

The Siegman Mausoleum

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### Mausoleum Owner / Correspondence Records

Mathilde S. Siegman is the owner of record of Lot No. 14508 and the Siegman mausoleum. According to Fourteenth Census of the United States 1920 Population, she was born in New York on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1871.<sup>1</sup> Her husband was Edward Siegman, who was an immigrant from Bayreuth, Germany, according to his record of U.S. Passport Applications 1795-1925.<sup>2</sup> They had a daughter, Virginia J. Siegman, and she was born in New York. Edward Siegman was a retired merchant and died on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1919. The letter of July 1919 from the contractor, Presby-Coykendall Company, says that plans and specifications for the Siegman mausoleum were approved, which implies that Mathilde S. Siegman had purchased Lot No. 14508 for family mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery right after her husband died in April. After she was widowed, Mathilde S. Siegman lived with her daughter and two French servants, Berthe L. Bonzon and Mathilde Bonzon in New York. The records of Mausoleum Owner Correspondences imply that Virginia J. Siegman married Mr. Esmerian who seems to have run his own business called R. Esmerian, Inc. – *Precious Stones* – and that she still lived in New York City after marriage. Mathilde S. Siegman died on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1940 and was buried to the mausoleum along with her husband. One of their servants, Mathilde Bonzon, was also buried to the mausoleum when she died on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1953. Virginia Esmerian was the last to be buried in the mausoleum after she died on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2003. There are seven catacombs in total and three catacombs seem to remain vacant as of today. Although Mathilde Siegman is the original owner of the mausoleum on record, the surname Esmerian has been additionally engraved above the front door right below Siegman.

Based on the record of Mausoleum Owner Correspondences, it appears that there were some maintenance issues with their mausoleum, such as cleaning, insects control, damage on the bronze door or tree removal on the lot, which often had Virginia Esmerian make claims to Woodlawn for repairs.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920 Population," ED No. 1060, Sheet No. 12B, [ancestrylibrary.com](http://ancestrylibrary.com). Refer to Pic. 02 of Sheet A1 in Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> "U.S. Passport Applications 1795-1925," [ancestrylibrary.com](http://ancestrylibrary.com). Refer to Pic. 01 of Sheet A1 in Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> "Mausoleum Owner Correspondences," Avery Archive. Refer to Pic. 02 of Sheet A10 in Appendix.

Estimates for exterior wall repointing, new planting/removal of trees, and roof joints repointing have been exchanged between Woodlawn and the Siegman family for \$4,000, which was bequeathed to the Perpetual Fund of Woodlawn to be applied toward care and maintenance of the lot and mausoleum along with any surplus income.<sup>4</sup> One interesting finding is that a company named The J.C. Dodds Memorial Studios, Inc. sent a letter to Woodlawn on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1937 telling them that a prospective buyer wished to erect a mausoleum similar to the Siegman mausoleum and asking about the required endowment.<sup>5</sup> It appears that the design of Siegman mausoleum with its Stony Creek granite exterior was outstanding and successful.

#### Site Context / Designs / Materials / Architect

The Siegman mausoleum is located at Lot No. 14508 in Chestnut Hill Plot neighboring a number of other mausoleums and several large trees. Lot No. 14508 is one of several circles around the sizable lot of Joseph Paterno. The front façade of the Siegman mausoleum faces northwest and it is mostly hidden by a taxus tree when viewed from Chestnut Hill Ave. There are two great trees – a maple and a hemlock – toward the rear façade of mausoleum which provide a nice backdrop and shade to the mausoleum.<sup>6</sup>

The exterior façades of the Siegman mausoleum are constructed with Stony Creek granite in two different types of finishes – polished for the main wall planes and unpolished for the rest of the exterior. Stony Creek granite, from Branford, Connecticut, was first quarried in 1858 and makes up a great deal of New York City's architectural history. The entire design of the mausoleum is symmetrical. The four corners of the mausoleum are decorated with fluted pilasters which have a taste of the Transition or Byzantine capitals and the Composite-base style.<sup>7</sup> Also, there are two ornamental urns sitting at each side

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<sup>4</sup> "Mausoleum Owner Correspondences," Avery Archive. Refer to Pic. 03 of Sheet A2, Pic. 01 of Sheet A4, and Pic. 01 of Sheet A8 in Appendix.

<sup>5</sup> "Mausoleum Owner Correspondences," Avery Archive. Refer to Pic. 02 of Sheet A2 in Appendix.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Dwg. 01 of Sheet A3 and Dwg. 01 of Sheet A4 in Appendix.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to Sheet A7 in Appendix.

of entry, creating an inviting element on the mausoleum. The northeast facade of the mausoleum appears to be the most deteriorated by biological growth. The door is cast in bronze with a goddess-looking figure and ornamental foliage in bas relief.

The walls and ceiling of interior are finished with Tennessee marble panels in a book-matched pattern and the floor is finished in highly polished Stony Creek granite.<sup>8</sup> Two catacombs are placed under the floor with a part of slab openable and five catacombs are in the rear side of the mausoleum.<sup>9</sup> Severe water stains were discovered around the upper parts of interior wall finishes, which led me to look into wall section details in terms of how the exterior granite and interior marble claddings were actually designed and built.<sup>10</sup> Based on the overall building wall sections from the Avery Archive, it typically has an approximately 1-inch cavity between exterior walls and interior claddings vertically, as well as a good depth of void between the exterior roof stones and the interior ceiling finish. These gaps are typically used for the traditional cladding system to allow for free draining of any trapped moisture, accommodate the fixings, and take up all structural tolerances. Fixings situated in the cavity typically carry the load of the cladding to a load bearing fixing at the floor plate so that the stones above are simply restrained using restraint fixings.<sup>11</sup> Without further developed construction details of the mausoleum on record, only some assumptions can be made that any water penetrated through failure of roof joints could be sitting inside these cavities significantly, including the cavity above the ceiling slab and the cavity between the walls, and that it has created severe water-damaged stains along the walls and ceiling perimeter. Careful maintenance is suggested to make sure that there is no severe failure of roof joints or weep vents on the walls.

It is also discovered that the jamb area around the door lock hardware has been chipped and damaged, which leads me to an assumption that there was some theft. The mausoleum currently does not have any stained glass windows on the side walls or the front entrance door. They all appear to be plain

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<sup>8</sup> Refer to Pic. 02 of Sheet A9 in Appendix.

<sup>9</sup> Refer to Pic. 02 of Sheet A4 and Dwg. 01 of Sheet A9 in Appendix.

<sup>10</sup> Refer to Pic. 03 of Sheet A8 in Appendix.

<sup>11</sup> "Cladding Stones." <http://murphystone.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/TechnicalData-Cladding-Stones-Paving.pdf>, Refer to Pic. 01 and 03 of Sheet A9 in Appendix.

single-pane glass and the interior panel of the entrance door is missing as well. Based on the correspondence record from Virginia Esmerian in 1960, it can be assumed that the interior panel of the entrance door was part of the original design.<sup>12</sup>

The architect of the Siegman mausoleum was Alfred Freeman (29 West 34<sup>th</sup> Steet, NYC). His practice was in New York City, where he designed buildings of eight-story mercantile store/loft, two or three-story garage/storage, and ten-story brick loft.<sup>13</sup> The entrance bronze door was designed by James S. J. Novelli as the engraved signature, J.S.J. Novelli, indicates.<sup>14</sup> James S. J. Novelli was born in 1885 and his artistic talent took shape toward the end of the Gilded Age. It flourished by 1920's and came to an early end by the Great Depression. James Novelli's art was mostly dedicated to keeping alive the memory of our country's heroes and fallen soldiers, decorating the squares, the private collections, and the cemeteries of New York.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> "Mausoleum Owner Correspondences," Avery Archive, Refer to Pic. 02 through 05 of Sheet A10 in Appendix.

<sup>13</sup> "Manhattan New Building Database, 1900-1986," Office for Metropolitan History, <http://metrohistory.com/dbpages/NBsearch.html>

<sup>14</sup> Refer to Pic. 04 of Sheet A5 in Appendix.

<sup>15</sup> Josephine Murphy, "Novelli, a forgotten sculptor," Boston : Branden Books, c2003

## Bibliography

"Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920 Population," ED No. 1060, Sheet No. 12B, [ancestrylibrary.com](http://ancestrylibrary.com)

"U.S. Passport Applications 1795-1925," [ancestrylibrary.com](http://ancestrylibrary.com)

"Mausoleum Owner Correspondences," Avery Archive

"Examination Sheet, The Woodlawn Cemetery," Avery Archive

"Drawings of Floor Plan, Elevations, Sections," Avery Archive

Babcock-Smith House Museum, "Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NY," <http://www.babcocksmithhouse.org/GraniteIndustry/MapUS/NY/NYC/Bronx%20Woodlawn/siegmán.html>

"Cladding Stones," <http://murphystone.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/TechnicalData-Cladding-Stones-Paving.pdf>

"Manhattan New Building Database, 1900-1986," Office for Metropolitan History, <http://metrohistory.com/dbpages/NBsearch,lasso>

Josephine Murphy, "Novelli, a forgotten sculptor," Boston : Branden Books, c2003

## Appendix

STATE New York  
COUNTY New York

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—BUREAU OF THE CENSUS  
FOURTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1920—POPULATION

SUPERVISOR  
ENUMERATOR

TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY Warwick  
NAME OF INSTITUTION Warwick  
NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Warwick  
ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 2nd DAY OF January 1920.

PLACE OF ABODE	NAME	RELATION	SEX	RACE	AGE	MARRIAGE	CITIZENSHIP	EDUCATION	NATIVE AND MOTHER TONGUE									
									PERSON	FATHER	MOTHER							
Street, avenue, etc., or farm, etc.	Household number, or name of institution	Relationship of this person to head of family	Male or female	Color or race	Age at last birthday	Single, married, divorced, or widowed	Naturalized or alien	Attended school any time after Sept. 1, 1919	Whether able to read	Whether able to write	Time of birth	Native tongue	Mother tongue	Time of birth	Mother tongue	Time of birth	Mother tongue	Whether able to speak English
572	144	Head	M	W	43	M	N	12	10	10	19	German	German	19	German	19	German	Yes
		Wife	F	W	40	M	N	11	10	10	19	German	German	19	German	19	German	Yes
		Son	M	W	10	S	N	5	5	5	19	German	German	19	German	19	German	Yes
		Daughter	F	W	8	S	N	4	4	4	19	German	German	19	German	19	German	Yes
		Son	M	W	5	S	N	3	3	3	19	German	German	19	German	19	German	Yes
		Daughter	F	W	3	S	N	2	2	2	19	German	German	19	German	19	German	Yes
		Son	M	W	2	S	N	1	1	1	19	German	German	19	German	19	German	Yes
		Daughter	F	W	1	S	N	0	0	0	19	German	German	19	German	19	German	Yes
		Son	M	W	0	S	N	0	0	0	19	German	German	19	German	19	German	Yes

PIC. 01 FOURTEEN CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1920-POPULATION [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com]



**PERSONS ACQUIRING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH NATURALIZATION OF HEADS OF FAMILIES**

**Edward Siegmán**  
Department of State  
of the United States at Washington, D. C.  
has a passport for myself, accompanied by my wife, **METILDA J. SIEGMAN**, and minor children, as follows: **VIRGINIA J. SIEGMAN**, born at New York City, N. Y., on the 27th day of July, 1903; and

I solemnly swear that I was born at **Danzonitz, Province of Posen, Kingdom of Prussia**, on or about the 29th day of January, 1858; that my father, **LEONARD SIEGMAN**, emigrated to the United States, sailing on board the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 1858; that he was naturalized as a citizen of the United States at New York City, New York, on the 27th day of \_\_\_\_\_, 1883; and that I am the bearer of the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, issued by \_\_\_\_\_, which is returned herewith; that I am the identical person referred to in said passport; that I have resided in the United States, uninterruptedly, for \_\_\_\_\_ years, from 1874 to 1914, at New York City, New York, where I follow the occupation of retired merchant.

I have left the United States on the 15th day of April, 1914.

PIC. 02 U.S. PASSPORT APPLICATIONS 1795-1925 [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com]



July 26, 1919

Frederic-Ogryzenda Company,  
 101 Park Avenue,  
 New York City

Gentlemen: Siegmans Mausoleum.

We are in receipt of plans and specifications for the above mausoleum.

Please file with us a floor plan showing the brick pier which we require at the four corners of the archway piers and we would ask you to kindly instruct your draughtsmen to show these on future plans.

The four exposed vertical joints in the cornice should be covered with metal caps same as the roof joints.

In all probability the building will be located as per the blueprint reviewed July 25th enclosed but we. Siegmans will definitely decide about this next Monday.

You will note that there is a difference of about one foot in the grade which should be taken care of in your base course.

Except as noted the plans are hereby approved.

Yours truly  
 THE WOODLAWN CEMETERY  
 By *Richard Murphy*

FIG. 01 PLAN APPROVAL [AVERY ARCHIVE CORRESPONDENCE]

ESTABLISHED 1864  
 THE J. C. DODDS MEMORIAL STUDIOS, INC.  
 230 PARK AVENUE  
 NEW YORK

MEMORIALS IN ALL  
 GRANITES, MARBLES,  
 BRONZE, AND STUCCO  
 HALF ADORNS' WORKMAN  
 HURRY HILL 2-4800  
 ROOM, MENORAH  
 FIVE FEET & SET.

NEW YORK  
 December 8, 1937.

The Woodlawn Cemetery  
 Webster Ave. and East 233d St.  
 Bronx, N. Y.

Gentlemen: Attention: Superintendent

We have a mausoleum prospect who wishes to erect a mausoleum similar to the "Siegmans" mausoleum constructed of Stony Creek Granite.

Before proceeding with the signing of the contract and entering into details he would like to know the endowment you will require for this type of building.

Could you give us an idea as to the endowment also of the "Julius" mausoleum as an alternative, all exact finish.

Thanking you for your attention to this matter, we are

Very truly yours,  
 THE J. C. DODDS MEMORIAL STUDIOS, INC.  
 RECEIVED  
 Richard Murphy  
 Vice-President.  
 RM FK

FIG. 02 LETTER FROM J. C. DODDS MEMORIAL STUDIO [AVERY ARCHIVE CORRESPONDENCE]

April 22, 1940

*Siegmans, Mathilde S*  
 14508 Chestnut

Mr. John C. Plumb, Superintendent  
 The Woodlawn Cemetery  
 Bronx, New York City

Dear Mr. Plumb:

The following is an extract from the will of Mathilde S. Siegmans, owner of lot 14508, Chestnut Plot, Section 125 for the perpetual care of same:

SECOND: I give and bequeath the sum of FOUR THOUSAND DOLLARS to the Perpetual Fund of THE WOODLAWN CEMETERY, the income of which shall be applied toward the perpetual care and maintenance of the mausoleum erected by me in said cemetery. I direct that upon my death my remains shall be placed in said mausoleum and that, if I should die in Europe, my remains shall be returned to the United States, accompanied by some relative or friend, and all the expenses thereof, including the expenses of said relative or friend, shall be charged to my estate as funeral expenses.

The attorneys for the estate are Messrs. Proskauer, Rose and Pankus, 11 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

9/3/40  
 Yours very truly,  
 By *J.H.P.*  
 Assistant Secretary  
 L. 190-1 Apartment 100  
 1200 Madison Avenue  
 New York City

FIG. 03 MATHILDE S. SIEGMAN'S WILL [AVERY ARCHIVE CORRESPONDENCE]

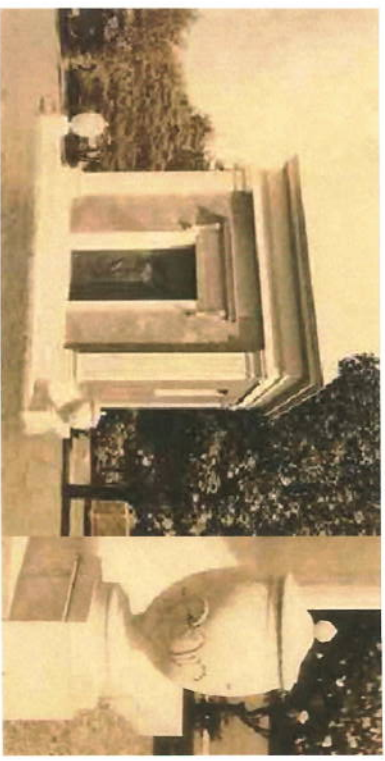


FIG. 04 PHOTOS FROM 1920 [Babcock-Smith House Museum, Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx NY]



FIG. 01



FIG. 02



FIG. 03



01 A3 SITE MAP 1  
 N.T.S.



FIG. 04



FIG. 05



FIG. 06

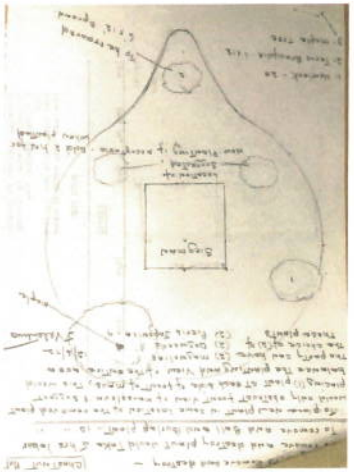
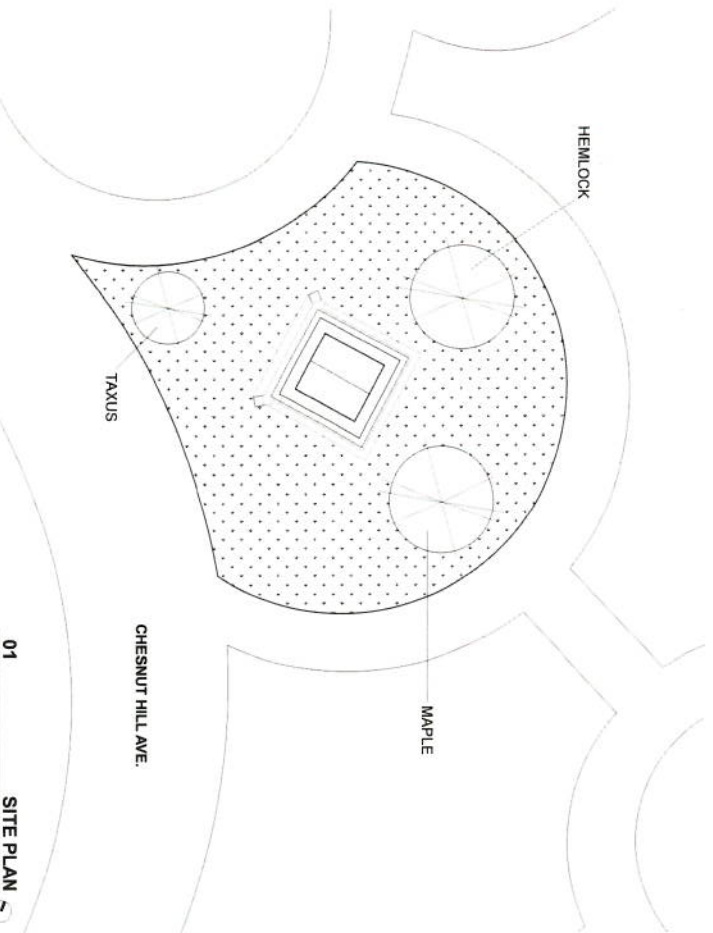


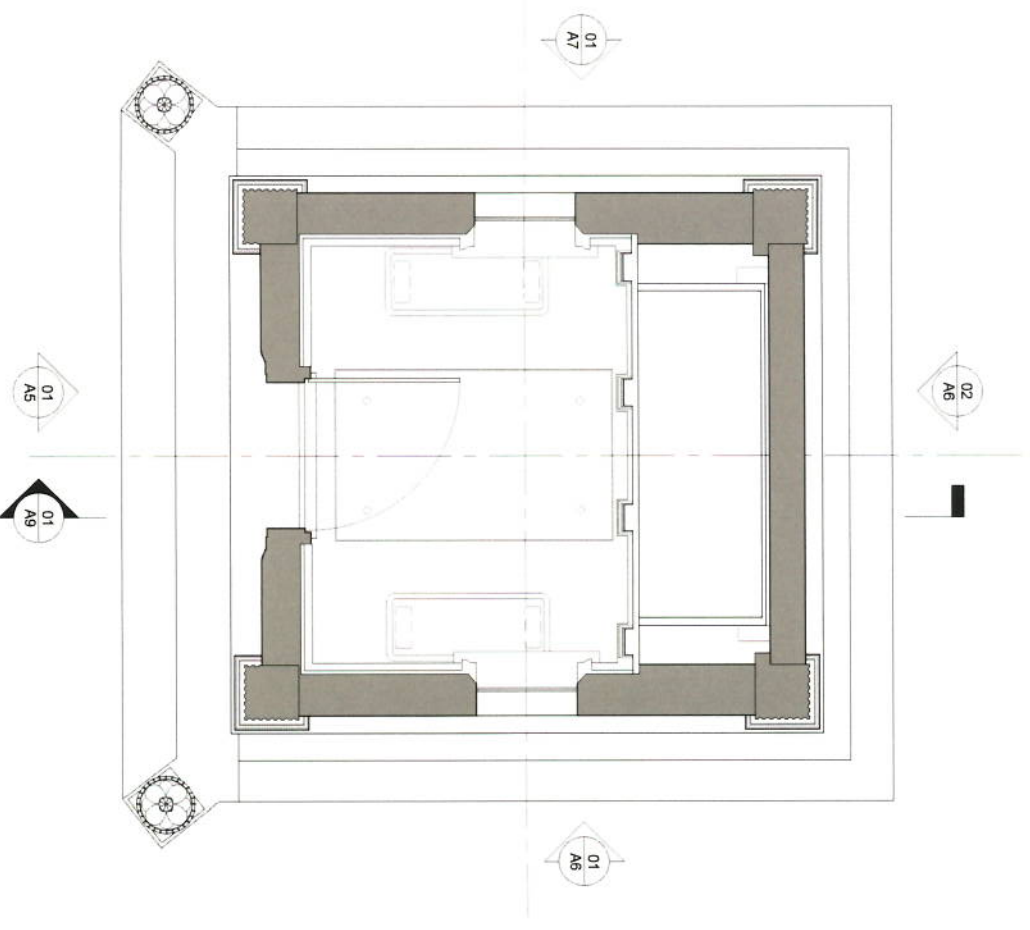
FIG. 01 LANDSCAPING ESTIMATE [AVERY ARCHIVE CORRESPONDENCE]



FIG. 02 OPERABLE FLOOR SLAB



01 SITE PLAN  
 A4 1/16" = 1'-0"



02 FLOOR PLAN  
 A4 3/8" = 1'-0"

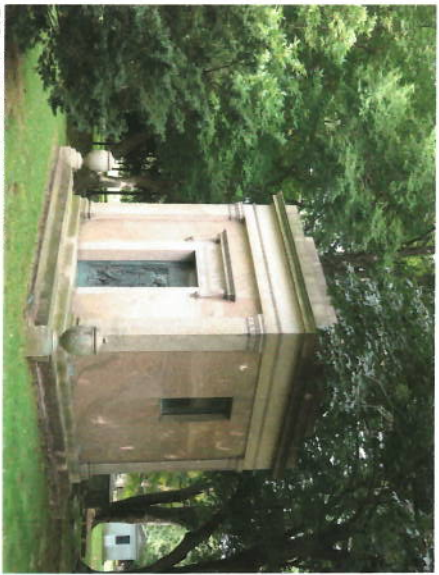
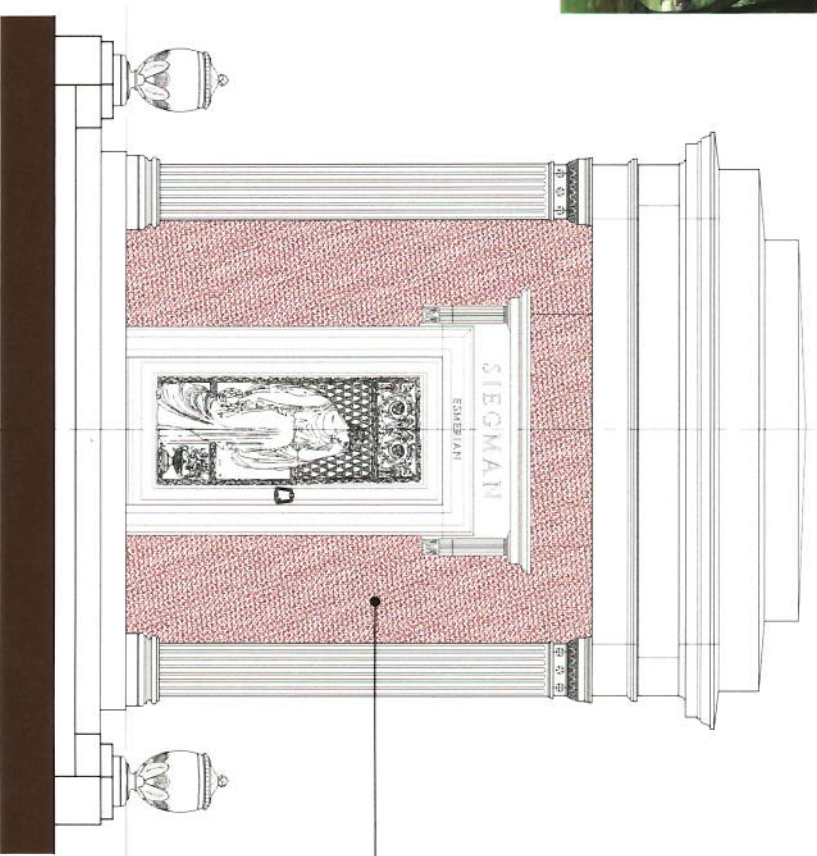


FIG. 01 MAIN FRONT VIEW



01 NORTH-WEST ELEVATION  
A5  
3/8" = 1'-0"



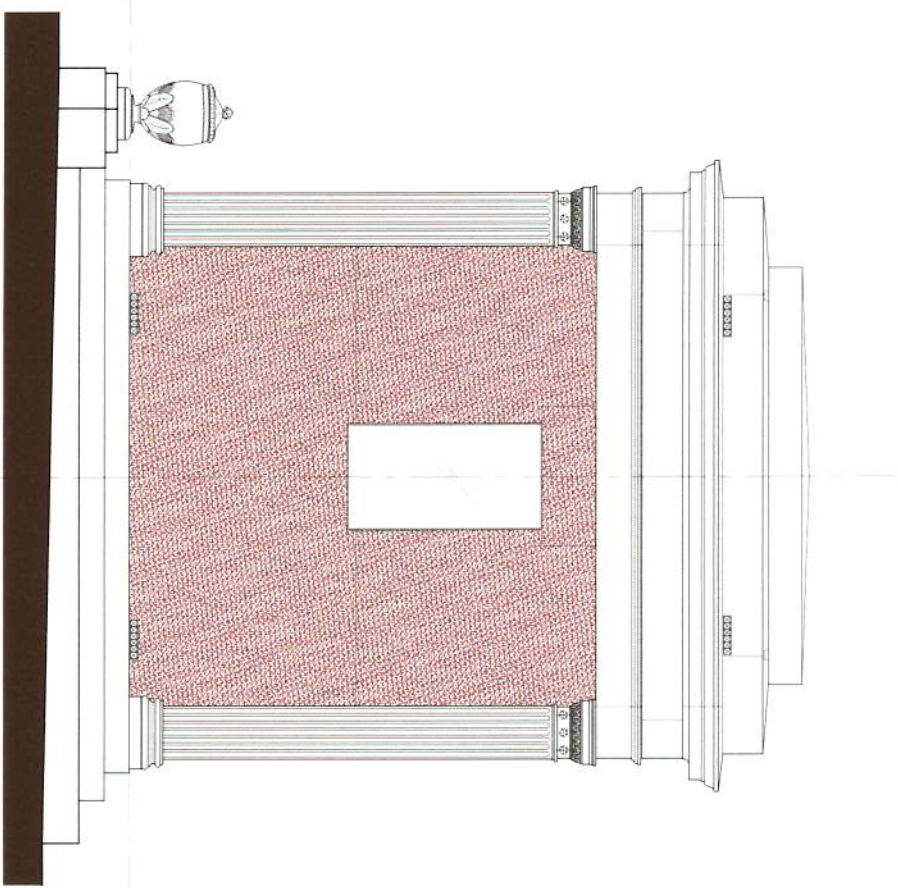
FIG. 02 INSCRIPTION



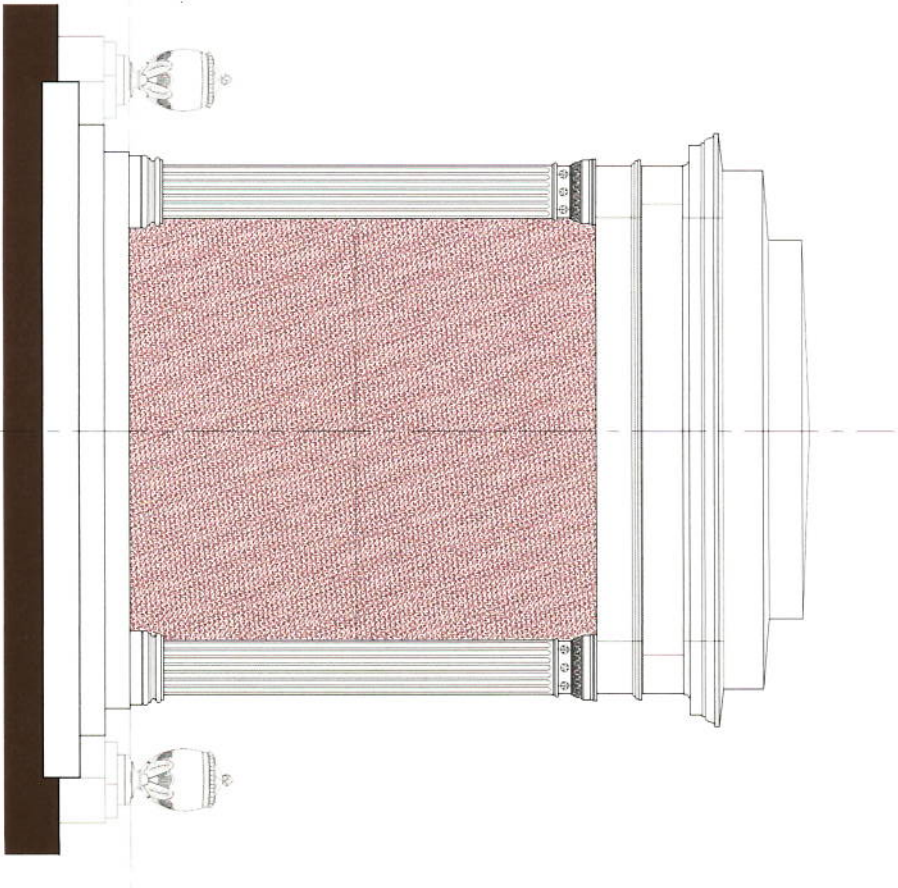
FIG. 03 STONY CREEK GRANITE FINISHES



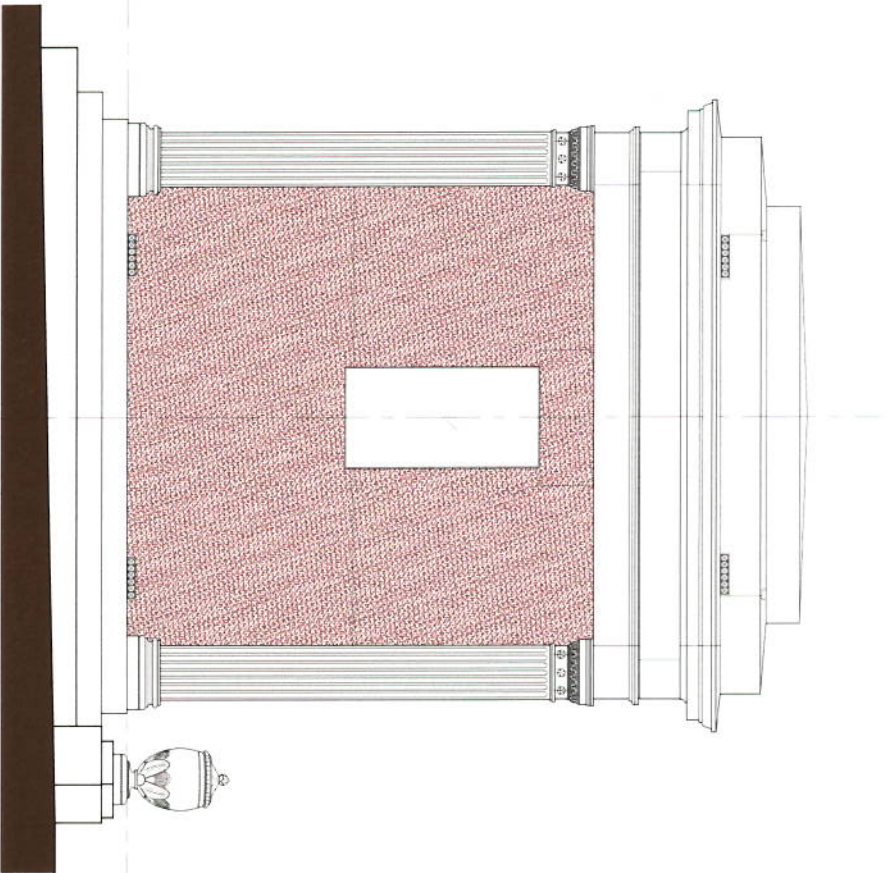
FIG. 04 SIGNATURE ON DOOR



01 SOUTH-WEST ELEVATION  
A6 3/8" = 1'-0"



02 SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION  
A6 3/8" = 1'-0"



01 NORTH-EAST ELEVATION  
 A7 3/8" = 1'-0"

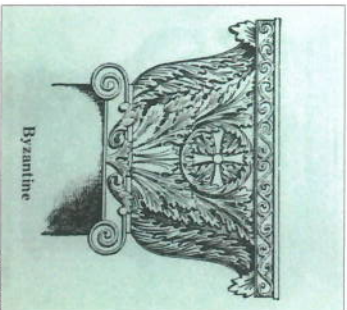


FIG. 01

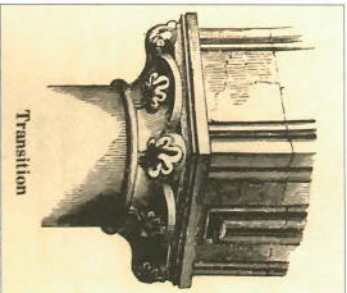


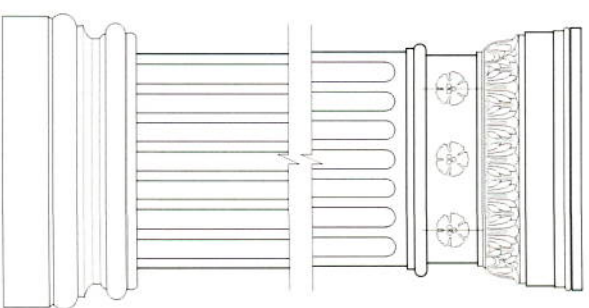
FIG. 02



FIG. 03



FIG. 04 DETERIORATION BY BIOLOGICAL GROWTH



02 ENLARGED CAPITAL  
 A7



FIG. 05

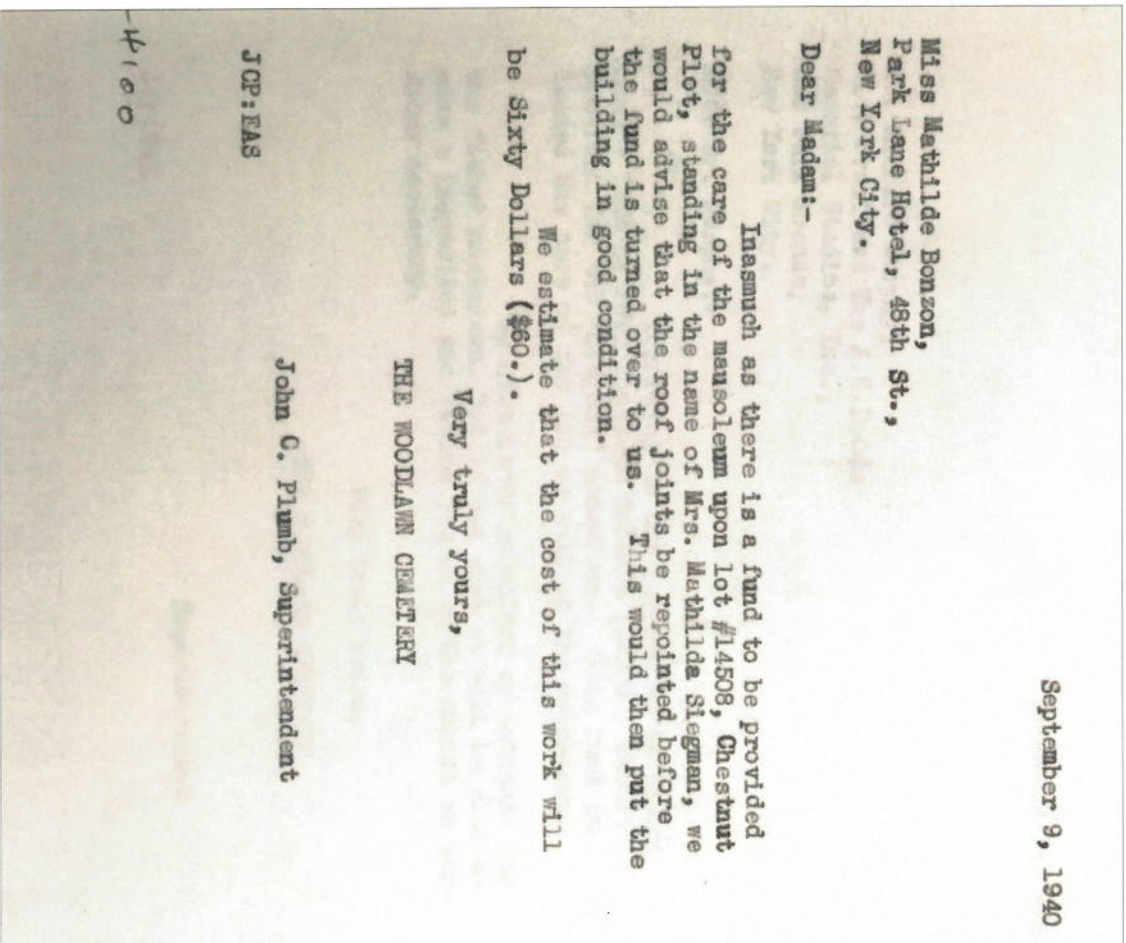


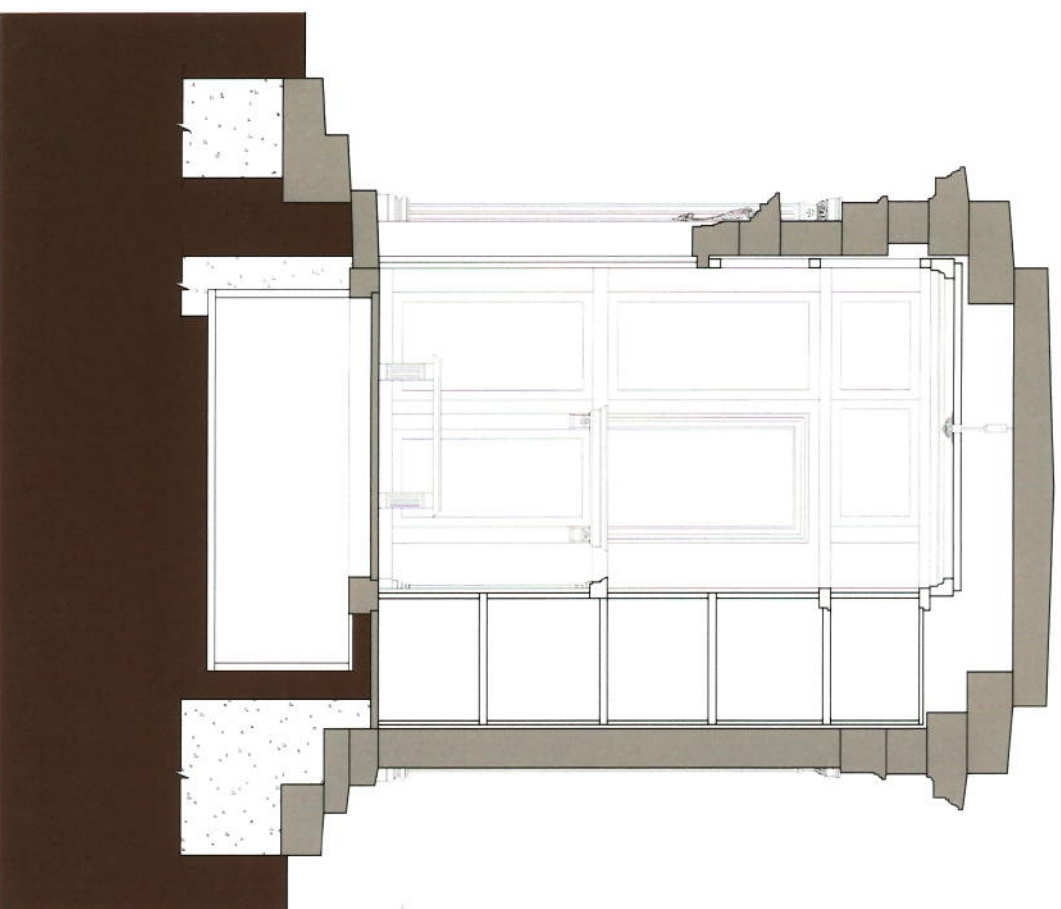
FIG. 01 ROOF JOINT REPOINTING [AVERY ARCHIVE CORRESPONDENCE]



FIG. 02 ROOF JOINTS



FIG. 03 WATER DAMAGE ON INTERIOR FINISH



01 SECTION THRU NORTH - SOUTH  
 A9  
 3/8" = 1'-0"



PIC. 01 ENLARGED SECTION DIAGRAMS



PIC. 02 BOOK-MATCHED PATTERN ON INTERIOR MARBLE FINISH

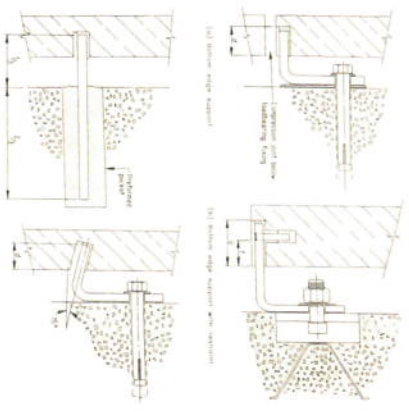


Fig. 1 Details of typical loadbearing fixings

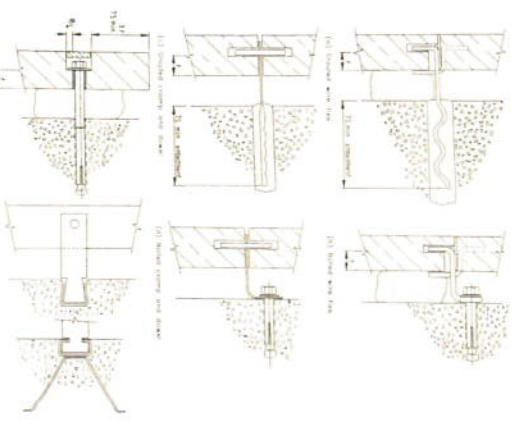


Fig. 2 Details of typical restraint fixings

PIC. 03 TYPICAL STONE CLADDING  
 FIXING DETAILS





FIG. 01 PHOTO FROM 1920  
 [Babcock-Smith House Museum,  
 Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx NY]

Lot Owner MRS. MATHILDA S. SIEGMAN

Lot No.	:	Sec.	:	Plot
11508	:	125	:	CHESTNUT

Mrs. Virginia Esmerian, 988 Fifth Ave., N.Y.C. called today and said that the bronze wreath at the base of the wall inside mausoleum has been damaged. There is a leaf broken off and she mentioned a stick, does she mean a stem, has been placed alongside of it.

Do you know how this happened, and can it be repaired?

Write to Mrs. Esmerian at above address or Phoned Bu. 6-9257

*Ellie Blower Mrs. Esmerian  
 Telephone 6-9257  
 Leaf wreath for funeral. 2/20*

NOTE: PRINTED FROM THE ARCHIVE

*BROKEN HERE*

FIG. 02 BRONZE WREATH DAMAGE [AVERY ARCHIVE CORRESPONDENCE]



FIG. 03 EXTERIOR WINDOW



FIG. 04 DOOR JAMB CONDITION NEAR HARDWARE



FIG. 05 BACKSIDE OF DOOR