

My assigned Woodlawn Cemetery mausoleum was built for one Madge Nathan Haas by her parents, Alfred and Mabel Nathan, and her husband, George C. Haas. Madge was born in 1893, and died in during the birth of her second daughter on 2 December, 1915; her body rests in one of two crypts in the mausoleum's floor. Alfred and Mabel Nathan were interred in the south wall of the mausoleum in 1935 and 1938, respectively, and George Haas was laid beside his wife in 1968. George's second wife, Clara S. Haas, was cremated following her death in 1996 (at the age of 101), and her ashes were placed in a niche; there remain four empty crypts, and three unoccupied niches.

George Haas was not a famous man. He was merely a wealthy Westchester stock brokerⁱ, a "Yale man"ⁱⁱ, and a collector/restorer of antique horse-drawn carriagesⁱⁱⁱ. He served with the US army as a colonel in both the first and second World Wars^{iv}. He had two daughters with his first wife, Nancy and Madge^v, one of whom apparently dedicated a historic home in Long Branch, New Jersey, to the memory of her young mother; he had a son, George C. Haas, Jr (also a veteran of WWII)^{vi}, and a daughter, Edith Joan (who dropt out of Vassar to serve with the Red Cross in Korea)^{vii}, with Clara.

Haas and the Nathans commissioned architect Eugène Schoen to build the mausoleum in July, 1916^{viii}. Schoen, a 1901 graduate of Columbia University, was, in 1916, one of the principles of the architecture firm Hedman & Schoen; they had recently completed the new synagogue of Congregation B'nei Sholaum at 401 9th Street, in Park Slope, Brooklyn^{ix}. Other examples of Schoen's work in New York include the Public National Bank of New York building at 106 Avenue C, which was completed in 1923, and designated a historic landmark on 16 September, 2008, and a number of other synagogues around Brooklyn. Later in his career, Schoen began to specialize in interior architecture, teaching the subject at NYU, and designing the RKO theater at Rockefeller Center and well-respected art deco furniture^x.

The Haas/Nathan mausoleum is composed in the style of the Roman Tower of the Winds in Athens —this was not an uncommon style for a mausoleum (indeed, there are several others in this style in Woodlawn), but also likely appealed to Schoen's Art Deco sensibilities. It has eight sides, but is not octagonal; it is a square with the corners cut-off. The exterior is Tennessee Pink limestone, with bronze doors and vents, and lion's head spouts along

the cornice copied directly from those on the Athenian Tower. However, this mausoleum differs significantly from the classical Tower of the Winds in its even more pronounced density and austerity: the elaborate friezes depicting eight flying gods have been replaced by simple garlands, and a faintly raised entablature bearing the words "He Giveth His Beloved Sleep" (Psalm 127:2). The external structural arrangement is intensely vertical and extremely dense: the mausoleum is elevated above the ground, and the viewer's eye is drawn relentlessly upward, without pause or obstruction, by the broad, slightly battered walls and the rather flat, mild friezes, to the very top of the heavy, stepped pyramid roof. The doors and far-overhead grates are recessed, giving no immediate indication of what might be behind them, and a significant detail---the elaborate Art Deco doorframe---is all but invisible till one is standing inside it.

The height and scale of the mausoleum also work to resist up-close understanding; the closer one approaches, the more the fully the roof becomes obscured. One must step back quite a distance in order to take in the structure as a whole, which adds an emotionally "closed" air to the mausoleum's very closed physicality.

The external arrangement of the mausoleum seems to set a viewer up for a particular interior, one that is correspondingly vertical, closed, imposing, angular, and disproportionately tall. But the actual interior is, quite vehemently, none of these things.

The interior is honed Botticini marble, with a barrel-vault ceiling tiled in vivid blue Gustavino glass, which might be read as a reference (however unintentional) to the water-clock in the original Tower; unlike the dense, rough exterior materials, these polished surfaces create a sense of light and lightness. The space is surprisingly rectangular, and the "shelves" of the crypts along the north and south walls render it very strongly horizontal. Rather than upward into an almost sublime obscurity, these horizontal interior lines draw one inward, creating a focal point in the stained glass window in the eastern wall. The broad bench along the eastern wall, in continuing the horizontal line of the crypts, creates a sense of human scale as well as human comfort, perhaps encouraging a visitor to see himself and the crypts on a continuum.

The mausoleum's most striking detail, the glass-tiled barrel-vault ceiling, comes as something of a shock: being at least six feet lower than the apex of the roof, it quite literally brings a visitor up short. Furthermore, because of its startling beauty, and the gentle curve, which suggests it is reaching down toward a visitor, the vaulting is both

lofty and oddly welcoming; like the bench, it lends the space a human scale, and affirms that this mausoleum is a place for the living as well as for the dead.

Though it becomes a focal point for anyone entering the mausoleum, the stained glass window in the eastern wall is something of a mystery: the correspondence between Schoen and Woodlawn Cemetery, and such articles of the correspondence between Schoen and the Harrison Granite Company as were preserved in the cemetery's files, refer only to a "window to be provided by the family."^{xi} It has been set in a granite frame that does not match any other material in the mausoleum, and appears to be significantly obscured (and possibly damaged) by condensation trapped between the window itself and another sheet of glass installed over it at a later date, likely with the intention of protecting the original from weather.

The Haas/Nathan mausoleum sits on a round lot, bordered by a fixed-gravel curb. Now nearly completely obscured by grass, this curb was a matter of some controversy: in May 1917, nine months after the completion of the mausoleum, landscape architects from the firm of Adams & Manning proposed a curb of Tennessee pink limestone, and a matching path leading from the mausoleum to the road; this plan was vetoed by Woodlawn Cemetery, and eventually the compromise of the fixed-gravel curb (no path) was reached^{xii}. The original lot included a grave to the south of the mausoleum; George C. Haas, Jr.'s children, George C. Haas III and an unnamed daughter, were buried there in 1954 and 1956, respectively, having died in infancy, but were disinterred when their father died in July 2002, and moved to his plot in the Kenisco Cemetery in Valhalla, NY^{xiii}. Whether he was personally involved in this particular project (it is unknown), Warren H. Manning's belief in minimally disruptive landscaping and the preservation of existing plant life likely accounts for the very simple landscape architecture (now, a single rhododendron bush).

ⁱ 1930 Census

ⁱⁱ "Auto Crash; Yale Man Hurt: George C. Haas Thrown Into Ditch and His Car Wrecked," *The New York Times*, 17 November, 1907.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Seabrook Coaching Stable Dispersal Auction website.

^{iv} Obituary, "George C. Haas, Broker and Civic Leader, Dead," *The New York Times*, 28 December, 1963.

^v 1930 Census

^{vi} Mount Kisco Veterans Memorial, via HMdb.org, Historical Marker database.

^{vii} "Edith Joan Haas Becomes Fiancée," *The New York Times*, 2 August, 1950

^{viii} Correspondence, Woodlawn Cemetery archives, Avery Library, Columbia University

^{ix} Modernism.com Biography

^x *Ibid.*

^{xi} Correspondence, Woodlawn cemetery archives, Avery Library, Columbia University

^{xii} *Ibid.*

^{xiii} *Ibid.*