

Drew Barnhart

HP Studio I

Woodlawn Cemetery

28 September 2018

Built in 1941 for Ruth Perrine Sheehan, the Sheehan Mausoleum sits on Woodlawn Cemetery's Arbutus Plot on a modest site removed from the cemetery's major avenues and most prestigious monuments. However, such a location seems fitting for the mausoleum's sole inhabitant, who, despite her wealth, did not rank among New York City's elite.

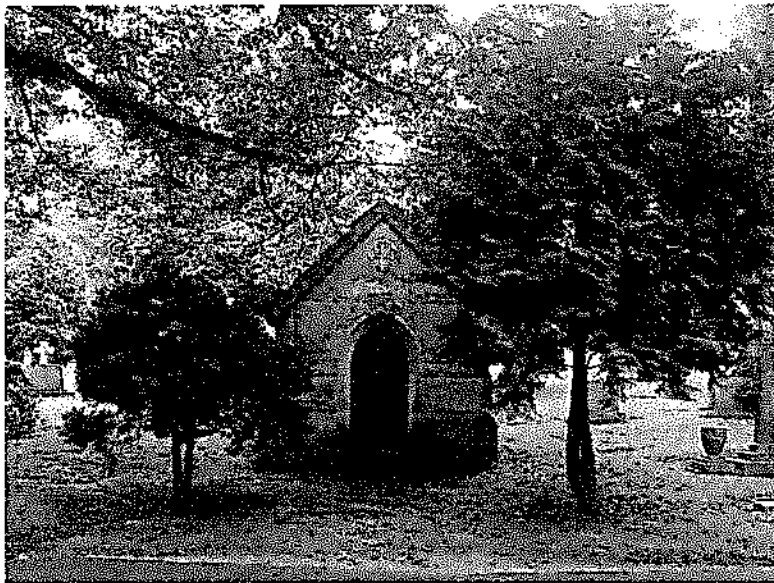


Figure 1: The Sheehan Mausoleum sits on a quiet street, removed from other mausoleums.

Ruth Perrine was born on October 11, 1878 (?) in Montgomery, Alabama to Caroline A. Perrine of Georgia and William H. Perrine, a house carpenter from New York.¹

Shortly after Ruth's birth, the family relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, where Ruth and her older sister Ada spent their

early lives and, upon graduating from high school, became teachers.² In 1902 Ruth married Cornelius James Sheehan Jr. in Fulton County, Georgia.³ Born in 1867, Cornelius came from a large and influential Irish Catholic family in Atlanta, Georgia. His father Cornelius J. Sheehan

Sr. had become wealthy through real-estate investments in Atlanta, Decatur, and Lovejoy and had been able to provide his children with privileged upbringings. Cornelius Sheehan Jr. attended both Moore's Business College and attended Atlanta Law School, passing the bar in 1907. However, Cornelius never practiced as a lawyer, working instead as an auditor for the Federal Post Office and later as a financial clerk for the New York Police Department.⁴

The couple were living together in Manhattan by 1920.⁵ However, by 1921, they had divorced, and Ruth was living in Chicago, where she worked as a private secretary.⁶ She only lived there for a short time, however, as by 1927, she listed her permanent address as being in New York City on a ship's passenger log.⁷ Throughout the next two decades, Ruth traveled extensively, staying at apartment-hotels in New York City, including the Park Central Hotel and the Waldorf Astoria, between her international trips.⁸ In 1944, Ruth moved to Daytona Beach to live with her sister. After her sister's death, she relocated Miami, where she died in 1972 at the age of 95.⁹

Ruth entrusted the design of her mausoleum to Westminster Memorial Studios, a company formed by former Tiffany Studio employees to finish outstanding commissions after Louis Comfort Tiffany's death in 1933.¹⁰ Located at 15 E. 26th St., this company also completed new commissions, advertising products including headstones, mausoleums, sarcophagi, stained glass, and mosaics, a range of services remarkably similar to those offered formerly by Tiffany Studios' Ecclesiastical Department.¹¹ By 1946, their company no longer appeared in Manhattan's telephone directory, indicating that they had either gone out of business or relocated.¹²



Figure 2: The door features designs inspired by gothic tracery and a pointed arch.

The Sheehan Mausoleum is one of many in Woodlawn Cemetery to be inspired by Gothic chapels.¹³ Perhaps the most obvious Gothic-inspired detail is its door, with geometric tracery and a pointed-arch setting. Additional Gothic design elements include the faux buttresses that flank the front façade and the cross-bottony above the lettering. While the rusticated granite and steeply-pitched, stepped roof are not necessarily Gothic details, they are also an important components of the

mausoleum's exterior appearance, lending it a feel that one Presbey-Leland catalogue describes as "quaint," in reference to a similar design.¹⁴

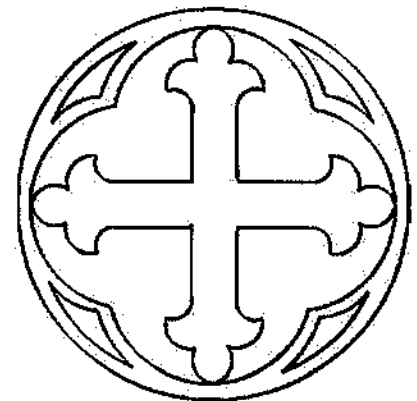


Figure 3: Cross Bottony

Inside the mausoleum, the focal point lies on a stained-glass window on the back wall, featuring a standing angel with one hand raised in a sign of benediction. In the background, one can see the corner of a tomb with a white cloth draped loosely over its top. This is likely a depiction of the New Testament story of Jesus's resurrection. Although the complete narrative varies depending on the gospel, in each telling, visitors to Jesus's tomb are greeted by an angel, or strange men dressed in white, and observe Jesus's empty grave linens as a physical sign of his resurrection. The scene is framed by Gothic architectural elements in a form reminiscent of a nave flanked by two aisles, decorated with spires, crockets, and foiled arches.

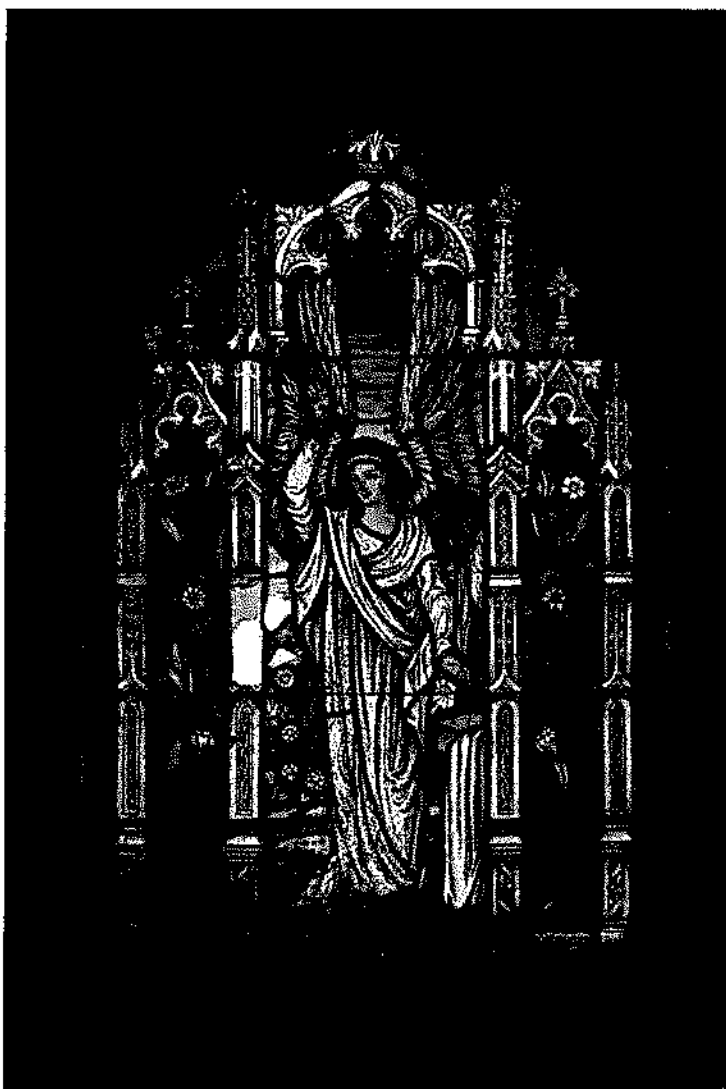


Figure 4: An angel stands in front of an empty tomb.

The materials used for the Sheehan Mausoleum seem relatively common for mausoleums at Woodlawn Cemetery. The exterior consists of rock-face Barre Granite from Vermont.¹⁵ Interestingly, Tiffany Studios owned an exclusive granite quarry in Cohasset, Massachusetts.¹⁶ It seems that Westminster Memorial Studios, despite being formed by former Tiffany Studios employees and completing Tiffany Studios' commissions, could not gain access to this quarry. The interior of the Sheehan Mausoleum is clad in three distinct varieties of marble – one for the floor, one for the walls and

sarcophagi, and one for the baseboard and pedestal. According to Woodlawn Cemetery's "Examination Sheet," the interior material should be Tennessee marble, but the form fails to comment on the various types of Tennessee marble used. By comparing the types of marble found on site to samples in a publication by the Marble Industry Board, it is clear that both the marble used for the walls and sarcophagi and the marble used for the floor are indeed two distinct types of Tennessee marble. The marble used for the baseboard and pedestal, however,

does not resemble any of the varieties of Tennessee marble found in the Marble Industry Board's publication, so further research is required to determine the specific type of this marble.¹⁷ In addition to the exterior granite and interior marble, the mausoleum also contains several bronze components, including the door, four vents, and ceiling rosettes.

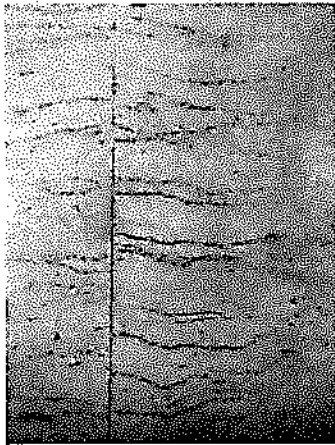


Figure 5: Marble used for the Floor

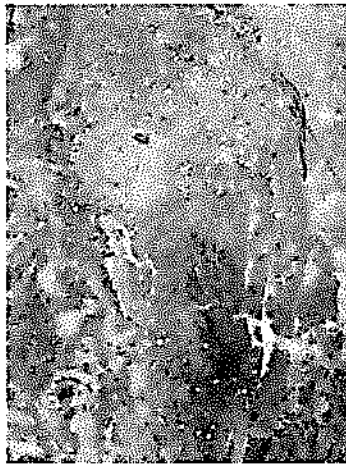


Figure 7: Marble used for the pedestal and baseboard

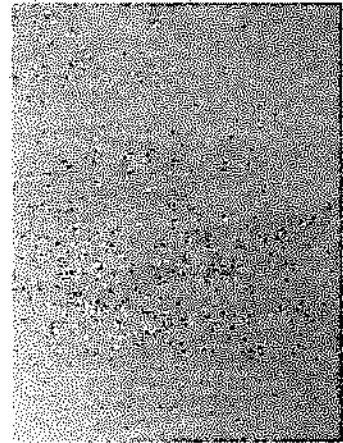


Figure 8: Marble used for Walls and Sarcophagi

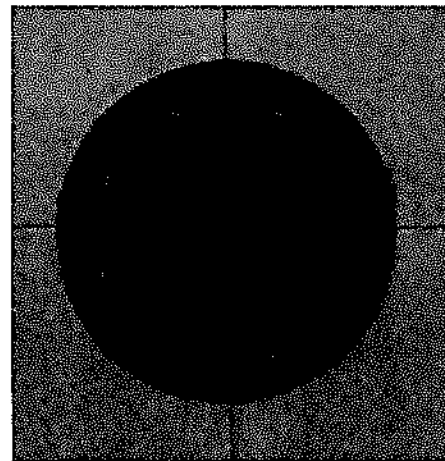
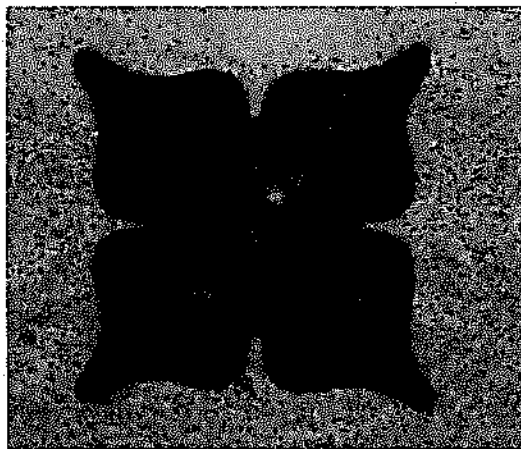


Figure 9; Two bronze rosettes.

Currently, the Sheehan Mausoleum is in relatively good condition with the exception of the window in the south elevation. The interior stained glass is broken in one place. Several of the stained-glass pieces are missing, and the surrounding lead comes are distorted. Additionally, the

exterior protective glass is broken in two locations, leaving the interior stained glass vulnerable to the elements and allowing debris and insects to infiltrate the space between the glass panes.



Figure 10: A close-up of the broken stained glass.

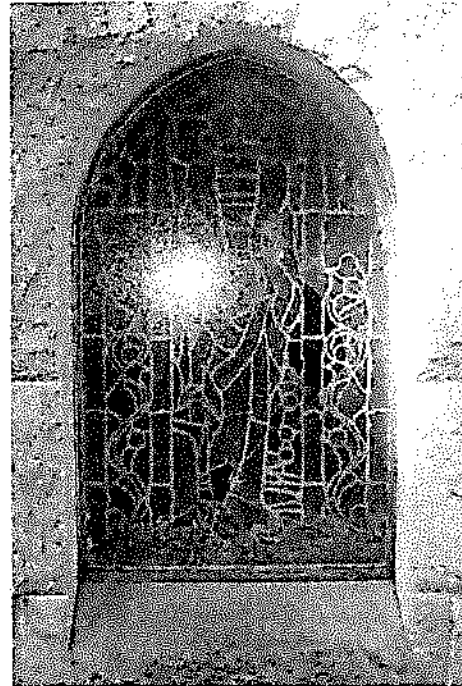


Figure 11: Two breaks in the exterior protective glass.



Figure 12: Root growth on the north elevation.

There are also several other minor issues that are not currently causing damage to the mausoleum, but should perhaps be monitored to avoid potential problems in the future. First, roots from a large, nearby tree are currently growing close to the north and east elevations and could

potentially cause structural damage in the future. Second, there is ivy growing on the south and west elevations, which is not currently causing any damage but should perhaps be monitored.

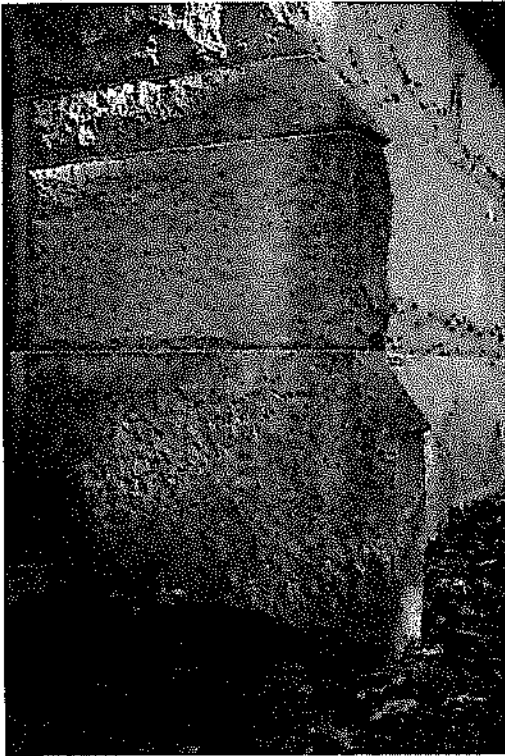


Figure 13: Biological growth on the north elevation

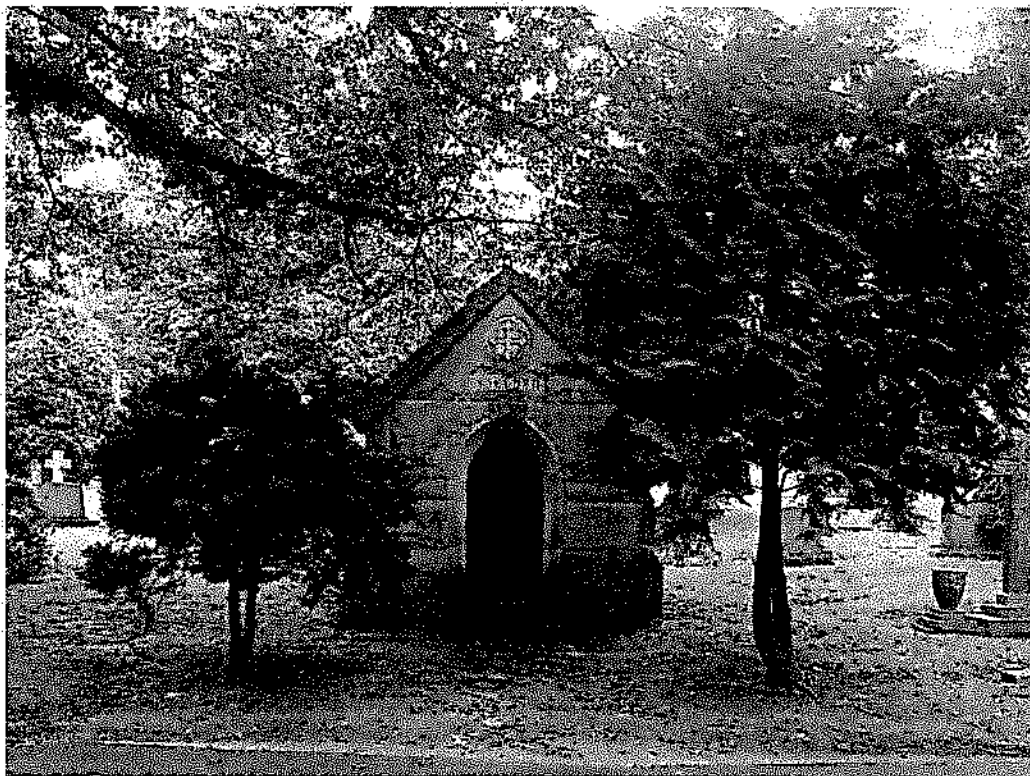
Finally, the surrounding tree canopies are shielding most parts of the mausoleum from the sun and preventing the mausoleum from drying adequately, resulting in biological growth on the roof, north elevation, and the parts of the buttresses that project beyond the roof. This biological growth has caused dramatic discoloration between the roof and the exterior walls. However, the mausoleum appears to be well-ventilated, so the tendency for the exterior to not dry well does not seem to be of structural or material concern. However for some, the biological growth could be a cosmetic issue.

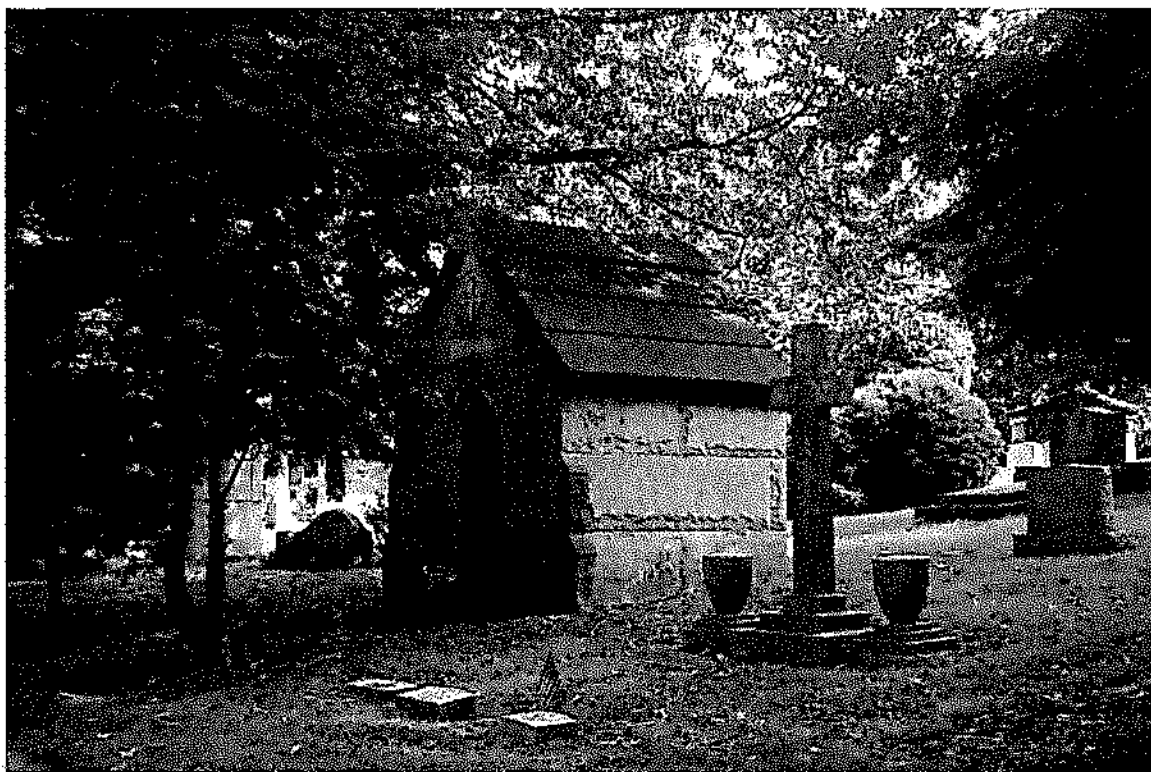


Figure 14: The trees shield the mausoleum from the sun.

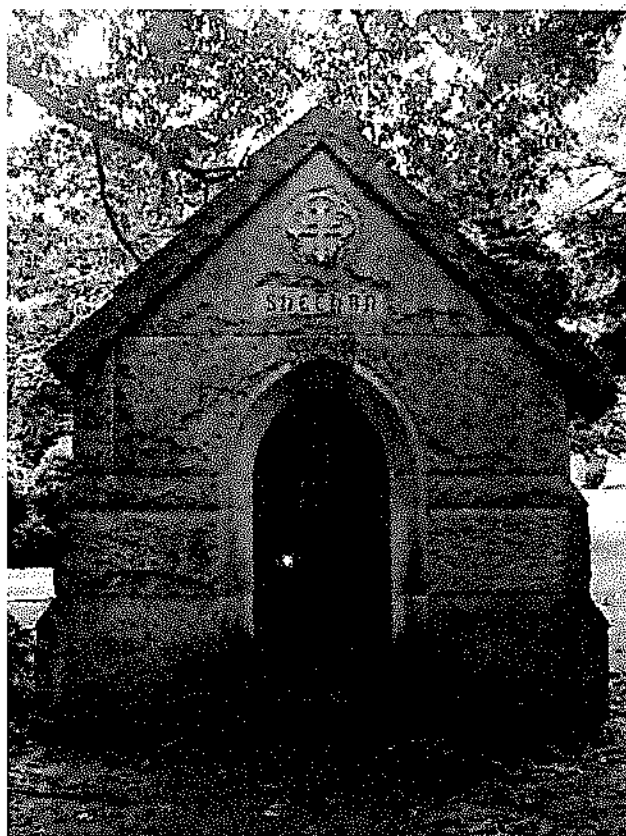
Additional photographic documentation:

The mausoleum in its site context

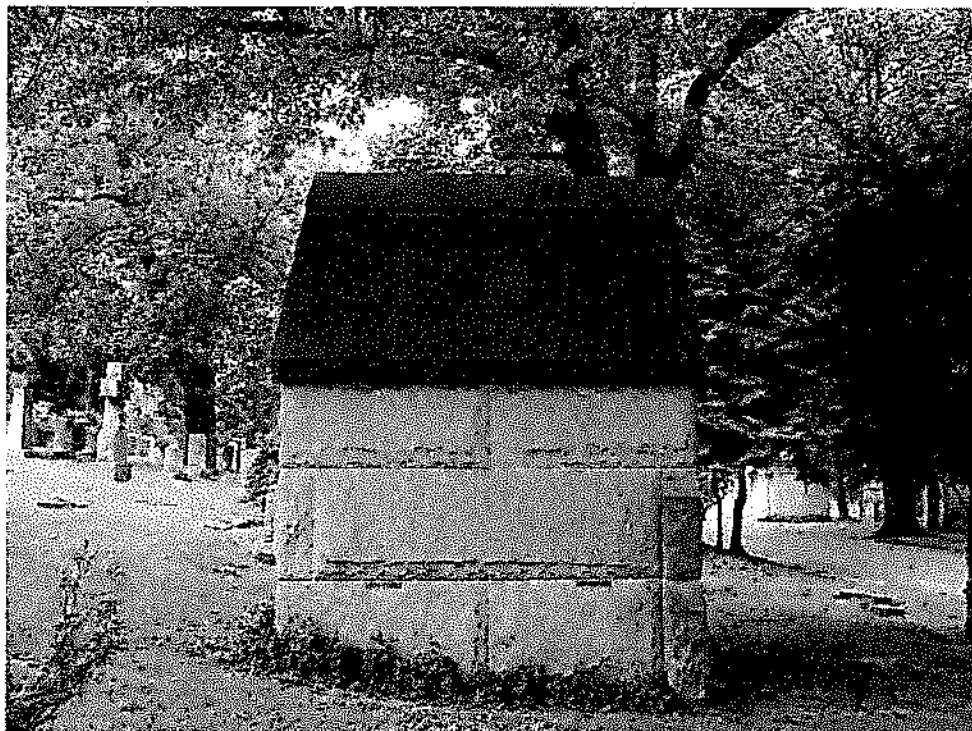




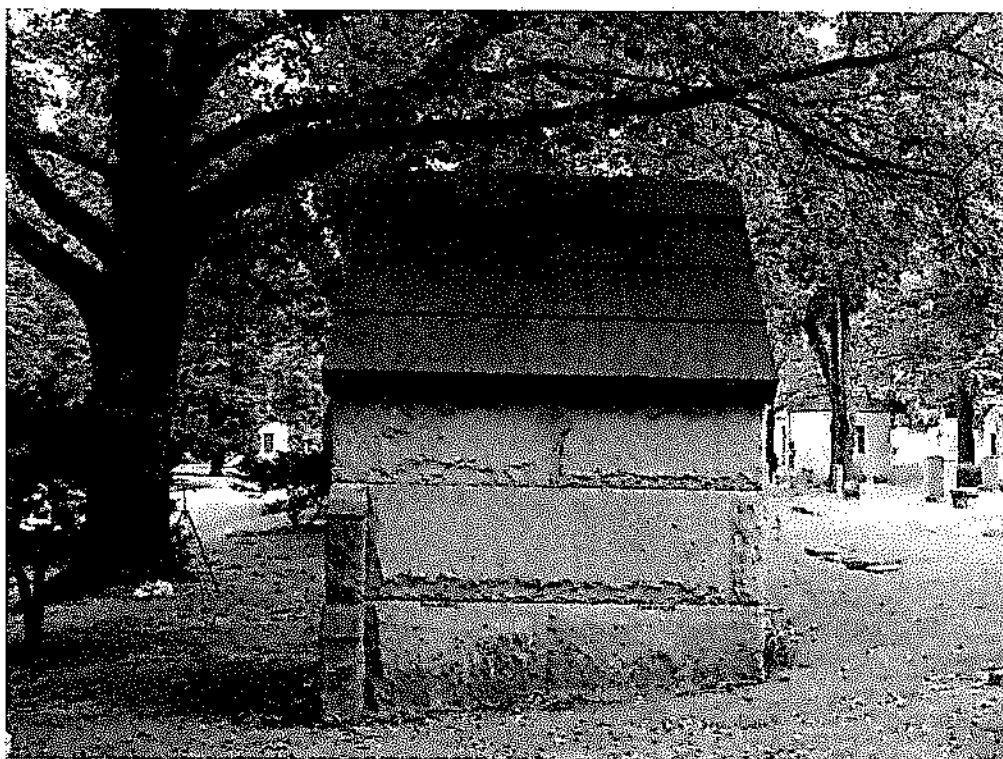
North Elevation



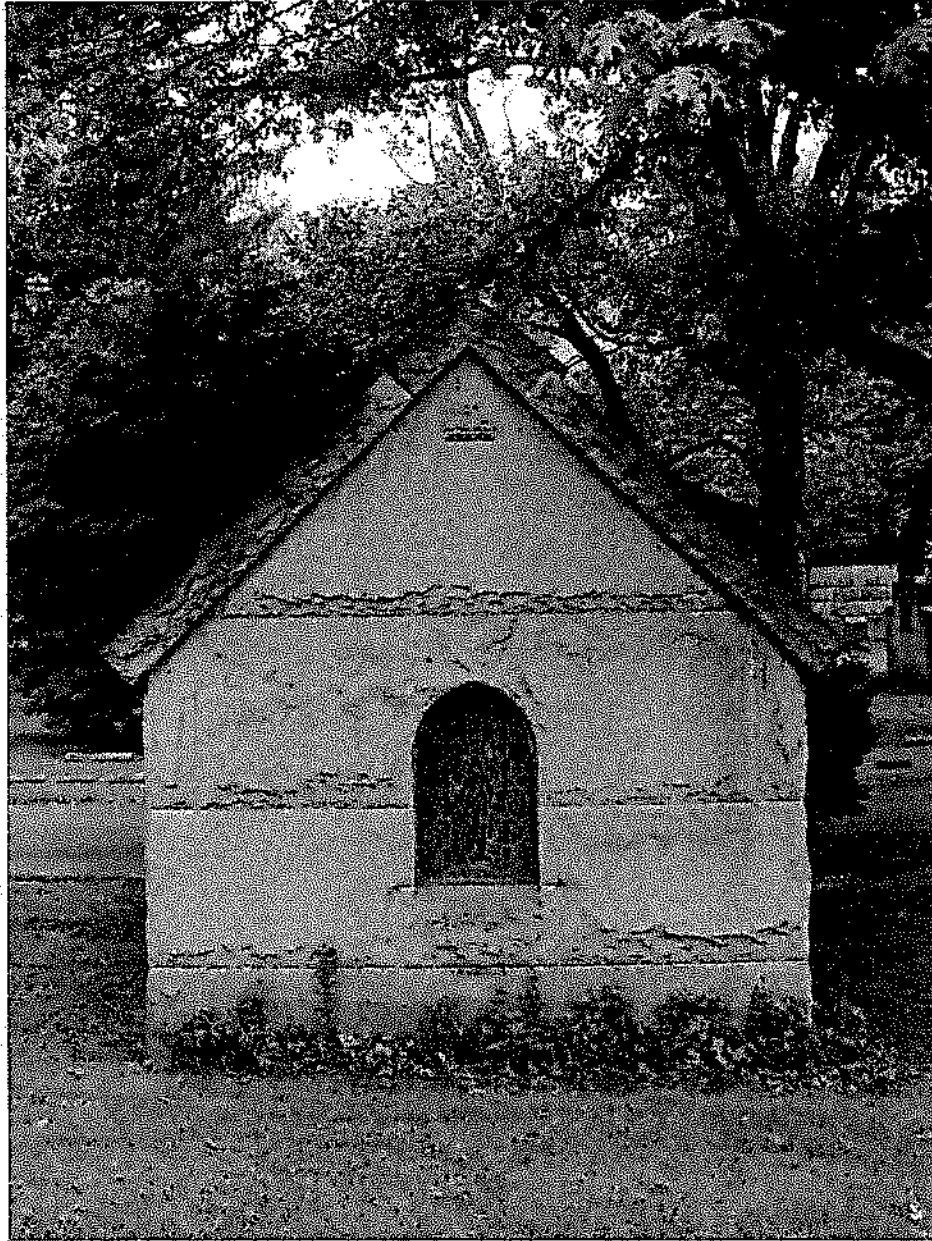
East Elevation



West Elevation



South Elevation.



- ¹“Obituary of Ruth P. Sheehan,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1972, 34. Proquest Historical Newspapers; United States Census, Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia, 1880, digital image s.v. “Ruth Perrine,” *Ancestry.com*.
- ² United States Census, Atlanta Ward 4, Fulton, Georgia, 1900, digital image s.v. “Ruth Perrine,” *Ancestry.com*.
- ³“Fulton County Marriage Records, 1828–1978,” The Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia, digital image s.v. “Cornelius James Sheehan,” *Ancestry.com*.
- ⁴“Windsor House Apartments (Crescent Apartments.)” City of Atlanta.
<https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/city-planning/office-of-design/urban-design-commission/windsor-house-apartments-crescent-apartments> (accessed 27 September 2018); United States Census, Borough of Manhattan, New York City, New York, 1920, digital image s.v. “Ruth Perrine Sheehan,” *Ancestry.com*.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶“U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925,” National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), digital image s.v. “Ruth Perrine Sheehan,” *Ancestry.com*.
- ⁷“List of United States Citizens on S.S. Fort St. George, December 29th, 1927.” New York, Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957, s.v. “Ruth Perrine Sheehan,” *Ancestry.com*.
- ⁸ See New York, Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957 and California, Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1959, s.v. “Ruth Perrine Sheehan,” *Ancestry.com*.
- ⁹“Obituary of Ruth P. Sheehan.”
- ¹⁰ Rachel Margaret Bradshaw. “Tiffany windows in Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia.” Master’s Thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1997. 88, 89.
- ¹¹ The Episcopal Church. *The Living Church Annual: The Year Book of the Episcopal Church in 1943*. New York: Morehouse Gorham Co. 1942. 61a; Tiffany Studios Ecclesiastical Department. *Memorials in Glass and Stone*. Baltimore: Tiffany Studios. 1922.
- ¹² New York Telephone Company. *Manhattan Telephone Directory Fall-Winter 1946*. New York: New York Telephone Company. 1946. 1308.
- ¹³ Andrew Scott Dolkart. “Designing Woodlawn Buildings and Landscapes,” in *Sylvan Cemetery: Architecture, Art and Landscape at Woodlawn*, eds. Charles D. Warren, Carole Ann Fabian and Janet Parks, New York: Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library and The Woodlawn Conservancy, 2014. 66.
- ¹⁴ Presbey-Leland Studios. *Book of Presbey-Leland Memorials*. New York: Presbey-Leland Studios, 1929.
- ¹⁵“Examination Sheet,” Drawer 3.3, Folder 70, Woodlawn Cemetery Records, Avery Drawings and Archives.
- ¹⁶ *Memorials in Glass and Stone*
- ¹⁷ Marble Industry Board. *Marble*. New York: Marble Industry Board, 1967.

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- Bradshaw, Rachel Margaret. "Tiffany windows in Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia." Master's Thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1997. 88, 89.
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United States Census, Borough of Manhattan, New York City, New York, 1920, digital image s.v.

"Ruth Perrine Sheehan," *Ancestry.com.*

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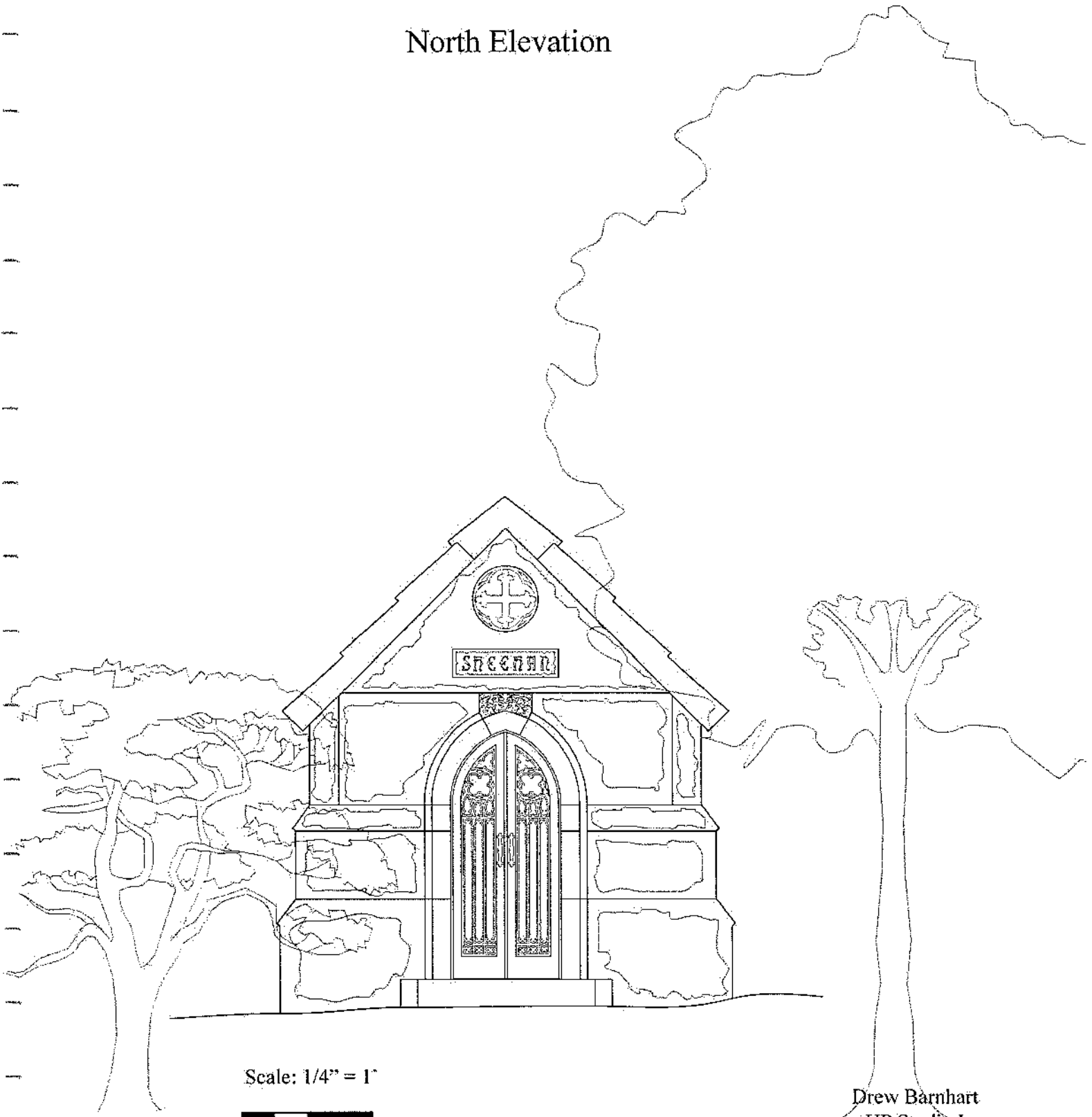
"Windsor House Apartments (Crescent Apartments.)" City of Atlanta.

[https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/city-planning/office-of-design/urban-](https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/city-planning/office-of-design/urban-design-commission/windsor-house-apartments-crescent-apartments)

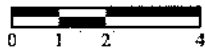
[design-commission/windsor-house-apartments-crescent-apartments](https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/city-planning/office-of-design/urban-design-commission/windsor-house-apartments-crescent-apartments) (accessed 27

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North Elevation

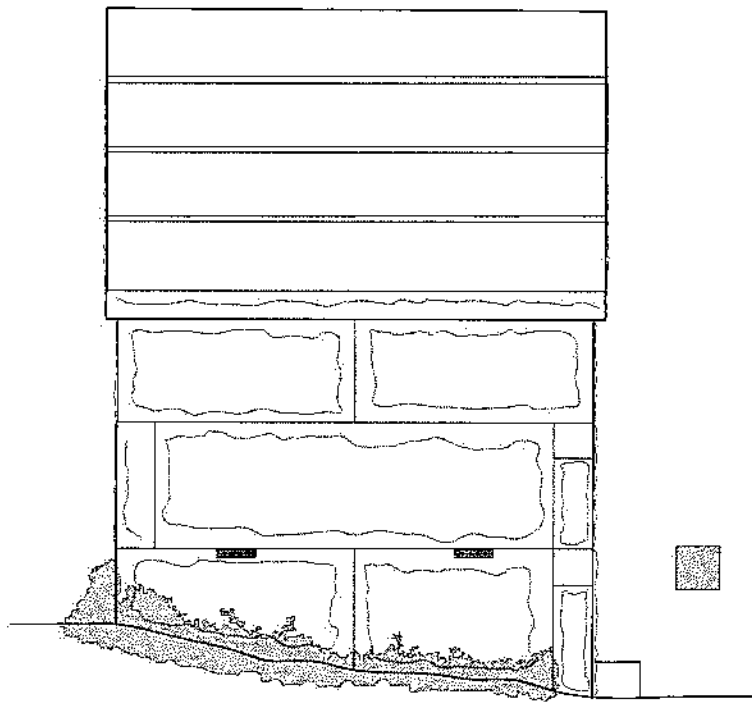


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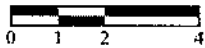
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East Elevation



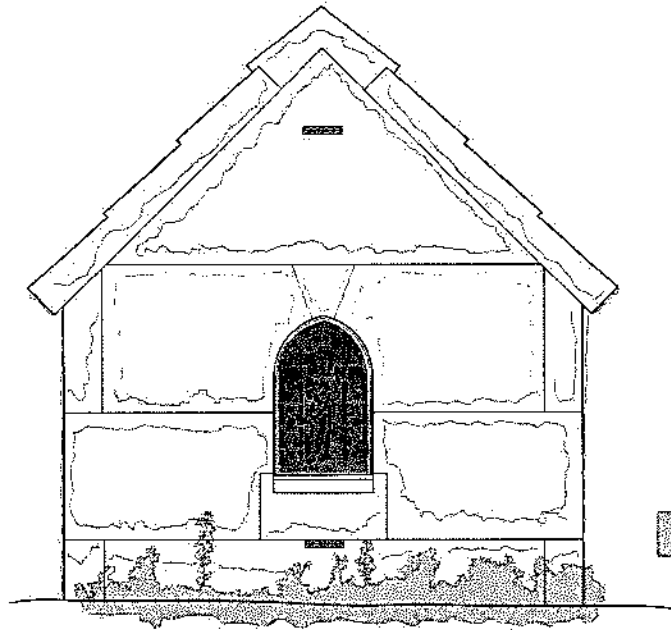
Indicates Area
Affected By Ivy

Scale: 1/4" = 1'



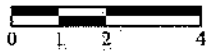
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South Elevation



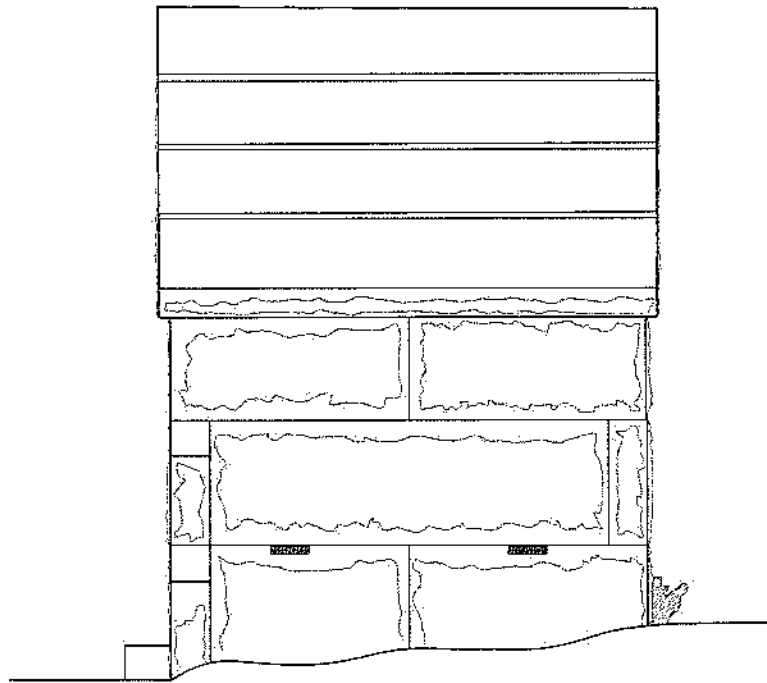
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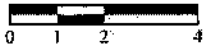
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West Elevation



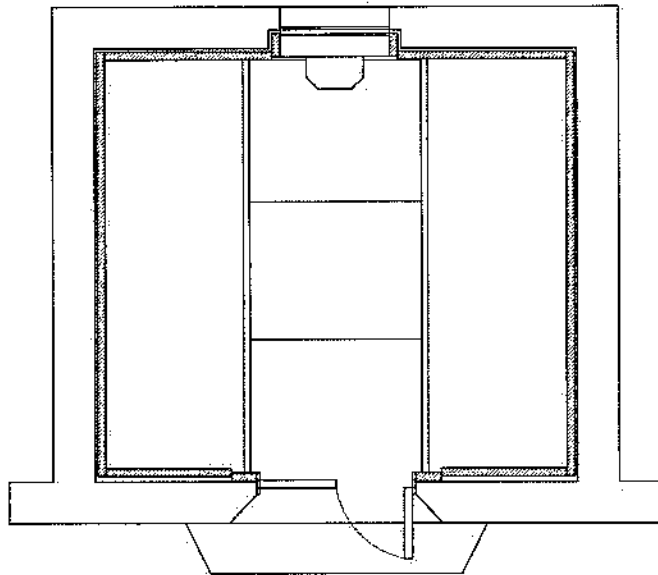
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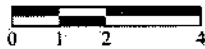


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Floor Plan

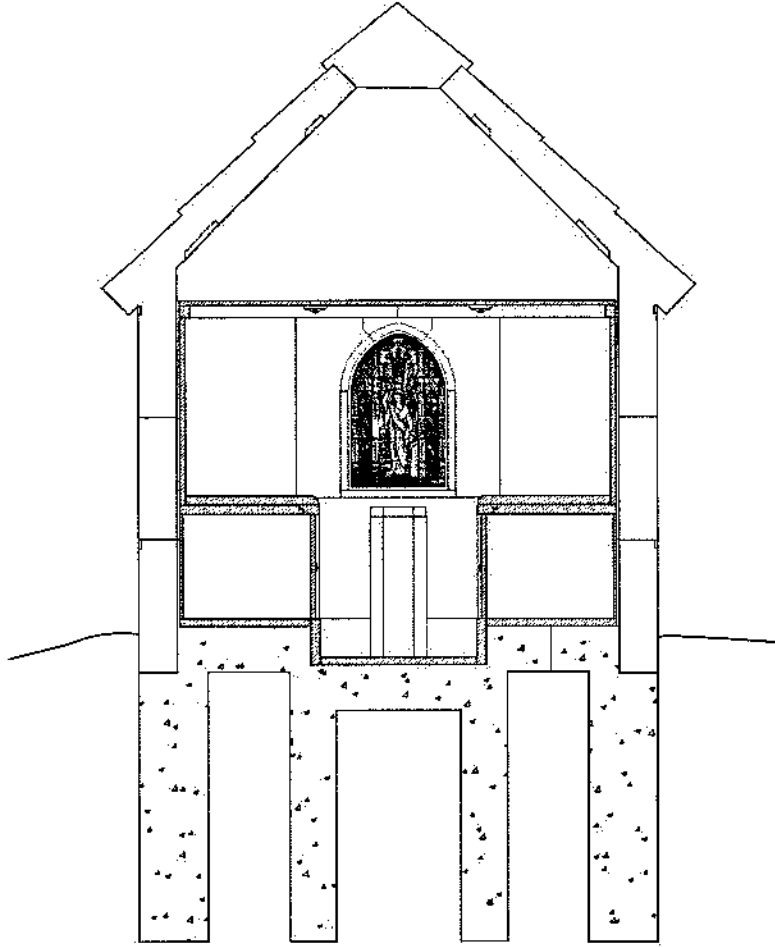


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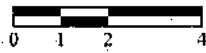


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Section

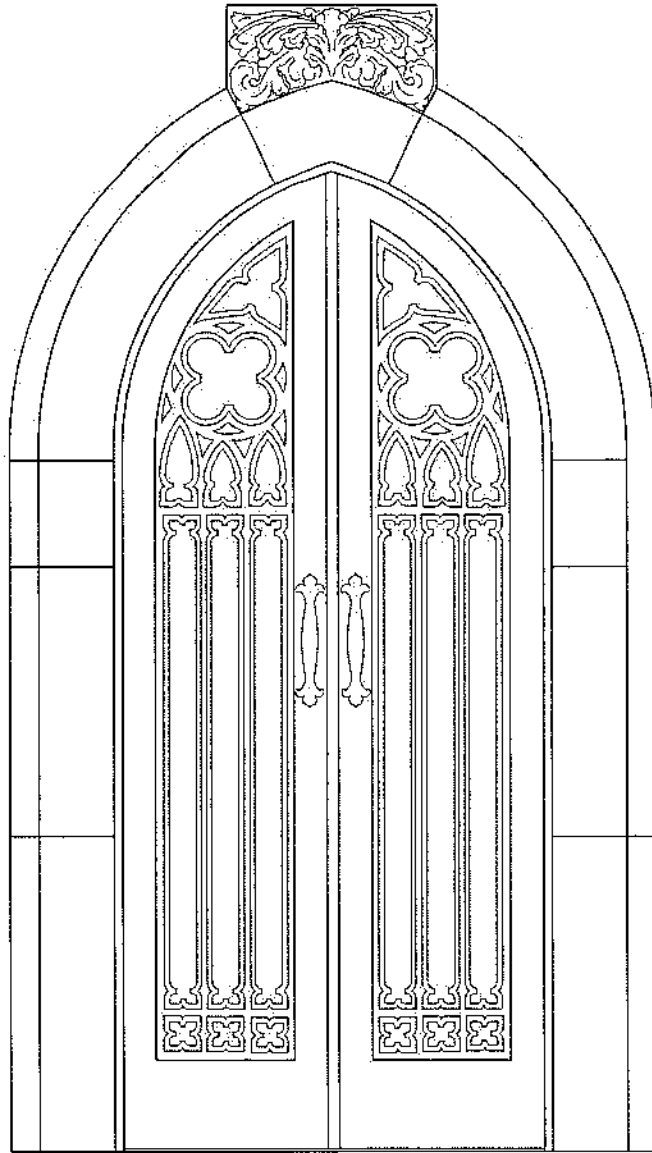


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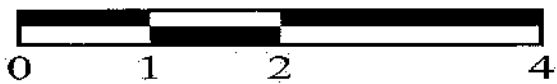


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Elevation Detail - Door

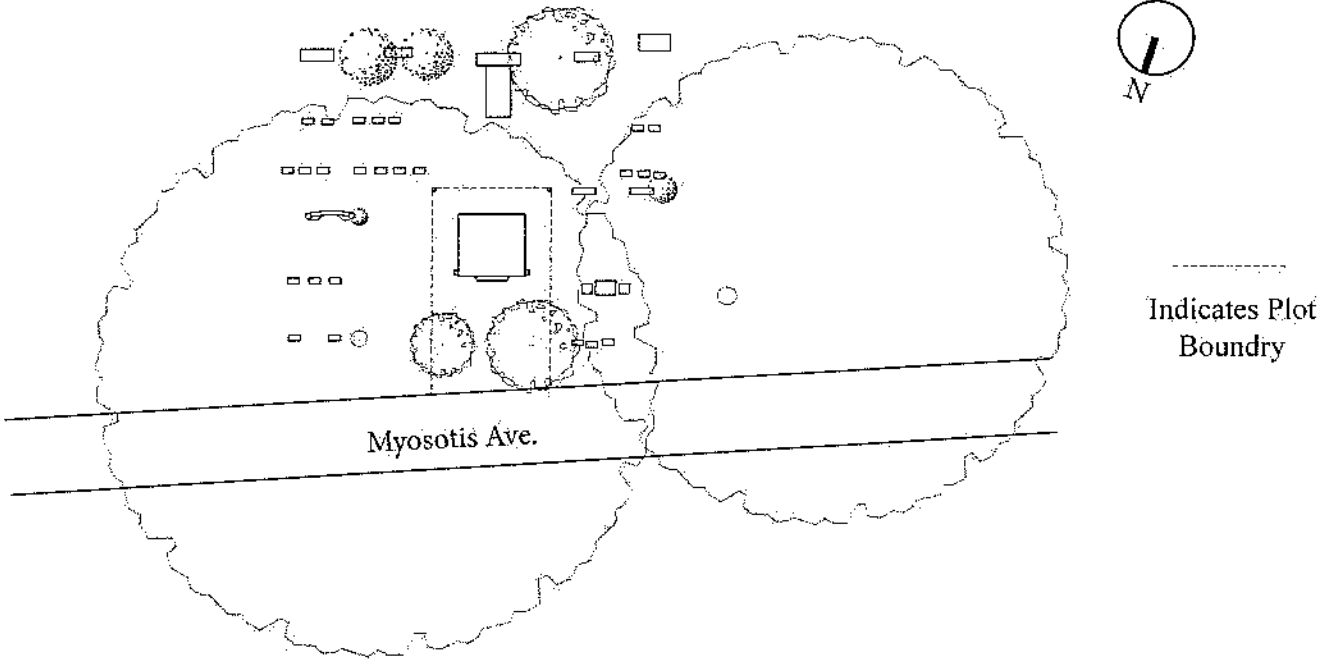


Scale: 3/4" = 1'



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Site Plan



Scale: 1/32" = 1'

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