located in the Parkview plot, section 147, deed 16728. The lot size is 6000 square feet circular in form with a radius of 43.71 feet. The mausoleum itself was placed in the centre on level elevation. The mausoleum's front door looks out onto the west path facing the intersection between Filbert Avenue and Border Avenue. Originally, the plot had multiple plants as shown in Figure 3, however it currently only has a few trees to the northwest corner of the mausoleum.

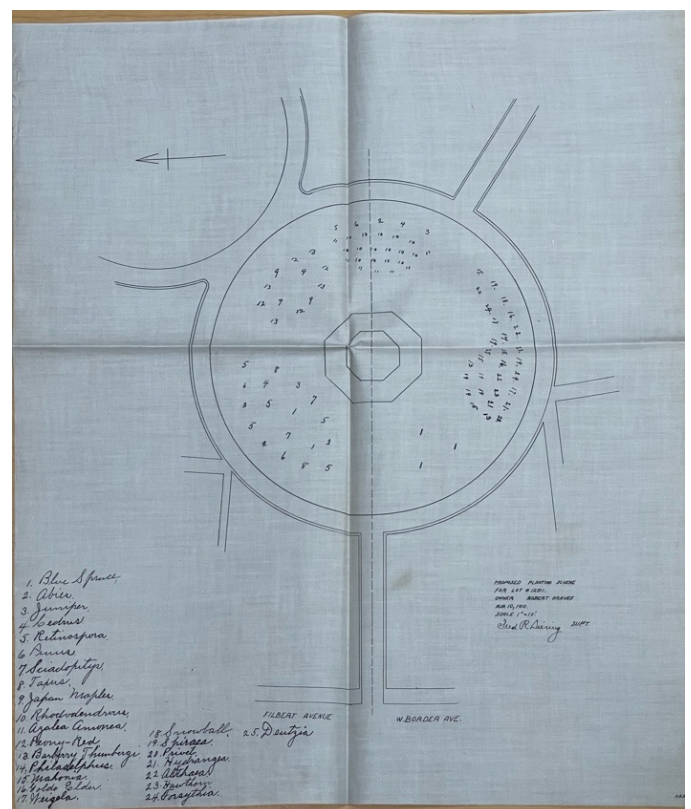


Figure 4: Record of landscaping plan of Graves Mausoleum, including list of all plants

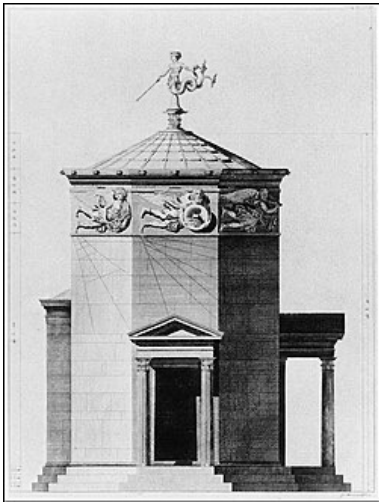


Figure 5: "Drawing of Tower of Winds", Stuart, James, and Nicholas Revett. *The Antiquities of Athens*. London, 1762.



Figure 6: Tower of the Winds, Athens. Photo by George E. Koronaiois.

2/ DESIGN PRECEDENCE

The design appears to take precedence from the Tower of the Winds (B.C. 110-35), located in the Roman Agora in Athens. The Tower of the Winds was an octagonal marble tower known as the Horologium of Andronikos Kyrrhestes who had designed the building to measure time by means of a water-clock (clepsydra; an ancient time-measuring device regulated by flow of liquid) in the structure, and a sundial on the exterior. The original design was made with 8 large reliefs on the exterior of wind gods, Notus, Libs, Zephyrus, Sciron, Boreas, Kaikias, Apeliotes, and Eurus. While the original entrance faces northeast, the Graves Mausoleum faces west. Horace Trumbauer designed the 'Tower of Winds' precedence mausoleum as documented in the Presbey Leland catalogue, PL29150 for Edward J. Berwind, Esq., of New York City¹⁰.

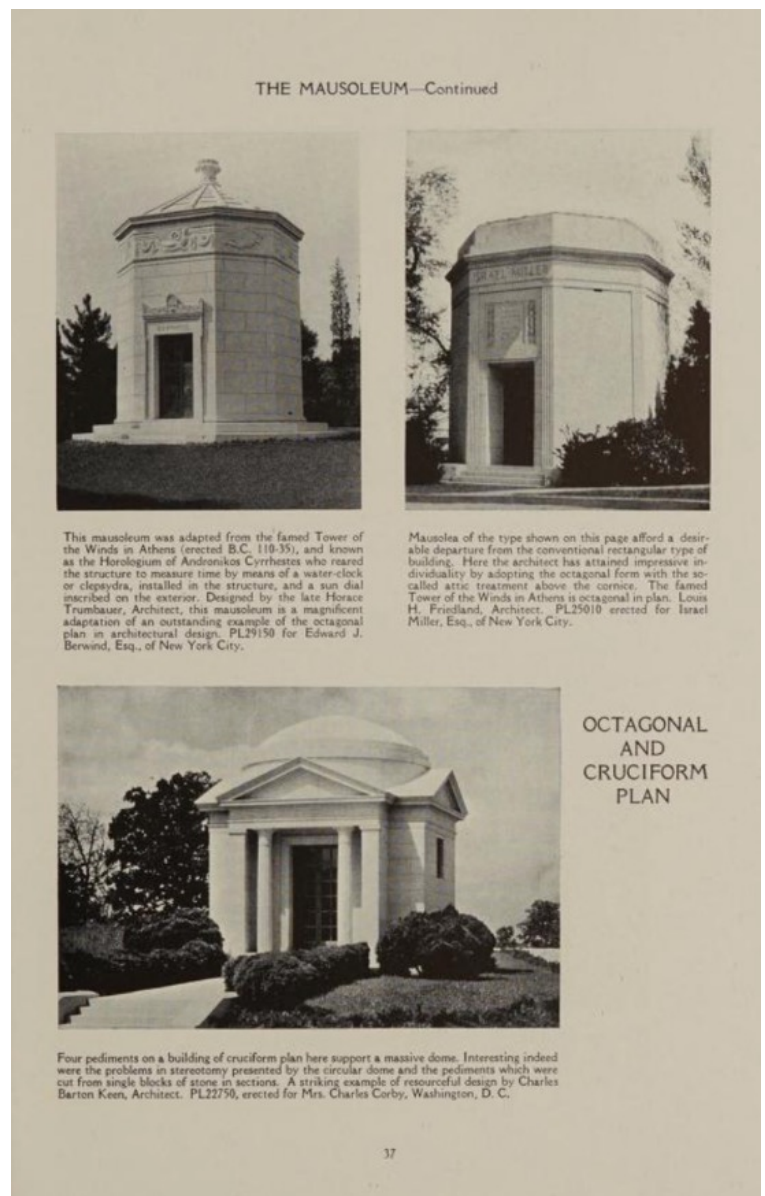


Figure 7: Tower of Winds Adaptation. Presbey-Leland, Inc., *The Book of Presbey-Leland Memorials* (New York: Presbey-Leland Studios, 1932), 37.

¹⁰ Presbey-Leland, Inc., *The Book of Presbey-Leland Memorials* (New York: Presbey-Leland Studios, 1932), 37.

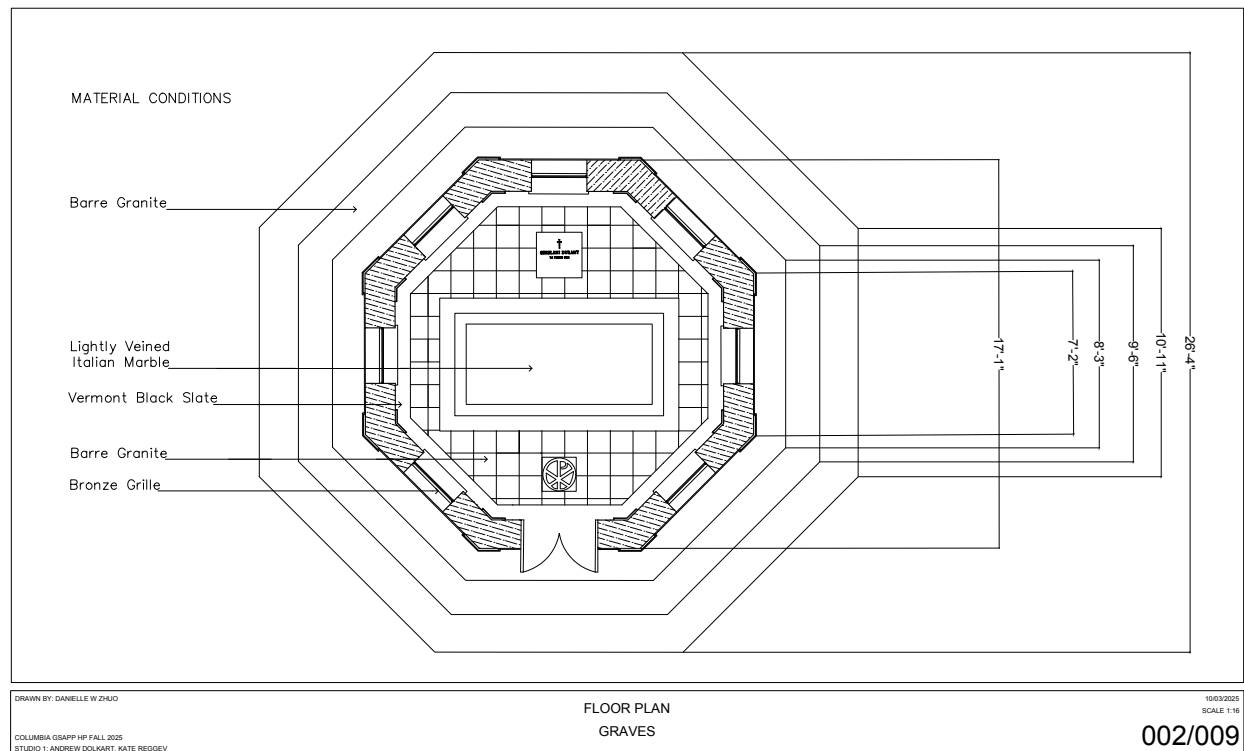


Figure 8: Floor Plan of Graves Mausoleum

3/ MAIN STRUCTURE

Avery Library documentation reports that Presbrey Leland was the contractor and architect for this mausoleum. The foundation was made of cement, rubble and concrete with a depth of 6' and a foundation wall thickness of 5'-10". The concrete was made with one part Atlas Portland cement, three parts sand, and five parts broken stone that could pass through a 2 1/2" ring.

The main body of the building is ashlar masonry constructed with unpolished, fine grained, light color Barre granite. The interior of the building is also a granite material but appears to be a slightly darker grey

colour. The granite was noted to be free from iron and other substances throughout the structure. Mortar for connecting vertical joints and setting beds was mostly La Farge cement, sand, and water.

There are three steps leading up to the main entrance of the building. The top of the structure has a finial in the shape of a pineapple. One each of the eight corners of the octagon there are Doric pilasters. The pediment on the front door of the mausoleum is adorned with dentil molding below and within the pediment.

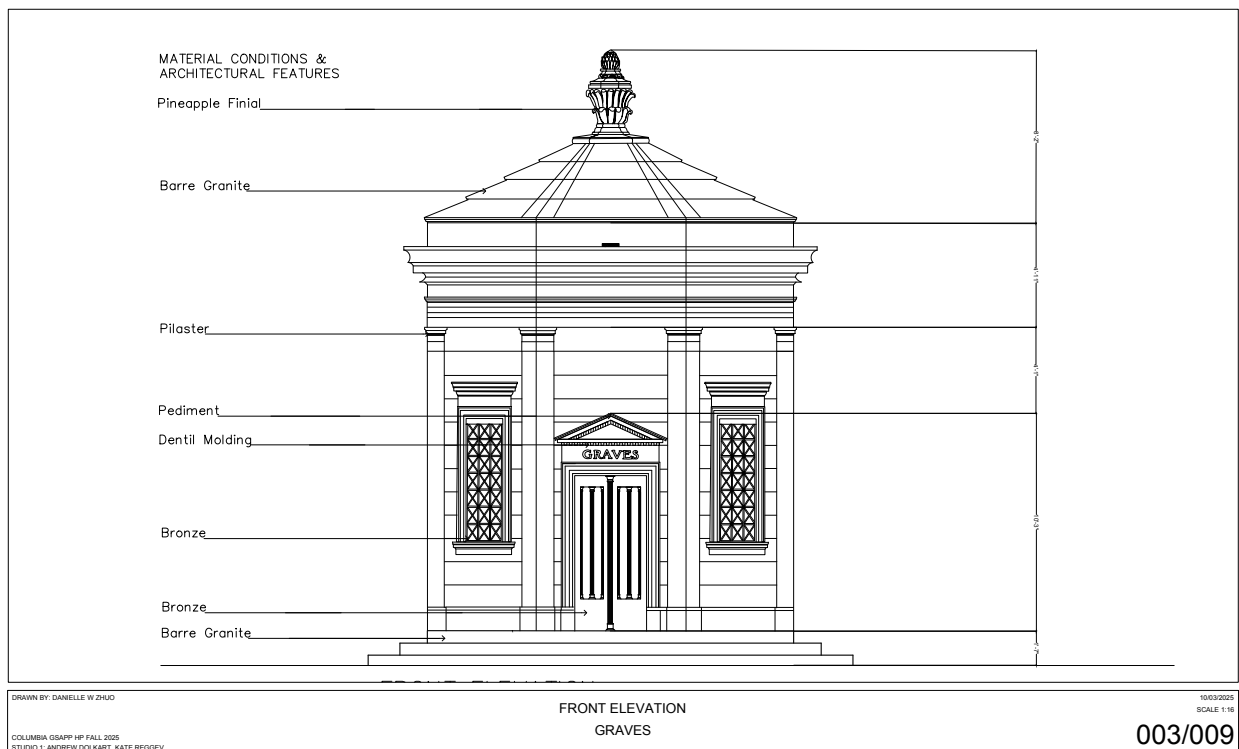


Figure 9: Front Elevation of Graves Mausoleum

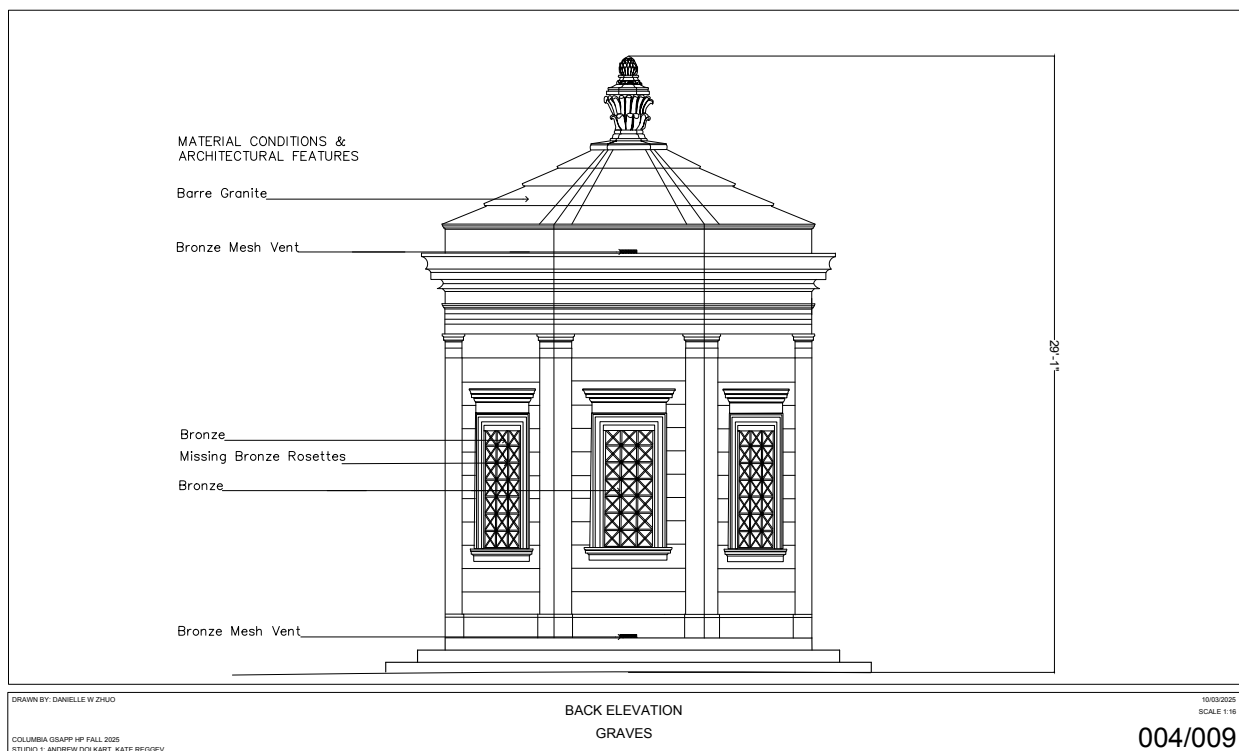


Figure 10: Back Elevation of Graves Mausoleum

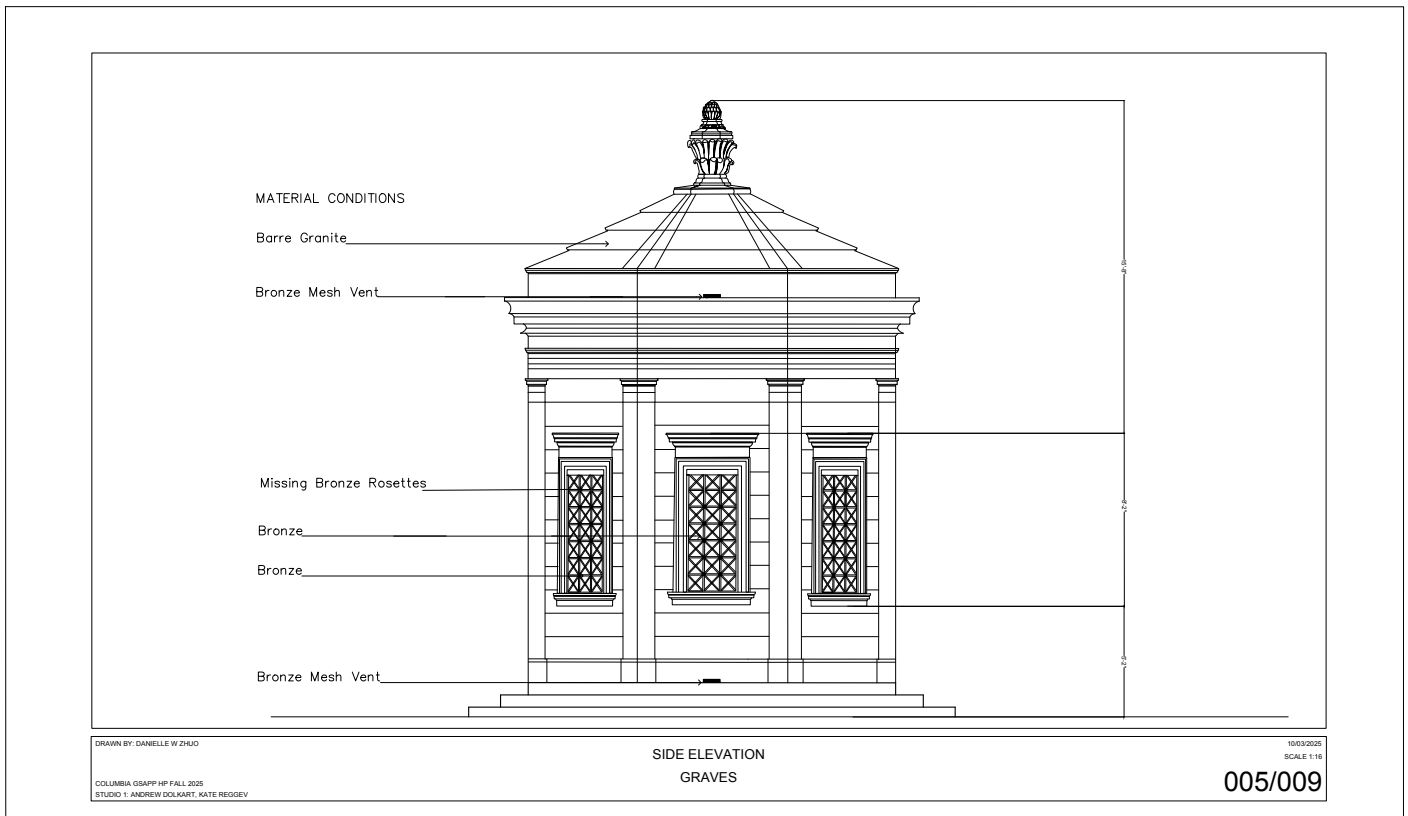


Figure 11: Side Elevation of Graves Mausoleum

4/ INTERIORS

The floors were originally intended to be marble mosaic but are currently a type of similarly grey granite. The edging of the floors is lined with Vermont black slate. The two-tiered catacombs are made of white lightly veined Italian marble on all ends including the sides and ends. On the face of the catacombs towards the main entrance, the two tiers are decorated with inscription, border etching and bronze crosses on either side. On the top of the catacombs there is a decorative bronze railing in the form of leaves going around the entire periphery.

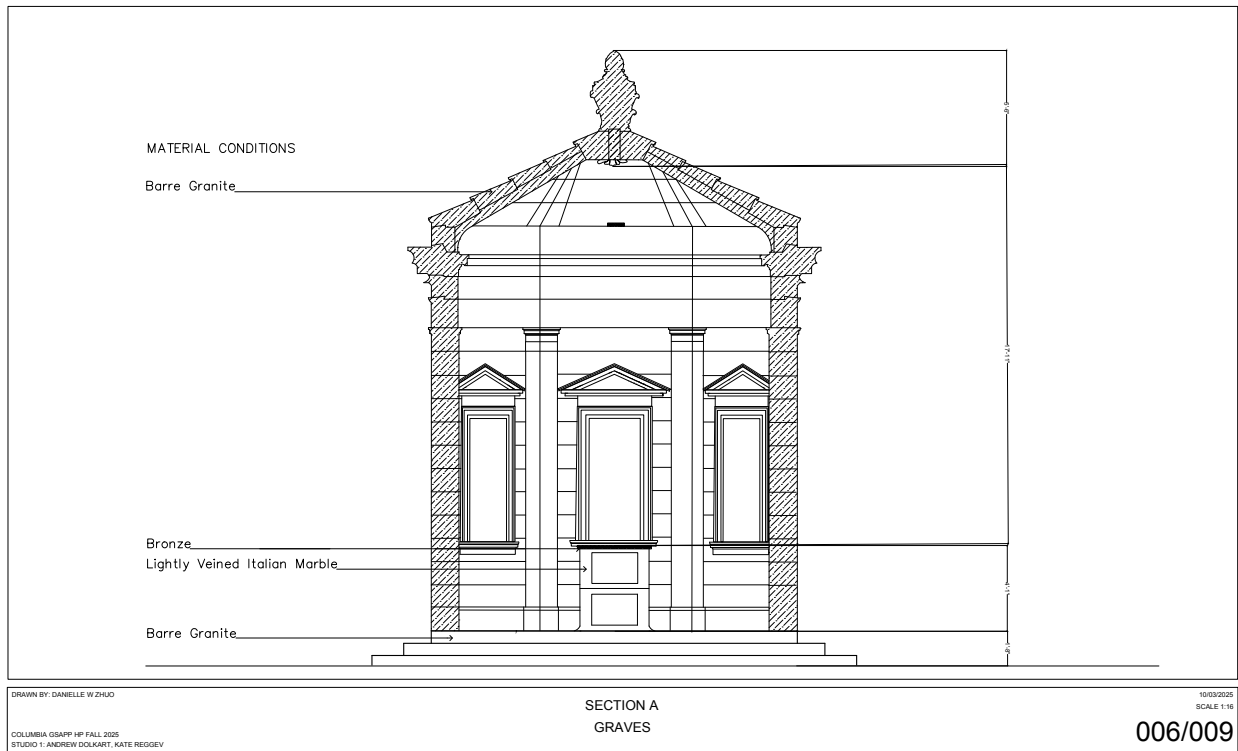


Figure 12: Section A (Longitudinal) of Graves Mausoleum

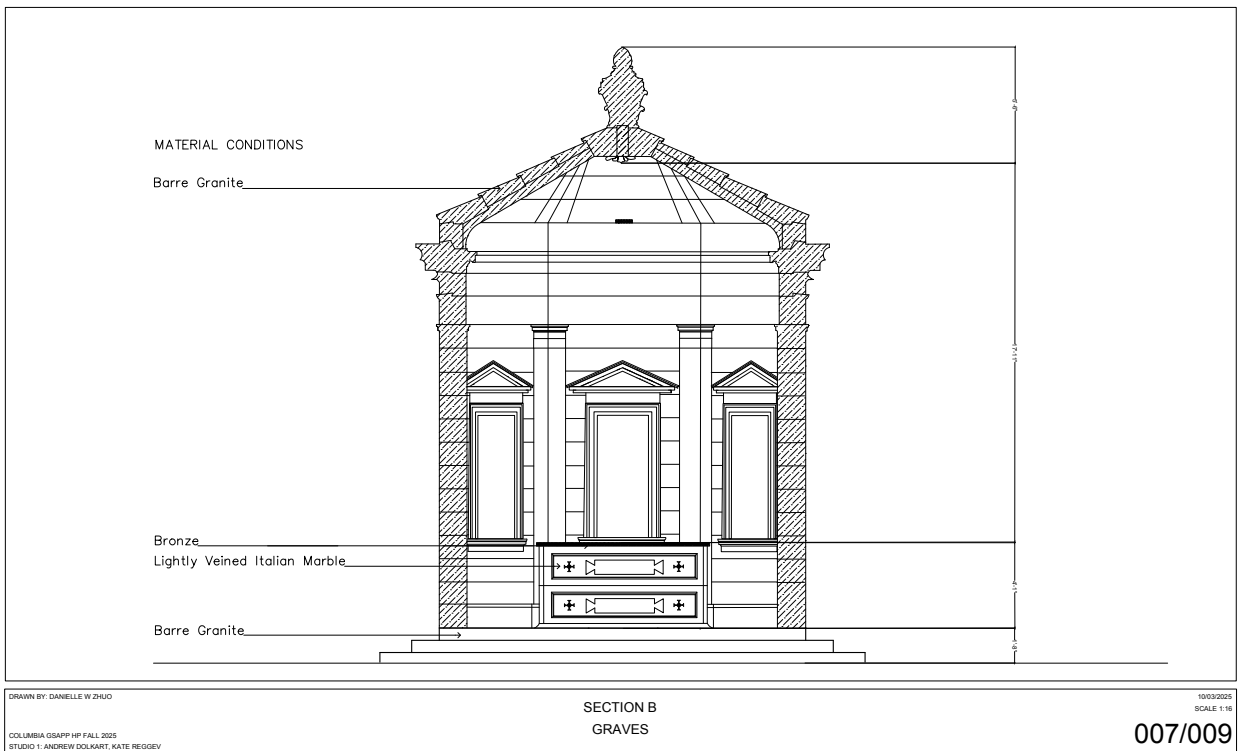


Figure 13: Section B (Cross-section) of Graves Mausoleum

5/ DOORS AND WINDOWS

The doors and interior and exterior window grilles are made with U.S. Bronze of 90% copper, 7% zinc, and 3% tin. The doors have doric pilasters, one full one in the middle and two half pilasters on the side.

The seven windows are covered with bronze grilles and window frames on the external side of the building, decorated at the cross intersections with small bronze rosettes. The windows on the inside are Tiffany & Co. stained-glass windows, each with its own impressionistic drawing (See Figure 2) and are additionally covered by bronze grilles. The stained-glass windows paint a large landscape of mountains, trees, and flora.

Tiffany and Co. had begun experimenting with glass as early as 1878 with mostly mosaic windows, seeking to convey pure colour without any enameling on the surface. By the 1880s, the Tiffany Glass company had been firmly established as the largest stained-glass studio in the nation, with most of their success due to church construction.¹¹ Tiffany attempted to place non-figural secular windows into church settings in the late 1890s, consisting of mostly naturalistic flowers or

landscapes. These were critiqued later as ‘a mass of rich color, without the attempt to portray figures or emblems. The idea was unique in church decorations and refers to Tiffany’s ideas regarding the devotional side to the contemplation of pure color without the association of sacred emblems or inscriptions. Tiffany’s interest in colour can be traced back to his studies in painting, and attempts to make designs where the color spots ‘are well selected and properly placed in relation to one another’, the color spots and masses were the appropriate size, and finally that the correct hues were chosen.¹² Most of these windows depict natural landscapes which was in line with Tiffany’s American reinterpretation, where despite some backlash from traditional sects, saw famous clients such as Carnegie agreeing with these choices stating “I want something new, something American. I don’t want any of these old style windows with the figures of bible prophets and crosses and that sort of thing. I want an outdoor scene. God is in that sunset. God is in all the great outdoors. I want a window just like that.”¹³

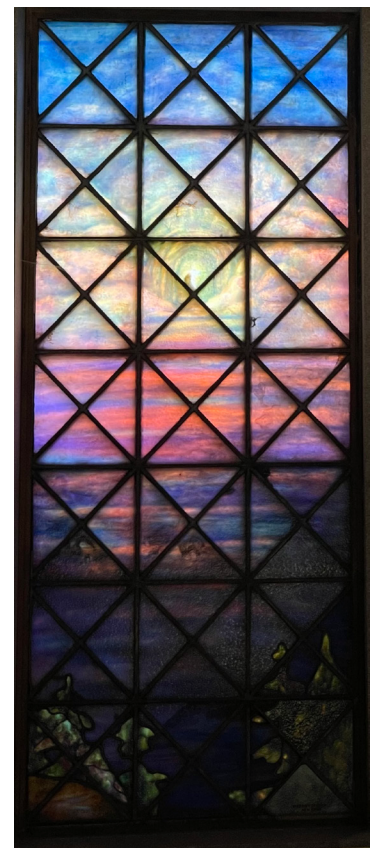
11 Alastair Duncan, Martin P. Eidelberg, and Neil Harris, *Masterworks of Louis Comfort Tiffany* (New York: Abrams, 1989)
12 Joan Elliott Price, *The Painting Career of a Colorist*, Louis Comfort Tiffany (New York: Peter Lang, 1996)
13 Duncan, Eidelberg, and Harris, *Masterworks*



Figure 14: Details of mortise and tenon roofing system (left) and 7 impressionist Tiffany & Co. stained glass windows (right) in Graves Mausoleum

6/ ROOF AND DETAILS

The roof and cornice are made of the same material as the walls and body of the mausoleum. During construction, Presby Leland had incorporated a complex system of rabbets, tenons, and vents to mitigate humidity issues and water leakage with the roof masonry. There are a total of six bronze ventilators which are protected with fine mesh on the inside to prevent insects from entering, these are placed on every other face starting from the entrance. Presbrey Leland had further provided a contractor guarantee against any such leakage for a period of 10 years after completion, and to make any repairs necessary to stop any leaks. Additionally, the mausoleum is topped with a pineapple or pinecone shaped finial, which differs from the original Tower of the Winds building. Pinecones often symbolized enlightenment and rebirth. The stained glass windows depict evergreen forests and a Ginkgo tree, with beautiful sunsets corresponding to the 8 facing directions of the mausoleum.

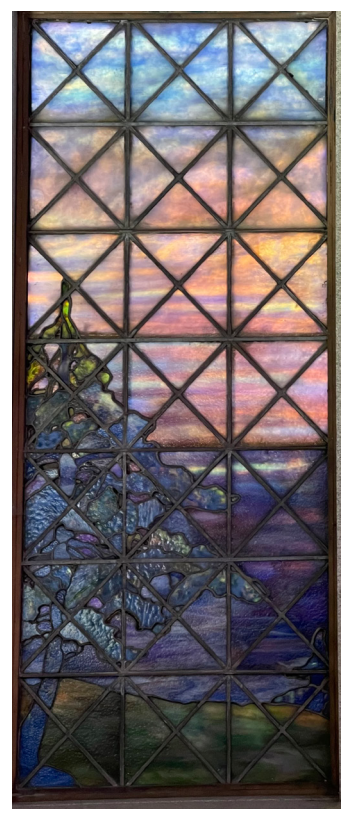




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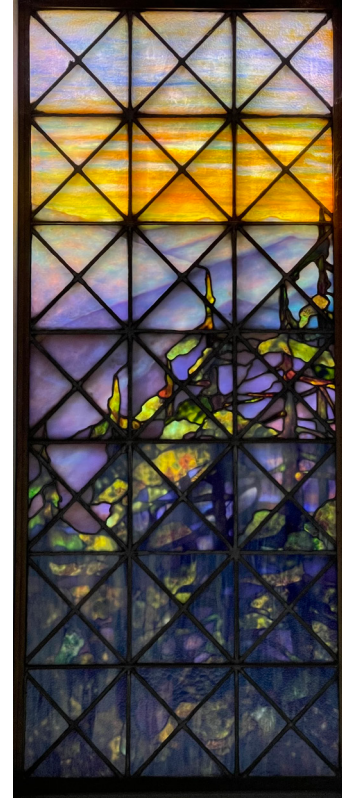
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5



6



7

Stained Glass Windows

1/ East window
2/ Northwest window
3/ North window

4/ Northeast window
5/ Southwest window
6/ South window
7/ Southeast window



Figure 15: Mortar deterioration by entrance (Left), rosettes missing from exterior window grilles (Middle), biological deterioration on ground and tombstone (Left)

7/ DETERIORATION

We note that on June 2nd, 1924, Robert Graves initiates correspondence with Woodlawn regarding the leaking of the roof, observed when he visits the Mausoleum of his wife and notes that the ‘inside surface of the walls seem to be streaked as if water leaked through the roof joints.’. He additionally stipulates that the mortar on the steps needed to be redone and refers to some shrubs and trees on the plot, giving us indications of what the plot originally looked like.

Current deterioration shows similar streaking of the ceiling. Upon talking to employees at Woodlawn, the mausoleum appears to have issues with flooding, given that the joints in the roof have little sealing and are

essentially granite tiles. As a result, there is efflorescence on the roof, a process by which salts, and other soluble mineral deposits migrate to the surface of porous materials leaving behind a white or grayish coating. We also note biological growth on the ground, catacombs, and windowsills due to the mausoleum flooding. Some of the bronze detailing on the catacombs has also fallen off.

Finally, there is the loss of multiple rosettes from the exterior bronze window grilles. Some mortar has been replaced in the sections with areas appearing whiter than the original mortar. However, as the building relies largely on elaborate masonry and a mortise and tenon system, there seems to be relatively minimal impact on the overall structure.

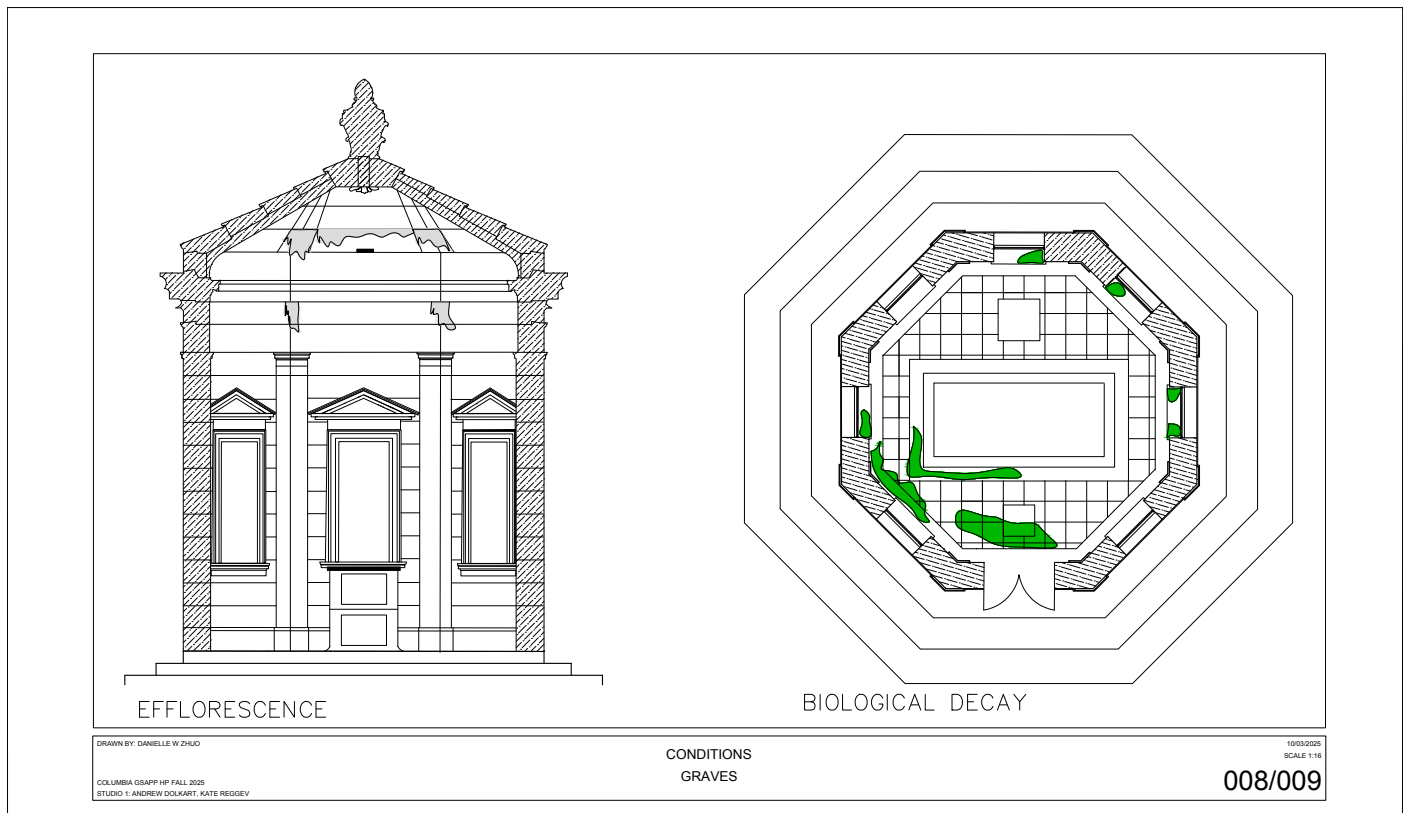


Figure 16: Efflorescence on ceiling show in grey (Left) and biological decay shown in green (Right)



Figure 17: Comparison of original Tower of the Winds efflorescence on the roof with Graves Mausoleum

PHOTOGRAPHY



Figure 18: Elevations of Mausoleum.

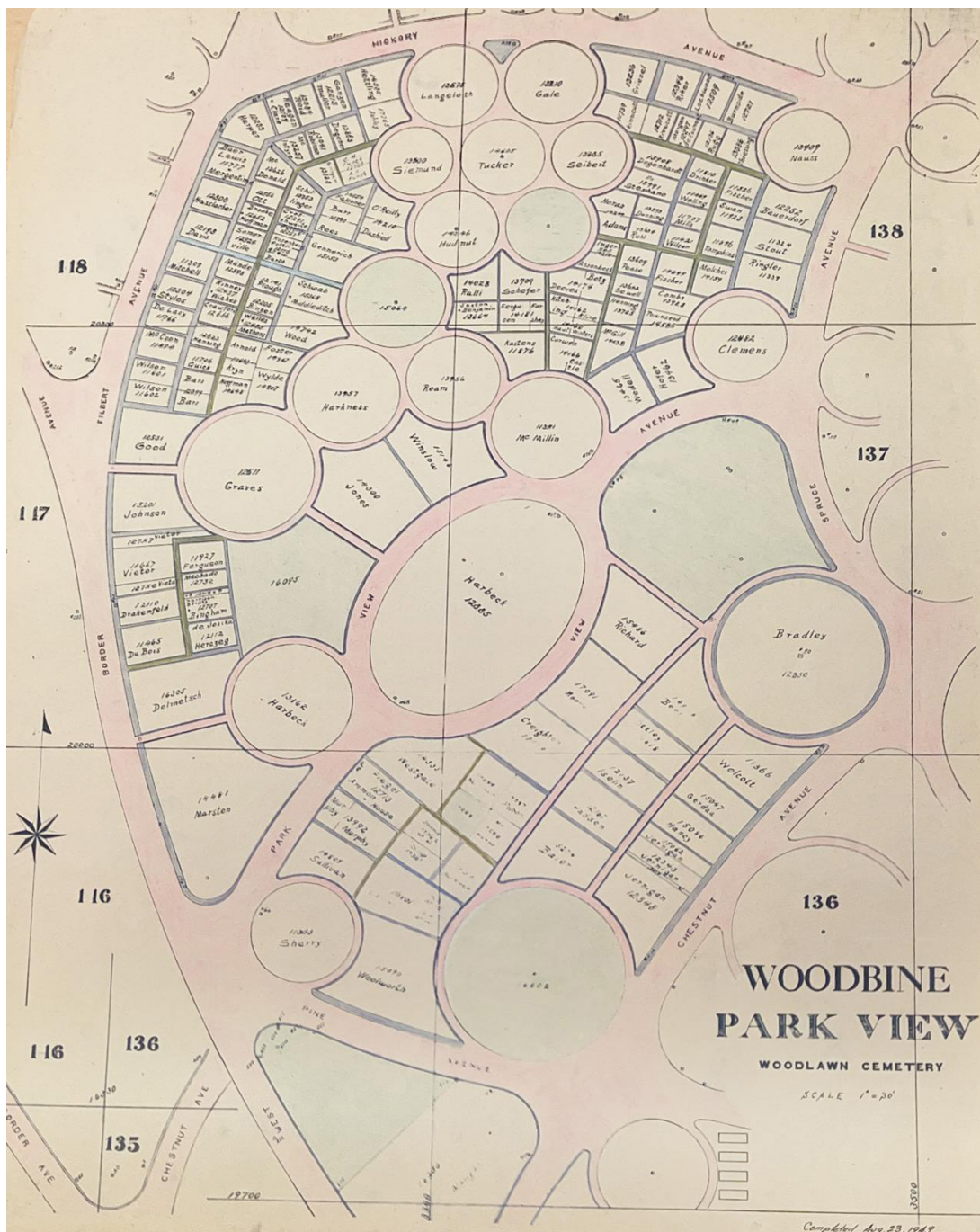


Figure 18: Site Photos of Mausoleum (Bottom right taken with broken phone camera)



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1. Duncan, Alastair, Martin P. Eidelberg, and Neil Harris. *Masterworks of Louis Comfort Tiffany*. New York: Abrams, 1989.
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