

Biographical Research on the Hennen Mausoleum

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The Hennen Mausoleum has eight catacombs inside and no other burials on its lot. It was commissioned by Mrs. Madge I. Hennen for her husband William Davison Hennen.¹ Exact date of construction or designers are unknown for lack of records, but the mausoleum must have been complete by May 1883 when Mr. Hennen was interred. (Figure 1)

William Davison Hennen was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on March 25th 1823, and was baptized on May 10th 1829.² His parents were Anna Maria Nicholson (1801-1887) from New Jersey and Alfred Hennen (1786-1870) from Maryland, who was a prominent lawyer and scholar in New Orleans.³ Graduated from Yale in 1806, Alfred Hennen taught at the University of Louisiana for many years, and owned the largest private library of law and literature in the south.⁴ Following the examples of his father and elder brothers, William studied in the Yale College class of 1842, and later returned to live with his family in Louisiana, also working as a lawyer.⁵ In 1861 he completed the law book "A Digest of the Reported Decisions of the Superior Court of the Late Territory of Orleans".⁶

It is unclear when William moved to New York, as his name couldn't be found in the 1860 and 1870 Federal Censuses. However, by 1875 he was living in the city, and at the age of 52 he married the 27-year-old Margaret Inman Coddington.⁷ Miss Coddington, known as Madge in many records including the inscription on the Hennen Mausoleum, was born in Union City, New Jersey, and worked as a teacher there before marriage.⁸ Together they had three children, William Davison Jr. in 1876, Anna Alfreda in 1878, and Maude in 1881. In 1880 the Hennen family lived on 103 West 56th Street in Manhattan (Figure 2), within a middle-class neighborhood where typical occupations for the heads of houses are lawyers, physicians and merchants. William was still working as a lawyer, but no information can be found on the firm he's practicing with. There were three servants in the household, including

¹ Woodlawn Cemetery Records, Lot 10028-10030.

² U.S., Presbyterian Church Records, 1701-1970, Louisiana, New Orleans, First Presbyterian Church Baptisms Records 1829.

³ 1850 United States Federal Census, Louisiana, St Tammany.

⁴ Alfred Hennen," *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography, 1600-1889*, Vol III p167.

⁵ U.S. School Catalogs 1765-1935, Yale University, Members of the Yale Class 1842, published 1887.

⁶ Hennen, William Davison. *A Digest of the Reported Decisions of the Superior Court of the Late Territory of Orleans; the Late Court of Errors and Appeals; and Supreme Court of the State of Louisiana [1809-1860] Contained in the Sixty-Five Volumes of Reports, from First Martin to Fifteenth Louisiana Annual*. Cambridge: H.O. Houghton, 1861.

⁷ New York City Compiled Marriage Index, 1600s-1800s, Marriage ID 2220828547, Certificate Number 7076, Manhattan 1875.

⁸ 1870 United States Federal Census, New Jersey, Union, Rahway Ward 4.

a cook, a nurse and a house servant, all of whom were women of Irish origin.⁹ William Davison Hennen died on May 17th 1883. By that time the family was living on 427 West 73rd Street, probably a brownstone row house and one of the first middle-class residential developments on the Upper West Side. (Figure 3, 4) His funeral was held on May 19th, the same date as his interment to the Hennen Mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery.¹⁰ A Bible quote was inscribed on his catacomb, "Hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."

Mr. and Mrs. Hennen's youngest child Maude died at the age of nine in 1890, exact date unknown. The Woodlawn records wrongly registered her as 9-month-old instead of 9 years. On June 13rd 1898 another tragedy struck the Hennen family, when Maude's sister Anna Alfreda died from accidental drowning in Asquam Lake in New Hampshire, only 20 years of age.¹¹ Her funeral service was at Trinity Church in Boston on June 19th, following by interment at Woodlawn Cemetery one day after.¹² On her catacomb is the quote: "They shall be mine, saith the lord of hosts, in that day when I make my jewels."

Mrs. Madge I. Hennen died at 74 in New York on November 29, 1924.¹³ She was also interred in the Hennen Mausoleum. However, later she was removed from the mausoleum,. Same was the case for William Davison Jr. and his wife. There are no records that explain why they were removed from the mausoleum.

William Davison Jr. was a graduate of Harvard University and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University. He later serving as a surgeon in the New York Guard Regiment before his death in January 31, 1941.¹⁴ He was married three times, with his first two marriages ending in divorce; his second wife Ida died during the law suit.¹⁵ His third wife Mrs. Constance Willcock Hennen died a year before her husband on March 16th 1940 at the age of 42, from what was described as "Congestion of The Viscera, Pending Chemical Examination"; this made news in the *New York Times* as an autopsy was ordered.¹⁶¹⁷ Their only child Constance was left an orphan at the age of 10. She was never interred in the mausoleum, and nor were any other Hennen Family members after the removal of Madge, William Jr. and Constance. Only three of the eight catacombs are currently occupied by William and his two daughters.

⁹ 1880 United States Federal Census, New York, New York City Ward 581.

¹⁰ *New York Times*, 18 May 1883: 5.

¹¹ Anna probably died when staying with her uncle Charles Egbert Coddington in his summer house. The Coddingtons also have their family graves in Woodlawn.

¹² *New York Times*, 20 June 1898: 7.

¹³ *New York Herald Tribune*, 01 Dec 1924: 13.

¹⁴ *New York Herald Tribune*, 01 Feb 1941: 10.

¹⁵ "Sues For Divorce After Her Death: Woman Dies In Cuba Three Days Before Her Attorneys File Papers In U. S. Husband Noted Doctor" *The Louisville Courier Journal* 31 Oct 1921: 10.

¹⁶ New York City Department of Records & Information Services; *New York City Death Certificates*; Borough: Manhattan; Year: 1940; Name: Constance Hennen.

"Death Inquiry Ordered: Doctor's Wife Found Dead in Bed--Autopsy to Be Made," *New York Times* 17 Mar 1940: 47.



Figure 1: The Hennen Mausoleum

Source: Photograph by author, October 2, 2020.



Figure 2: 103 West 56th Street (the row house on the left) on 1940 Tax Photo

Source: DOF: Manhattan 1940s Tax Photos, Manhattan Block 1009 Lot 29, 1381-1399 6 Avenue.



Figure 3: West 73rd Street in 1885

Source: Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, The New York Public Library. "Manhattan: 73rd Street- Columbus Avenue" New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1885.

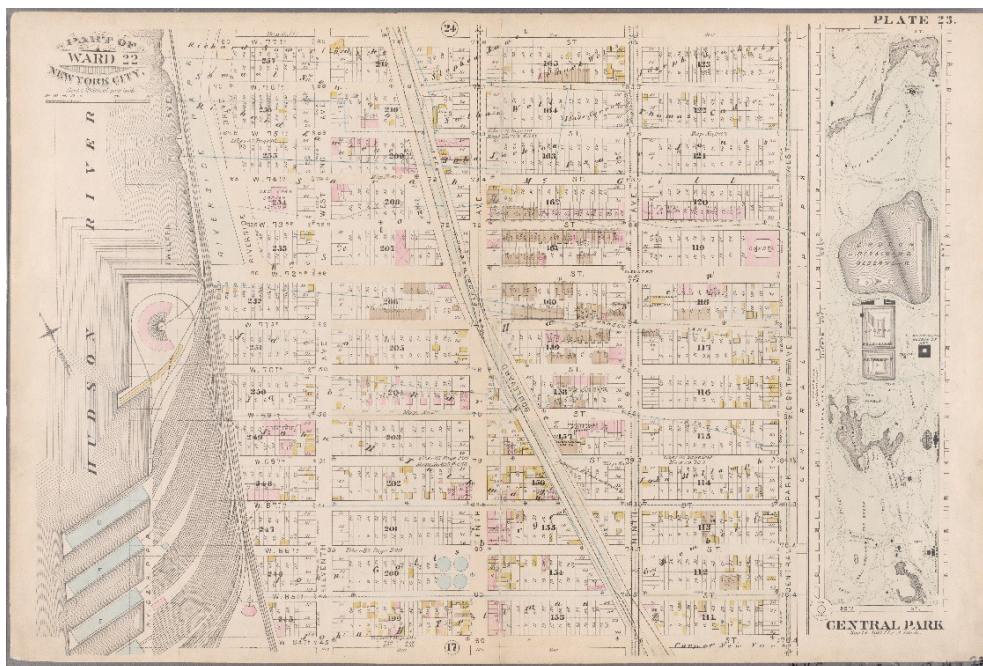


Figure 4: The Upper West Side in 1885

Source: Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. "Plate 23: Bounded by W. 77th Street, Eighth Avenue (Central Park), W. 84th Street and (Hudson River) Twelfth Avenue." New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1885.