

**Report on the
Louis Ungrich Mausoleum**

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The Louis Ungrich mausoleum is a sepulchral monument located in Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, New York. The Classical Revival-style structure occupies a circular plot in the Wistaria tract found in the northern part of cemetery. Through a brief historical review of the mausoleum and its inhabitants, this report seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on monumental practices at Woodlawn. In particular, the history of the Ungrich mausoleum serves to illustrate the dual-nature of many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century monuments found there: although mausoleums project an aspirational image of the deceased for posterity, they also often reflect in their form and in their relation to other monuments the lived experience of those they commemorate.

In the year before construction began on the Ungrich mausoleum, an automobile accident inspired the purchase of at least two burial plots at Woodlawn Cemetery. A chauffeured vehicle carrying Louis and Henrietta Ungrich as well as Charles and Matilda Weisbecker lost control during a social outing near Edgewater, New Jersey. Witnesses recalled a wheel detaching from the vehicle moments before it crashed into a telegraph pole.¹ Charles Weisbecker died at the scene. Louis and Henrietta Ungrich sustained life-threatening injuries, ultimately resulting in Louis Ungrich death within three days. Despite the severity of her injuries, his wife Henrietta survived him. Within the year, the widowed Mrs. Weisbecker and Mrs. Ungrich both acquired plots at Woodlawn for their spouses' interment.²

As the events of 1908 suggest, the Ungrich and Weisbecker families had wealth and status that afforded them access to chauffeurs, automobiles, and certain leisure experiences. Louis Ungrich was a real estate investor and a building contractor in a joint enterprise with his brother Louis K. Ungrich. Charles Weisbecker was a grocery wholesaler and the owner of the Weisbecker Manhattan Market on West 125th street. However, the Ungrich-Weisbecker relationship was longstanding, and its character reveals the humbler origins of the Ungrich

¹ "One Dead, Four Hurt, In Auto's Wild Dash," *New York Times*, October 5, 1908, 1.

² Major Monument Records for Henrietta Ungrich and Matilda Weisbecker, Woodlawn Cemetery Archives, Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University.

family; it also implies a motivation for the eventual construction of the Ungrich mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery.

By Louis Ungrich's death in 1908, the Ungrich brothers had invested mightily in Manhattan real estate.³ But that business only had begun around 1886, when Louis Ungrich was at the age of thirty-six. Prior to entering the building industry, the brothers had undertaken another long-term joint enterprise: the production and sale of pickles and preserves. Those provisions were available for purchase at the Weisbecker Manhattan Market (Figure 1).⁴ Louis and Louis K. were born in New York to a German baker and his wife, and their first business reflected that upbringing. But like many first-generation Americans of the era, the Ungrich brothers sought to elevate their socio-economic standing by repositioning out of traditional jobs. In real estate and building Louis Ungrich and Louis K. Ungrich found notable success.

As has been noted by cemetery historians, funerary monuments - and mausoleums in particular- often were a reflection of this kind of aspirational thinking in the nineteenth century.⁵ As symbols of wealth and prestige, a mausoleum frequently represented to its owner a final affirmation of socio-economic achievement. Its construction symbolically staked a claim for an entire family in the landscape of the social elite. Indeed, Louis Ungrich may have held a similar belief: he regarded funerary monuments with such importance that his last will and testament mandated as a first order of business that a "suitable monument" bearing his name be erected to his memory.⁶

Upon their husband's deaths, Henrietta Ungrich and Matilida Weisbecker both enlisted C. E. Tayntor Granite Co. to design and build grand mausoleums on their Woodlawn plots. The Louis Ungrich mausoleum's design reflects that of a tetrastyle Greek temple (Figure 2). At the temple's portico, Doric columns support an entablature featuring triglyphs and a set of

³ *A History of Real Estate, Building, and Architecture in New York City* (New York, New York: The Real Estate Record Association, 1898), 145-148.

⁴ *New York City Directory, 1880-1886* (New York, New York: The Trow City Directory Company).

⁵ Kenneth Ames, "Ideologies in Stone: Meanings in Victorian Gravestones," *Journal of Popular Culture* 14:4 (1981): 641-656, and David Charles Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

⁶ Last Will and Testament of Louis Ungrich, New York County, District and Probate Courts. Accessed through subscription service Ancestry.com, *New York, Wills and Probate Records, 1659-1999* [database on-line].

emphatically rendered guttae. A wreath carved in relief projected from each triglyph, provides further ornamentation. Pilasters sited in line with the outermost members of the colonnade adorn all four corners of the tomb. The interior features a multi-part plan: through bronze double doors, a short vestibule led to a central hall flanked by stacked sepulchral vaults and terminating at an altar window. Pillars located at the entrance to the central hall contribute a processional quality to the design by recalling the exterior colonnade and prefiguring pilasters at the far wall. The stained-glass window there, crowned with a rounded pediment and flanked by pilasters, appears as part of an altar. Its projected shelf rests on half columns and is foregrounded by a low bench (Figure 3).

In executing this design, the Tayntor Granite Co. utilized granite and marble as the primary structural and ornamental materials, as is recorded in archival materials, and was confirmed through observation at the site. The exterior mausoleum walls consisted of finished granite blocks mortared with a cement-based mortar, also recorded in archival materials. The most common stone unit is approximately ten inches thick. Exterior columns, pilasters, and roof slabs similarly were granite. Marble was chosen for the mausoleum interior. Two-inch thick polished marble floors, ceiling panels, and catacomb wainscoting were used in addition to carved features.

Construction began on the mausoleum in 1909 and likely was finished that same year. Apparently satisfied with the work of the C. E. Tayntor Co. on his brother's tomb, Louis K. Ungrich enlisted the same company to build his own mausoleum in the wake of his daughter's death in 1911.⁷ The Louis K. Ungrich mausoleum shares many design similarities with that of Louis Ungrich, and its location was chosen within view on the adjacent Astor plot (Figure 4). The adjacency of the Ungrich family mausoleums at Woodlawn reflected the living arrangement of the families during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The brothers had purchased neighboring brownstones in Upper Manhattan by the close of the nineteenth century. Although Louis K. and his family had moved away for a time, the two families resumed living as

⁷ Major Monument Records for Louis K. Ungrich, Woodlawn Cemetery Archives, Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University.

neighbors follow the 1908 accident, likely in support of Henrietta and her two sons Frederick and Louis K. B. Ungrich.⁸

Henrietta lived until 1942, when she was interred in the vault opposite her husband in the Louis Ungrich mausoleum. She was survived by both of her sons. Neither Frederick nor Louis K. B., however, had spouses or children, and ultimately they were interred in the vaults immediately below their parents in 1951 and 1959, respectively. Today, only these four of the mausoleum's ten vaults are filled.

Despite the mid-twentieth century conclusion of the Louis Ungrich family lineage, the mausoleum appears to have experienced recent commemorative use. Glass and plastic flower vases rest in front of the altar window, which may have been filled at points by members of the Louis K. Ungrich family. The mausoleum also remains in fair condition, although staining on the interior marble ceiling (Figure 5) and accretion at its cornice ventilation (Figure 6) suggest that water entry has been an issue. Although deterioration appears to be minimal, determining the extent of water damage would require investigation of the area above the marble ceiling. This investigation also could reveal where and how much water is entering the structure.

The Louis Ungrich mausoleum appears in Woodlawn's mortuary landscape as a singular symbol of a family's wealth and social standing. However, closer investigation reveals that the image projected by the mausoleum is complicated by a set of intra-monumental dynamics. By considering the Ungrich mausoleum in concert with those memorializing Charles Weisbecker and Louis K. Ungrich, we come to a more complete understanding not only of the history of the Ungrich family, but also the ways that the deceased conceived of monumental practice. This suggests that further exploration of the historical relationships between monuments at Woodlawn Cemetery would be of benefit to further understanding of the cemetery's history and of funerary customs during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁸ United States Census, 1890, 1900, 1920 1920, and New York State Census, 1900, 1905. Accessed through subscription service Ancestry.com [database on-line].

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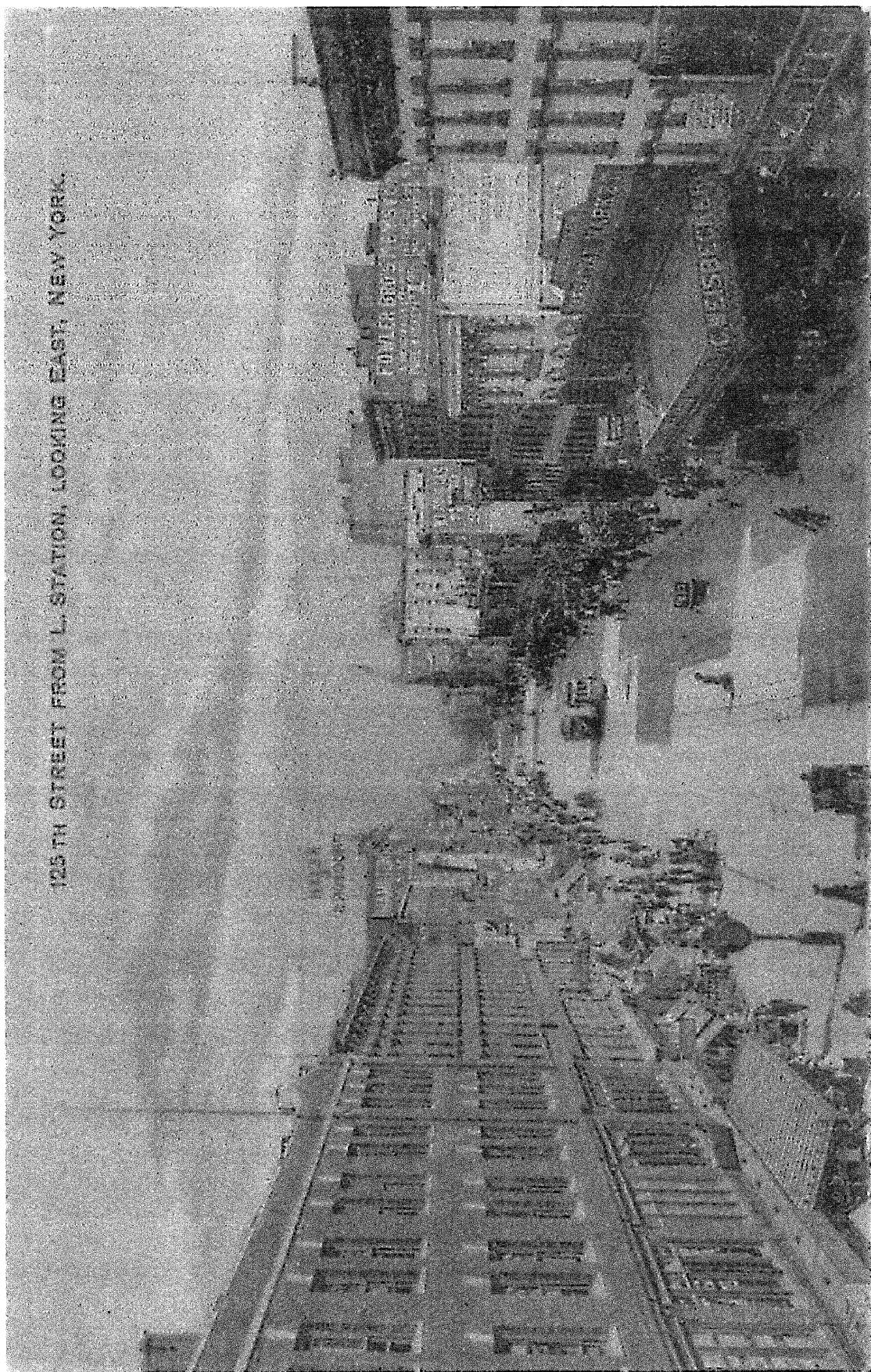


Figure 1. Postcard view of West 125th Street ca. 1910 with Charles Weisbecker's Manhattan Market in the bottom right corner

(Source: Old New York Post Cards #15, stuffnobodycaresabout.com)

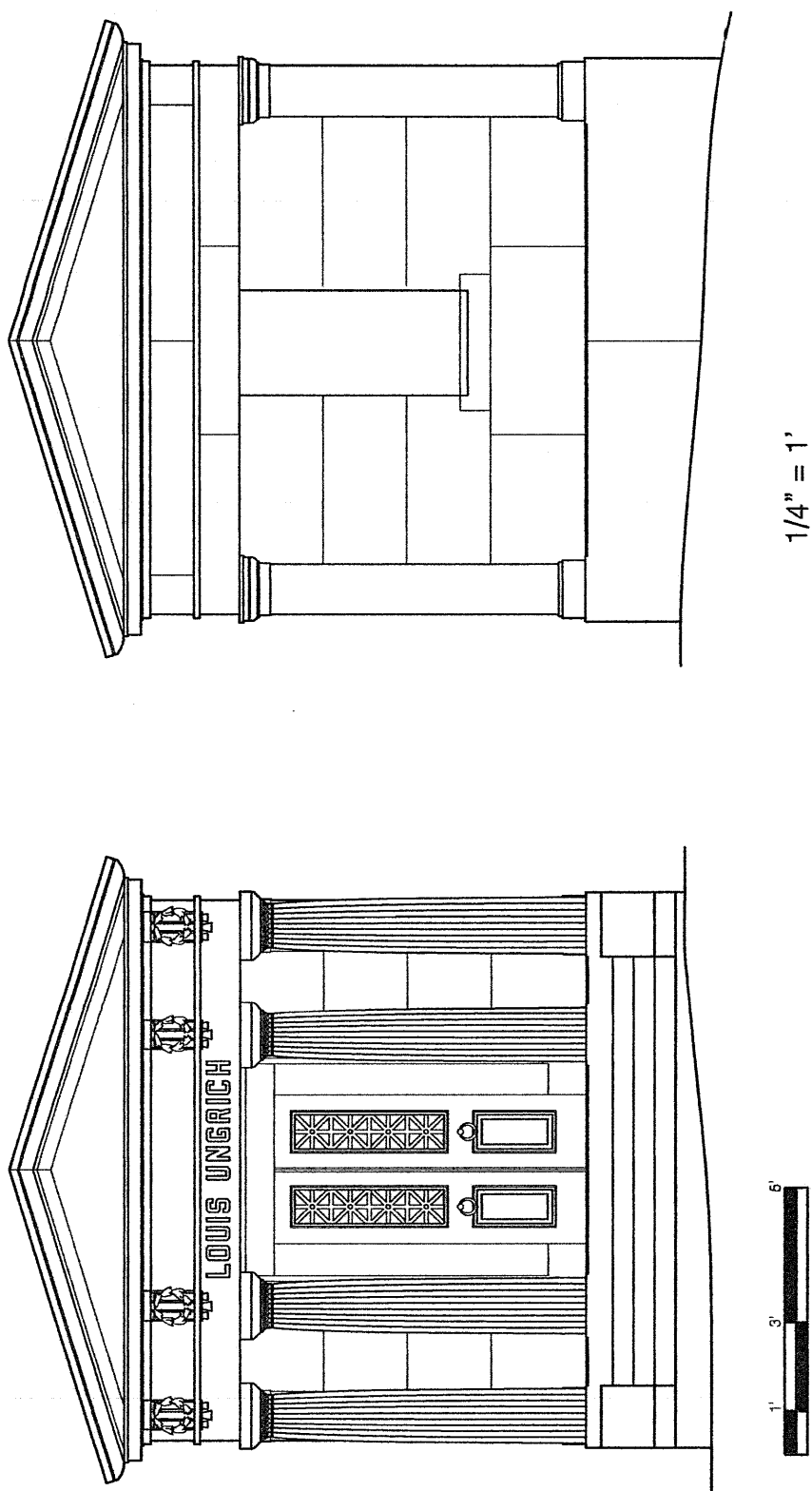
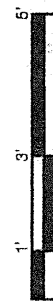
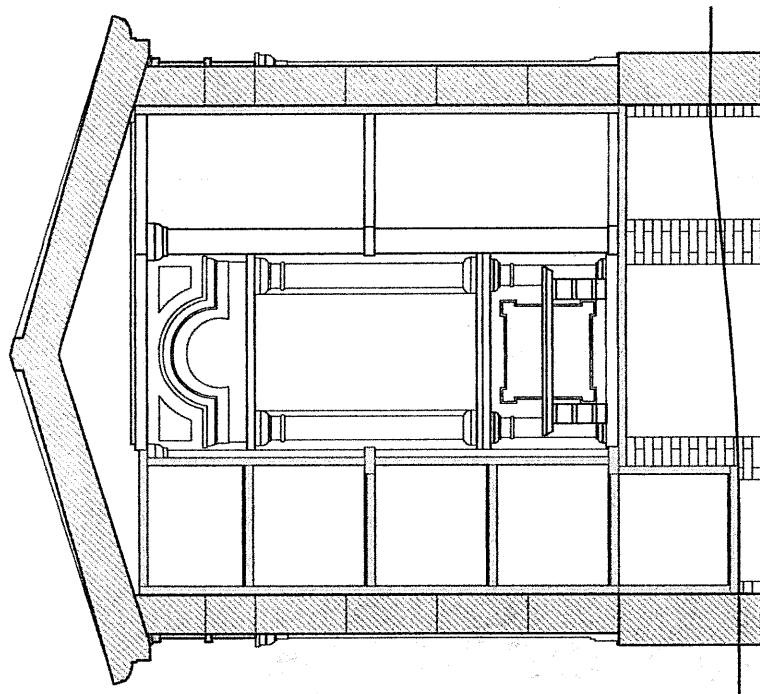
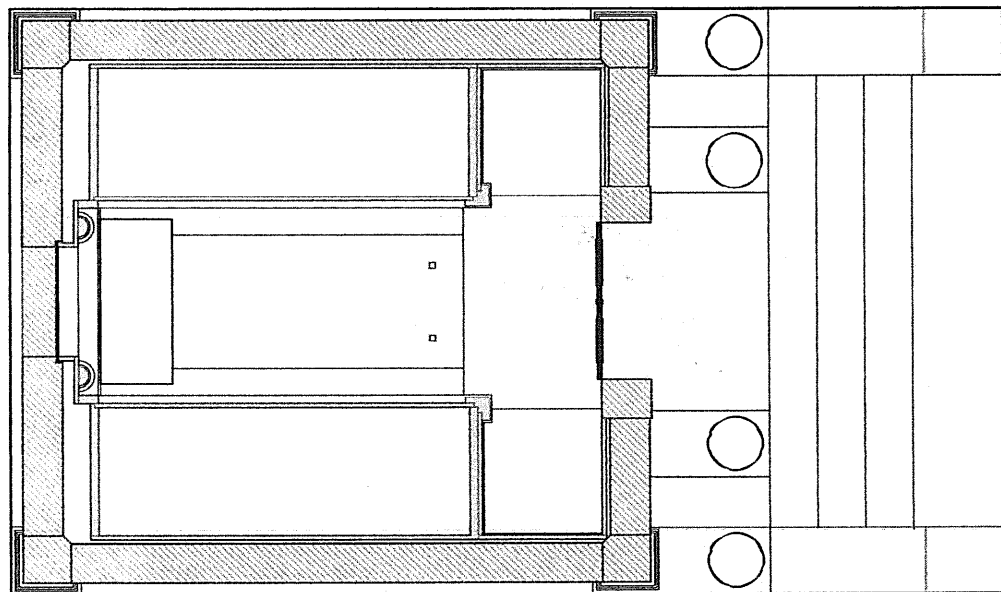


Figure 2. Front and Rear Elevations of the Louis Ungrich Mausoleum



1/4" = 1'

Figure 3. Plan and Interior Section

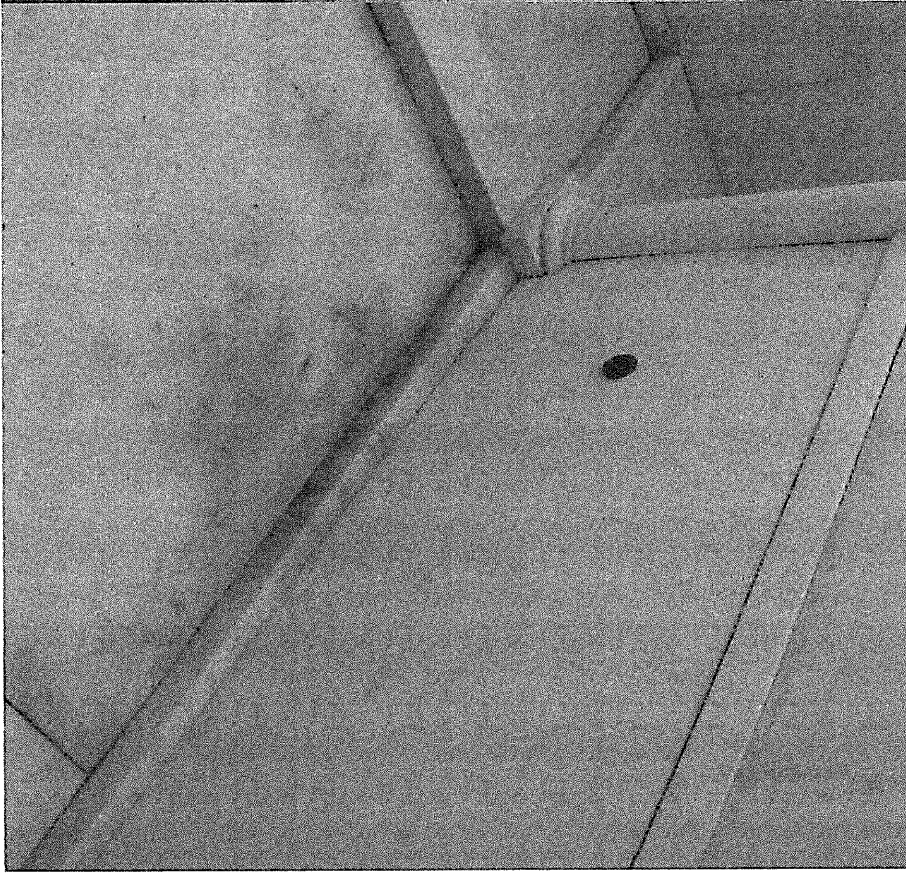


Figure 5. Staining on the marble ceiling

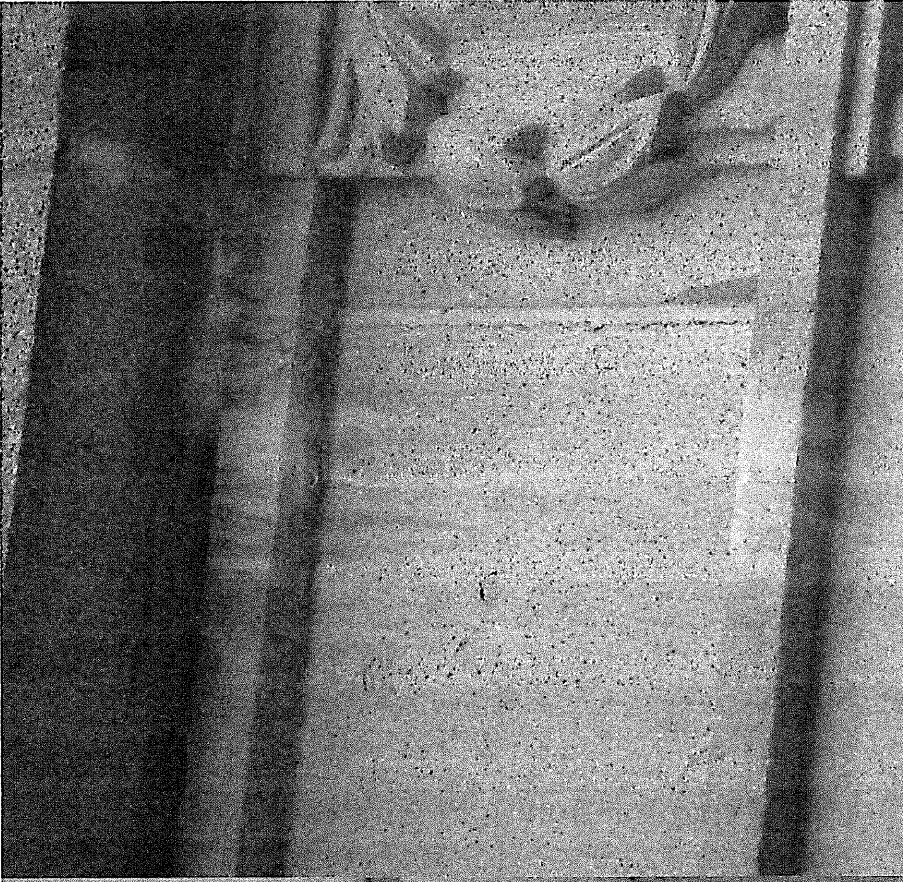
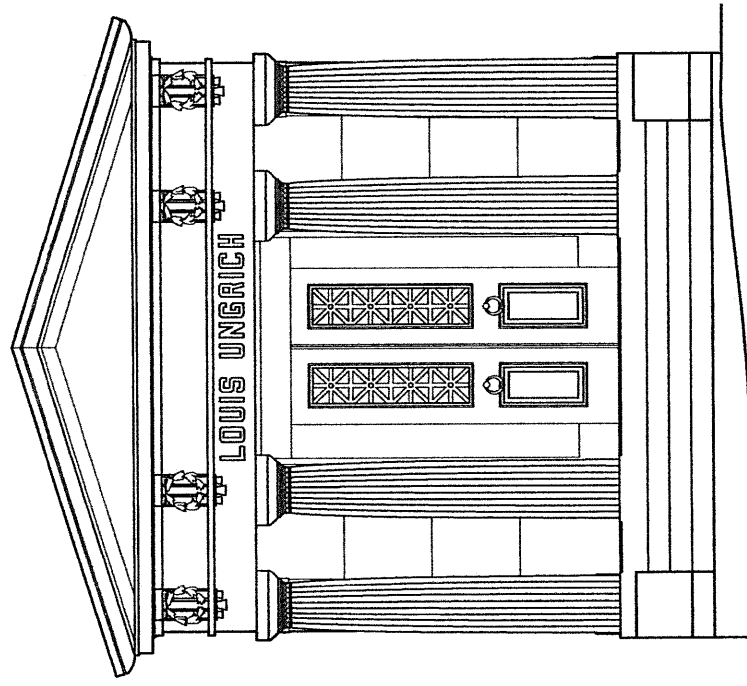
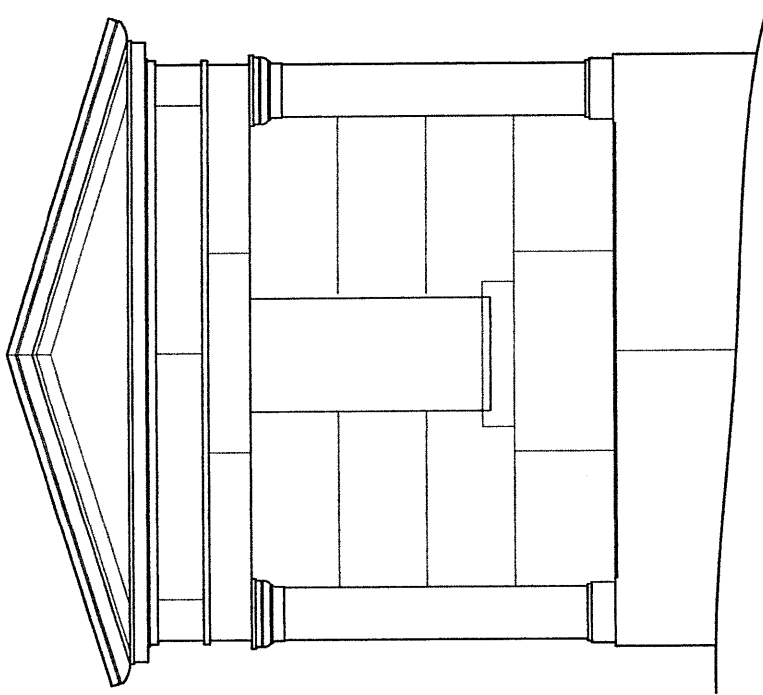


Figure 6. Accretion at the a cornice vent, south side

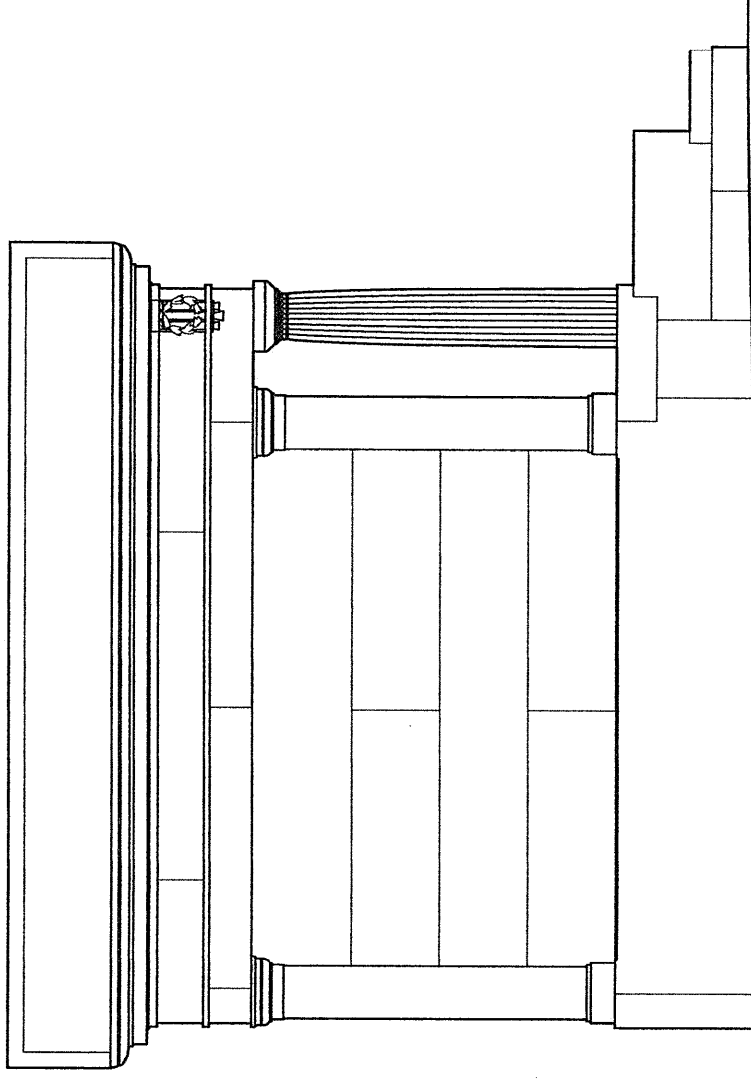
Measured Drawings of the Louis Ungrich Mausoleum

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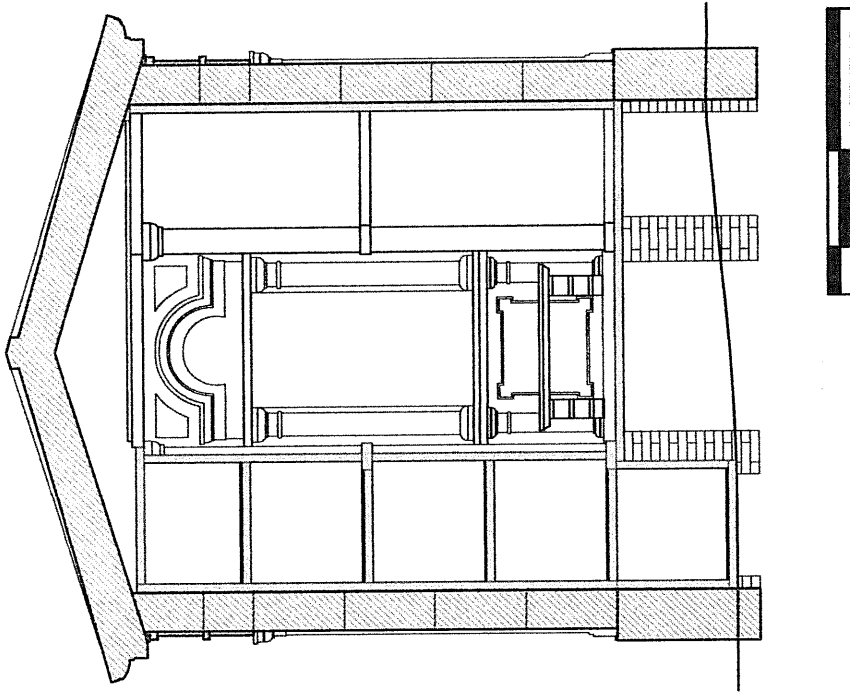
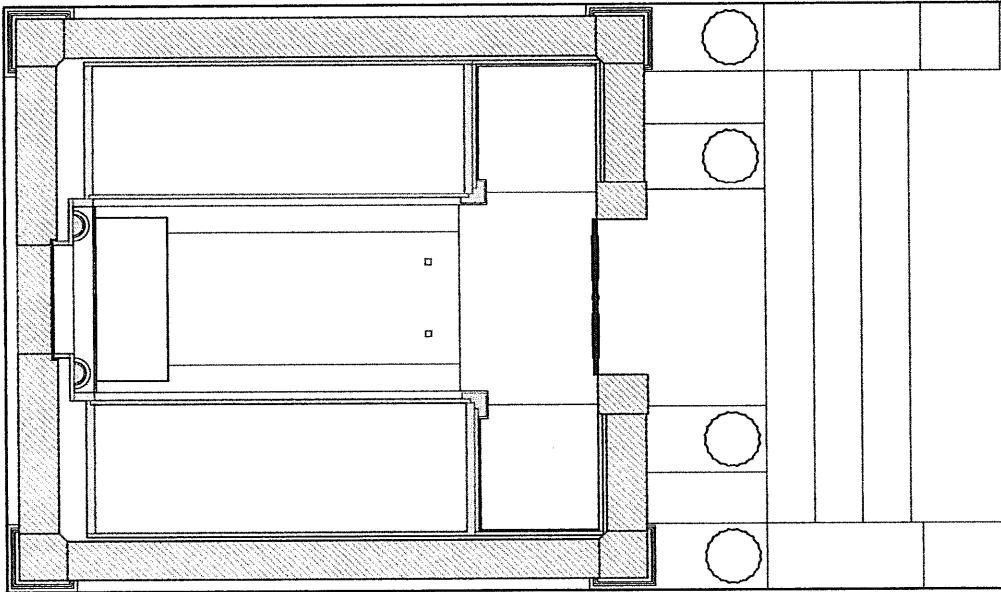


Front and Rear Elevation
 $1/4" = 1'$



Side Elevation
1/4" = 1'





Floor plan and Interior Section

Double Door and Triglyph Ornament

Door Scale $3/4" = 1'$

Triglyph $1" = 1'$

