

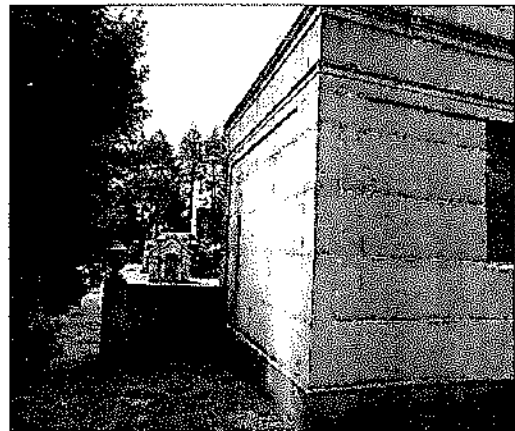
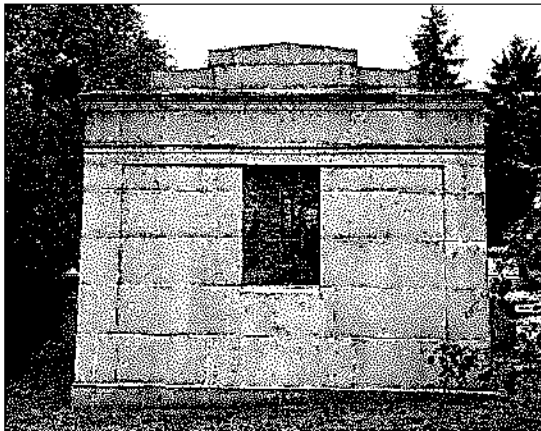
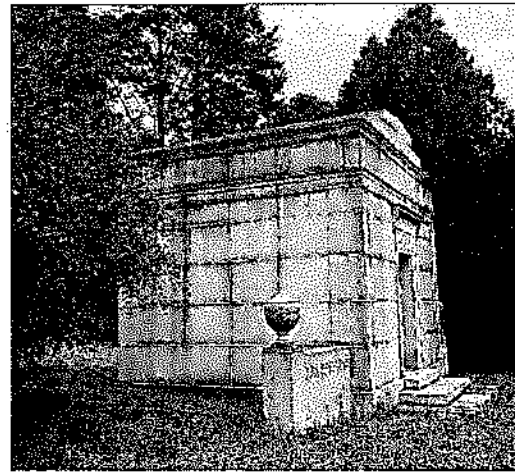
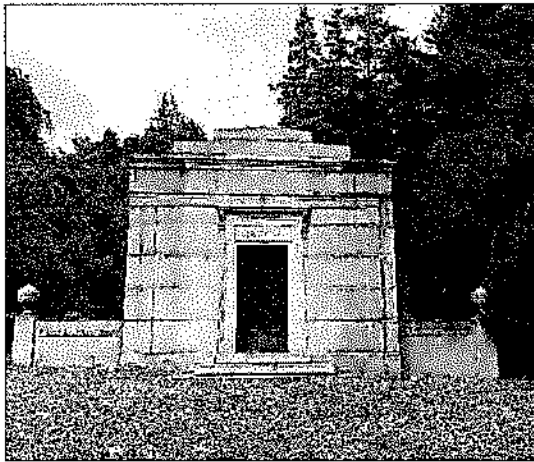
Claire Cancilla

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HP Studio I

22 October 2018

Woodlawn Cemetery: Becker Mausoleum



Figures 1 – 4. Front, Side, and Back View of the Becker Mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery

Biographical Information

Dr. Clayton Adelbert Becker, a medical doctor, banker, and real estate speculator, commissioned the Becker Mausoleum, constructed by the Farrington, Gould & Hoagland Memorial Corporation, in 1929.¹ The corporation was a prolific builder of mausoleums and is credited for at least 175 structures at Woodlawn alone.² Dr. Becker, Lucille Copley Becker (his second wife), and Dr. Becker's grandson Clayton Adelbert Farrar are interred in the mausoleum. Five additional sepulchers appear to be empty.



Figures 5 and 6. Dr. Becker and Lucille Copley Becker³

Dr. Becker was born on July 28th, 1850 near the town of Springwater in Livingston County, New York, and died of kidney cancer at his 330-acre property, Rye Lake Farm in White Plains, New York on October 31st, 1928, at the age of 78.⁴ One of nine children, Dr. Becker was the son of farmer Allen Becker and his wife Mary.⁵ Dr. Becker paid for his education at Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, in Lima, New York, by working as a farmhand.⁶ After working as a teacher for several years, he trained as a physician at New York University Medical Center.⁷ Dr. Becker practiced medicine at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan before opening a private practice office on Park Avenue and 176th Street in 1876.⁸

Dr. Becker was a founder and controlling owner of the Bronx Borough Bank from 1898 until he sold his interest in 1927.⁹ He was also a real estate investor who reportedly advised his patients on investment opportunities before he ceased practicing medicine full-time to focus on investing.¹⁰

Dr. Becker married twice. His first wife, Margaret, was the mother of his daughter Maude, born sometime between 1870 and 1880.¹¹ Margaret died in 1905, and Dr. Becker married Lucille Copley, a widow, in 1906.¹² Lucille had been married to John Victor Clarke from 1888 until his death in 1904.¹³ Dr. Becker lived with Lucille and her three children by her previous marriage until her death in 1921.¹⁴

When he died in 1928, Dr. Becker's estate was valued at \$3,976,754 (more than \$57 million in 2018 dollars), including real estate valued at \$1,549,136. Maude and her son, Clayton Adelbert Farrar (born in 1913), inherited substantial life interests and cash awards.¹⁵

In 1912, Maude, described as "prominent socially," married Henry Thomas Farrar, a "Manager/Buyer" for Henri Bendel.¹⁶ Maude and Henry divorced in the 1930s, and Maude married Baron John

von Leidersdorff of Denmark.¹⁷ The couple lived beyond their substantial means, and when Maud was sued to repay a debt for dresses from Henri Bendel, she objected that she could not "make ends meet on a joint income of \$80,000 a year."¹⁸ In 1937, she faced jail time for her debts when the court rejected her claim that her \$750,000 trust fund "on its face appears to be a substantial amount, yet, nevertheless, it is an amount necessary to maintain dependent in a station to life to which she has become accustomed." The judge responded that "the argument deserves no answer."¹⁹ The couple filed for bankruptcy in 1950, and Maude died soon after, in April 1952.²⁰ She is buried in Virginia.

Maud's son Clayton Adelbert Farrar married Elisabeth Acker (1914-2002), an early aviatrix, in December 1934. Clayton served in World War II and was an attorney in civilian life.²¹ The couple had four children (Clayton Adelbert Farrar Jr., Thomas Farrar, David S. Farrar, and Ann Farrar Browning) and subsequently divorced.²² When Clayton died in November 1978, in Greenwich, Connecticut, he was survived by his children, his second wife, Patricia White Farrar, and three step children.²³ No record has been found to indicate why Clayton was buried with his father and stepmother, rather than with his wife or children.

Materials Analysis:

The mausoleum faces south, towards Pine Street, in the Chestnut Hill section of the cemetery. The H.O Armour Mausoleum is to the northwest and the Bliss Mausoleum is to the west. Several large trees are very close to the mausoleum.

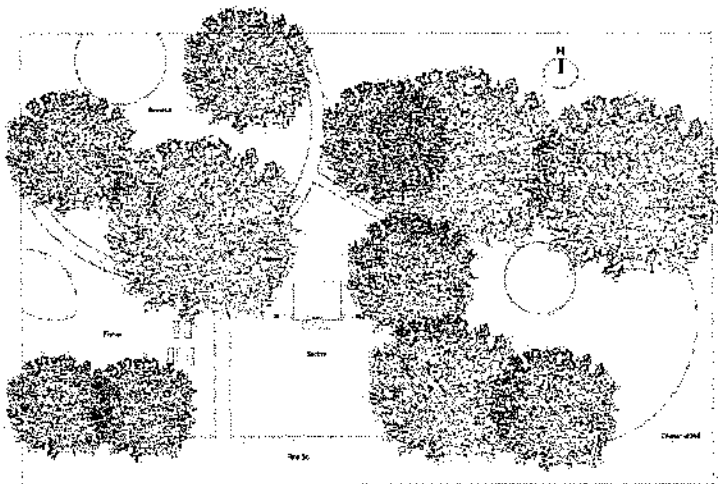


Figure 7. Becker Mausoleum Site Map

The exterior of the Becker mausoleum is comprised of granite blocks. Dr. Becker specified “the best quality” Barre, Vermont granite, to be “fine hammered on all exposed surfaces.”²⁴ Barre granite is not a true granite but a granodiorite, an intermix of quartz and feldspars that has a finer grain structure than true granite.²⁵ Barre granite was a favorite building material of Farrington, Gould & Hoagland.²⁶

The interior exposed surfaces of the mausoleum are clad with polished pink Tennessee marble, which can actually be a form of limestone.²⁷ It contains impurities that resemble the veins in marble, but are more likely to be carbonite deposits or other impurities in the sediments.²⁸

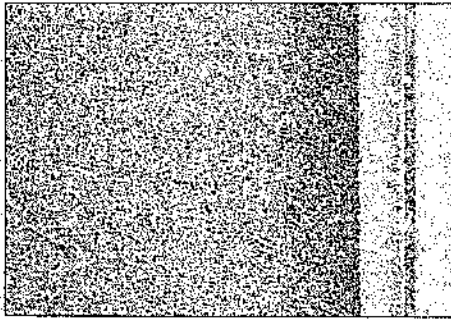


Figure 8. Granite on the exterior.

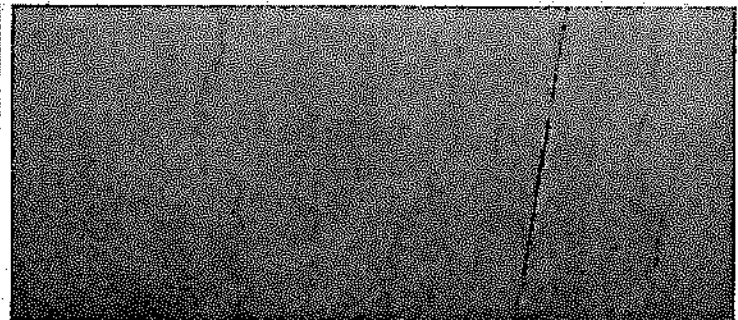
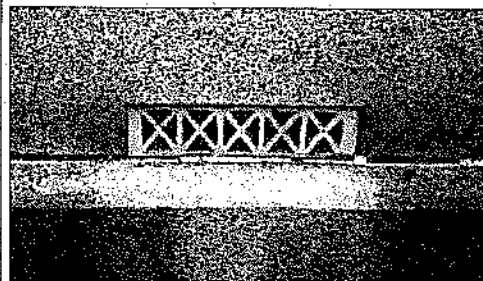
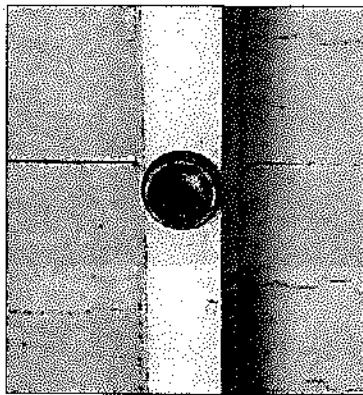


Figure 9. Tennessee Pink Marble on the interior

There are eight exterior vents on the east and west facing walls, covered with what is likely a bronze screen and grille. Ventilation is “further provided for by two ceiling ventilation hangers in the corridor of the mausoleum.” The purpose of these interior hangers was to connect to the exterior ventilations to promote airflow.²⁹



Figures 10 and 11. Interior bronze hanger and exterior bronze vent

The door is made of regulation U.S standard composition bronze, which is also used in the window frame, fourteen catacomb rosettes, a pair of operating handles, two ceiling hangers, and eight exterior vents.³⁰ These features are likely bronze as they are non-magnetic when tested with a magnet,

and many of the features have oxidized to a green shade which is indicative of the presence of copper, a component in bronze. The structure of the interior is anchored and doweled with copper anchors.

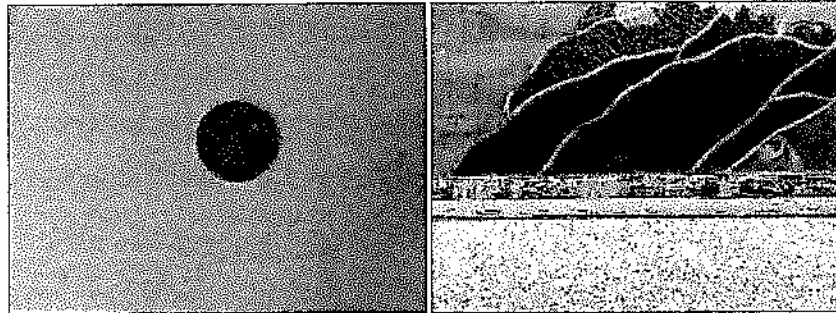
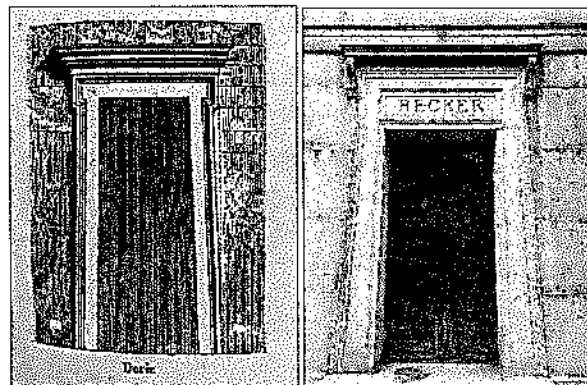


Figure 12. Interior anchor and exterior window frame

The mortar of the structure may have lime in it. The mausoleum is laid in Atlas Portland and White Atlas non-staining cement. Dr. Becker instructed that “the proportion of one-part cement to two parts of clean sharp sand carefully mixed dry, then water added and thoroughly cleaned and wet, then the cement spread, then the next stone let down into the cement.”³¹

Architectural Style:

The mausoleum is designed in an austere classical style, characterized by symmetry and spare Classical elements, not including columns. The entire structure has a simple cornice at the top. Above the entablature is a shallow peak attic. The entrance to the mausoleum is a Doric doorway. The frame has inclined jambs making the opening wider at the base than at the top, although the door itself does not have this feature.



Figures 13 and 14. Drawing of a Doric doorway³² and the Becker front door

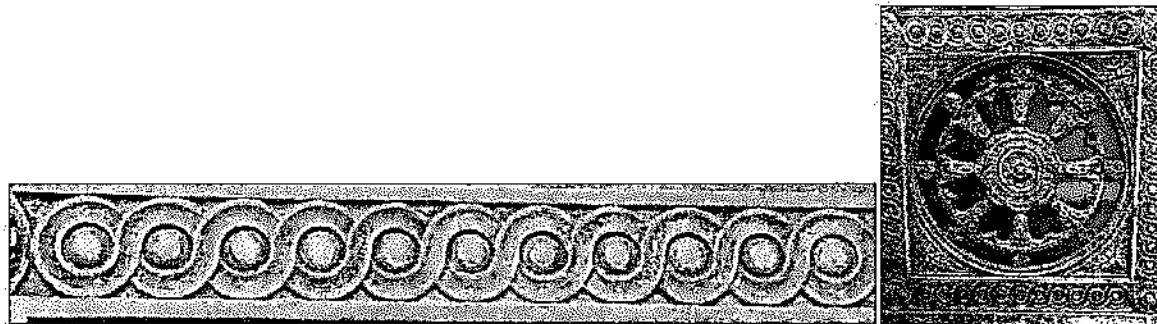
There is a decorative, art-stained glass window at the back of the structure that is likely a symbolic river of life scene. It is possible that the window is Tiffany, as glass designed by Tiffany

Studios is common at Woodlawn.³³ There is no craftsman's mark on the window, however, and there is no comprehensive list of Tiffany glass so it is not possible to definitively state the window's origin.³⁴



Figures 15 and 16. Interior view of stained glass and exterior view of stained glass

The bronze door has ten decorative panels, each of which is outlined with guilloche, an ornament formed by bands twisted over each other in a "continuous series, leaving circular openings which are often filled with round ornaments."³⁵



Figures 17 and 18. Bronze door detail and panel

The mausoleum is symmetrical, with two low decorative walls extending from the East and West facing sides of the mausoleum. A decorative granite urn rests on a plinth at the end of each wing. Frets, a decorative feature consisting of continuous "lines arranged in rectangular forms," are engraved on either wing.³⁶

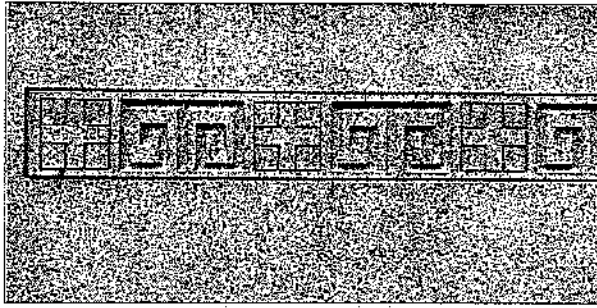


Figure 19. Fret detail



Figure 20. West-facing wing

Condition:

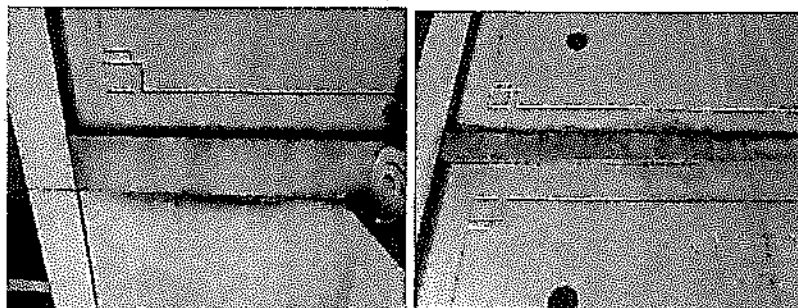
Dr. Becker provided \$5,000 in his will for “perpetual upkeep,” but damage to the mausoleum indicates that it requires additional maintenance and repairs.³⁷ There is a good deal of dark staining on the structure, including on the surface of the stairs, the tops of the wings on either side, and around the mortar lines and cornices on all faces of the mausoleum. Additionally, the mortar between the granite blocks on the building, on all sides, has the appearance of “dripping” down the mausoleum.



Figure 21. West-Facing Wall Damage

This “dripping” effect is likely the result of water damage. Water likely entered the interior of the mausoleum and escaped through the easiest path of travel – in this case likely through open joists of the mortar. As the water travels through the stone, it picks up contaminants and soluble components of the mortar. The white may be a calcite deposit, left behind from evaporated water on the surface of the stone.

In the interior, there is staining, possibly from previous water damage, and additional dripping down the side of the sarcophaguses on either side of the mausoleum. This is also likely also the result of moisture deposits within the interior of the mausoleum. This water damage, both on the interior and exterior, suggests long-term issues with water infiltration.



Figures 22 and 23. West facing interior damage

ENDNOTES

- ¹ "Extract from the Will of Clayton Adelbert Becker," Woodlawn Cemetery Records, Avery Architecture and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University, Major Monuments Records, Box 1: Folder 85
- ² "Major Monuments Records," Woodlawn Cemetery Archives, Avery Architecture and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University, accessible via <https://library.columbia.edu/locations/avery/da/collections/woodlawn.html>
- ³ "1920 passport application, Lucille Copley Becker": National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), 20 Jan 1920-21, Jan 1920, Ancestry.com.
- ⁴ "C. Adelbert Becker, Banker, Dies at 78," *The New York Times*, 2 November 1928.; "Directory of Deceased American Physicians, 1804-1929", "Paid Death Notices," *The New York Times*, November 2nd, 1928.; Becker Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery, The Bronx, New York.
- ⁵ United States Census, Richmond, Ontario County, New York, 1860, digital image s.v "Allen Becker," Ancestry.com.
- ⁶ "C. Adelbert Becker, Banker, Dies at 78."
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid. Becker sold his interest to the Bank of Manhattan Company, which subsequently absorbed the Bronx Borough Bank.
- ¹⁰ "Auction Dr. Becker's Bronx Estate, June 15," *New York Herald Tribune* (1926-1962); May 11, 1929.
- ¹¹ Dr. Becker and Maude travelled to Jamaica in 1906. The ship manifesto lists Maude's age as 27, indicating she was born in approximately 1879. See "1906 Arrivals: New York, New York," image s.v "Becker," Ancestry.com. Maude's obituary, however, states her year of birth as 1872. See "Virginia Deaths, 1912-2014," Virginia Department of Health, digital image s.v "Maude Becker," Ancestry.com.
- ¹² United States Census, Bronx Assembly District 32, New York, New York, 1910, digital image s.v. "C. A. Becker," Ancestry.com.; *Becker v. McCrea*, N.Y. Supreme Ct. (Aug. 2, 1910), para. 114.
- ¹³ United States Census, Manhattan, New York, New York, 1900, digital image s.v "C. A. Becker," Ancestry.com.; "Death Notices," *The New York Tribune* (1900-1910), June 10th, 1904. Proquest Historical Newspapers, pg 9.
- ¹⁴ The children were John V. Clarke Jr. (born approximately 1889), Copley Clarke (born approximately 1892), and Corrie Clarke (born approximately 1891). See 1910 United States Census.; Becker Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery, The Bronx, digital record, FindaGrave.com.
- ¹⁵ "Sale of Dr. Becker's Land Will Attract Builders, Investors," *New York Herald Tribune* (1926-1962); May 19, 1929.
- ¹⁶ "Former Norwell Man Takes as His Bride the Daughter of a New York Physician and Banker," *Boston Daily Globe* (1872-1922); Nov 16, 1912. "WWI Registration Records," Registration State: *New York*; Registration County: *New York*; Roll: *1786820*; Draft Board: *158*, Digital Image s.v "Henry Farrar," Ancestry.com.
- ¹⁷ 1940 United States Census, New York, New York, digital image s.v "Henry Farrar."; "Maude von Leidersdorff Obituary," *The New York Times* (1923-Current file); Apr 7, 19525.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ "Baron's Farm Status Put to Courts."; Baroness Faces Jail Over Bill for Gowns," *The New York Times*, June 20, 1937.
- ²⁰ "Maude von Leidersdorff Obituary."
- ²¹ "Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946," digital image s.v, "Clayton Adelbert Farrar," Ancestry.com
- ²² "Deaths, Harrison, Elisabeth Acker."
- ²³ "Obituary 6," *The New York Times* (1923 - current file), November 20th, 1978.
- ²⁴ "Last Will and Testament of Clayton Adelbert Becker," Woodlawn Cemetery Records, Avery Architecture and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University, Major Monuments Records, Box 1: Folder 85, pg 2.
- ²⁵ "The Barre Backstory," Barre Granite Assn. (undated).
- ²⁶ *American Stone Trade*, Vol. 21 (Jan. 1922), p. 15
- ²⁷ Wayne G. Powell, "Tennessee Marble" (City University of New York, undated).
- ²⁸ Charles Gordon, *The Marbles of Tennessee* (State of Tennessee Geological Survey, 1911), pg. 18.
- ²⁹ "Last Will and Testament of Clayton Adelbert Becker."
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Ibid, 36.
- ³³ "Major Monuments Records," Woodlawn Cemetery Archives, Avery Architecture and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University, accessible via <https://library.columbia.edu/locations/avery/da/collections/woodlawn.html>

³⁴ "Louis Comfort Tiffany Documents and Archival Materials," Corning Museum of Glass (undated), <https://libanswers.cmog.org/loader.php?fid=9013&type=1&key=223f0b03943f51d0db5614849075eae4>

³⁵ Ibid, 269.

³⁶ Ibid, 234.

³⁷ "Extract from the Will of Clayton Adelbert Becker," Woodlawn Cemetery Records, Avery Architecture and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University, Major Monuments Records, Box 1: Folder 85

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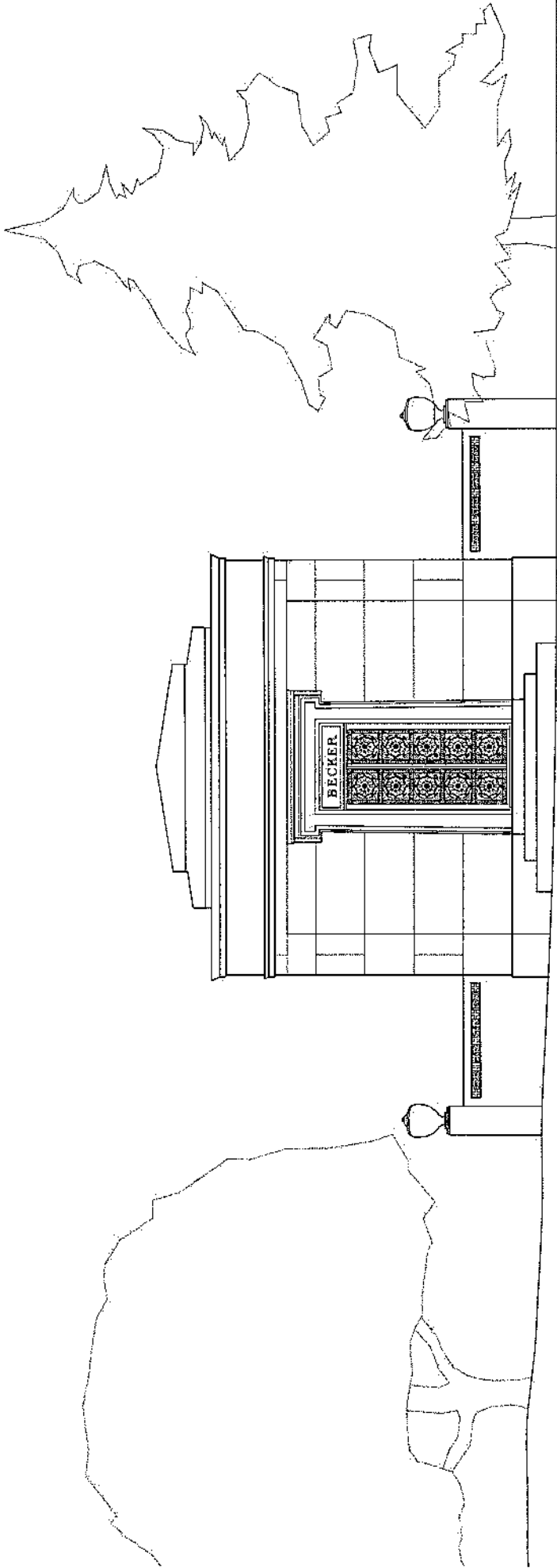
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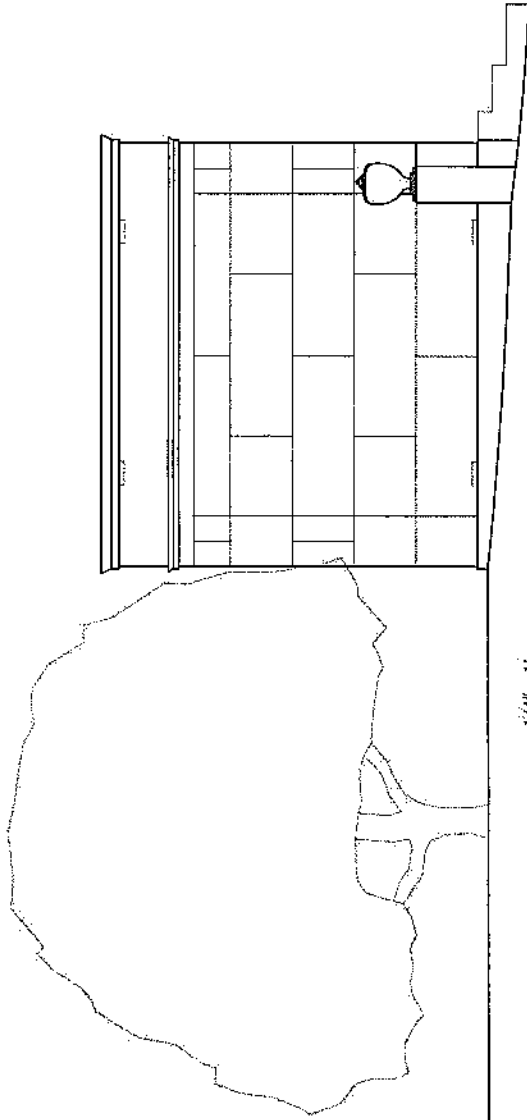
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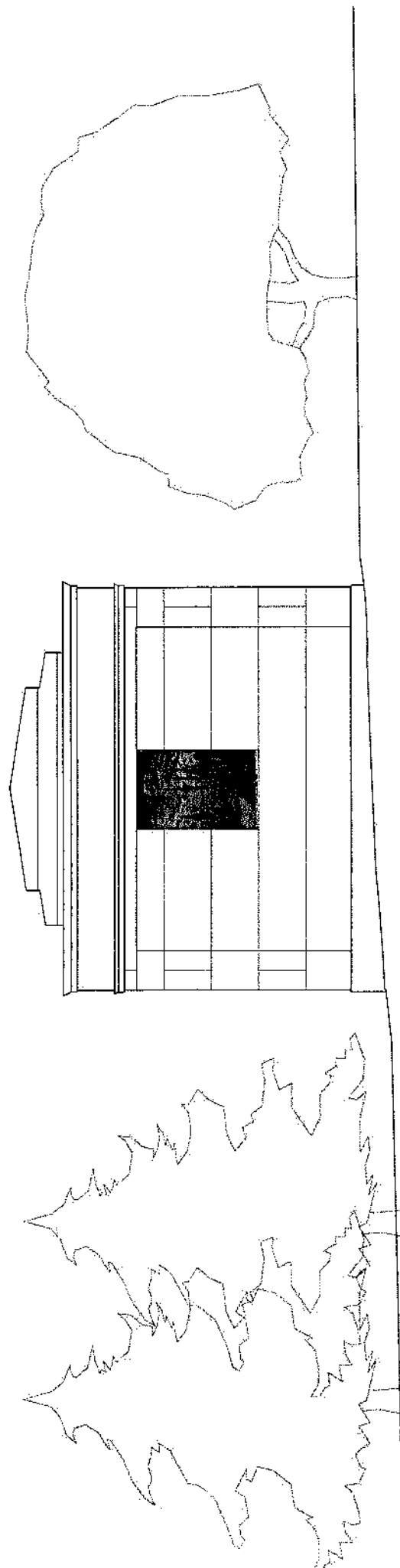


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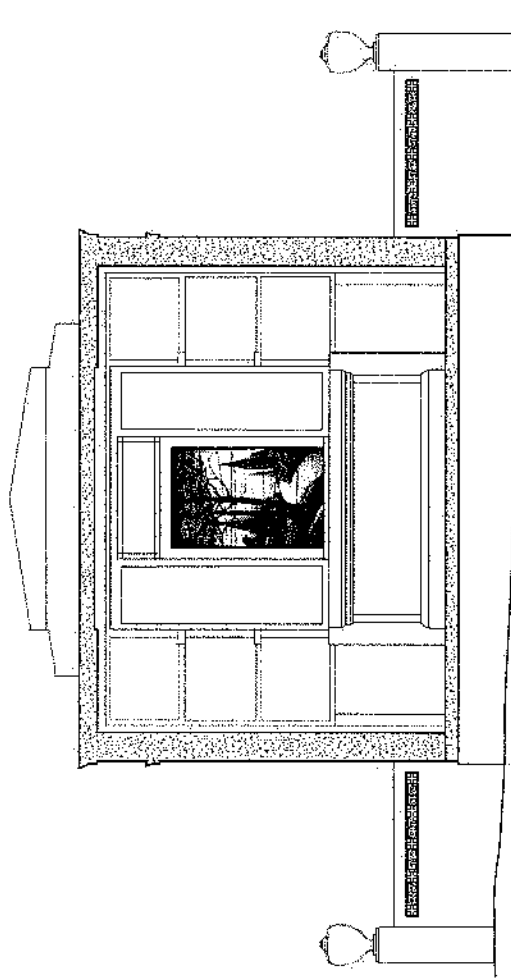
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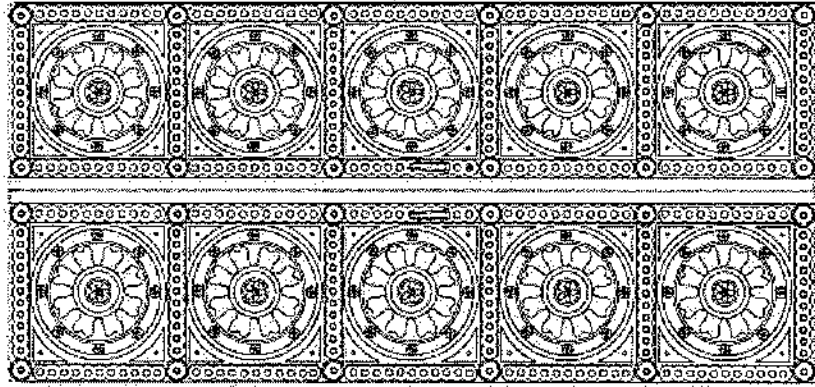
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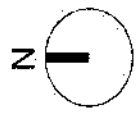
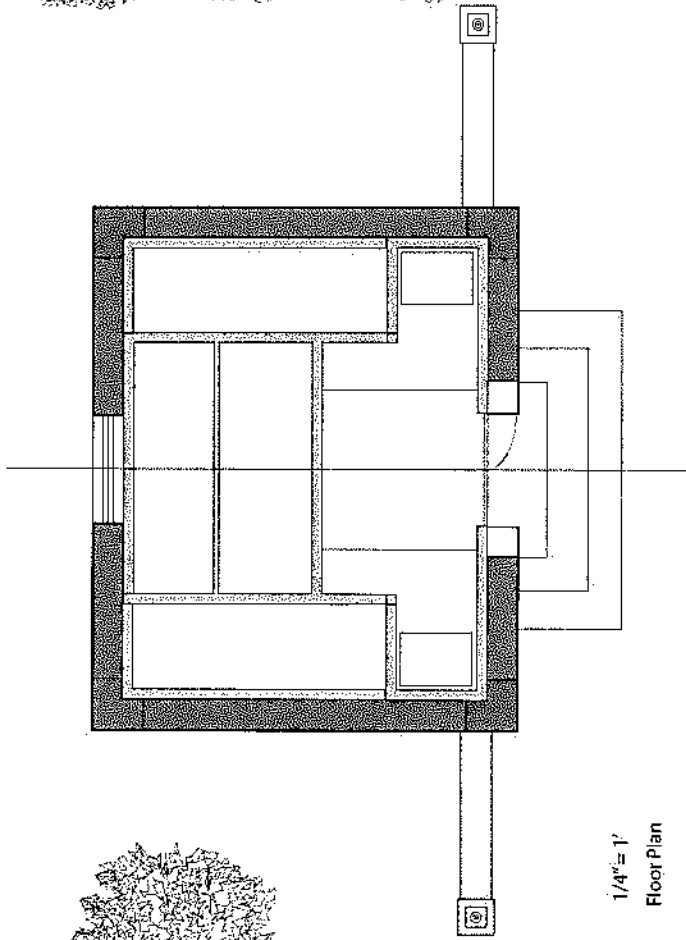
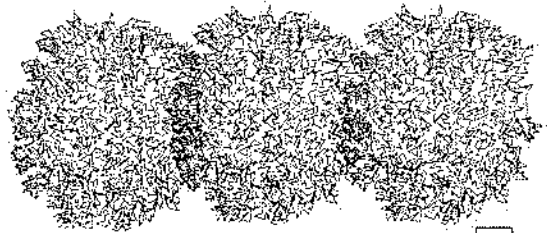


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Section Facing North



1/4" = 1'
Section Facing North





1/4" = 1'
Floor Plan



