

HP Studio I

Project 3: Woodlawn Cemetery, Bulova Mausoleum

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The Bulova mausoleum, sited near the center of Woodlawn Cemetery in the Myosotis section, was built in 1937 by H. K. Peacock Memorials, Inc.<sup>1</sup> It is 13 feet and 3 inches high, 20 feet and 9 inches wide, and 21 feet and 2.5 inches long. The mausoleum's exterior consists of very large blocks of Texas Pink granite, while its interior room is faced with bookmatched Tennessee Pink marble slabs.<sup>2</sup> The entrance door is cast bronze with glass panes, and the front facade's two windows appear to be cast bronze as well.<sup>3</sup> Two Tiffany-style stained-glass windows frame the interior room. The exterior entrance is flanked by two granite benches that angle out from the front facade, creating a welcoming atmosphere that is mitigated by two lovely but overgrown Japanese Maple trees that almost completely obscure the front facade of the mausoleum. The Bulova mausoleum sits nearly at the center of its lot, which is roughly 30 feet square.<sup>4</sup> It is oriented to the cardinal directions, with the front of the building facing south. The lot has an uneven shape because it abuts a hill immediately to the east, and the mausoleum is slightly built into this hill. The mausoleum faces Walnut Avenue, but is set far back from this street, between and behind two other mausoleums, those of Holzmaister and Smith.<sup>5</sup>

The mausoleum houses eight members of the Bulova family, laid to rest there between 1937 and 1998. Joseph Bulova (1851–1935), the first person to be buried in the mausoleum, immigrated to the United States from Bohemia when he was eighteen and opened a jewelry store in Manhattan on Maiden Lane.<sup>6</sup> This store eventually became the Bulova Watch Company, a large-scale watchmaker with factories in multiple U.S. states as well as Switzerland.<sup>7</sup> The Bulova company created the Accutron, the first fully electronic watch, and was also innovative in its advertising techniques, creating the first radio advertisement in 1926 and the first television commercial in 1941.<sup>8</sup> Joseph's son Arde (1889–1958), who was chairman of the company from 1930 until his death, founded the Joseph Bulova School of Watchmaking in Woodside, Queens, in 1945 to provide employment for disabled WWII veterans.<sup>9</sup> The Bulova Watch Company is still in

operation, although the Bulova family is no longer involved with it.<sup>10</sup> The other occupants of the mausoleum are Joseph's wife, Bertha (1863–1943); four of their daughters, Stella Bulova (1894–1912), Hanna Bulova (1889–1971), Louise Bulova Guilden (1900–98), and Julia Bulowa (1886–1971); and Julia's husband, Hugo Bulowa (1874–1938).<sup>11</sup>

The first thing that struck me about the Bulova mausoleum was its isolation. The hill it's built into, the maple trees planted in front of it, and the two mausoleums that are in front of it all serve to hide the building. Because of these things, I first thought that the Bulovas wanted their mausoleum to be very private. After further research, however, I discovered that the Bulovas were actually unhappy with their site's location, and had plans to make the mausoleum more visible and accessible with plantings and the installation of a path going down the east hill to the building.<sup>12</sup> No evidence of the hill path remains, and the only surviving plants seem to be the Japanese maples. A planting plan from 1937 also shows a path of flagstones that was to lead to the entrance of the mausoleum from Walnut Avenue, of which there are only a couple of remaining stones today.<sup>13</sup>

The front facade of the Bulova mausoleum is symmetrical, as is the back facade. The side facades have some elements of symmetry, but are not completely symmetrical. The interior room is symmetrical on both axes, this being broken only by the entrance door. The crypt and the interior room are the same size, 11 feet and 10 inches wide and 7 feet and 8 inches deep. The size of the crypt is based on its 12 burial spaces, stacked in four horizontal bays of a standard size of 2 feet and 9 inches wide by 7 feet and 8 inches deep.<sup>14</sup> It seems that the interior room's size is based on the size of the crypt, and this in turn shapes the overall form and dimensions of the entire mausoleum.

The mausoleum is built in what I would call a modified Gothic style. In the contract for the mausoleum, Joseph and Bertha Bulova's daughter Louise (who seems to have been the main family member involved in the creation of the mausoleum) requested that the building take certain elements—the buttresses, front step, and roof return—from another mausoleum in Woodlawn, that of Anton Kliegl. The Kliegl mausoleum, built in 1927, is a very Gothic structure, with a pointed-arch doorway and a steep roof with a large cross atop it. The Bulova mausoleum's doorway, on the other hand, has a flattened

arch, and its roof has a less extreme pitch than the Kliegl mausoleum. Also in contrast to the Kliegl mausoleum, the Bulova mausoleum has no overt religious iconography. The Bulovas were a wealthy Jewish family, but they did not choose to be buried in a Jewish cemetery, though, or to have Jewish iconography on their mausoleum.<sup>15</sup> Instead, all of the Bulova mausoleum's decoration, from the doorway to the stained-glass windows to the stone carving above the entrance, is nature-themed, with leaves, vines, and landscapes. Furthering the nature theme are the two stained-glass windows, with a sunrise scene on the east-facing window and a sunset landscape on the west-facing window to catch the light from the sun's daily cycle. Many of the Bulova mausoleum's formal elements—from its flanking benches to the very large granite stones used for the facade and roof to the landscaping—make it a very horizontal, heavy, and earth-bound structure.

Unlike many other mausoleums in Woodlawn, the Bulova mausoleum does not have a window on the same axis as the entrance door, but has its two windows on a cross axis with the entrance. This gives the interior room an added feeling of privacy compared to the exterior facade and benches. A further contrast between the interior and exterior is apparent through the contrast between the very rough, rock-faced granite used on most of the exterior and the smooth, refined marble of the interior room. The entranceway, front step, window frames, and exterior benches are the only smooth-finished elements on the front facade, drawing the visitor to the entrance. At the same time, the entrance door has no handle, and only a very discreet keyhole to allow entry. The Bulova mausoleum sends mixed messages about how welcoming it wants to be.

More than many other mausoleums in Woodlawn, the Bulova mausoleum's design is really a mix of styles and motivations. The building is not only one style, but takes elements from multiple formal sources. It is welcoming in some ways, but isolates itself in others. Its siting is unusual compared to other mausoleums, and when you sit on one of the exterior benches, with the Japanese maples completely obscuring everything else, you feel that you are in the middle of the forest, not a cemetery. The material finishes and construction of the mausoleum's interior and exterior are beautiful, and would probably be hard to replicate today. Although the mausoleum is currently neglected, I would argue for its preservation based on its unique style and atmosphere, as well as its exceptional stone construction.

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<sup>1</sup> H. K. Peacock Memorials, Inc., blueprints of Bulova Mausoleum (Avery Library of Architecture and Fine Arts Archives, Woodlawn Collection).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Records, Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx NY, Lot No. 17246.

<sup>6</sup> "Joseph Bulova, 83, Watchmaker, Dies," *New York Times*, 19 Nov. 1935, accessed on Proquest.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> "The History of Bulova," Bulova company website, <http://www.bulova.com/about/about.aspx#history.aspx>, accessed 16 Oct. 2010.

<sup>9</sup> "Arde Bulova Dies; Watch Firm Head," *New York Times*, 20 Mar. 1958, accessed on Proquest.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

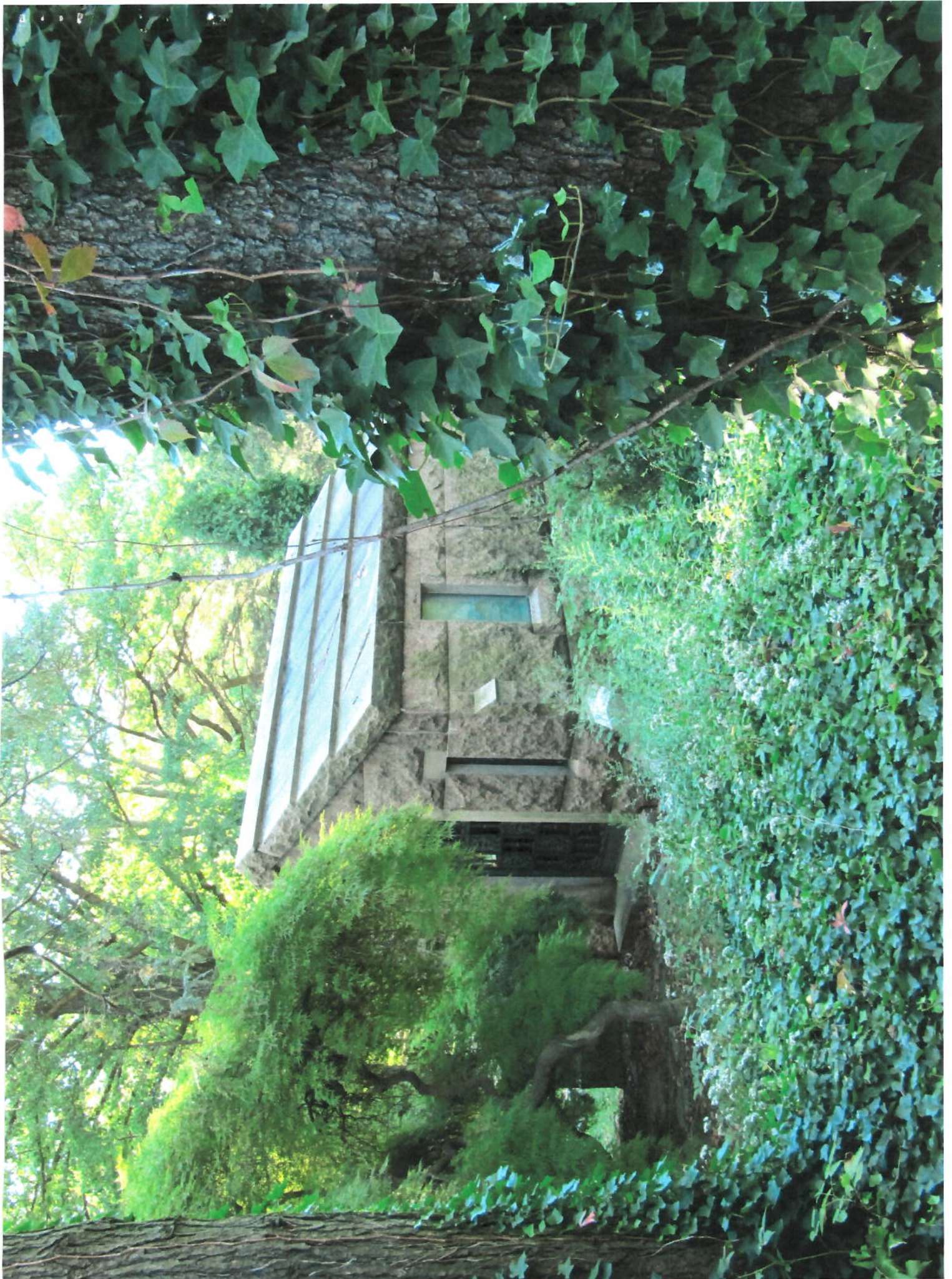
<sup>11</sup> Records of Woodlawn Cemetery for Lot No. 17246.

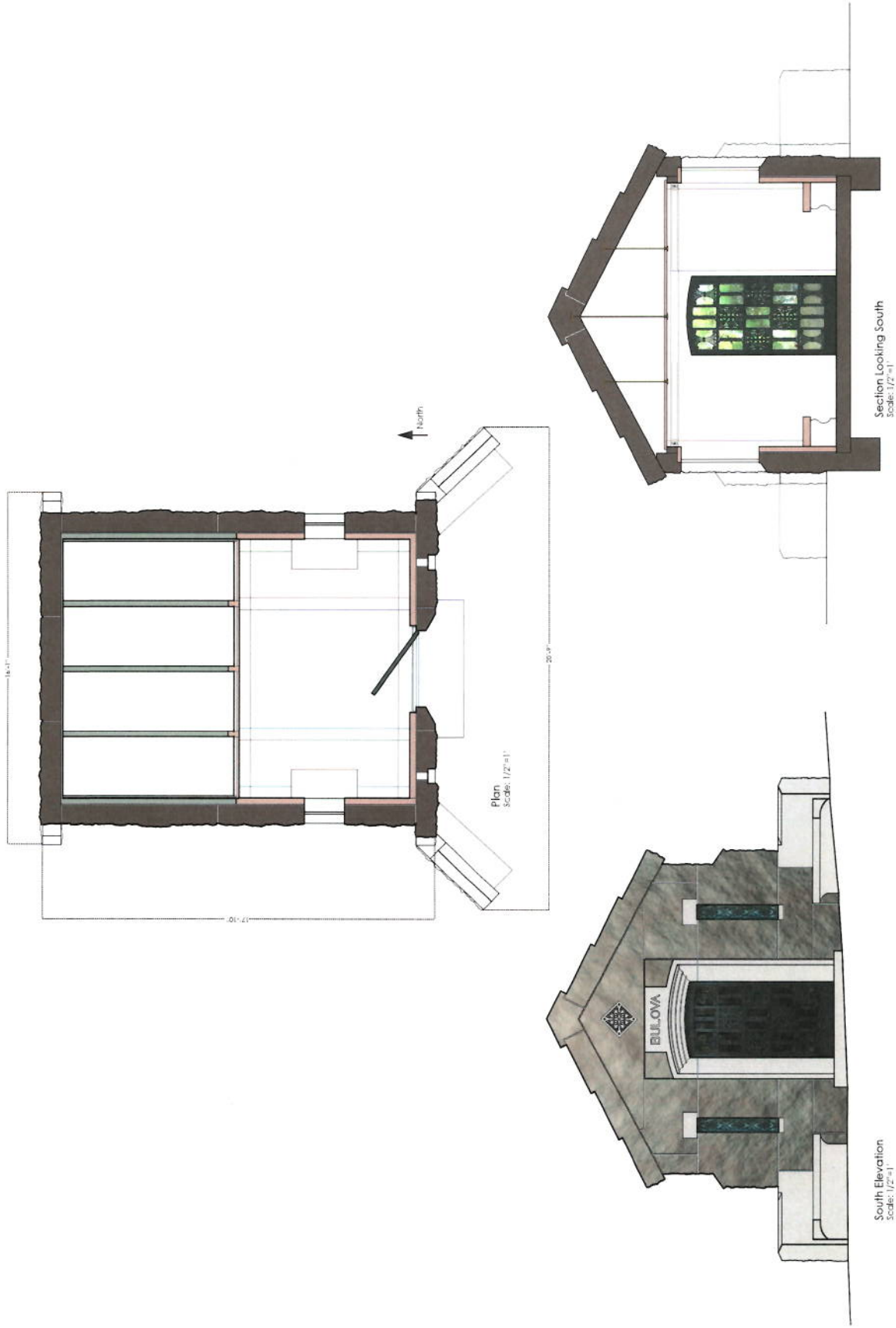
<sup>12</sup> Avery Archives, Woodlawn Collection, correspondence between Woodlawn Cemetery and H. K. Peacock, landscaping plans and order acknowledgment from Rosedale Nurseries in Tarrytown, New York.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Avery Archives, Woodlawn Collection, blueprints of Bulova Mausoleum prepared by H. K. Peacock Memorials, Inc. Standard burial space size explained in conversation with Peacock Memorials.

<sup>15</sup> "Joseph Bulova, 83, Watchmaker, Dies."





### Problem 3: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis of the Bulova Mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery

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 Becca Salgado, October 18, 2010