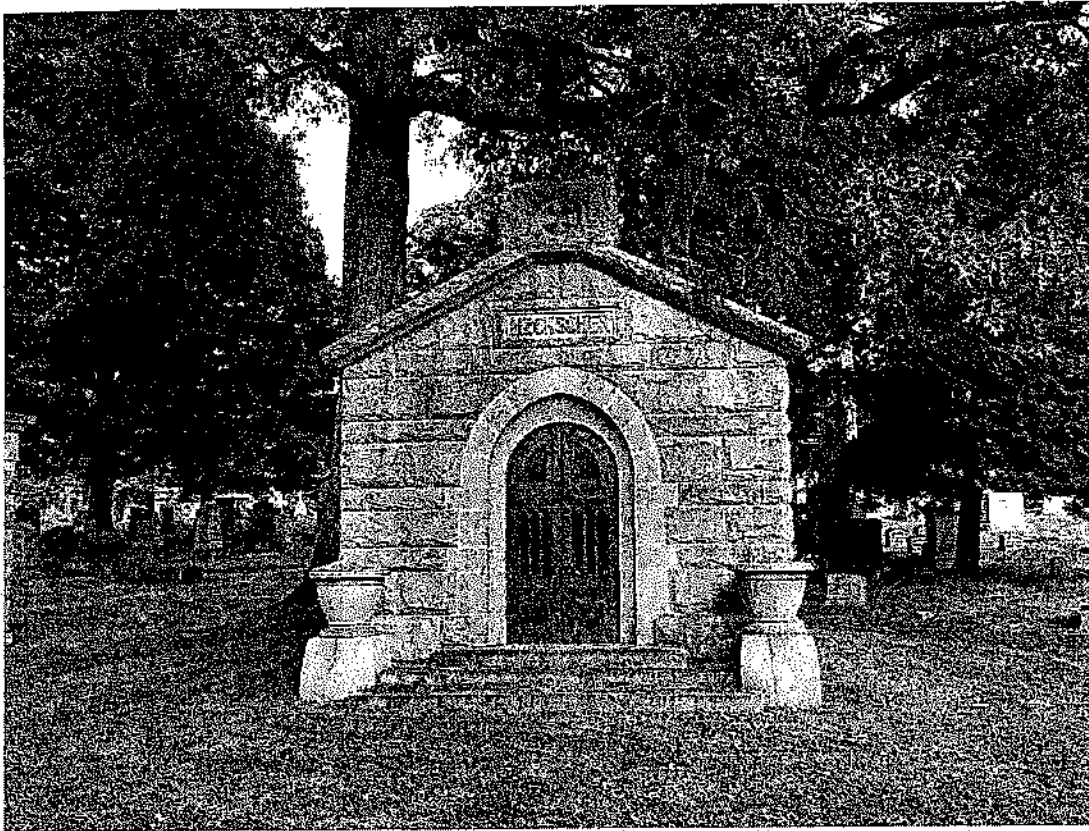


THE AUGUST HECKSCHER MAUSOLEUM



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Problem 3: Woodlawn Cemetery, Heckscher Mausoleum

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Heckscher Mausoleum

HISTORY OF PATRON

August Heckscher (1848-1941) is the patron of the Heckscher Mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery in Bronx, New York. He shares the mausoleum with his first wife, Anna Atkins Heckscher (1858-1924), who was the daughter of an ironmaster in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, along with their children -- two newborns, Charles (1882) and Matica (1911), and their son Maurice (1886-1967). Their daughter, Antoinette, Lady Esber of London, is not buried here. Also residing in the mausoleum is Heckscher's second wife, Virginia Henry Curtis Heckscher (1941).¹

August, the son of a German statesman and diplomat, was born in Hamburg, Germany. He attended school in Germany until the age of 14 when he decided to become a merchant and his father sent him to school to study in Switzerland. When he came back to Germany, he was an apprentice at an exporting house for three years. In 1867 at the age of 19, August went to New York with \$500 strapped to his waist. After spending hours in the library teaching himself English, he went to work with his cousin, Richard Heckscher, in a coal mine in Pennsylvania.² He later partnered with his cousin on their own coal mining operation named Richard Heckscher & Co., and then sold it to the Philadelphia Reading Railroad. August then became the Vice President and General Manager of the Lehigh Zinc and Iron Company in 1881, which merged with the New Jersey Zinc Company.³ In 1905 he left this position and pursued his interest in New York real estate where he purchased land and buildings in the 42nd street neighborhood. He turned profits by reselling the buildings for more than he paid for them.⁴

Heckscher later became known as a philanthropist. He donated the land between 104th and 105th street on 5th Avenue and built the Heckscher Foundation Building there, which benefited children in the city. In addition to the building and land, in 1929 Heckscher donated \$4,000,000 to the fund to create nurseries, playgrounds and clinics for the children.⁵ In addition to his work in Manhattan, Heckscher donated \$160,000 to the Long Island State Park Commission to create a park in East Islip. This was dedicated as the Heckscher State Park.⁶ He also had an influence in Huntington, Long Island, where he had an estate. There he donated a park, named Heckscher Park, as well as an athletic field. In 1919, he donated a Beaux-Arts museum to Huntington that includes art from the Renaissance, the Hudson River School and early modernist American art, which is now called the Heckscher Museum of Art.⁷

August's first wife, Anna, passed away in 1924. She died at sea when returning from a visit to her daughter, Antoinette, in England.⁸ Heckscher was remarried at the age of 81 in 1930 to Virginia Henry Curtiss Heckscher, the widow of Edwin Burr Curtiss who had ran the A.G. Spaulding Sporting Goods Company. Virginia had been a friend of Anna's and had a strong interest in philanthropy, supporting the same issues as August.⁹ He lived in Mountain Lake, Florida for the last 25 years of his life, where he died in his sleep at the age of 92.¹⁰

August has been remembered as a philanthropic figure in history, "first to last he was a man of extraordinary vigor, much ability and an alert and sympathetic understanding of the social problems of the community".¹¹ In addition, his grandson, August Heckscher, continued his legacy as President John F. Kennedy's Cultural Advisor and New York City Parks Commissioner, where he hosted the first New York Marathon in 1970 among many other accomplishments.¹²

ARCHITECT

The architect of Heckscher's 1912 mausoleum was H. Edwards-Ficken. Ficken was born in England in 1852 and educated in Scotland before coming to the United States in 1868. Some of his notable commissions include the Charles Gates Dawes House in Illinois, the Cloister at Yale, the Coney Island Steel Pier, and buildings at Woodlawn Cemetery.¹³ At Woodlawn, he designed the Jerome Avenue Lodge, the Jerome Avenue Gates, and additions to the Webster Avenue Office, which are all in the Gothic Revival style.¹⁴ Ficken and Heckscher both belonged to the Huntington Yacht Club, where they probably met.¹⁵ It is assumed that they had been friends at the club, which is why Ficken was chosen to do the mausoleum design. What is interesting is that the mausoleum was designed in 1912 and Ficken become Supervising Architect of Woodlawn in 1913. It seems that Heckscher used his influence in some way to secure Ficken the position, however there is no documentation to support this.

BUILDING SITING

The Heckscher Mausoleum is located in Woodlawn Cemetery on the Juniper plot, section 102, and plot number 12138 (figure 1). It sits on a crossroads between Birch Avenue and Prospect Avenue. While one can take either path to reach the building, the most direct way from the main gate is from Birch Avenue, facing the building's left side. Since the mausoleum is built on the diagonal between the two streets, an approaching visitor does not only see the building's side; one can also see part of the building's front façade when approaching. The mausoleum is on

a circular plot with a radius of about 22 feet with a dirt pathway encircling it (figure 2). Its entrance is a little less than 20 feet from the main road. From the entrance looking straight out, an observer will see the other end Prospect Avenue instead of directly facing other mausoleums. Based on a map of the cemetery in 1912, it does not seem that the mausoleum had any direct neighboring buildings at the time it was constructed, however there was another mausoleum with a circular plot across the street to its right side,¹⁶

Today, as one approaches the mausoleum's left side from Birch Avenue, the area is more built up than it had been in 1912. There is now a mausoleum directly to its right and one across the street on the left side as well as many surrounding tombstones. The area around the plot has many large trees, with one just on the outskirts on the circle plot but none within. The only landscaping apparent in the circle plot are the vases in front of the mausoleum, which currently only have dead plants. There is no record of what the landscapes or original plants in the vases had been when the mausoleum was planned.

INTERIOR DESIGN

There is only one way to enter and leave the Heckscher mausoleum: the doors in the center of the front façade. Once one enters, the first thing noticed within the all-white marble interior is the large stained glass arched window featuring an angel (figure 2). This window is located on the back wall of the mausoleum, eyelevel to the entering visitor. Directly below the window, there are two stacked, marble catacombs, which protrude from the back wall. The catacomb on top is for August's first wife, Anna Atkins Heckscher, with gold lettering for her name, birth and death dates, and phrase 'Dear heart you were without sin'. It features a relief-carved Greek cross and carved, thin rectangle flags on either side of the cross. On the flags, it is written in large, gold gothic lettering 'He giveth his beloved sleep', which is from Psalm 127:2.¹⁷ In place of the left knob is a small vase to hold flowers. Underneath Anna's catacomb is August Heckscher's, which has gold lettering for his name and birth and death years, two bronze quatrefoil knobs, and a gold leaf design on the top corners. The gold leaves may be laurel leaves, which represented accomplishment in ancient Greece and are mentioned in the New Testament.¹⁸ The plan of the mausoleum is symmetrical, with stacks of four similar white marble catacombs on both sides (figure 4). However these are not decorated with gold lettering like the center two. The only other catacomb labeled is the top right, which features two bronze, oval plaques for two newborn babies that Anna and August had lost. A visitor had placed vases on the space above Anna's catacomb and a throw rug on the marble floor, which covers two more catacombs

beneath it. The interior construction and plan are similar to other mausoleums in Woodlawn. While it is not a large building, the room inside is spacious enough for a few visitors to enter at the same time. While dark inside, light still enters through the stained glass window and through the grated spaces in the door.

FAÇADE DESIGN

The mausoleum is a small one-story, rectangular building. The symmetrical façade is made of alternating bands of thin and wide blocks of rusticated granite (figures 5 and 6). To reach the doorway on the front façade, there are three steps with smooth, granite vases on either side, providing balance to the building. The bronze double doors are slightly recessed with a rounded arch and are decorated with flowers that vaguely resemble Greek crosses (figure 7). There is no correspondence about the doors in the archives, however it is featured in the architect's designs and therefore may be attributed to him. The door is part of a compound arch with a slightly pointed arch around the door and then another non-recessed slightly pointed arch around that. The arches around the door are also granite, but they are smooth and not rusticated like the rest of the façade walls. Above the doors is a rectangular stone with "Heckscher" carved in relief. Looking further up on the front façade, the top of the pitched roof is capped by a rectangular, rusticated granite block in the center. The block's center features a circle with a Greek cross in relief.¹⁹ This block provides height to the building's front façade, while also reminding us that this is a religious structure. Walking around the building, the sides continue with the rusticated granite material seen on the front and with a large stone base (figure 8). The sides have no windows, only six small vents on the top and bottom. The back façade has the same rusticated granite, but it includes an arched window, which is covered by a bronze gate (figure 9). The back façade's pitched roof is also topped by a cap, however it is not as large as that on the front façade and not decorated.

DESIGN PRECEDENTS & CONTEXT

August Heckscher was a millionaire and an important figure. He owned skyscrapers in New York City and built large, public buildings. However, looking at his 1912 mausoleum, a visitor would not realize this. It is a medium-sized mausoleum, not large and grand like some of the others seen in Woodlawn. It is not neo-classical, like most others, suggesting their dominance, masculinity and wealth. Still, it is not like others in the cemetery that are clearly gothic with tall spires and high-pointed arches, as if they were small cathedrals. It is simple, balanced and

symmetrical with touches of religious symbolism with its cross on top and its slightly arched doors. The mausoleum reminds the viewer of a small chapel in the woods. To understand the design, we must first understand Heckscher's character and his possible influences.

Heckscher is was a man of routine, self-discipline, and did not showcase his wealth. He woke up early each day, had no breakfast, drank only a little on occasion, ate a simple diet and avoided large, ostentatious events. He was also active and loved nature, "He loved country life and was fond of walking...devoted as well to aquatic sports, the sea, yachting and fishing".²⁰ In addition, Heckscher loved music, dabbled in writing poetry, and most of all loved art, especially landscapes.²¹

Heckscher was drawn to the native landscape which is evident in the art he collected, the landscape of his estates, and the political figures he was associated with. Many of the works he collected were from the Hudson River School artists who painted romantic rural landscapes (figure 10).²² Heckscher had a Dutch Colonial house on a tree-filled property by the water in Huntington, Long Island.²³ He also donated money and land for two parks in Long Island. In addition, Heckscher was connected with some of the most important figures shaping the landscape of their day such as President Roosevelt, who passed the 1906 Antiquities Act to preserve historical landscapes and sites, and Robert Moses, New York City's Park Commissioner who made historic changes to the New York area's urban landscape.²⁴ Another link is Heckscher's residence later in life in the private community of Mountain Lake, Florida, whose landscape was designed by Fredrick Law Olmsted Jr., son of the Central Park landscape architect.²⁵ Heckscher was interested in preserving rural landscapes and likely discussed landscape issues with these figures.

Another influence on Heckscher's choice of architecture may have been Romanticism in art. His mausoleum on its rural landscape and rusticated stonework reminds the viewer of a little chapel in the woods. Once again, the Hudson River School artwork can be seen as an influence featuring castles, ruins, or cottages alone in a romantic landscape (figure 10). Furthermore, there are many German Romantic paintings of chapels and church ruins decaying in the woods, overgrown with plants (figure 11).²⁶ While predating him, Heckscher probably had seen and felt these influences during his time in Germany and in America.

Heckscher's mausoleum has similarities with other mausoleums of its time. It has the rusticated stone, symmetry and balanced vases on either side like many mausoleums, such as the 1908 Kipp Mausoleum (figure 12). However, once again it lacks the classical style. Its style is more similar to the 1924 Harkness Mausoleum and the 1852 Shiff Mausoleum, which is in Green-Wood, with their simple facades with slightly arched doors and modest

religious ornament (figures 13-14). Heckscher's choice of designs does not seem to follow a trend during at the time of construction, but fits Heckscher's personality, religious beliefs, and love of a rural, romantic landscape.

CONCLUSION

The Heckscher Mausoleum a romantic gothic-revival structure. It is a medium-sized, rusticated stone building with modest religious ornament sitting within nature. Heckscher loved nature and wanted his mausoleum to be similar to a small chapel or cabin in the woods, seen in so many romantic paintings. In fact, the rural landscape of cemeteries, such as Green-Wood and later Woodlawn, were influenced by the Hudson River School's portal of rolling hills and winding paths.²⁸ Heckscher was attracted to Woodlawn's bucolic, peaceful landscape when he chose to spend eternity there. The building is significant for the philanthropic and generous man who lived there as well as how much of his love of the Hudson River School and landscape is seen in the building's design. Its placement and location reflect his love of nature and peace.

PICTURES



Figure 1. Heckscher Mausoleum plot (Reddan)

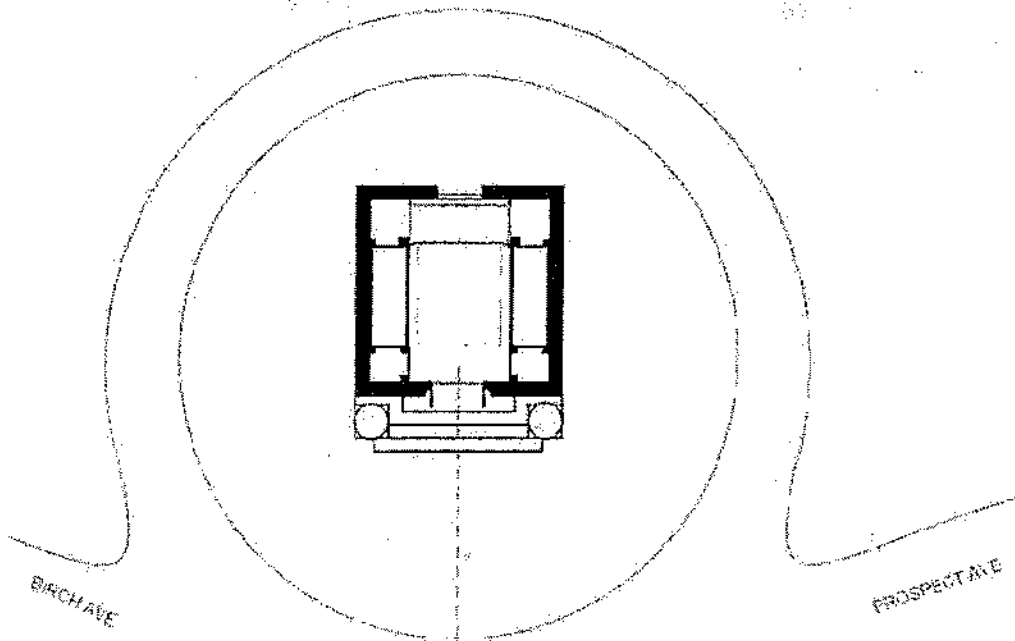


Figure 2. Heckscher Mausoleum site plan (Reddan)

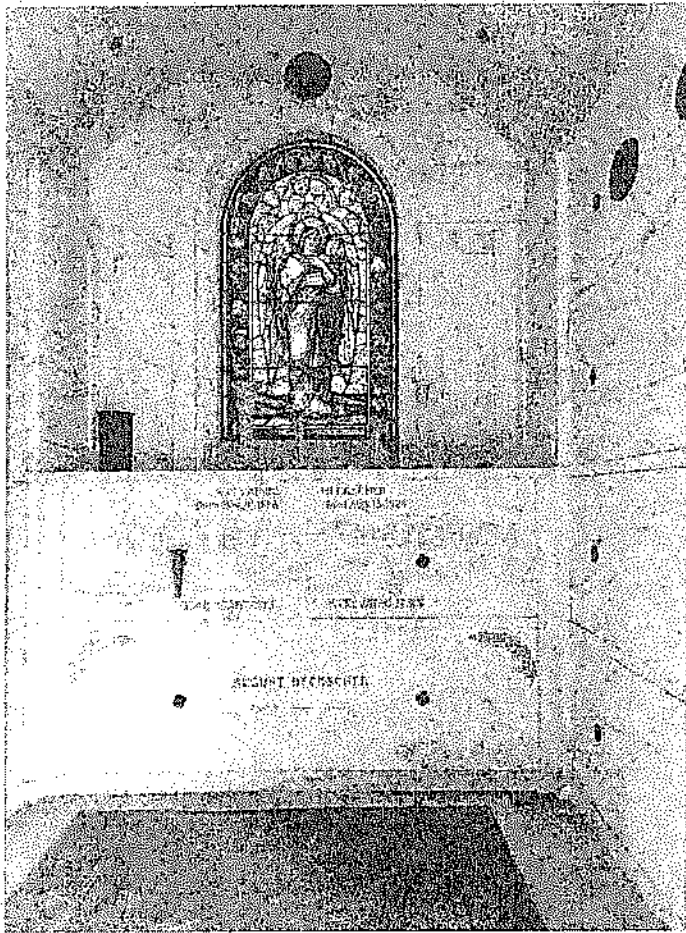


Figure 3. Heckscher Mausoleum interior (Reddan).

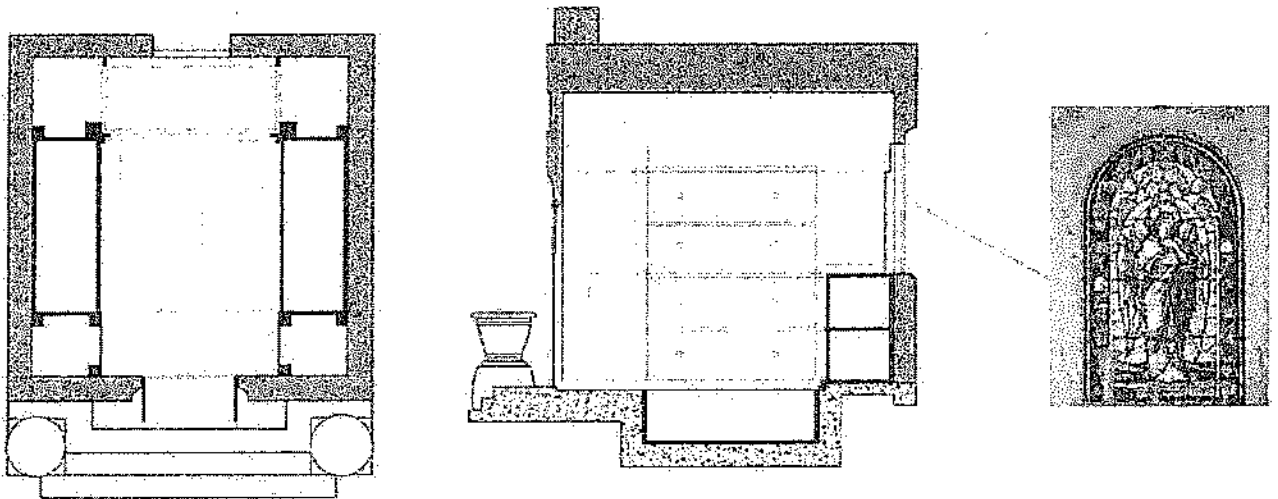


Figure 4. Heckscher Mausoleum plan and section (Reddan).

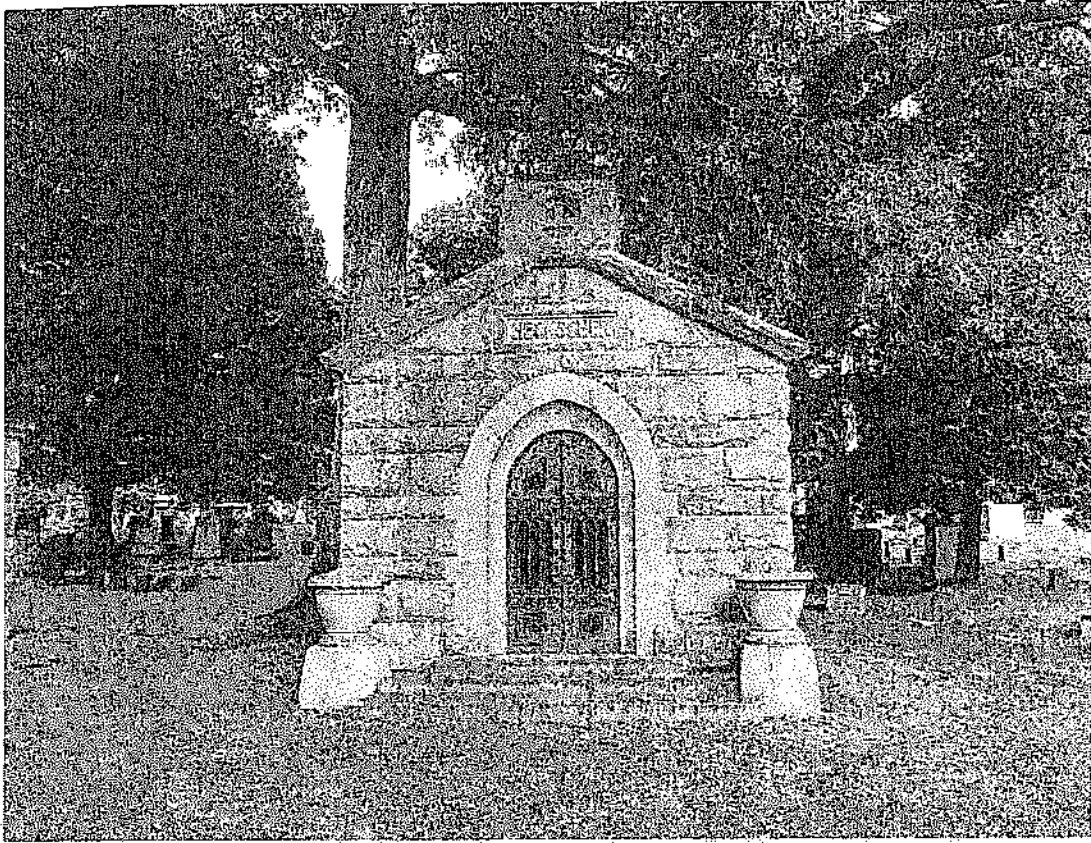


Figure 5. Heckscher Mausoleum front facade (Reddan)

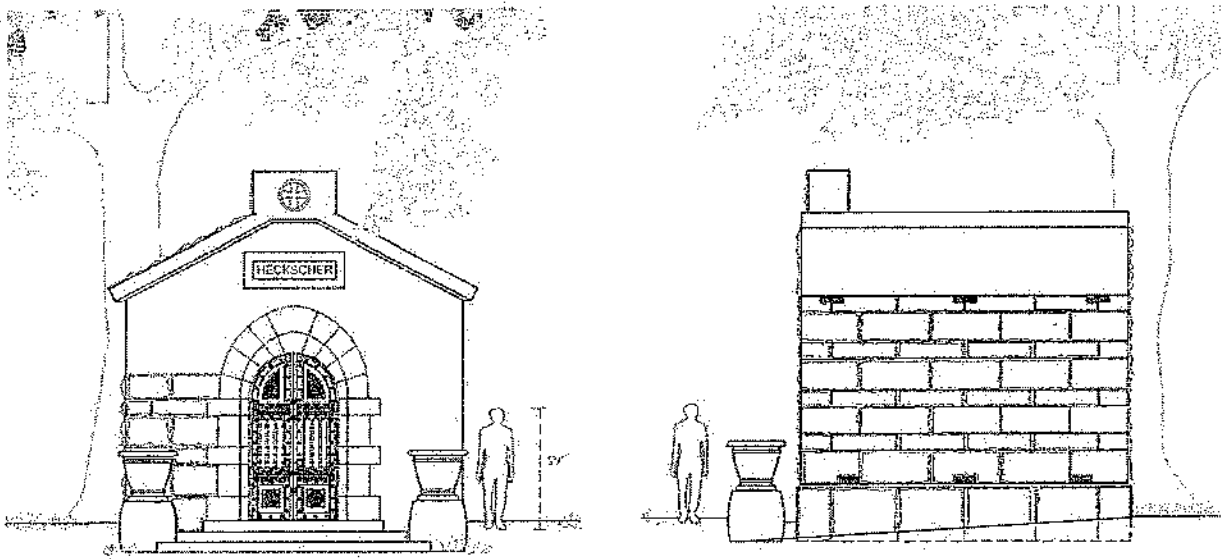


Figure 6. Heckscher Mausoleum front and side facades in elevation (Reddan)

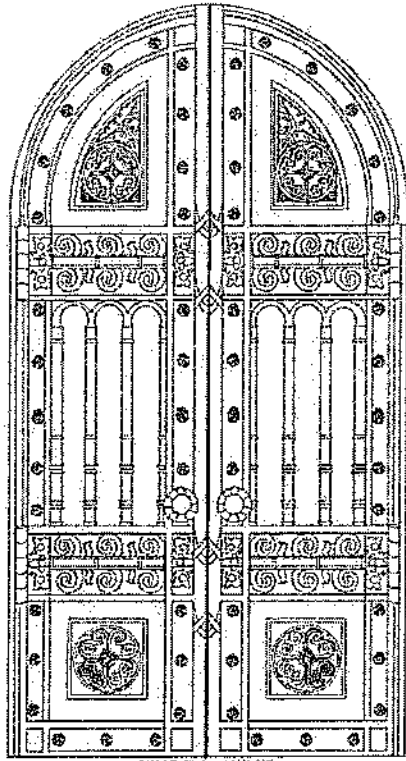


Figure 7. Heckscher Mausoleum door detail (Reddan)

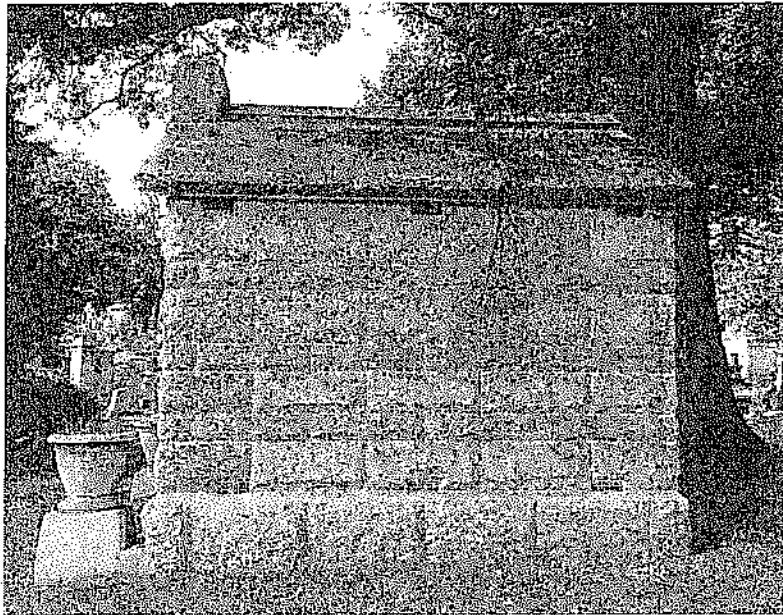


Figure 8. Heckscher Mausoleum side facade (Reddan)

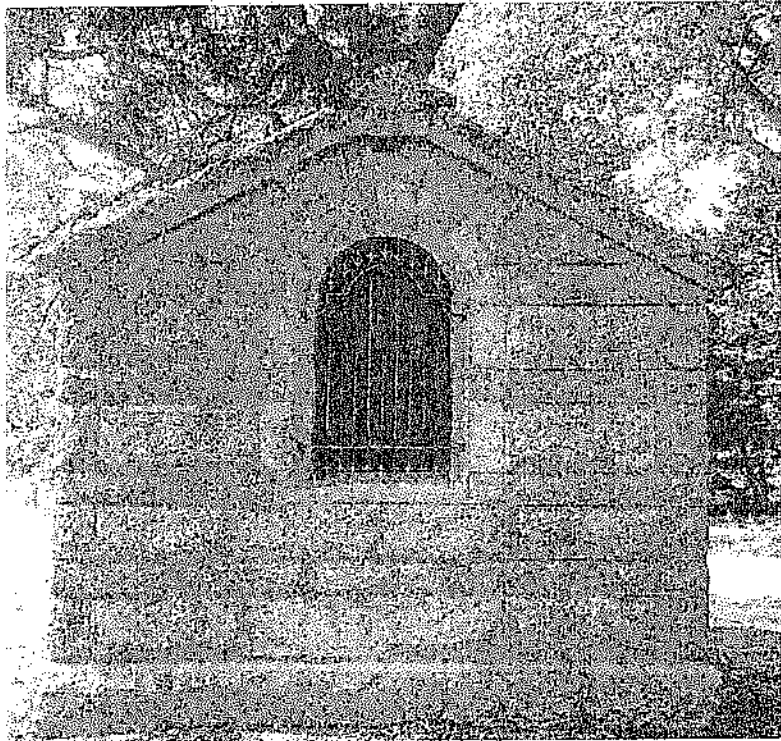


Figure 9. Heckscher Mausoleum back façade (Reddan)

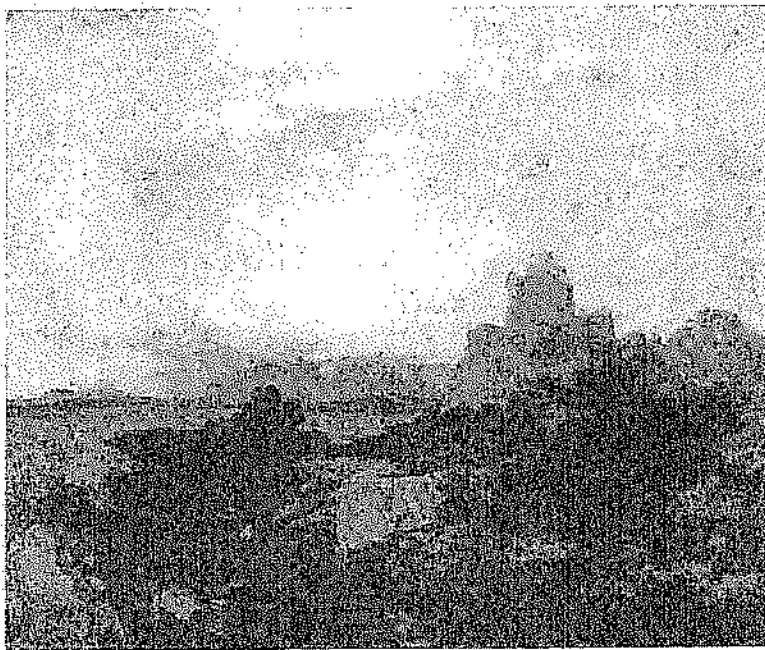


Figure 10. Thomas Moran, Bluebeard's Castle (Heckscher Museum of Art).



Figure 11. 19th Century Romantic Art (Friedrich)



Figure 12. Kipp Mausoleum (Reddan)

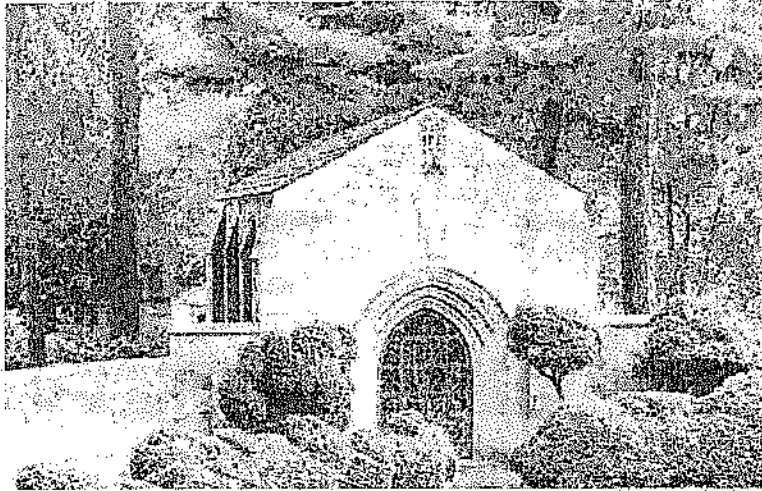


Figure 13. Harkness Mausoleum (National Park Service)

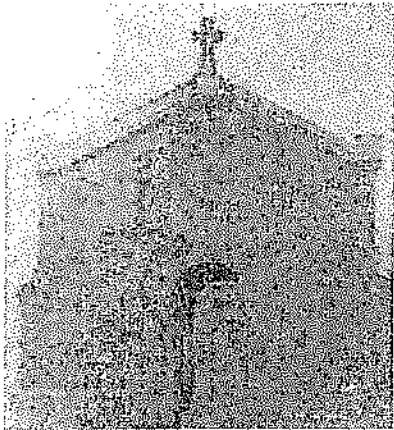


Figure 14. Shiff Mausoleum (Green-Wood at 175)

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