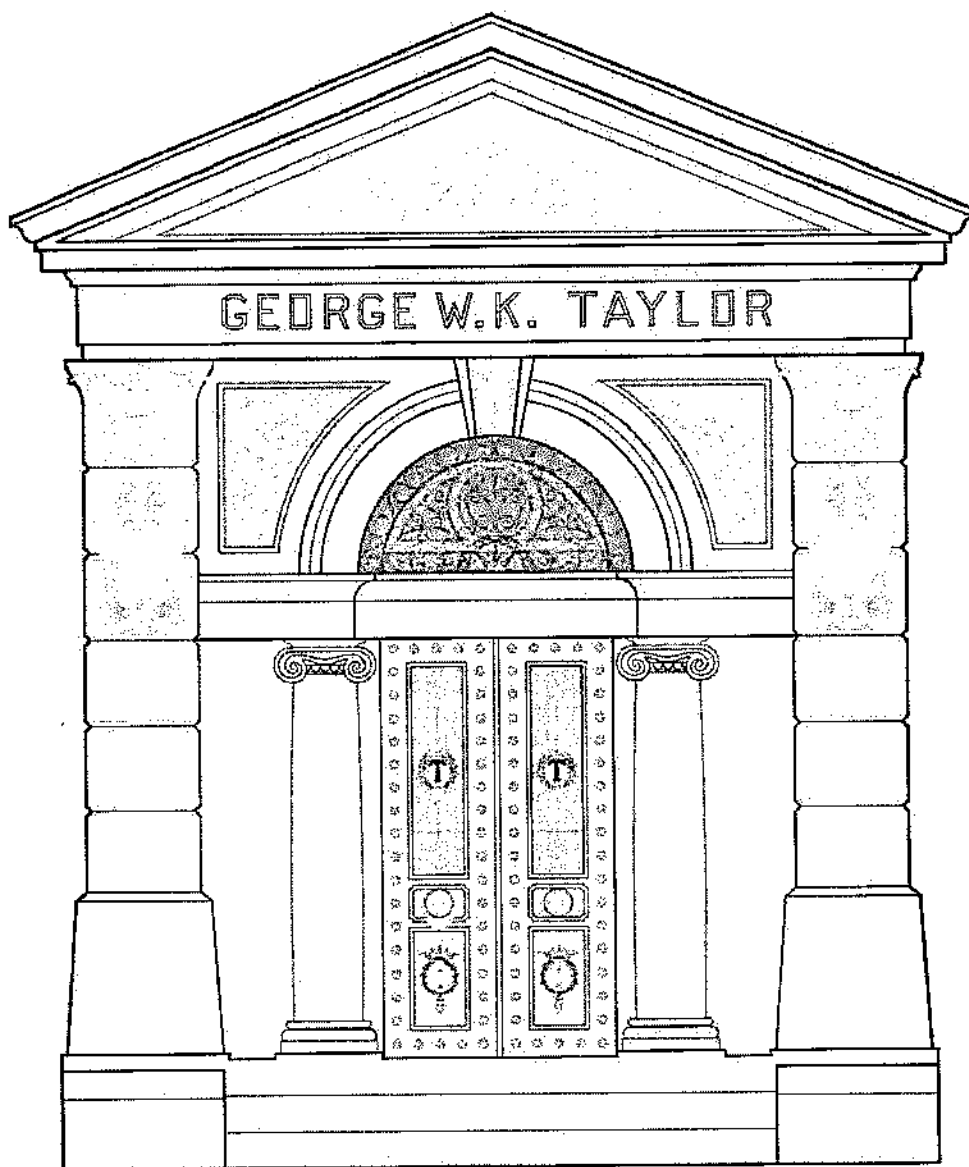


GEORGE W. K. TAYLOR MAUSOLEUM

Columbia University - GSAPP Historic Preservation
Erin Murphy



SEPTEMBER 28, 2018

Albert H. Combs

Albert H. Combs, the original owner of Lot 10617 in Chestnut Hill of Woodlawn Cemetery, commissioned the design of his mausoleum in 1901 from C. E. Tayntor, a prominent monument builder of the time (Figure 1). The 14-tombed monument was a massively ornamental structure, especially considering his small family of three and Quaker roots.¹ It appears the mausoleum was a testament to Combs's career, and a tribute to the social relationships with his peers in the financial world. Combs commissioned the mausoleum at the age of 55, in the midst of his enormously successful career as a broker on Wall Street at the Stock Exchange. Here, he served as a board room executive for the

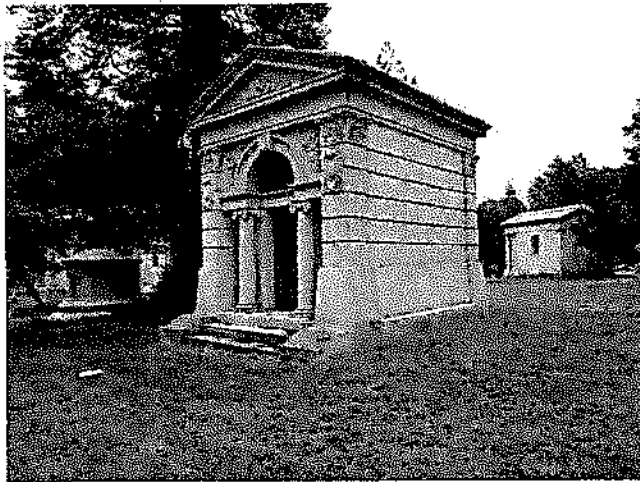


Figure 1: Taylor Lot #10617, Chestnut Hill Plot, Woodlawn Cemetery, NT. Front elevation of mausoleum, clad with light granite.

Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, and Goulds, as well as many others, through his own company, A. H. Combs & Co. His fortune through the Stock Market made him a millionaire, and he was known in the industry, as named by William Rockefeller, as "The Bear Who Never Growled" for his aggressive nature in the Stock Exchange market.²

Combs married his wife, Mary Elizabeth Hicks, in 1869. The two were of Quaker descent. His career began as a clerk in Brooklyn, but he quickly grew in the financial market and soon lived on West 49th Street and Sixth Avenue, a prestigious area of New York City.³ After the birth of their first and only child in 1876, records of Combs indicate his career growth in the Stock Exchange.

¹ U.S., *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy, Vol I-VI, 1607-1943* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.

² "The Bear Who Never Growled". *Wall Street Journal*, 1929, Oct 05. (1923 - Current File)
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/130711484?accountid=10226>

³ Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=imw86&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&qh=neXwOEZooFrU9F3N4MNiqA%3D%3D&gss=angs-

In September of 1908, Combs was caught in the midst of a lawsuit of the Brown-Buchanan case, where a New York woman's stock from O. A. Brown & Co. was fraudulently distributed, through A. H. Combs & Co., to Buchanan.⁴ This led to over a quarter million dollar loss for Combs, as well as the loss of his seat at the Stock Exchange, a significant financial and personal hit to the millionaire.⁵ In 1914, Combs and his wife moved in with their son Harry, who was also a broker at A. H. Combs & Co., at the San Remo Hotel on W. 74th St. Newspaper records report multiple accounts of the A. H. Combs Co. descent in the years following the 1908 Brown-Buchanan case (Figure 2). In 1914, Combs sold the mausoleum he commissioned in 1901 to the Taylor Family for \$805. The mausoleum was originally constructed for \$3363.⁶ Shortly after the sale, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that A. H. Combs & Co. was in financial trouble.⁷ Following these initial announcements, the firm was suspended from the Stock Exchange, due to the "character of the business done" between 1912 and 1914.⁸ As such, it is likely that the monument was sold for financial need, given the hit

A. H. Combs & Co. in Trouble
Wall Street Journal (1889-1922), Dec 9, 1914.
Digitized by Historic Newspapers: The Wall Street Journal
pg. 1

A. H. Combs & Co. in Trouble

The Stock Exchange has received information that A. H. Combs & Co. are unable to meet their obligations. Firm was organized Dec. 4, 1880, and consists of A. H. Combs, board member, Homer A. Lattin and H. B. Combs. A representative of the firm of A. H. Combs & Co. states that the firm has very few outstanding accounts at the present time. The failure was due for a large part to the closing of the Exchange, which stopped all business, and this was a large part of the firm's revenue.

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Figure 2: A.H. Combs & Co. in Trouble. 1914. *Wall Street Journal* (1889-1922), Dec 09, 1914.

g&new=1&rank=1&gsfn=Albert&gsfn_x=1&gsln=Combs&gsln_x=1&msrpn__ftp=New%20York,%20USA&msrpn=35&msrpn_x=1&msrpn__ftp_x=1&gskw=clerk&gskw_x=1&catbucket=rstp&MSAV=1&uidh=fph&pcat=ROO.T_CATEGORY&h=1211337082&dbid=2469&indiv=1&ml_rpos=4

⁴ "Brown Partners Arrested for Theft." *New York Times*, 1908, Sep 26.
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/96860754?accountid=10226>

⁵ "Combs, Exchange Veteran, Stricken." *Wall Street Journal*, Sep 26, 1929.
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/130761460?accountid=10226>

⁶ Woodlawn Lot Book F, Jan 2 1896 - Sept 30, 1901, Deeds 10202 - 12335. Deed Number 12116. Woodlawn Cemetery.

⁷ "A.H. Combs & Co. in Trouble." *Wall Street Journal*, Dec 09, 1914.
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/129388568?accountid=10226> (accessed September 27, 2018).

⁸ "A. H. Combs & Co. Make Assignment." *New York Tribune*, Dec 9, 1914.
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/575365289?accountid=10226> (accessed September 27, 2018).

Albert's career took following the Brown-Buchanan lawsuit.

Interestingly, the granite header above the door frame that was designed for the mausoleum should have been engraved with the Combs family name, according to the original plans.⁹ Upon inspection of the mausoleum stonework, the granite header does not appear to have ever been replaced. This indicates that the family name was never engraved, as the granite



Figure 3: Granite above the mausoleum door is original, suggesting that Combs never engraved his name during construction.

at the header matches all original stonework on the exterior (Figure 3). It seems odd that in the thirteen year span from the conception of the mausoleum to the transaction with the Taylor Family, Combs never had his name engraved on this monument.

Although Combs was a prominent broker on Wall Street, and a "Bear" of the Stock Exchange, his personal life was rooted in his religious life of Quakerism. His mausoleum, in addition to never bearing his name, is almost excessively ornate and seems out of character for a Quaker family. The plot where he and his family are buried today, Lot 13928 in Park View, is dramatically simple in comparison to their original mausoleum in Chestnut Hill, with a simple family stone and eight burial plots, four of which are

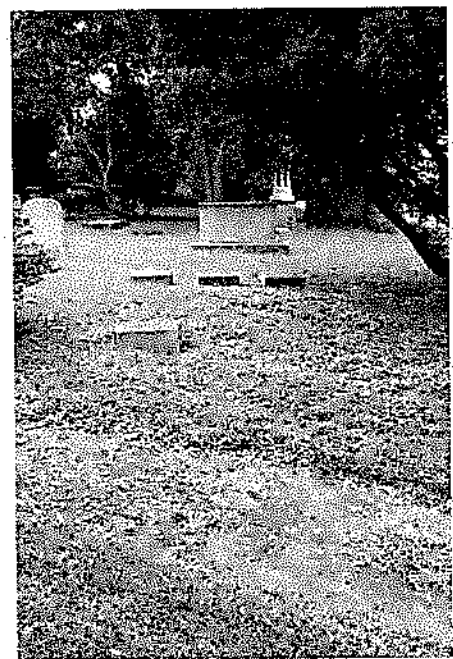


Figure 4: Combs Lot #13928, Park View Plot, Woodlawn Cemetery, NY

occupied, with headstones designed by H. K. Keller (Figure 4). Combs purchased this lot in March 1917, following the death of his wife Mary in January 1917.

⁹ Front Elevation, Combs Major Monument Folder, Woodlawn Cemetery Records, 1863-1999, Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University (hereafter cited as Woodlawn Cemetery Records).

George W. K. Taylor

George W. K. Taylor purchased the mausoleum with his wife Anna M. from Albert H. Combs in 1914. Born in Brooklyn, NY in 1856, Taylor was a mechanical engineer, graduating from Cooper Union in 1877 with a Bachelor of Science. He remained a Brooklyn native until his death. He worked for Eaton, Cole, and Bernham, a New York and Connecticut based plumbing and heating company, from 1874 to 1893. His background specialized in designing, manufacturing, and overseeing the production of pipe valves and fittings for power stations. In 1893, he formed a partnership with Henry McMann dealing and designing iron pipe fittings and valves for power plants.¹⁰ In 1901, the partnership became incorporated as McMann & Taylor Co. and Taylor served as the President of the firm.¹¹

In addition to his career, Taylor was an extremely involved member of his community. He was an active member of his Episcopalian congregation, serving as a trustee at St. Mark's Church in New York. He also was Director of Greenwich Bank, President of the Alumni Association at Cooper Union, a member of multiple plumbing and mechanical engineering industry organizations (i.e. American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Machiner Club of New York, Merchants' Association) and more.^{12, 13}

¹⁰ "George W. K. Taylor Taken By Death," *Domestic Engineering* 74, no 11 (1916): 338.

https://books.google.com/books?id=khdHAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA338&lpg=PA338&dq=George+W.+K.+Taylor+Taken+By+Death,&source=bl&ots=OgoL0NPMVt&sig=drxKqJPtarnik7f_O2al3bdBJOA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewiajJ_GsNvdAhUswlKkHe_DC58Q6AEwA3oECAQQAQ#v=onepage&q=George%20W.%20K.%20Taylor%20Taken%20By%20Death%2C&f=false

¹¹ "George W. K. Taylor," *New York Tribune*, Mar 07, 1916.

<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/575545336?accountid=10226> (accessed September 27, 2018).

¹² "Wadham's Not a Candidate," *New York Tribune*, Feb 13, 1908.

<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/572005729?accountid=10226>

¹³ "George W. K. Taylor," *Power* 43 (1916): 716.

https://books.google.com/books?id=wgomNhgjmAC&pg=PA716&lpg=PA716&dq=%22McMann+%26+Taylor+Co%22&source=bl&ots=ON_waLdNPO&sig=vw2eARI5Vzm3Y2yOqFvK0m7dTv0&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiEvcL0vsXdAhWyneAKHQI0D9AQ6AEwA3oECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q=%22McMann%20%26%20Taylor%20Co%22&f=false

Despite his rigorous career life, George W. K. Taylor's main focus seemed to be his family. He and his wife had three children, Allan L., Anna C., and Burnham K.¹⁴ In his will, written in 1895, Taylor set up a trust for his family where he laid out his wishes for his savings and property. He deeded the estates to his wife and set up trust funds for his children and grandchildren, which was set to accumulate income until the age of 21, for the use of "support, education, and maintenance", only if the children were of "good moral character".¹⁵ He also allocated money for his wife's care for his father, sister, and her children. Taylor's will had no mention of his many affiliations or organizations that he was involved in, and did not indicate any funds to be distributed for these associations.



The Late Geo. W. K. Taylor.

Figure 5: "George W. K. Taylor Taken By Death," *Domestic Engineering* 74, no. 11. (1916): 338.

George W. K. Taylor died unexpectedly of a stroke in 1915 (Figure 5). In 1925, his wife, Anna M., passed away and was buried with him in the mausoleum. Today, George and Anna are buried with their three children, as well as Anna L.'s husband, George Lee Trumbull.

Although the mausoleum itself is an architectural reflection of Albert H. Combs, the bronze door appears to have been chosen by the Taylor family, as the door bears a "T" in the center of the window openings. The lot in Chestnut Hill was endowed by the Taylor family. Woodlawn correspondence

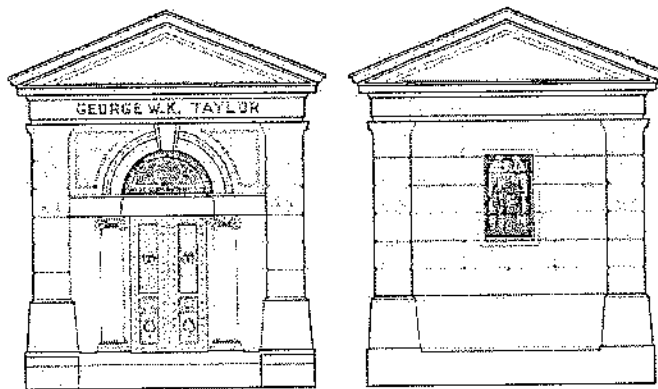
¹⁴ Year: 1910; Census Place: Brooklyn Ward 19, Kings, New York; Roll: T624_967; Page: 14A; Enumeration District: 0434; FHL microfilm: 1374980. https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=tzT2&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&indiv=1&qh=JB3qV1Lquw6IvCv6TW0C4A%3D%3D&db=1910USCenIndex&gss=angs-d&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=George%20W.%20K.&gsfn_x=0&gsln=Taylor&gsln_x=0&msrpn__ftp=New%20York,%20USA&msrpn=35&_83004003-n_xcl=f&MSAV=1&uidh=fph&pcat=35&fh=0&h=17839571&recoff=&ml_rpos=1

¹⁵ New York, Kings County, Probate Records; Author: New York Surrogate's Court (Kings County); Probate Place: Kings, New York (1915): 86-95.

records indicate that the family was regularly frustrated and disappointed with the level of care performed by Woodlawn, often writing letters inquiring about upkeep and maintenance.¹⁶

Building Materials and Conditions

The George W. K. Taylor mausoleum is constructed of C. E. Tayntor's "finest light granite" ashlar on the exterior with light Italian marble on the interior according to project specifications.¹⁷ C. E. Tayntor, a Maine based granite quarrier, was a prominent granite mausoleum and monument builder who constructed monuments as far south as Georgia.¹⁸ They also designed and constructed over 115 recorded mausoleums at Woodlawn Cemetery, known for their intricate stonework as evident on the Taylor mausoleum.¹⁹ The front (northwest) elevation is elaborately carved, with Ionic columns flanking the entrance. The door appears to be bronze with ornate detailing, rosettes, and grilles, with a glass pane inset of the bronze frame on the interior. Additional ornate bronze grilles are installed above the door in the archway and at the rear (southeast) elevation window opening. Ornate stained-glass windows are installed on both the front and rear elevation window openings (Figure 6).



*Figure 6: Architectural Drawings of Front and Rear Elevations with Stained Glass Detailing
(Image Not to Scale)*

¹⁶Taylor Lot Owner Correspondence Folder, Box 123, Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

¹⁷Specification Sheet, July 17, 1901, Combs Major Monument Folder, Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

¹⁸ Maine Soon to Dedicate Andersonville Monument, (1904, Nov 13). The Atlanta Constitution (1881-1945)
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/495888197?accountid=10226>

¹⁹ Major Monuments Index, Woodlawn Cemetery Records, Avery Library.

The building is situated towards the rear of the lot with the front elevation facing Chestnut Avenue. On the side (northeast) elevation, the mausoleum is shadowed by a large tree that is slightly north of the Taylor plot (Figure 7). The most significant damage was observed on this elevation, with isolated hairline cracking through the granite and mortar joints, as well as significant organic growth. In addition to the organic growth, accretion was observed seeping from the north corner joint at the mortar joint of two granite blocks. This was the only location where accretion was observed.

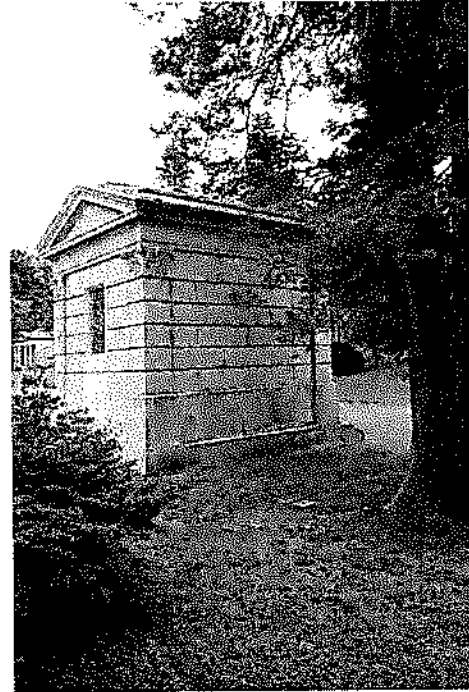


Figure 7: North Corner of Mausoleum, Facing Side (Northeast) Elevation, with Adjacent Vegetation



Figure 8 and 9: Water Staining at Ceiling (above); Organic Growth and Water Collection at North Corner of Interior (below)

Gaps in the mortar joints at the roof between granite slabs were visible in several areas. Significant moisture was observed at the interior at the ceiling slabs, where condensation had collected at marble joints (Figure 8). A second site visit was performed following rain, after which some puddling was observed on the floor of the interior. Slight organic growth was observed at the interior northwest corner on the marble walls, and the majority of water observed on the interior had collected in this corner (Figure 9).

C. E. Tayntor had designed a patented roof system, which the project specification states

“protects all the joints and make[s] a perfectly watertight building.”²⁰ Original project drawings indicate a 3-layered roof tier system with the upward facing seams of the roof protected with overlapping lips of granite. Although in section this appears to be an ideal, watertight system, deterioration of the mortar could allow for open joints and infiltration of water, particularly during wind-driven rain events. Lot owner correspondence records with the Taylor family indicate that the roof system has been repointed at least once. Given the missing mortar, it is recommended that the roof system be repointed again.

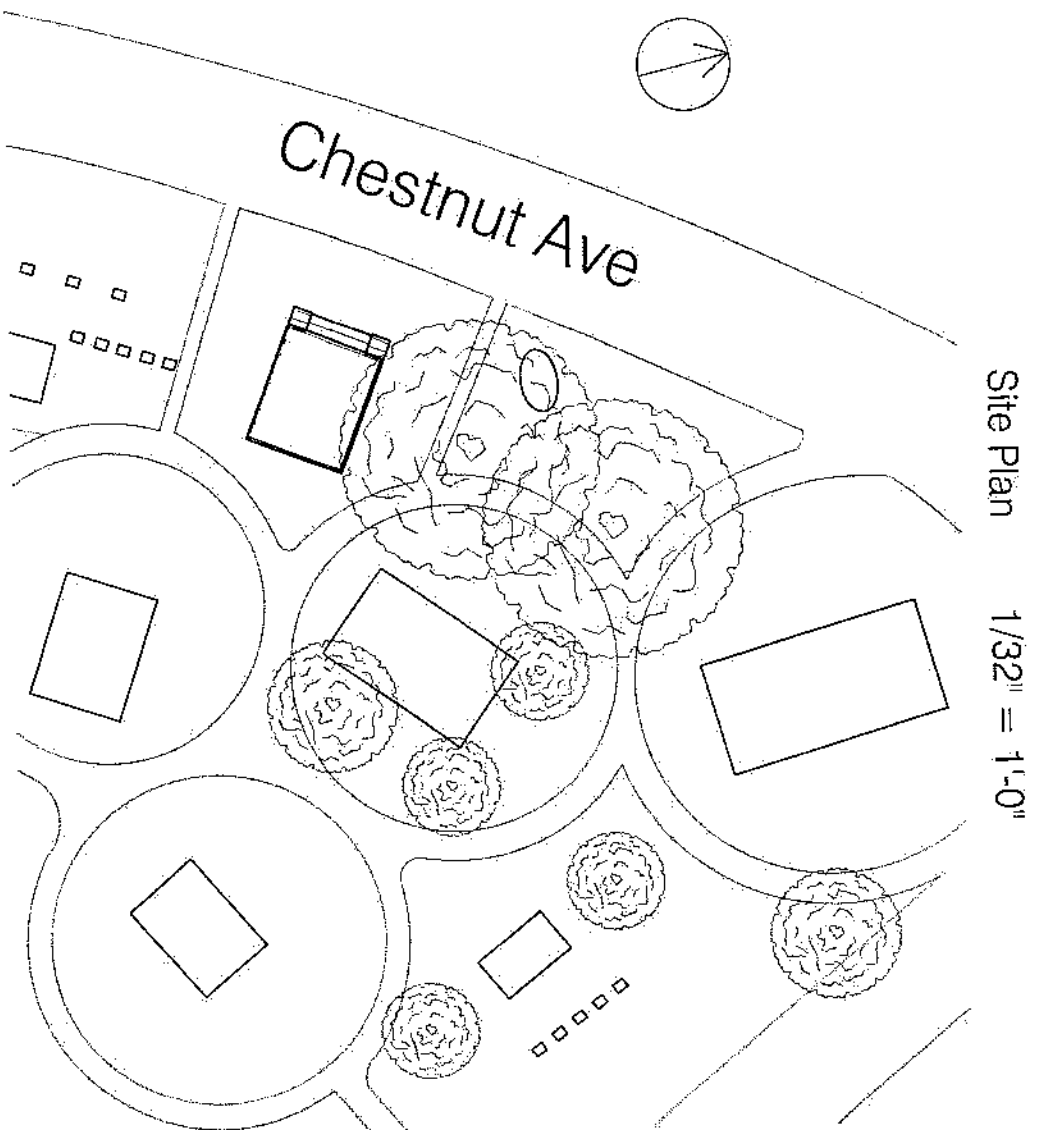
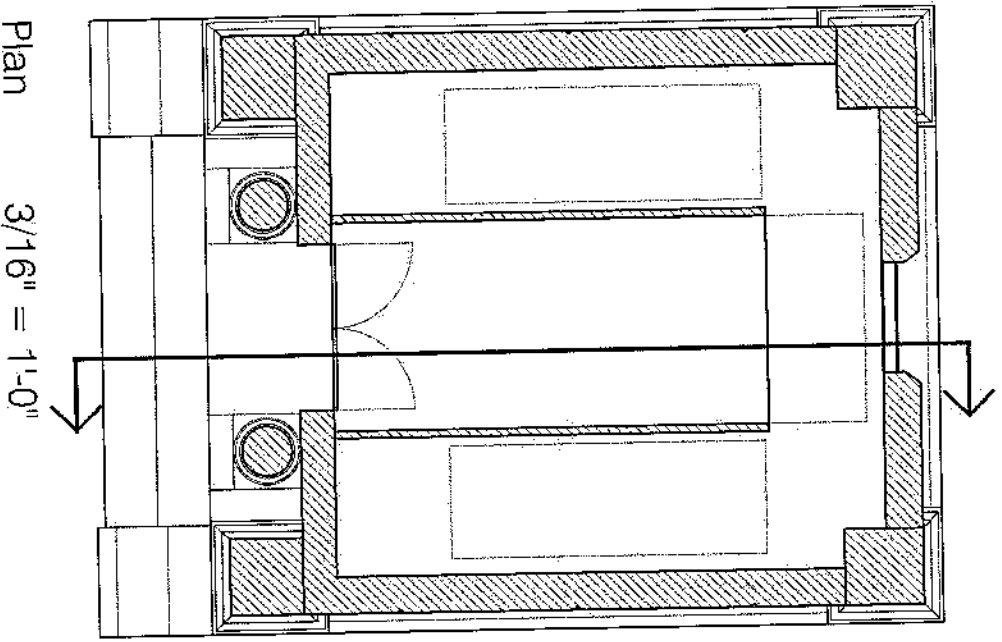
Additional investigation should be performed in order to evaluate where and how water is entering the mausoleum. The northeast elevation exhibits the highest amount of damage (cracking in mortar, organic growth, and accretion) and should be evaluated further:

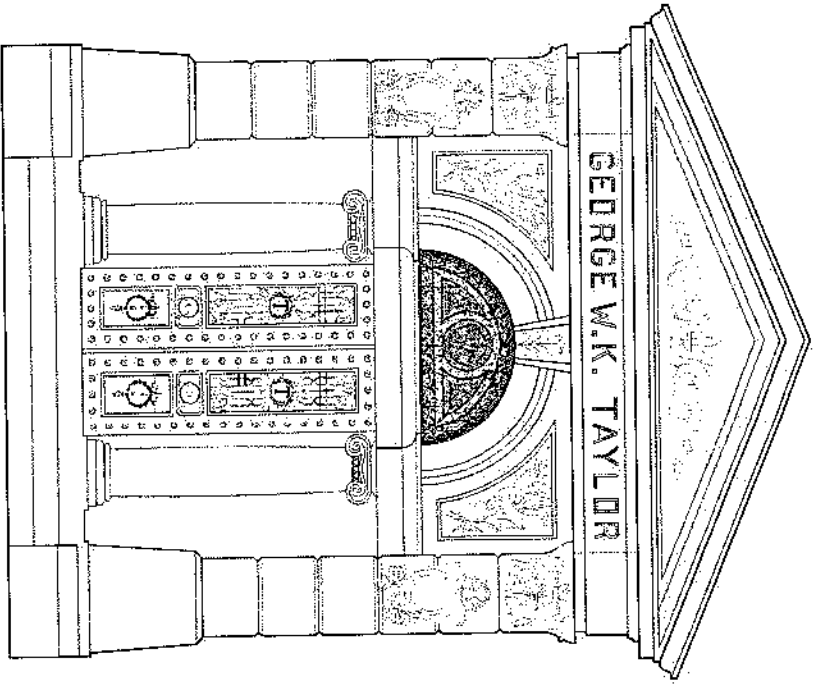
²⁰ Specifications for the Manufacture and Completion of a Granite Mausoleum to be Erected in Woodlawn Cemetery, Woodlawn, N.Y. for A. H. Combs, Combs Major Monument Folder, Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

George W. K. Taylor Mausoleum at Woodlawn

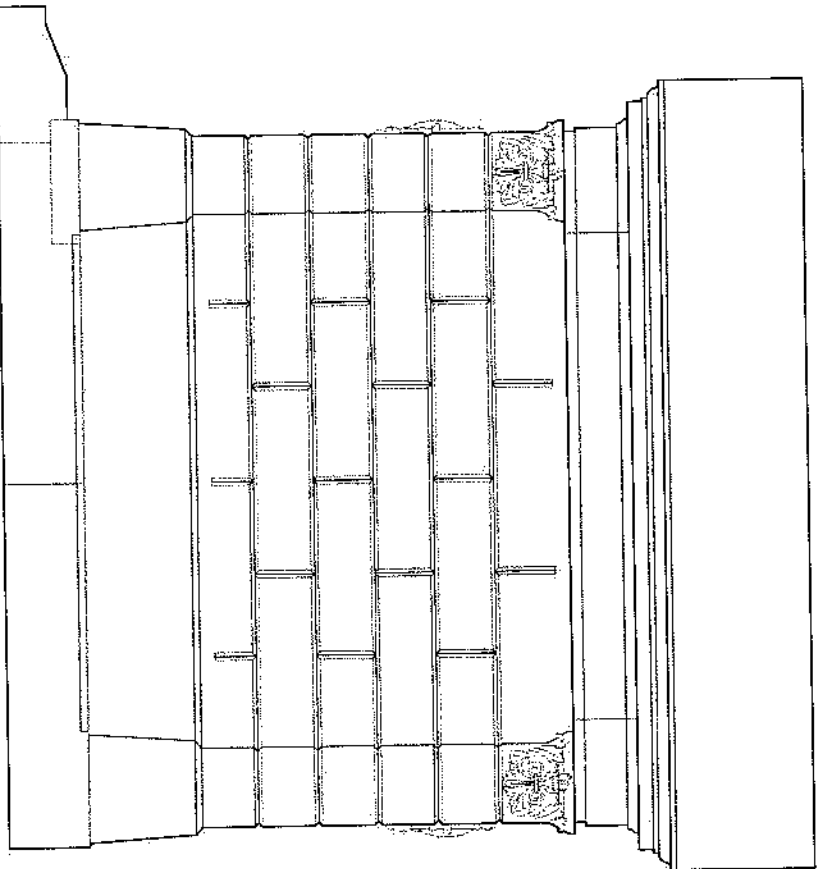
Columbia University

Drawn by Erin Murphy, MSHP'20



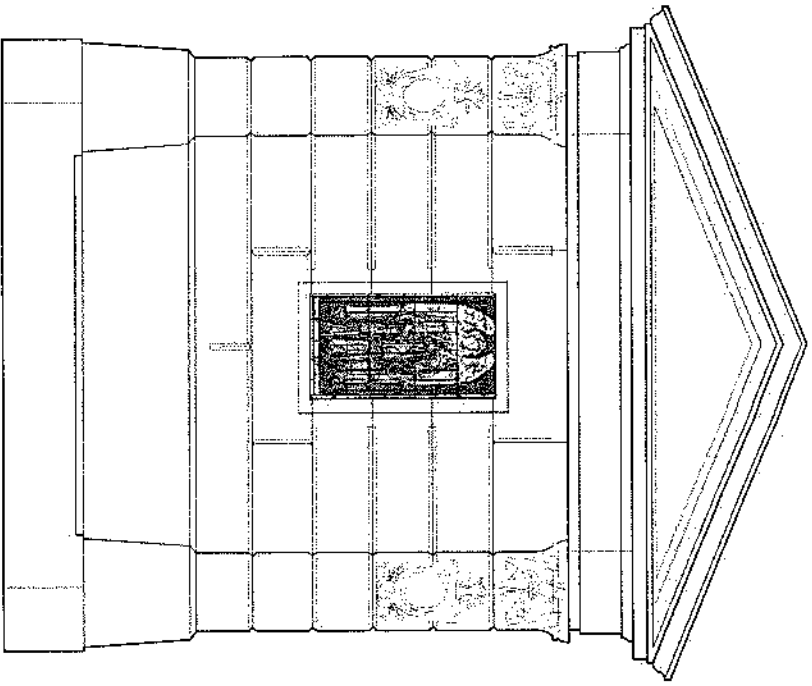


Front (Northwest) Elevation
3/16" = 1'-0"

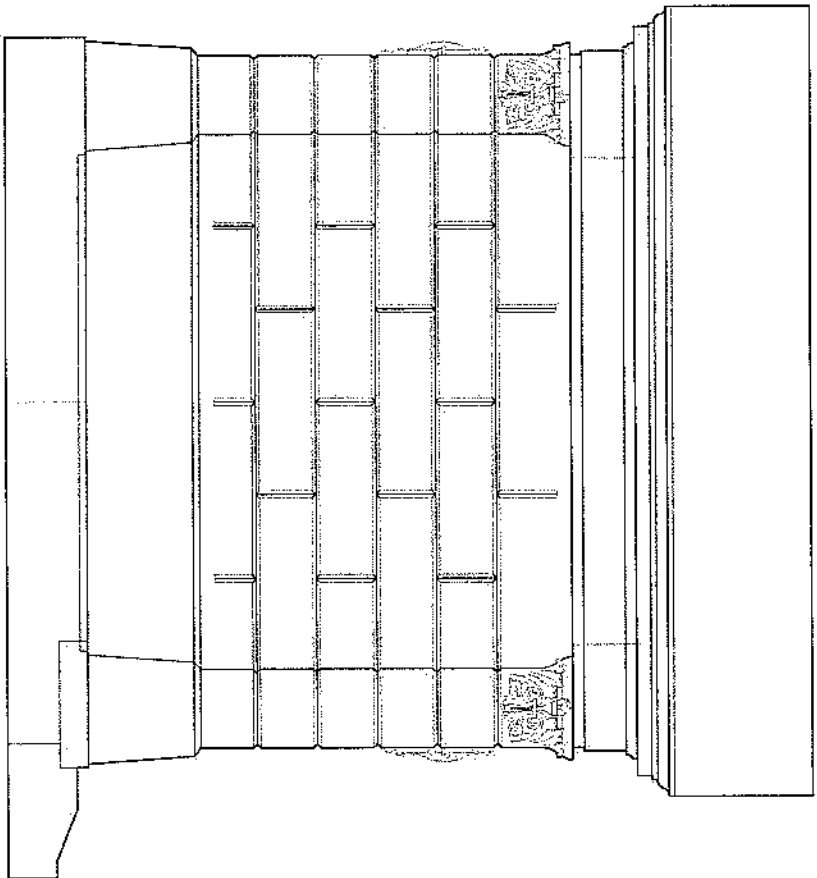


Side (Southwest) Elevation
3/16" = 1'-0"



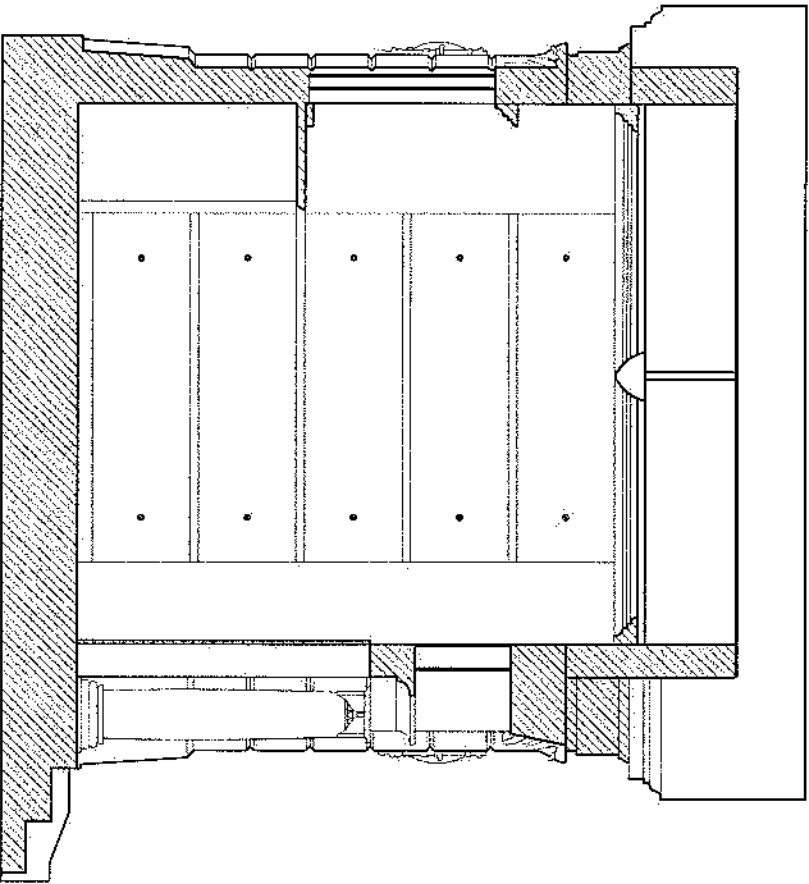


Rear (Southeast) Elevation
3/16" = 1'-0"

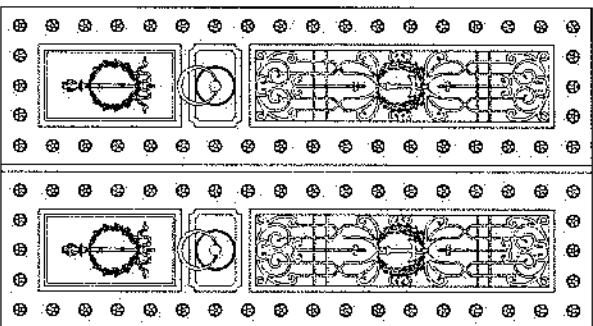


Side (Northeast) Elevation
3/16" = 1'-0"





Section
3/16" = 1'-0"



Door Detail
3/8" = 1'-0"

