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Reading Buildings

October 6, 2013

The Siedenburg Mausoleum

Located in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, the Siedenburg mausoleum was constructed in 1902 by Robert Caterson upon the death of Henrietta Siedenburg, wife of Reinhard Siedenburg.¹ The building, neo-classical in style, is the final resting place of nine members of the Siedenburg family (fig. 1).

Reinhard Siedenburg was born July 10, 1844 in Bremen, Germany. He immigrated to the United States in 1866 and settled in Staten Island.² A cotton broker by trade, he founded his own firm Rhd. Siedenburg & Co. He would ultimately become first the Vice President (1892-1894) and then President (1894-1896) of the New York Cotton Exchange.³ At the time of his death in 1922, his estate was appraised at \$133,000 (roughly \$1,850,000 in 2013 dollars).⁴

George Siedenburg was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1889.⁵ He was the nephew of Reinhard Siedenburg and during his early career he worked for Rhd.

¹ Siedenburg Correspondence File, Woodlawn Cemetery Collection, Avery Drawings, Columbia University.

² U.S. Passport application, Reinhard Siedenburg, Mar 1, 1982, ancestry.com, Oct 8, 2013.

³ New York Cotton Exchange Year Book: 1927-1928, New York Cotton Exchange, 1928.

⁴ "Estates Appraised," New York Times, Aug 24, 1923, ProQuest, 5.

⁵ U.S. Passport Application, George R. Siedenburg, May 1, 1922.

Siedenburg & Co.⁶ However, upon the departure of the son of Reinhard Siedenburg from the firm in 1932, the firm was absorbed by Hubbard Bros. & Co., where George would continue to work as a manager in their foreign department.⁷ Like other members of the family, he was a member of the New York Cotton Exchange. In 1933 he traveled as a delegate of the New York Cotton Exchange both to the International Cotton Congress at Prague and the general congress of the International Chamber of Commerce in Vienna.⁸

Of Reinhard Siedenburg's children at least two, possibly three, lie with him and his wife in the mausoleum: George Hugo Siegfried, August Brand, and Dorothea von Bergen.⁹ Their eldest child, Dorothea, married Carl von Bergen. Together, they had two children, Else and Carla. Carla would through marriage become the Baroness Carla von Boecklin of Rust Baden, Germany. Else was married twice, first to G.L. Jackson, with whom she had her daughter Kathleen Jackson Boyd, and later to Warren B. Nash. Mr. Warren B. Nash was the treasurer of the New York Stock Exchange and a resident of 410 Park Ave.¹⁰

Robert Caterson, an Irish immigrant and accomplished sculptor constructed the family mausoleum. A New York Herald Tribune article described him as "as one

⁶ "Obituary 1" New York Times, Oct 15, 1910, ProQuest, 11.

⁷ "George R. Siedenburg: Cotton Broker Was Delegate to International Congress in 1933," New York Times, Apr 6, 1941, 48.

⁸ "George R. Siedenburg: Cotton Broker Was Delegate to International Congress in 1933," New York Times, Apr 6, 1941, 48.

⁹ U.S Census, 1880, Ancestry.com; Reinhard Siedenburg U.S. Passport Application, Ancestry.com. Could not establish a strong connection between Augusta Brand and Reinhard Siedenburg other than an Augusta listed by first name as one of Reinhard's children.

¹⁰ "Mrs. Jackson wed Warren B. Nash Stock Exchange: Daughter of Carle von...," New York Herald Tribune, Feb 9, 1933, 15.

of the pioneer builders of mausoleums" in the United States. His office, which he established in 1872, was conveniently located in the neighborhood of Woodlawn.¹¹ While Caterson's work includes countless mausoleums and tombs in Woodlawn, he took pride in his national reputation. He was extremely careful in choosing only the highest quality materials, even going so far as to purchase his own 8000 acre quarry in Granite Mountain, Tx.¹² Two of his most prominent commissions include the mausoleum of Collis P. Huntington in Woodlawn (fig. 2), for which Mr. Huntington spent about \$250,000 in 1900 and the most expensive of its time, Leland Stanford's in Palo Alto, CA.¹³

For the Siedenburg mausoleum, Caterson designed a neo-classical temple made of Vermont Granite. The design, proportionally confined to a square with the addition of a roof and irregularly spaced columns (fig. 3), can be traced as far back as ancient Greece. However, a far stronger relationship can be seen in the Renaissance in the design of Palladio's Il Redentore (fig. 4).

The mausoleum is set back on an already deep lot, and is not immediately visible from Park Ave. (fig.5). One approaches the mausoleum from a long, straight, formal path, which creates a sense of monumentality (fig.6 & 7). This approach, over 50 feet in length, guides one into the portico, through the bronze doors, and into the marble interior where it is terminated by a wall with three tombs. Here lie the bodies of Henrietta, George Hugo, and Reinhard Siedenburg, upon which, the

¹¹ "Building Mausoleums in U.S.," New York Herald Tribune, Dec 24, 1929, ProQuest, 13.

¹² "Monuments and Mausoleums: Artistic Work in Stone," New York Tribune, Dec 27, 1903, A7.

¹³ "Tomb Built Regardless of Cost: Robert Caterson Says Mr. Huntington," New York Tribune, Aug 16, 1900, 3.

cremated remains of the other family members sit (fig.8). The mausoleum includes three beautiful stained glass windows (fig. 9) with the German inscriptions "Die mit Thränen säen, werden mit Freuden ernten" (Those who sow with tears will harvest with joy) and "Selig sind die da Leid tragen, den sie sollen getröstet werden" (Blessed are those who carry sorrow for they shall be comforted). Significantly, the third window, set in the rear wall, is only visible from the exterior as it is hidden behind the highest tomb. What at first seems like an unusual choice is explained by Caterson's original drawings and the family's history (fig. 10). The mausoleum was originally intended to house only two (Henrietta and Reinhard), but a third tomb was added at some point between George's Hugo unexpected death in 1905 (at eighteen years of age) and his father's death in 1922, when he was laid to rest with his wife and son (fig. 8). Prior to this alteration, the procession from Park Ave. would have terminated in front of the third stained glass window, creating a lighter and more permeable space (fig. 11).

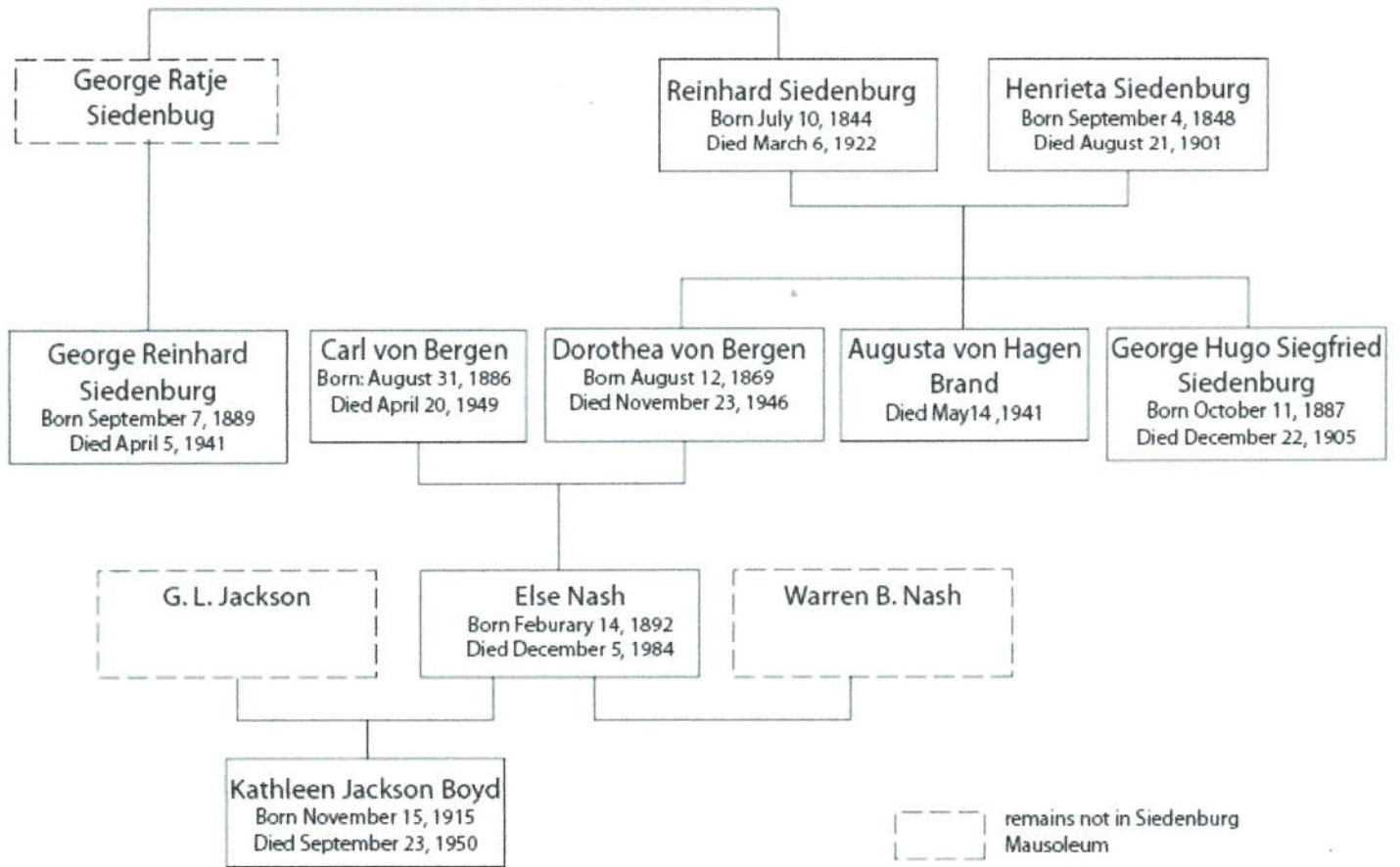
Robert Caterson built at least one other mausoleum of almost identical design. Erected just one year later in another area of Woodlawn, the Elias mausoleum is almost indistinguishable in its design and landscaping.¹⁴ It is unclear how frequently Caterson recycled his designs; however, the differences in the Siedenburg and Elias mausoleums are seen in the bronze work, stained glass, and the stone ornament above the door, which personalize each design (fig. 12).

Today, the Siedenburg mausoleum exists exactly as it has for over a century. The overall condition of the mausoleum is quite good with the only exception being

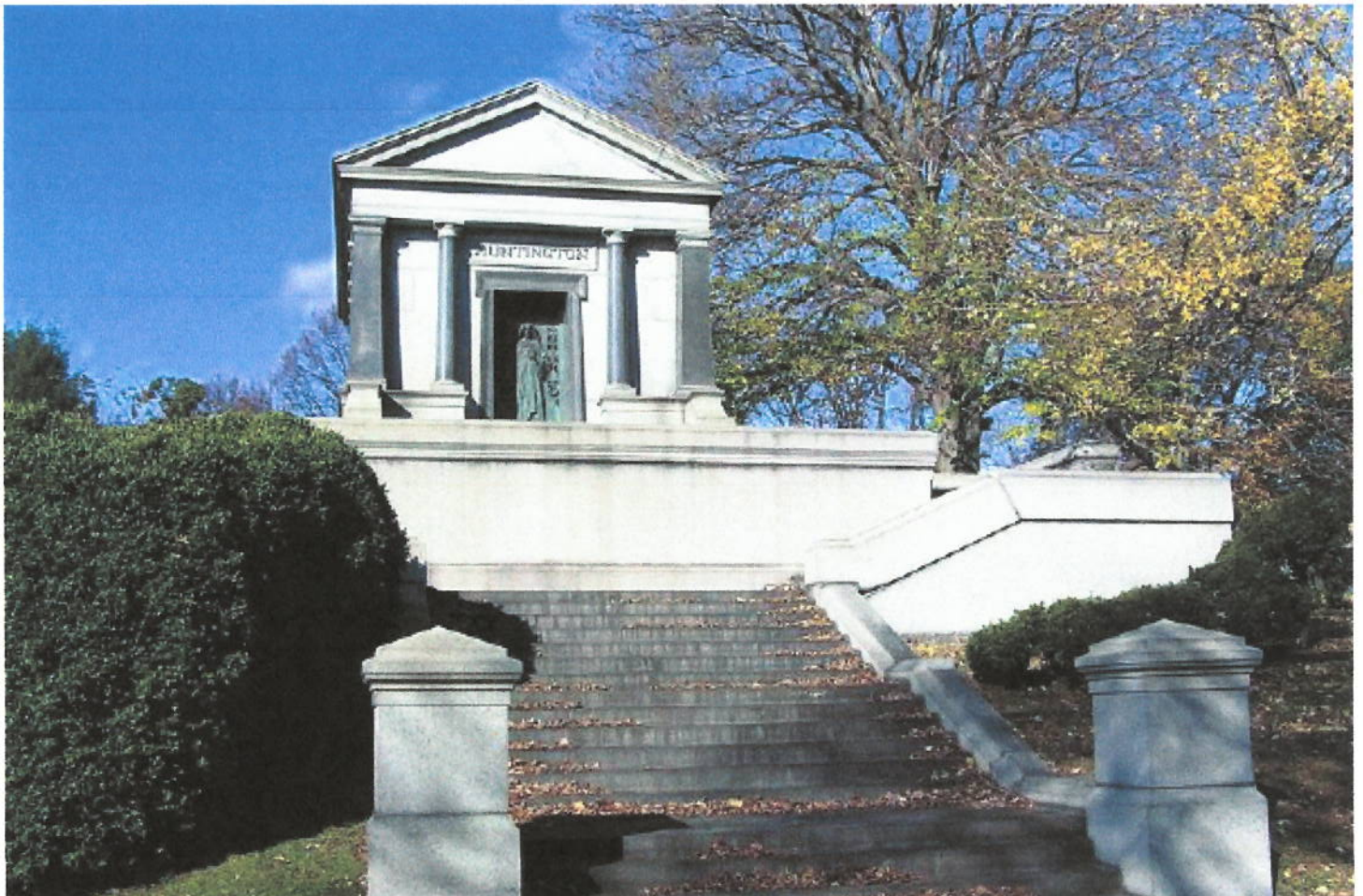
¹⁴ Robert Caterson, Monumental Work: Mausoleums, Vaults, Monuments, Etc., New York City, Avery Classics Collection.

a small amount of damage to one of the stained glass windows. The only dramatic change to the mausoleum lies in its surrounding landscaping. The family plot was once planted with seasonal flowers and had two trees growing either side (Fig. 6). Today the mausoleum sits beneath only one huge tree to the rear of the plot and the flowerbeds were long ago replaced with grass. Perhaps at some point the landscaping will be restored and the Siedenburg mausoleum will gain back the picturesque setting it once had (Fig. 12).

1)

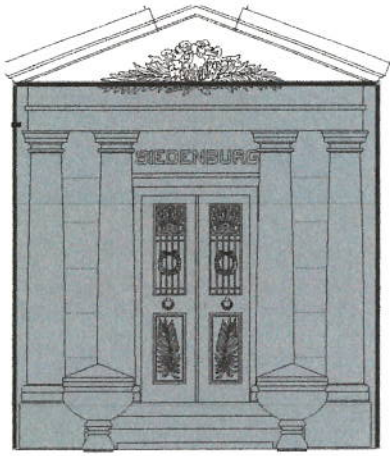


2)

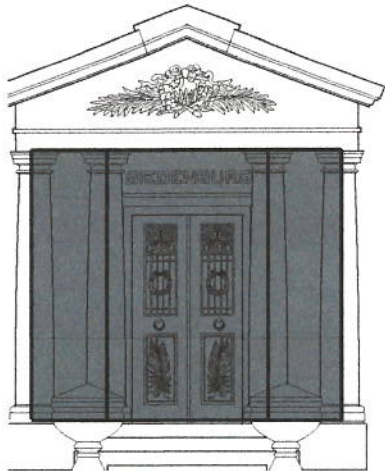


Collis P. Huntington Mausoleum

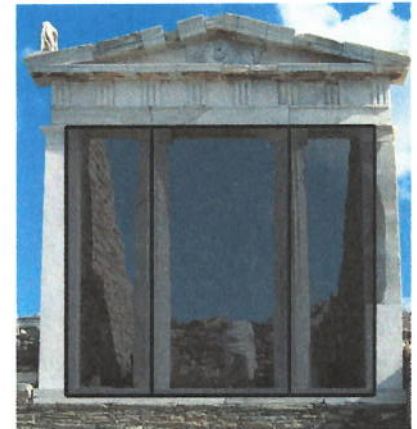
3)



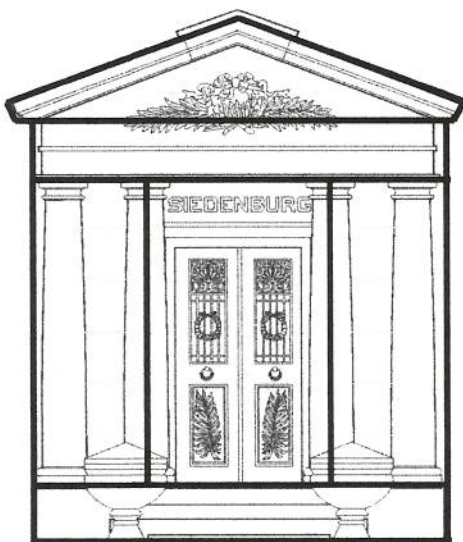
The area from the eaves to base is a perfect square in both buildings



Relationship between the height and width from the entablature to the base and the spacing of the columns is the same



4)

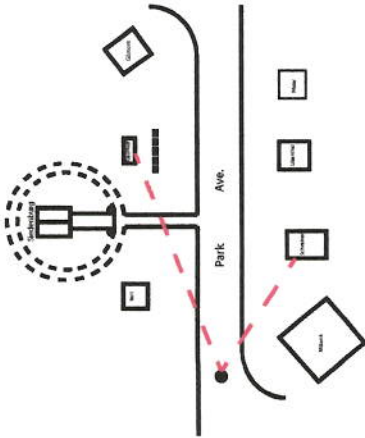


Outline of Siedenburg Mausoleum

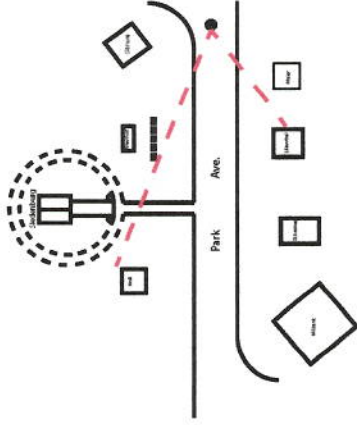


Palladio's Il Redentore, Venice, Italy
Image: photographer unknown (c. 1870)

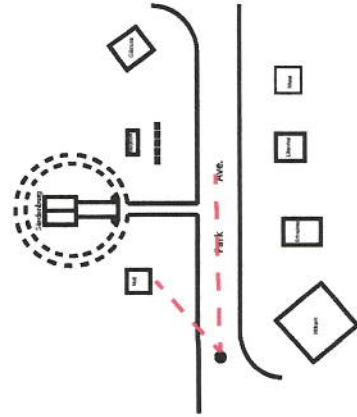
Views of Site from Park Ave.



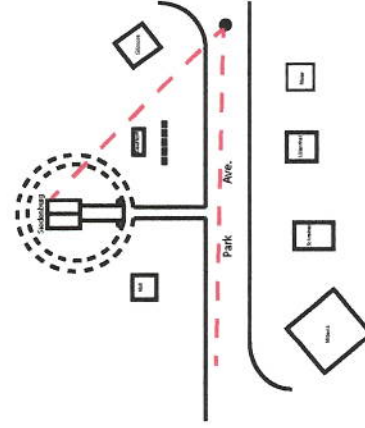
view approaching from left



view approaching from right

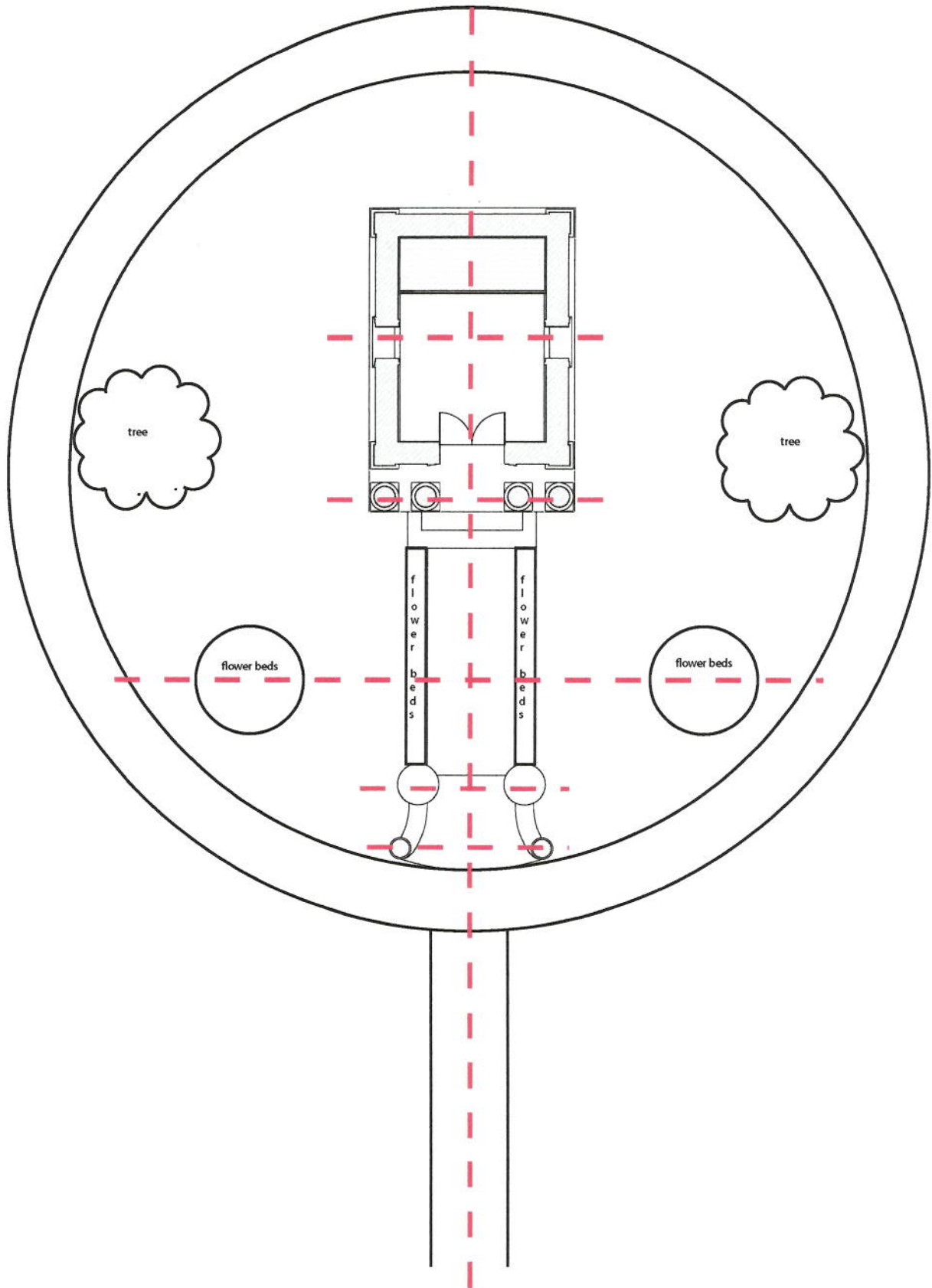


view towards Siedenburg mausoleum approaching from left



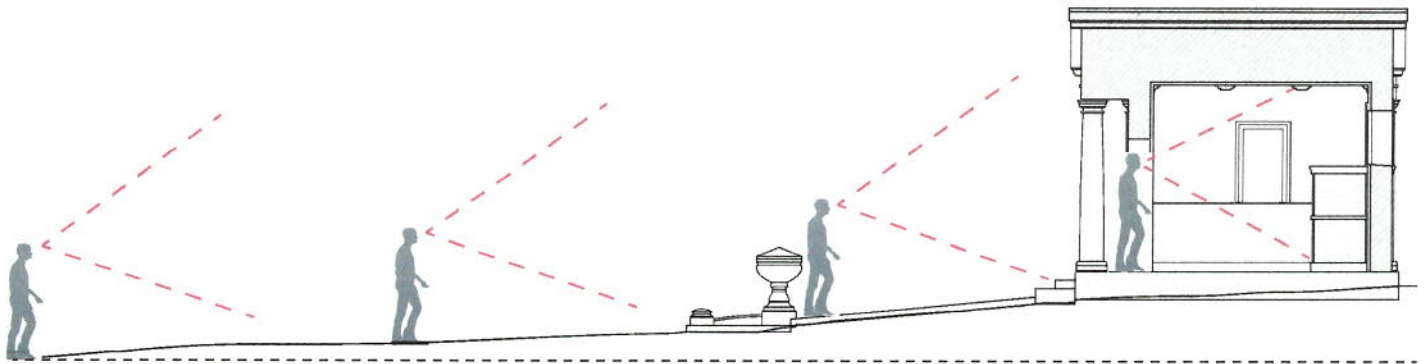
view towards Siedenburg mausoleum approaching from right

6)



Approach and symmetry shown in plan

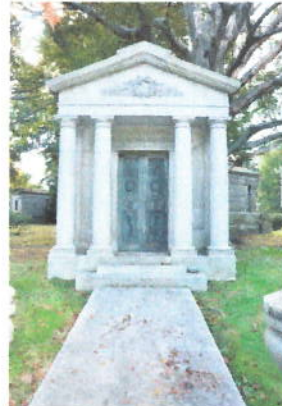
7)



view from road
(56' from mausoleum)



view from halfway along cemetery path
(38' from mausoleum)



view from edge of family plot
(18' from mausoleum)

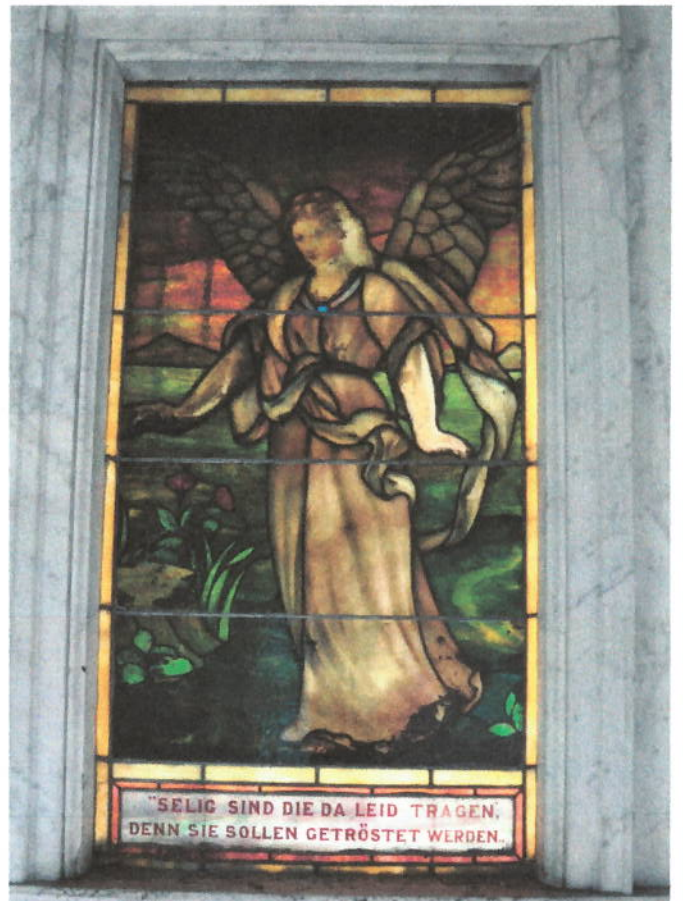


Interpretation of interior space from
doorway prior to alteration

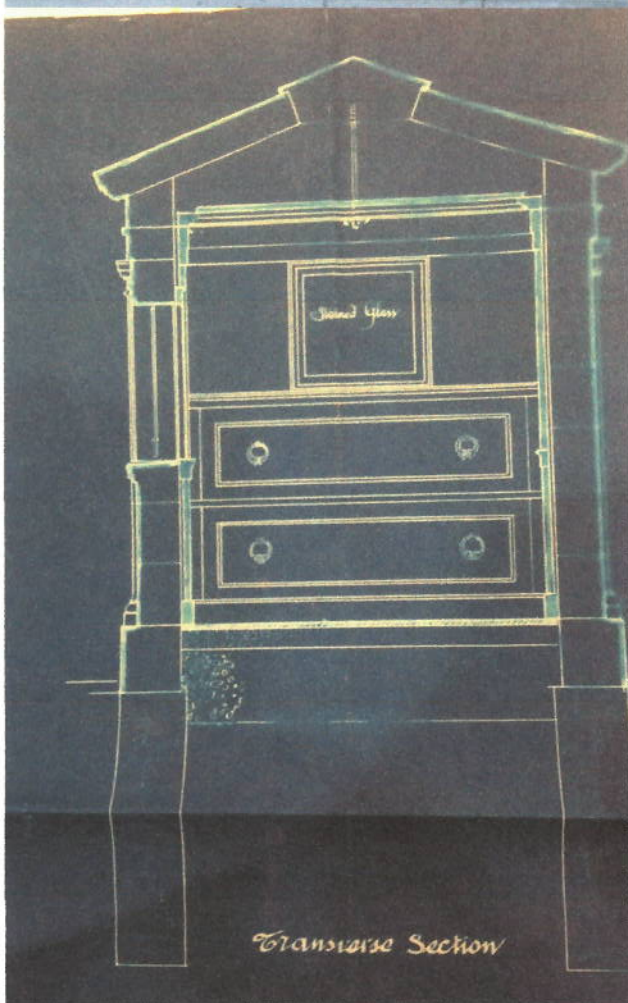
8)



9)



10)



11)



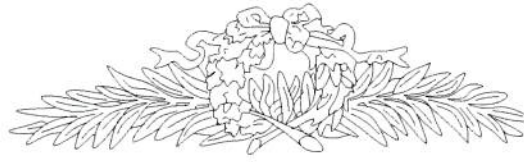
12)



Siedenburg Mausoleum



Elias Mausoleum, Robert Caterson, Woodlawn Cemetery



Details from Siedenburg Mausoleum

