

# Paladino Mausoleum

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The Paladino mausoleum, located in the Ash plot towards the north-western part of Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NY rises almost 50 feet high, well above some of the treetops in the surroundings, acting as a landmark within the surroundings (fig 1). It is a three-leveled structure, replete with repeated columns, pilasters, and statues. An ornate structure, it is meant to draw the eye immediately to it, proclaiming the worth of the owner rather than inviting quiet contemplation.

The structure, originally built in 1902, was not commissioned by the currently interred Paladino family, but by Elizabeth Wiesen upon the death of her husband, Henry. A well-off grocer in the Bronx, he specified in his will that he wanted a plot in Woodlawn Cemetery to be purchased and a mausoleum erected that would cost no less than \$25,000 (at the time a large sum of money), in order for his wife to inherit the rest of the estate.<sup>1</sup> Thus, she commissioned Joseph Havender Sr., owner of Joseph Havender Monumental works, to design the mausoleum. The final bill was reported by the New York Times to be slightly over \$27,000, and to have eaten up a large part of the estate.<sup>2</sup>

The structure Joseph Havender designed is unlike most mausoleums in the area, and even unlike the other 16 mausoleums he designed in the cemetery, including his own. Designed in 1902, the mausoleum is one of his earliest designs (the rest not appearing until about 1908)<sup>3</sup>, and pulls strongly on the Baroque for inspiration. The structure is a square, with protruding sections at 45 degrees at each corner. In plan, at the ground level, it essentially creates a square joined with a cross. Around the base are two stairs, which then join with the walls of the mausoleum. The corners then become Tuscan columns that rise out of large bases with a scroll extension, and their capitals form the end of the first level. At the next level rise another set of columns – with composite capitals and a Corinthian entablature – centered on the first level Tuscan columns. The third level draws inward, creating a

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from Will of Henry Wiesen. Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

<sup>2</sup> "Affection for the Dead Sometimes Assumes Rather Odd Forms in Cemeteries About New York." New York Tribune (1900-1910), Jan 18, 1903.

<sup>3</sup> As per the Woodlawn Archives

catafalque of concentric squares, surmounted by a 10 foot tall statue of a woman with a cross – supposedly meant to symbolize the widow's grief.<sup>4</sup>

The use of the two orders of columns is a classical Roman form, used on many buildings in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – although this is a slight variation as usually the orders would be more sequential – here two entire orders have been skipped. The building draws more heavily on aesthetics of the Baroque in its use of elaborate ornamentation. The use of rounded arches with a heavy keystone is also drawn upon heavily – noted around the doorway of the mausoleum, and again repeated on the second level, where a flat arch supported by two Tuscan columns frames a statue. This idea of repetition is key throughout the façade of the mausoleum, and is used to create a symmetrical structure that can be approached from any side and still make a statement about wealth and power. Unlike most of the structures in the cemetery, which have a clear entrance, this mausoleum is meant to stand as a statue would – a work of art in the landscape. The mausoleum draws its massing from the church steeple form, such as that of St. Martin's Cathedral (fig 2), or the plans from James Gibb's book *A Book of Architecture*, which show the potential variations of the symmetrical structure – including a square plan that is a close match for the second level plan of the mausoleum (fig 3).

The mausoleum combines repetition and symmetry with seriality – the statues, for instance, are not exactly the same. Above the entrance is an angel – and around the sides are the three theological virtues: Hope (pictured with an anchor), Faith (pictured with a key), and Charity (holding a flowering wreath). These are religious symbols, attempting to confer a greater sense of religion upon those entombed below. Topping off these statues is the uppermost one symbolizing the widow's grief.

Emphasizing this repetition is the use of different finishes of granite on the mausoleum. The specification sheet from the file indicates Barre Granite, from Vermont, for the entire exterior structure.<sup>5</sup> While most of the structure has a honed finish, the columns and pilasters are all of polished

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<sup>4</sup> "Affection for the Dead Sometimes Assumes Rather Odd Forms in Cemeteries About New York." *New York Tribune* (1900-1910), Jan 18, 1903.

<sup>5</sup> "Specification Sheet". Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

granite, which emphasizes the repetition of these forms throughout the building. It also serves to accentuate the diagonal intersections of the outer columns with the rectangular form of the main structure – emphasized further as the urns at the top 4 diagonals are also made of polished granite. Looking at the structure of the mausoleum emphasizes even further how important it was for this to be a spectacle for passers-by – the interior room of the mausoleum only takes up the first level. The second and third levels are entirely gratuitous and unnecessary to the housing of the catacombs, and therefore there purely for decoration.

The siting of the mausoleum is no accident either – although there was no planned landscaping, it is on a corner with no trees growing immediately around it to compete with its height. In comparison to the other mausoleums around this corner, the monument towers over them. It is at least twice the height of the other two large mausoleums at the northwest and southwest corners, and thus draws the eye. The direct approach to the door is accomplished by two shallow stairs framed by two large urns, also made of polished granite, and a 1-person wide, less than six-foot-long path, are all that direct one's approach to the structure's entrance. It is as if the interior really was not to be made much of, and thus not worth a monumental approach.

The interior has been rebuilt by the current family, but originally was of Italian marble and contained just two catacombs – those of Henry Wiesen and his wife.<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Wiesen however, citing poverty, asked for a court order in 1923 to sell the mausoleum.<sup>7</sup> When she finally sold it to Christopher Munnich, a chauffer, Henry Wiesen's body was dug up and placed in a new, smaller plot on the opposite side of the mausoleum.<sup>8</sup> Two years later, Christopher Munnich then sold to the Paladino brothers: Anthony, Frank, and James, owners of the Paladino Contracting Company.<sup>9</sup> Frank Paladino wrote a letter to Robert Caterson for the reconstruction of the interior to accommodate 8 people, and drew up a

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<sup>6</sup> "Interior Plan". Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

<sup>7</sup> "Wants to Sell Husband's \$25,000 Tomb to Relieve Poverty, Singer Tells Court". *New York Times* (1857-1922): June 3, 1922.

<sup>8</sup> Record of Interments: Lot No. North West Part 15395. Woodlawn Cemetery Records

<sup>9</sup> Record of Interments: Lot No. North West Part 15395. Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

new layout of the plots around the mausoleum.<sup>10</sup> The result is a squeezing of the original rectangular space created by Joseph Havender. The new catacombs are placed directly up against and perpendicular to the oval windows that were centered on the side walls of the mausoleum. The space is cramped, and does not provide for much space inside for personal recollection. Within the mausoleum are all three Paladino brothers, Anthony and James' wives, and under the floor their parents and older brother – who died before the plot was purchased. Frank's wife, Jennie, is buried just outside the mausoleum, to the right of the path up to the door. To the left side of the door is Anna Paladino, one of James' daughters. The remaining plots are given in part to 3 infants, and to James' other daughters: Helen Connell (buried with her husband, William R. Connell, an engineer, and their son, William J. Connell), Mimi Paladino, and Mary Livingston (who died in 2014 and is buried with her husband, Mort Livingston).

The mausoleum is well-maintained – the latest burial was in 2014. The front urns are filled with flowers – during the Wiesen ownership they were filled with evergreens, but were meant to be filled with something. The Paladinos have made no alterations to the exterior of the structure, and thus it still stands as a work of art in the landscape – and imposing figure made for display of wealth.

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<sup>10</sup> Letter to Robert Caterson. Woodlawn Cemetery Records

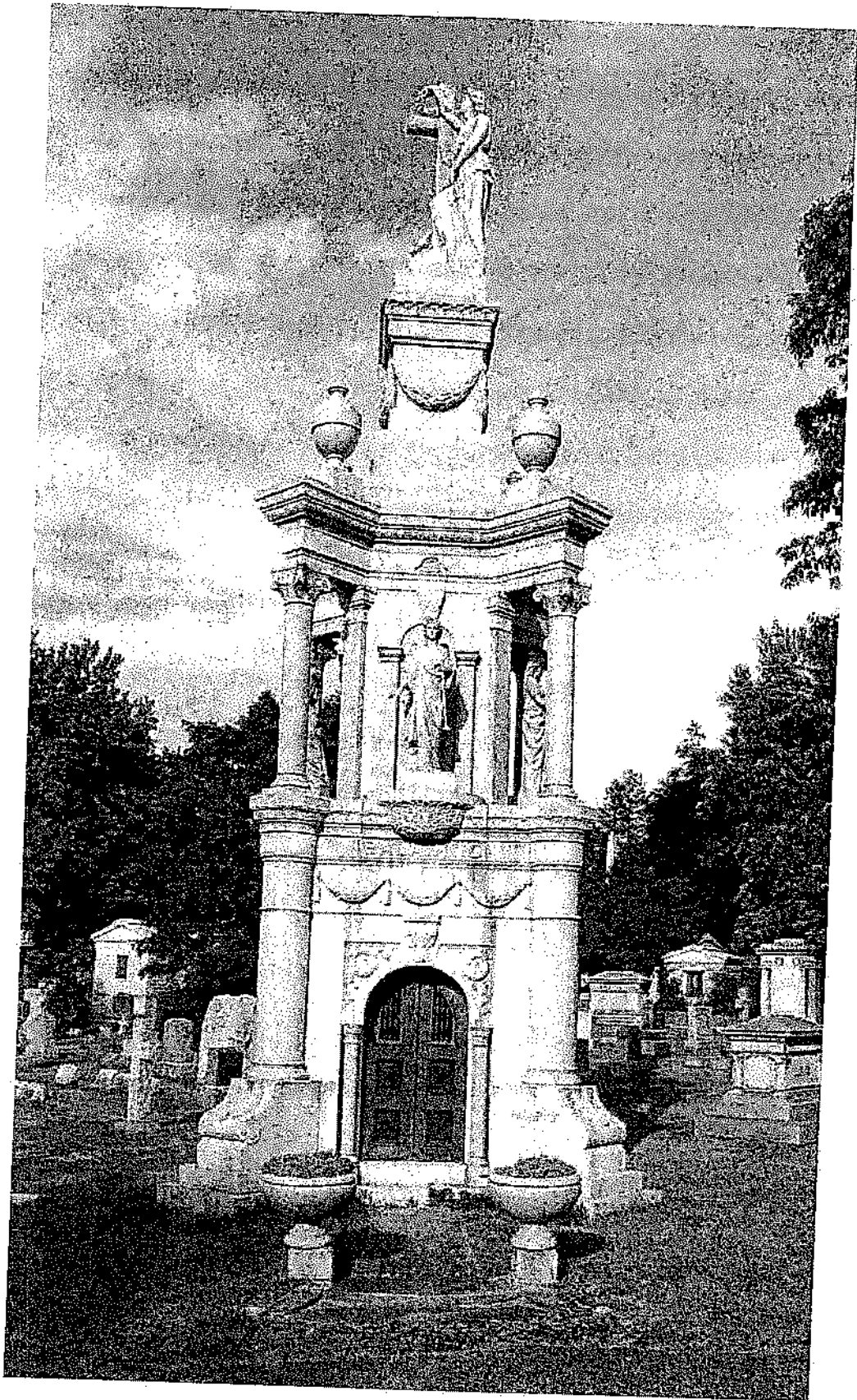
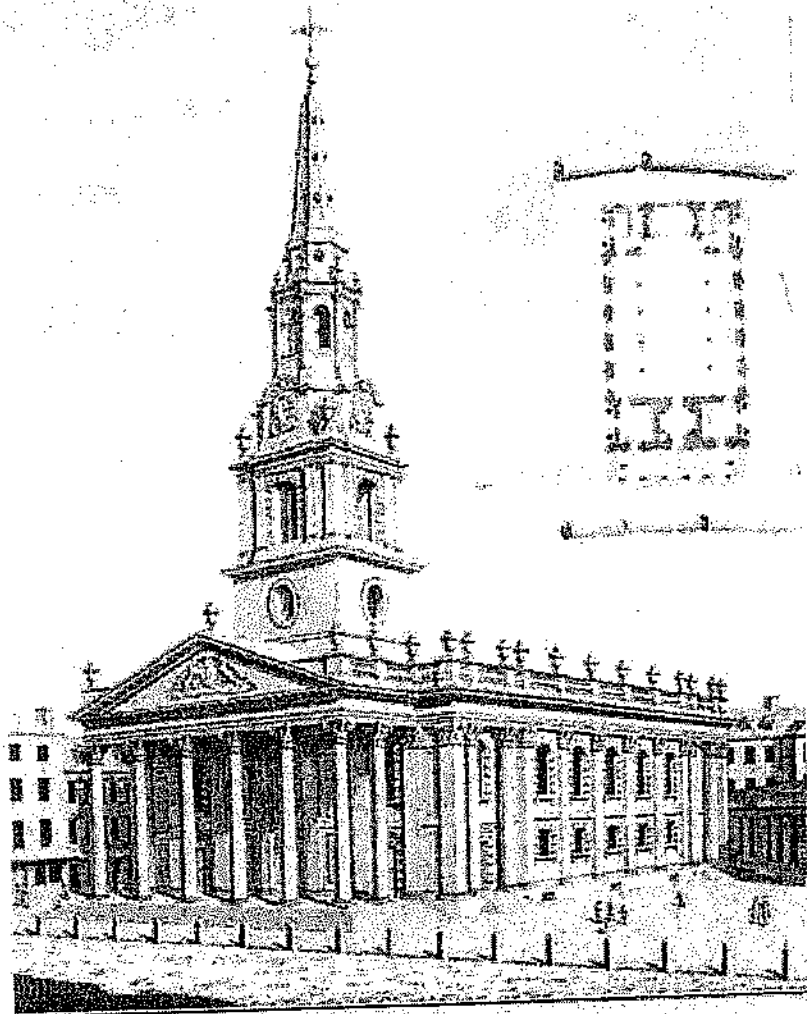


Fig. 1: Paladino Mausoleum



*A Perspective View of St. Martin's Church*

Fig 2: St. Martin's Church<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Gibbs, James. *A book of architecture, containing designs of buildings and ornaments.*

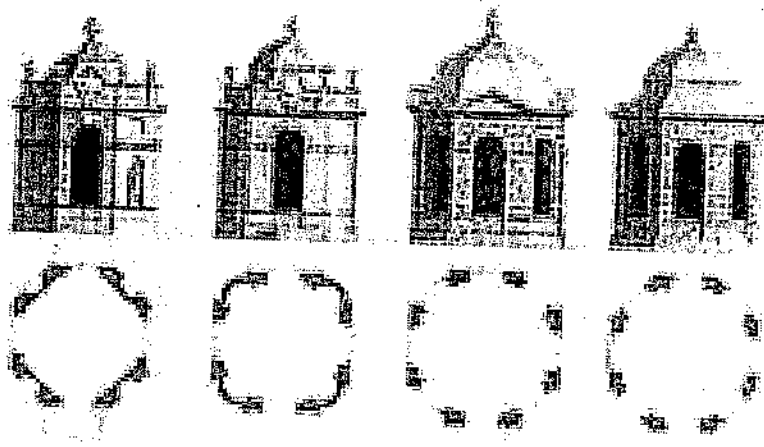


Fig 3: Suggested church steeple plans<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Gibbs, James. *A book of architecture containing designs of buildings and ornaments.*



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