

**John R. Hegeman Mausoleum
Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NY**



FALL 2012 HP STUDIO 1 - **PROJECT 3**: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis

FACULTY: Francoise Bollack, Ward Dennis and Andrew Dolkart

BETH MILLER 10/15/12

John R. Hegeman's ancestor, Adrian Hegeman, immigrated from Sloten, Amsterdam in 1650. He and his wife Catherine settled in Flushing, Long Island where he served as magistrate and scout-fiscal of the five Dutch towns. Adrian's descendants were farmers and land speculators, settling in Flatbush and Flatlands, Long Island. Following the Revolutionary War, Rem Hegeman, John Hegeman's great-great grandfather, established a homestead in Flatlands, Brooklyn.

John Rogers Hegeman, son of John G. and Charlotte Owens (Rogers) Hegeman, was born on a farm in Flatlands on April 18, 1844. He was educated at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute and became an accountant at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in 1866. On October 25, 1870, he married Evelyn Lyon of Brooklyn, and on the same day was named vice-president of MetLife. In 1891, he was elected president of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. During his years at Metropolitan Life, Hegeman managed to turn a small, struggling company into the largest life insurer in the U.S. Hegeman successfully introduced "workingmen's" insurance programs to the United States, following the model of companies in Great Britain. He was considered a great man with a great mind and heart by his colleagues.

In 1893, Metropolitan Life relocated its offices to the 11-story Metropolitan Life Home Office building at 1 Madison Avenue, designed by Napoleon Lebrun & Sons. In 1907, President John R. Hegeman facilitated a land-swap deal with the adjacent church in order to construct an office tower addition. The 50-story, 700 ft. tall tower, known as the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Tower, was also designed by LeBrun. It was the tallest building in the world at its completion in 1909, preceded by the Singer building and surpassed by the Woolworth building in 1913. At Hegeman's insistence, the tower's design was modeled on the Campanile of San Marco in Venice.

John R. Hegeman and his wife resided at 19 Madison Avenue, which is now the site of the Metlife North Building, also known as Eleven Madison. The family had a

country home called 'Rosedene' at Orienta Point in Mamaroneck, NY, where Hegeman spent the last years of his life, as well as a home in Wyoming. The Hegemans enjoyed yachting, owned horses and were active in the community. They financed the construction of the Salem Baptist Church in New Rochelle, NY, designed in the neo-Romanesque style by Arthur Bates Jennings and completed in 1904. The couple had one son, John Rogers Hegeman, Jr., born on August 10, 1871, who was a Captain of the 108th Regiment of Infantry in the National Guard, as well as assistant secretary of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. In 1914, Evelyn Rogers passed away and was interred at the Hegeman mausoleum. John R. Hegeman died of heart disease on April 6, 1919 at his home, 'Rosedene.' Hegeman left half of his estate to his son and half to Metropolitan Life's Sanitorium at Mt. McGregor, NY, which was created during Hegeman's tenure, to finance the "Hegeman Memorial" dedicated to tuberculosis research.

The John R. Hegeman mausoleum occupies the "Hickory Knoll" plot at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. It was designed by architect Ferdinand Prochazka and built in 1915 at a cost of \$75,000 by the Hedden Construction Company. Ferdinand Prochazka was a specialist in the design of monuments and mausoleums. He wrote a thorough and thoughtful piece in *The Architectural Review* titled "Problems of Mausoleum Construction," discussing the importance of preventing moisture infiltration and providing adequate ventilation, as well as designing artful and uplifting spaces in which to celebrate the deceased. "The idea of keeping these places of remembrance clean and bright, symbolical of the idea of future light and brightness, seems to me the most appropriate idea, and I cannot give up the thought that all things should be done to make a mausoleum a shrine of reflection, with everything symbolical of the sweetness of remembrance of those who have passed away forever."

As one heads Northeast along curving Chestnut avenue, the Hegeman

mausoleum appears between the trees. The building is set slightly off axis from the street of approach. One glimpses the symmetry of the front façade and feels the sensation of being pulled along the curving street with the desire to view the façade perpendicularly. The building is set apart from the surrounding cemetery as it is set on a raised platform about 4 ft. above ground level at the entrance. The platform is ringed by a granite retaining wall. It is rectangular in form with curved granite walls at the back corners, rising 4 ft. above the platform, each with a bench and flanked by urns. These curves serve to contain one's gaze and movement, focusing attention back onto the building and creating a private, intimate, interior space on the platform.

Prochazka stated that, "the temple form, in either the Greek or Roman style, offers the safest construction." The plan of the building's exterior is that of a tetra style Corinthian temple with a slight modification at the rear portico. The interior plan recalls a cruciform church layout with the catacombs housing John R. Hegeman and his wife at the altar. The exterior skin of the building is composed of Barre granite. The entrance door and windows are cast bronze, each with a central glazed panel behind which yellowish curtains are hung. The character of the interior is soft and light. The walls and floor are lined with white marble and the high groin-vaulted ceiling is lined with a yellow tile mosaic. A yellow rug lines the floor and is flanked by delicately carved, white-painted wood benches and a table with yellow fabric accents. There are stained glass windows on either side and at the back, which provide a light-filled interior. The focal stained glass window features a church that closely resembles the Salem Baptist Church that was financed by the family. A portrait of a young boy appears in each of the three windows, which could be a likeness of John R. Hegeman, Jr.

John R. Hegeman's mausoleum successfully embodies his life. The exterior is grand, classical, austere and powerful, while the interior is soft, domestic, spiritual and family-oriented.

Resources:

Cuyler Reynolds, Genealogical and Family History of Southern New York and the Hudson River Valley: A Record of the Achievements of Her People in the Making of Commonwealth and the Building of a Nation, Volume 3, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, January 1914

Ferdinand Prochazka, "Problems of Mausoleum Construction," The Architectural Review Volume 5, May, 1917

Mendelsohn, Joyce. Touring the Flatiron, New York, NY: New York Landmarks Conservancy, 1998

The National Encyclopedia of American Biography. New York: J.T. White Company, 1895

"John R. Hegeman Dies at Country Home," *New York Times*, April 7, 1919, p.12, Proquest

"John R. Hegeman, Life Insurance President, Dies," *New York Tribune*, April 7, 1919, p.8, Proquest

"John R. Hegeman Dead at 74," *The Washington Post*, April 7, 1919, p.1, Proquest

"John R. Hegeman Goes Into Beyond at the Age of 74," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 7, 1919, pg. 8, Proquest

Other Resources:

www.nyc-architecture.com

www.bklyn-genealogy-info.com/Town/Homesteads/Hegeman.html

Woodlawn Cemetery Records, Mausolea and Monument Files. New York: Avery



Figure 1: John R. Hegeman



Figure 2: Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Tower - 1909



Figure 3: Salem Baptist Church, New Rochelle, NY - 1904

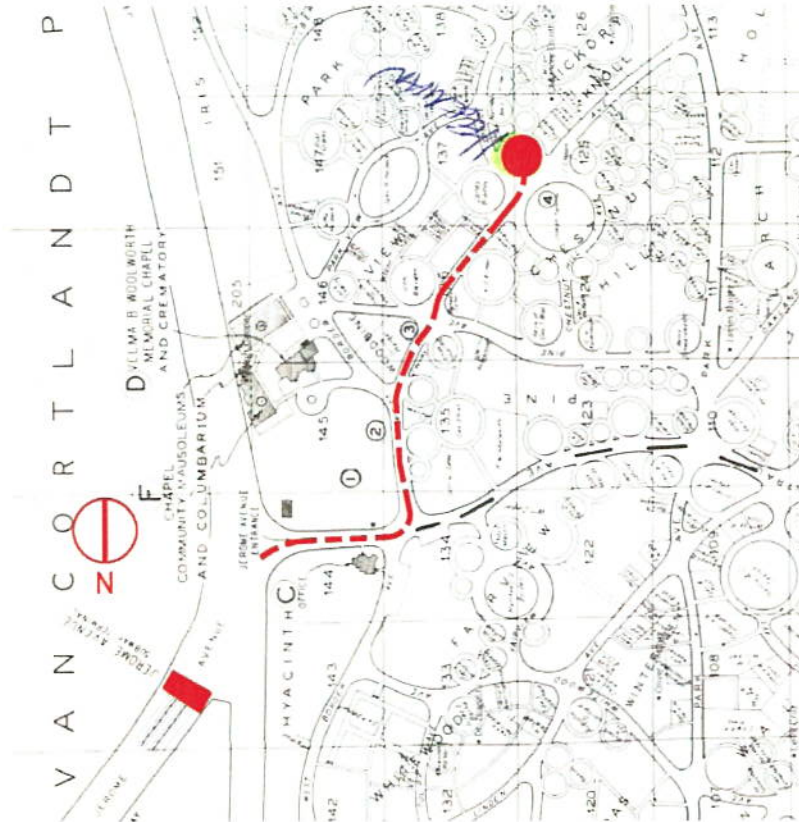


Figure 4: Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NY

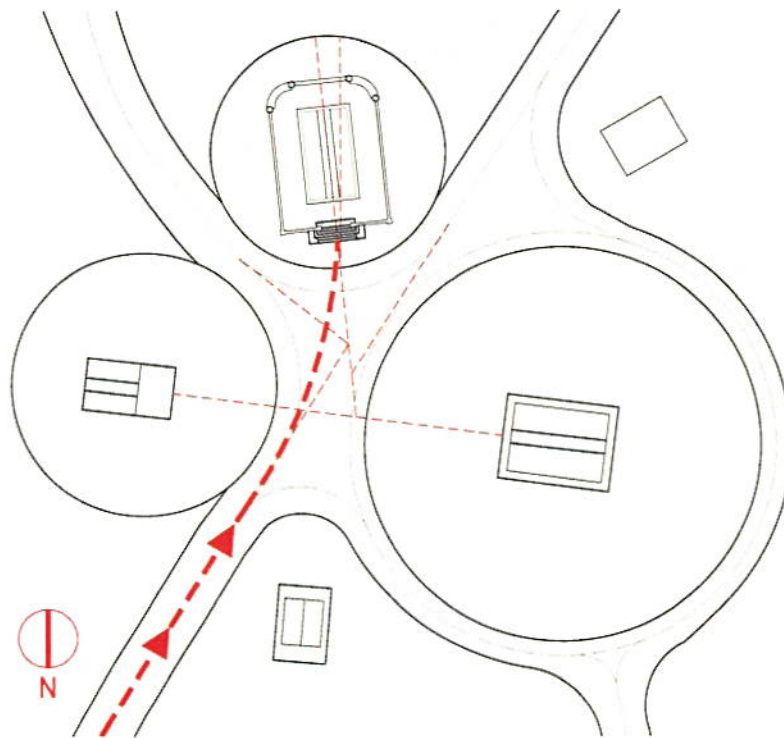


Figure 5: John R. Hegeman Mausoleum – Site Analysis

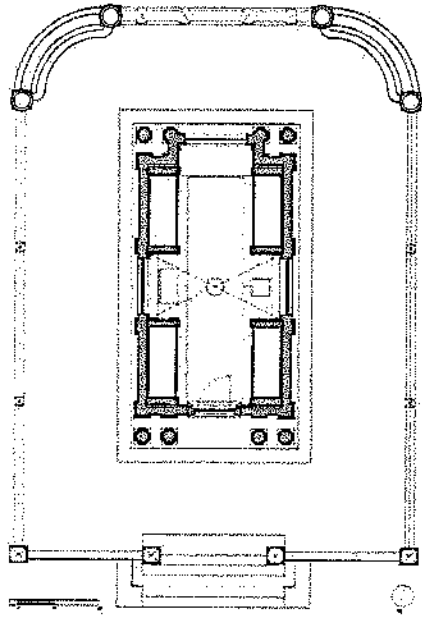


Figure 6: John R. Hegeman Mausoleum – Plan Drawing

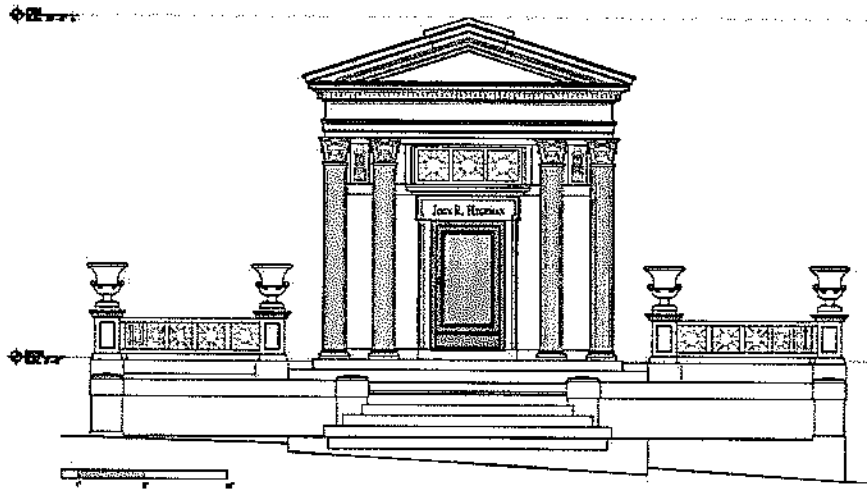


Figure 7: John R. Hegeman Mausoleum – Front Elevation



Figure 8: John R. Hegeman Mausoleum – Front Elevation



Figure 9: John R. Hegeman Mausoleum – Interior view