

Woodlawn Cemetery:
Research of Postley Mausoleum

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October 3, 2025



Postley Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery, 2025

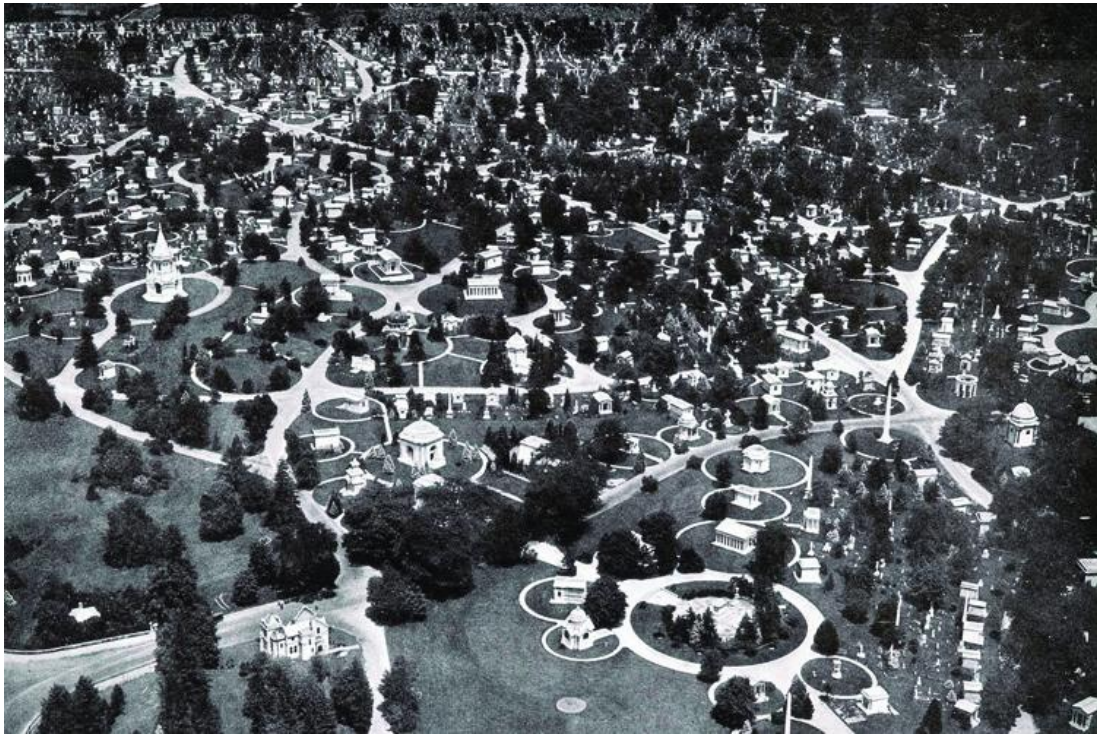


Image1: Woodlawn Cemetery

Background

The Postley Mausoleum is located in the Woodlawn Cemetery at 4199 Webster Ave, Bronx, NY (Image 1). To reach it, you should enter the Woodlawn Cemetery via the Jerome Avenue entrance, then walk approximately 100 meters along Central Avenue and onto Park Avenue (Image 2). The mausoleum is located on the roadside, facing due east.

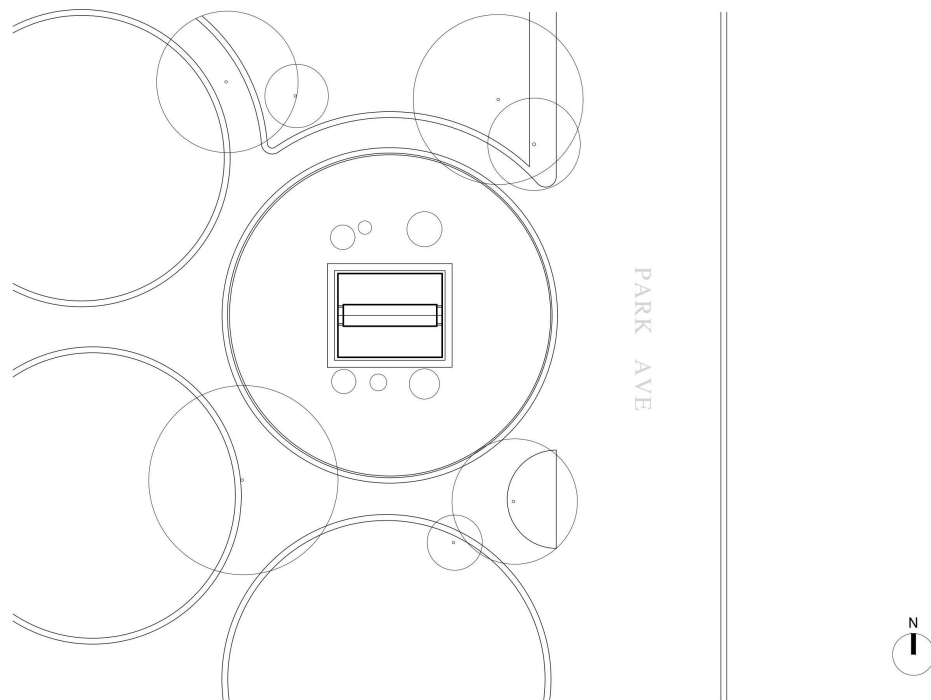


Image 2: Site Plan of Postley Mausoleum

The mausoleum belongs to the Postley family. It is owned by Mrs. Margaret Sterling Postley, widow of Clarence A. Postley. Clarence A. Postley came from a long line of military figures (Image 3). Clarence Postley graduated from West Point in 1870 and served in the Third U.S. Artillery and was a mathematics instructor at West Point for five years. He enjoyed club life, especially relating to horses and yachting. His club memberships included (but were not limited to) the University, Union League, Players', New York Athletic, Hamilton Park, New York Jockey, Coney Island Jockey, New York Yacht, American Yacht, Corinthian Yacht, Larchmont Yacht, and Seawanhaka Yacht Clubs.¹ He died on May 28, 1908, in Manhattan, New York County, at the age of 59.²

1. The Larchmont Yacht Club Meeting. New - York Tribune, Feb, 17, 1848.

2. Tom Miller, "The Lost C. A. Postley Mansion - 817 Fifth Avenue," The Lost C. A.



CLARENCE A. POSTLEY.

Image 3: The portrait of Clarence A. Postley

Clarence Postley's great-grandfather served in the Revolutionary War; his grandfather, Charles Postley, fought in the War of 1812; and his father, General Brooke Postley, joined the New York State Militia in his early years and was later promoted to an officer in a cavalry brigade. During the American Civil War (1861–1865), he was known as "the commander of the famous Hussar Brigade," wrote historian William Van Rensselaer Miller in his 1894 book, *Select Organizations of America*.³ He was responsible for training and inspecting cavalry forces in the New York area and remained active within the State Militia system. After the war, he continued his service as Brigadier General of the First Infantry Brigade in New York City. On October 28, 1870, he presided over a large military parade in Prospect Park, Brooklyn.

3. Gen. Postley Dies Suddenly. *New - York Tribune*, Jan, 5, 1901.

Clarence Postley graduated from West Point in 1870 and served in the Third U.S. Artillery and was a mathematics instructor at West Point for five years. He died on May 28, 1908, in Manhattan, New York County, at the age of 59.⁴

The mausoleum contains the remains of Clarence A. Postley and his wife, Margaret Sterling Postley who died on November 7, 1915, at the age of 62, . His parents, Gen. Brooke Postley and Agnes Helen Postley, died on January 1, 1901, at the age of 83, and on March 15, 1910, at the age of 84, respectively.⁵ His son, Sterling Postley, died on November 12, 1928, at the age of 51.⁶ Sterling Postley's second wife, Jeanne G. Postley, died on December 4, 1955, at the age of 73. This is the total number of people buried in the tomb. Woodlawn received final payment of \$482,35 on October 23, 1908 (Image 4).

Owner <u>Margaret S. Postley</u>	Deed No. <u>15876</u> Date <u>Oct 23 1908</u>
Examination No. <u>175</u> Lot No. <u>17154</u>	Section No. <u>111-112</u> Plot <u>West 4th St. between 1st & 2nd Sts.</u>
Contractor <u>The Ireland Co.</u>	Order from owner <u>by C.H. Woodlawn order</u>
Architect <u>George A. Freeman</u>	Foundation order forwarded <u>Nov 5 1908</u>
General design satisfactory? <u>yes</u>	Plans returned <u>1908</u>
Adjusted to grade <u>yes</u>	Size of lot <u>area 2000' - circ - R-2524</u>
Material of foundation <u>Cement rubble</u>	Location on lot <u>center on center - front of block</u>
Cement <u>Portland (1-5)</u>	Adjacent lots <u>---</u> F.B. <u>63-74</u>
Concrete <u>(1-5) for arching</u>	Approximate size <u>4'-10" x 17'-2" x 6" C.B. 44'</u>
Depth of foundation <u>6'</u>	Approximate quantities:
Thickness of foundation walls <u>4'-6" x 5'-8"</u>	Earth exc. <u>1600</u> cu. ft. Rock exc. <u>---</u> cu. ft.
Elevation and finish of foundation <u>20.7</u>	Concrete <u>200</u> cu. ft. Rubble <u>1500</u> cu. ft.
Excavation and fill of center <u>no</u>	Cement <u>---</u> bbls. Sand <u>---</u> cu. yds.
Class and quarry of ashlar <u>light Barre</u>	Broken Stone <u>---</u> cu. yds.
Thickness of ashlar <u>10"</u>	Approximate bill <u>\$550</u> Final bill <u>\$482.35</u>
Finish of ashlar <u>Rock face</u>	Cost, labor and material a/c \$ <u>---</u>
Roof construction satisfactory? <u>yes</u>	Cost, engineering a/c \$ <u>---</u> Total cost \$ <u>---</u>
Platform and Tomb Wall satisfactory? <u>yes</u>	Full plans & speci. <u>yes</u> Extra foundat'n plan <u>yes</u>
Frieze <u>1 piece</u> Doors <u>U.S. Bronze</u>	Crypt below grade <u>no</u> Drainage <u>---</u>
Dowels and Cramps <u>submittal</u> Tie rods <u>---</u>	Crypt and surface water <u>---</u>
Material and thickness of floor <u>Tennessee marble</u>	Floor of crypt below foundation finish <u>---</u>
Support of floor <u>Concrete arch on inside walls</u>	Stiles rabbeted to rest on slate shelves <u>yes</u>
Space for interments, doors open <u>yes</u>	Diagram <u>Clear</u> Time for completion <u>Nov 20-08</u>
Size of catacombs <u>7'-6" x 2'-8" x 2'-3" x 2'-2"</u>	Box in R T & 10 Name <u>6'-11" x 2'-8" x 2'-9"</u>
Catacomb shelves <u>2' slabs</u>	Bill to <u>The Ireland Co.</u>
Tablet of catacombs <u>to arch</u>	Plans examined and returned <u>6-20-08</u>
Catacombs, sides and ends <u>1 tablet back & brick end at</u>	
Support of catacombs <u>bricks & mortar on walls</u>	
Ventilation, air inlets and outlets <u>yes</u>	
Interior finish <u>at 4' Tennessee marble</u>	

Image 4: Transaction Contract, Avery Hall Library

4. Tom Miller, "The Lost C. A. Postley Mansion - 817 Fifth Avenue," The Lost C. A.

5. Brooke Postlet is Fanoni. New York Times, 1935, Jan 13.

6. Sterling Postley Funeral to be Held Tomorrow. New York Herald Tribune. 1928, Nov 14.

Field Observation

The mausoleum is divided vertically into three sections. The top section features a hip roof, the central burial space, and three steps supporting the lower section. The horizontal hip roof and three steps completely enclose the entire space, while the central burial space is divided into two sections: the entrance hall which is a semi-open gray space, and the burial hall.



Image 5: Front Facade of Postley Mausoleum

The building's facade is symmetrical, with the roof pediment centered and symmetrically centered (Image 5). The roof is composed of three monolithic stone panels of white granite, one at the top corner and the others for the two downward eaves. A thin, lightweight granite stone slab covers the two seams between the three panels to prevent rainwater from entering. The intersection of the triangular roof and the horizontal eaves is recessed, a design consideration. The word "POSTLEY" is engraved in the center of the horizontal eaves.



Image 6: Side Facade of Postley Mausoleum

The Portico is connected to the steps by four columns, supporting the eaves (Image 6). The outermost two pillars, located close to the top corners of the steps, are

square, while the inner two are round prisms. Both are intact and well-preserved. They are 0.4 inches from the main burial chamber, forming an open transitional space at the entrance to the main burial chamber, providing shelter from wind and rain. This not only meets functional requirements, facilitating opening and closing, but also adds a sense of ritual to the entrance, creating a gentle and solemn transition. From the front, the main entrance to the burial chamber is located between two pairs of columns. The bronze door opens inward on both sides. The upper half of the door is inscribed with a laurel wreath, a protruding horizontal door handle in the middle, and a square decoration on the lower portion. Signs of patina appear on the wreath, door handle, and door edge. The catacomb is arranged on two sides, with each vertically divided into four chambers. Each chamber is divided by a solid block of Italian Marble. A message about the deceased is engraved in the center of the front, and bronze rosettes are set into the marble slabs on either side. The floor is composed of three full slabs of Tennessee marble. Opposite the entrance wall is a window with stained glass embedded in the bronze partition, depicting a wreath and a chalice placed in a classical niche. During the day, the stained glass window illuminates the interior, adding a touch of vitality to the otherwise austere white chamber.

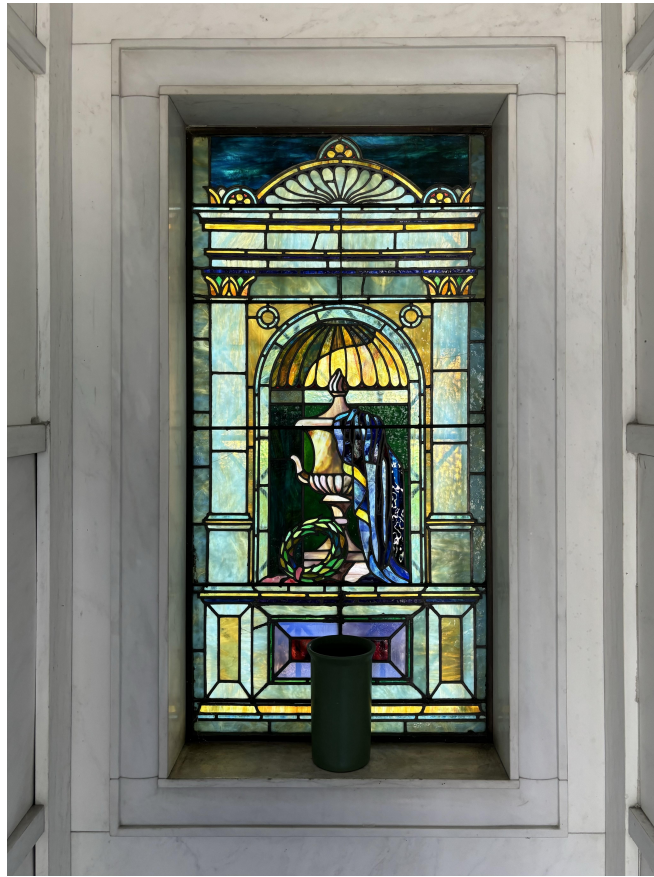


Image 7: Window of Postley Mausoleum

The stained-glass window is decorated with classical architectural elements: columns, arches, cornices, and decorative patterns, creating a sense of temple or monumental architecture (Image 7). The fan-shaped pattern, similar to a scallop shell, symbolizes rebirth and resurrection, and also has Christian baptismal connotations. In the center of the painting is a funeral altar, with a chalice-like vessel symbolizing the soul's rest and eternity.⁷ This was a common sight in American cemeteries from the late 19th to early 20th centuries. The vessel is covered with a blue and gold cloth, symbolizing mourning, a shroud, or funeral shroud for the deceased. The color blue also symbolizes heaven and eternity. A laurel wreath rests at the base of the vessel:

7. "Ciborium (Container)," Wikipedia, January 5, 2025.

laurel is a symbol of victory and immortality, signifying the deceased's triumph over death and their entry into eternity.⁸ The arched structure places the altar vessel within a kind of "niche," emphasizing its importance as an object of worship and commemoration. The predominant color palette of green and gold symbolizes life, eternity, and divine radiance.



Image 8: Rain Stain on the eaves

Image 9: Microbial Erosion

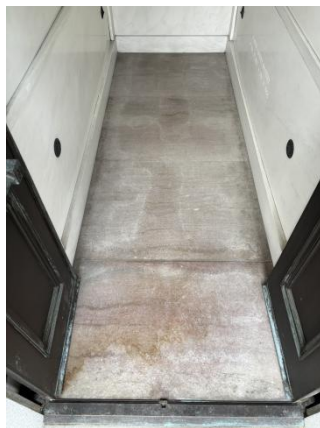


Image 10: Water stain on the Roof

Image 11: Bent Marble

8. "The Art of the Cemetery: Laurel Wreath: Woodlawn Cemetery • Crematory • Conservancy," Woodlawn Cemetery Crematory Conservancy, accessed September 28, 2025.

The building is in excellent condition overall. Rainwater staining have appeared on the eaves, covering the entire edge (Image 8). The foyer shows virtually no signs of damage, appearing pristine. Black streaks of microbial erosion have appeared on the sides of the building, gradually decreasing from the steps upwards to about half a meter above the wall (Image 9). Patina has appeared on bronze components, including doors and windows (Image 10&11). Rainwater erosion has eroded the marble panels of the interior roof, which have slightly bowed downward. The vertical marble slabs on the left and right sides, engraved with the deceased's message, are slightly bent. Minor water seepage has also been observed on the marble floor and side walls (Image 12&13).



Image 12: Blue Rust on the Window

Image 13: Blue Rust on the Door

Research Strategy

During the research process, a measurement approach was followed, moving from the overall to the specific. First, measure the data for each facade and compare and verify them. On the front facade, measure the steps, then the positions of the four pillars. Next, measure the height of the horizontal eaves and the height of the eaves'

apex. Establish the basic framework, and finally focus on measuring the details of the pillar styles and the basic dimensions and details of the bronze gate. After completing the measurements, take a one-point perspective photo of the entire front facade and photos of the detailed decorative details (Image 14).

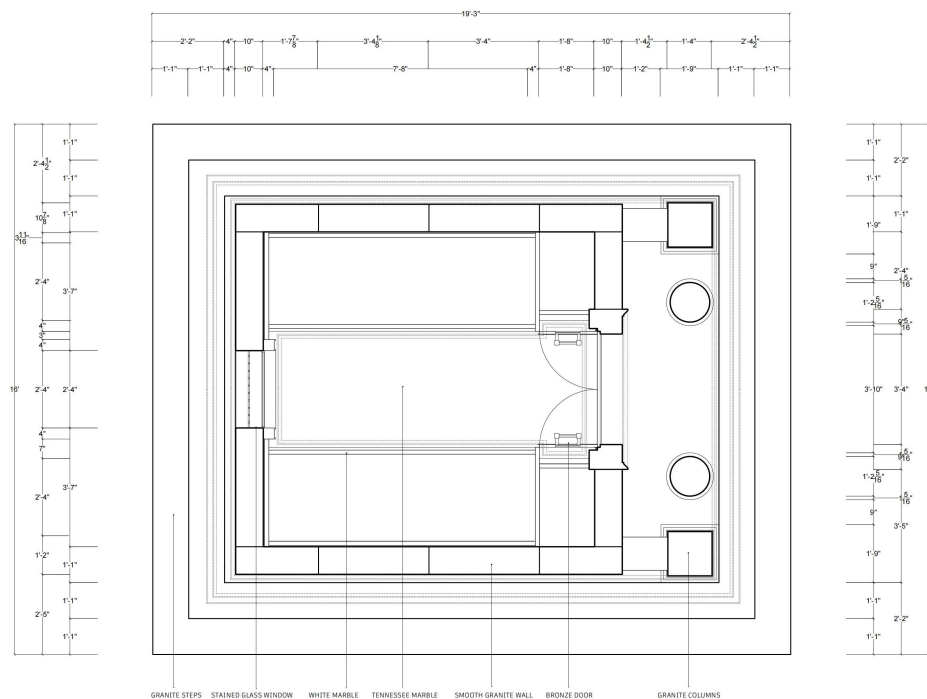


Image 14: Floor Plan of Postley Mausoleum

Next, measure the left and right facades (Image 15&16). Because the roof and steps run through the front and back, repeated measurements are unnecessary. Focus on the dimensions of the burial chamber and antechamber, as well as the arrangement and size of the main chamber's wall tiles. Finally, measure the details of the four bronze drain spouts on the upper and lower sides of the facade and their relative positions within the facade. Take photos of the overall facade and details of the spouts.

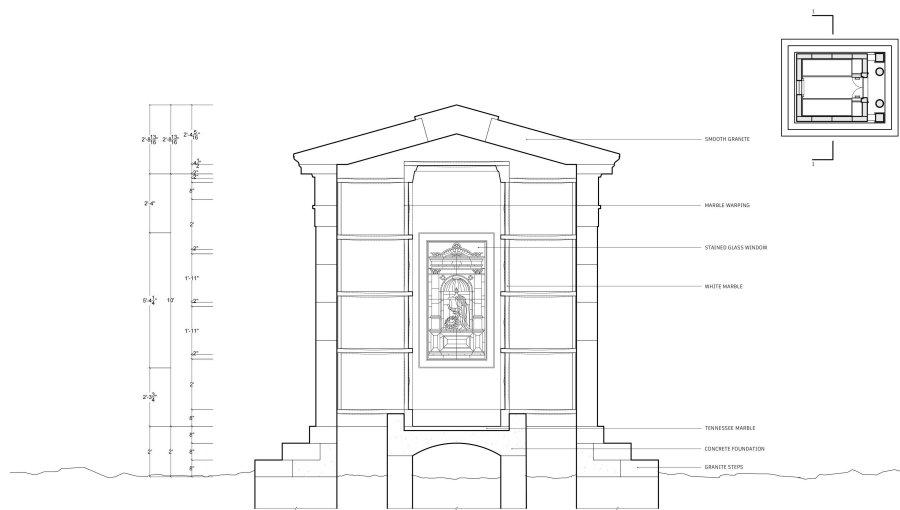


Image 15: 1-1 Section

Then survey the rear facade. Focus on the brickwork arrangement and window locations, especially observing the details of the bronze metal grilles outside the windows. Take photos in sequence.

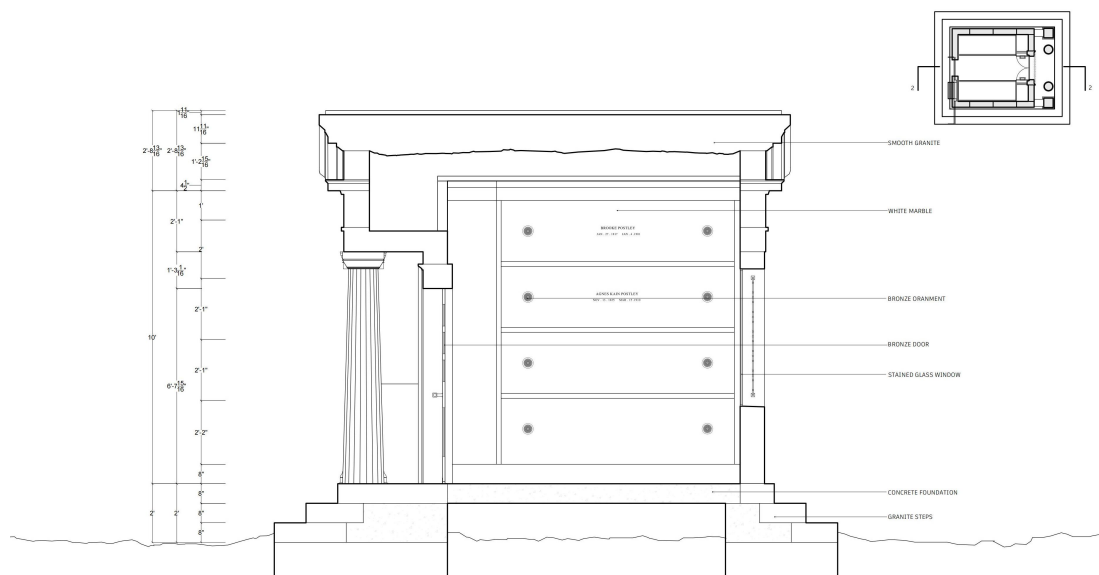


Image 16: 2-2 Section

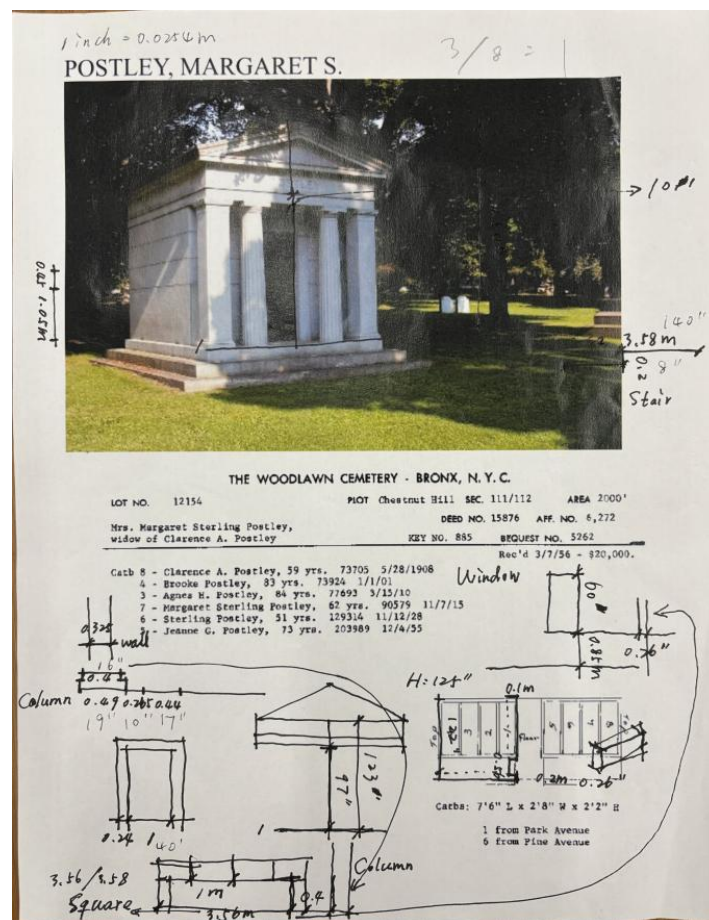


Image 17: Research Manuscript

Finally, I entered the interior space for measurement. Using the exterior and interior dimensions of the tomb chamber, I inferred the wall thickness and construction method. I also inferred the interior construction method by observing the marble tile joints. Finally, I took photos of the interior roof and flooring, focusing on the window patterns (Image 17).

After completing all the measurements, we repeated the process from the exterior to the interior, recording and observing the condition and location of damage to each facade and interior wall. We then used the damage to infer possible causes.

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