

## COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY HISTORIC PRESERVATION STUDIO 1 - FALL 2014

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### John H. Harbeck Mausoleum

#### *Biography*

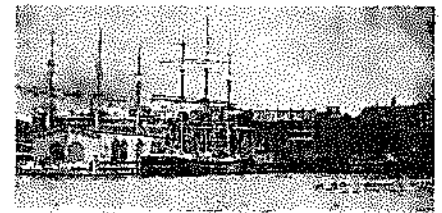
John Henry Harbeck (circa 1839 – 1910) and Kate Alice Harbeck (1859 – 1930) are interred in the John H. Harbeck mausoleum. Born into wealth, John Harbeck's father William Harbeck was a founding partner of the Harbeck Stores in the Fourteenth Ward of Brooklyn. These storehouses unloaded cargo off of incoming ships and re-loaded the cargo onto rail cars for distribution. John Harbeck worked on Wall Street in a financial position for insurance companies, which was an early form of securities. He invested his inheritance into storehouses in Colorado and railroad stocks, and was one of a select group of Americans to have a bank account in Paris. Traveling through Europe, attending horse races, and owning homes in multiple states, John Harbeck lived extravagantly. Historical newspapers have documented his pseudo-marriage to Caroline Montgomery more than his business endeavors. A relationship that lasted seven years starting in 1870, John Harbeck introduced Caroline Montgomery as his "wife" to friends and she joined him on his European escapades. Harbeck started having an "affair" with Kate Hammel, who was introduced to him by Montgomery. Kate Hammel is described as a "young, pretty, unemployed telegraph operator." Harbeck married Hammel in the 1880s and a disgruntled Montgomery filed suit for divorce. The Supreme Court of New York decided Montgomery didn't have a case because she was never officially married to Harbeck. Harbeck and Hammel lived happily in Boulder, Colorado for most of the year. En route to Paris, Harbeck stopped in New York, contracted a cold which progressed into pneumonia, ultimately leading to his death at the Plaza Hotel on November 8, 1910. Commissioning his mausoleum in the 1910s, Kate Harbeck selected Carrere and Hastings as the architect. After Carrere's death in 1911 and the re-organization of the firm, Theodore E. Blake of Thomas Hastings & Theodore E. Blake Associated Architects became the principal designer.

#### *Building Description and Analysis*

One approaches the building from the north and enters through two large dark bronze doors, inspired by the doors of the Baptistry of Saint John by Lorenzo Ghiberti. The doors in sharp contrast to the light granite blocks mark a clear entry point and sets up the vertical axis

JOHN HENRY HARBECK  
DIED  
NOVEMBER 8, 1910

*Hand tracing of engraved name and date of death on marble sarcophagus.*



Harbeck Stores.

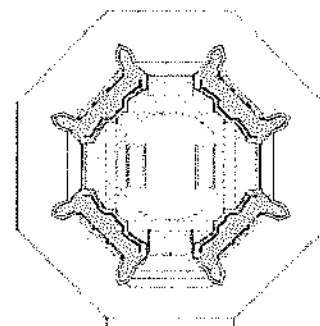
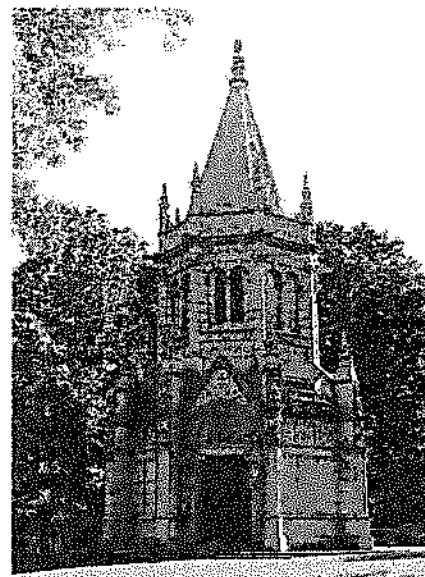
*Main warehouses between the Fulton and South ferries ca. 1880.*

of the building. This vertical axis is the main design element, which is segmented into three massings. The overall form is an extruded symmetrical octagon with alternating window faces and capped with a steep octagonal pinnacle.

The mausoleum is sited in the center of its oval shaped plot being setback 38 feet on each side and 60 feet on the front and back. Its entry faces the interior of the cemetery, oriented to the northeast entry. The entire plot is offset by streets with the adjacent plots facing the mausoleum. The mausoleum has a unique oval shape plot while most of the other plots are circular. The only landscaping consists of two trees at the back of the mausoleum, which do not appear on the historical aerial views. There is a landscape planting plan for 1916 including trees and shrubbery; however, none of this exists. The angles of the octagonal base further emphasize the buildings dissociation with the landscape. The present landscaping addition of 2 anterior trees significantly alters the perception of the building. As Woodlawn cemetery expanded, the entry at the Jerome Avenue gate became more prominent, but the building turns its back to the gate.

Approaching from the north, the entrance establishes the main axis of the building capped off by a large Tiffany stained glass window behind a white marble altar on a raised platform. The entry sequence orients the visitor to the polychrome painted stained glass window which depicts the risen Christ ascending into heaven and accompanying saints. The three stained glass windows dominate a vibrant and geometric interior. The windows are placed on the 90 degree and straight forward views of the visitor. They are arranged in a formation that allows light from the sunrise to enter the east window, light from the midday sun to animate the central window, and the sunset to illuminate the west window. The main interior elements are the two engraved marble sarcophagi, an altar, four candelabras, and a suspended golden metal lantern light. The sarcophagi are oriented to absorb the light shining through the central window. All the interior marble has a polished finish without any engravings except for the sarcophagi. From the exterior vents, the building has a cavity wall system in order to remove moisture. Stacked blocks of granite reinforce the shape of the building.

The plan is octagonal and symmetrical in both axes. Above the datum of the octagon, the circular plan of the raised dome is inscribed in a square which implants the placement of four pilasters. These pilasters resolve the issue of the excess space around the edges of the circle in the square. The main design principle of the façade is three distinct



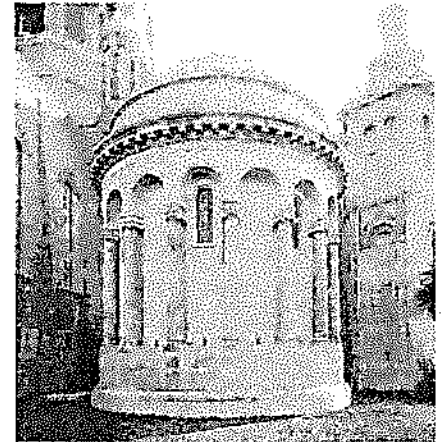
*Top: Front elevation photograph.  
Bottom: Plan cut through windows.*

vertical massings. The setbacks between the massings create a layered effect. The buttresses provide a unifying element between the base and middle massing. Their alignment is echoed through the rising of the Corinthian pilasters of the middle massing.

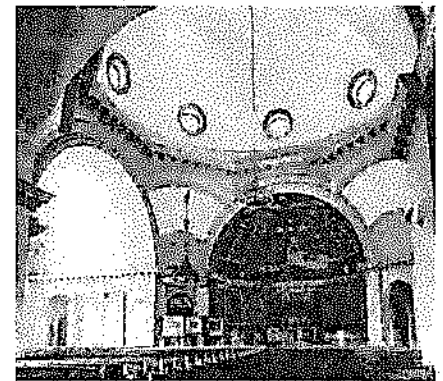
The recessed and octagonal roof creates the final massing element. With coffered designs and sharp edges, the lines climax with the urn statuary on top. The main pinnacle is surrounded by eight smaller pinnacles located at the vertices of the octagon. The mausoleum is adorned with lavish ornamentation. Gargoyles act as brackets for the gutter system, acanthus leaves of the Corinthian capitals support the horizontals, and stacked urns cap off the piers. Heraldry of dragons is placed above the entry pediment and a scene with seagulls and mermaids is placed within the inscribed arch. Foliage is carved into the buttresses and friezes.

### *Design History and Precedents*

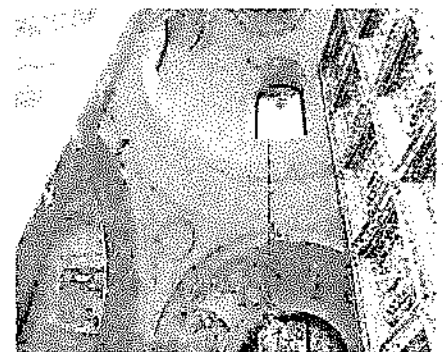
The prominent firm McKim, Mead, and White hired two young students from the Ecole nationale superieure des Beaux-Arts John Mervin Carrere and Thomas Hastings for an apprenticeship in the early 1880s. In 1885, Carrere and Hastings started their own firm and designed commercial, residential, institutional, religious, hospitality and civic buildings including their first project the Ponce de Leon Hotel (1885-1887) and perhaps most notable the New York Public Library (1897-1911). Utilizing their classical and beaux-arts training, Hastings and Blake designed the Harbeck Mausoleum in the classical style with Gothic and Romanesque ornamentation. Ideal geometry schemes were used in earlier Carrere and Hastings designs such as the World War I Memorial (1907), Flagler Memorial Presbyterian Church Mausoleum (1890), and conceptual drawing for a monument in Woodlawn (1890). These forms reflect the classical principles of philosophy. The ideal geometry asserts itself over the landscape as humans demarcate their settlements above the landscape. Each precedent sits on a platform as does the Harbeck Mausoleum to further emphasize departure from the landscape, entering a world where you are elevated vertically. In the Harbeck Mausoleum and in the Flagler Mausoleum, the configuration of the windows draws the eye up the wall to the apex of the dome. This creates a sensation of other-worldliness, or encountering the heavenly realm. The window niche half domes in the Harbeck Mausoleum open up to a full dome as similarly in the First Church of Christ, Scientist (1908), and the Central Congressional Church (1891). In both these precedents, the void above the window cuts into the dome to allow more light to reflect into the interior as can be seen in the Harbeck Mausoleum.



*Flagler Memorial Presbyterian Church Mausoleum, Carrere & Hastings, 1890.*



*Central Congressional Church, Carrere & Hastings, 1891*



*Interior photograph John H. Harbeck Mausoleum, 1912.*

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