

Sloane Mausoleum / Woodland Cemetery



Figure 1 | Sloane mausoleum from main road. Photograph by author.

The Sloane mausoleum, located in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, was commissioned by J. Parker Sloane upon his father's death in 1913. The mausoleum was designed for the immediate family of J. Parker Sloane and currently holds ten family members. Certain analyses regarding the mausoleum were developed based on extensive biographical research into the Sloane family, and based on architectural documentation of the structure and site itself.



J. Parker Sloane, who ordered the mausoleum's construction for his family, came from a line of wealthy New York citizens. J. Parker's paternal grandmother was a direct descendent of Elder William Brewster, who came to America on the Mayflower and J. Parker was a member of the Society of Mayflower Descendants and the Sons of the Revolution due to his grandmother's connection.<sup>1</sup> His paternal grandfather was James Sloane: a young immigrant from Scotland who eventually went on to found W & J Sloane Company with his brother.<sup>2</sup> W & J Sloane was a home furnishing company that was founded by James' older brother William Sloane in 1843 as a rug importer and seller; it was the first rug company in America to import rugs from the Orient.<sup>3</sup> The business ultimately grew into an empire that sold furniture and interior decorations as well, becoming the store that most of the New York elite visited for home furnishings during the late-1800s through the mid-1900s. The company was passed down to J. Parker's uncles and father, George William Sloane. J. Parker was less involved with the business than his father and grandfather, but still held ties to the family name and to the fortune the furnishings company amassed.

J. Parker Sloane was born to George William Sloane and Catherine Benson Sloane in the city of Brooklyn in 1872, where the family lived past J. Parker's death. He was the eldest child of four, and therefore became the head of household in 1913 after his father's death. Based on consecutive census reports between 1905 and 1910, George W. Sloane was the head of a household consisting of his wife Catherine, unmarried sons J. Parker and Williams Douglas, and

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<sup>1</sup> "Parker Sloane, 64, Bank Founder, Dies," *New York Times*, October 4, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> "Parker Sloane, 64, Bank Founder, Dies," *New York Times*, October 4, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> "W & J Sloane," Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W.\\_%26amp;\\_J.\\_Sloane](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._%26amp;_J._Sloane), (Accessed September 29, 2017). On the New York City census report of 1850, James Sloane cites his occupation as a rug weaver.

unmarried daughter Margaret; there were also two servants in 1910 that were not part of the household in 1905.<sup>4</sup> Both J. Parker and William D. listed their occupation as real estate at the time. After the head of household title transferred to J. Parker, he retired at the age of 40, and his other married sister Marcelle came back to live with them along with her husband Albert Flint. Ultimately, after their mother's death in 1928, the Sloane household consisted of J. Parker, brother William D., sister Marcelle and brother-in-law Albert, sister Margaret, brother-in-law John Alexander Manson, and daughter Margaret Manson, along with four servants.<sup>5</sup>

Upon his own death in 1936, J. Parker was known as a real estate mogul and broker in New York City who traveled extensively outside of the country to conduct his real estate ventures. He died as the President of the Roosevelt Saving Bank in Brooklyn, a major developer of the East Elmhurst and Elmhurst Heights neighborhoods, and a director of an electro-metallurgical plant in Niagara, NY.<sup>6</sup> He was also a popular figure in the upper-class Brooklyn community due to his Mayflower ties and long established connection to the city's elite. He was invited to dinners with the Mayor of Brooklyn, and appointed as a vice-president of the Board of Trade of the Seventeenth Ward in the Greenpoint neighborhood in Brooklyn.<sup>7</sup> J. Parker died a bachelor and left \$1,331,127 to his surviving brother, sisters, and niece.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly J. Parker,

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Enumeration of Inhabitants in the 8<sup>th</sup> Election District, Borough of Brooklyn, in the State of New York", June 1, 1905.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Commerce-Bureau of the Census, "Fifteenth Census of the United States, Population Schedule", (New York, NY), April 19, 1930.

<sup>6</sup> "Parker Sloane, 64, Bank Founder, Dies," *New York Times*, October 4, 1936.

<sup>7</sup> "Parker Sloane, 64, Bank Founder, Dies," *New York Times*, October 4, 1936; "Guest of Brooklyn's Mayor," *New York Times*, November, 28, 1894; "A Board of Trade Formed," *New York Tribune*, April 28, 1897.

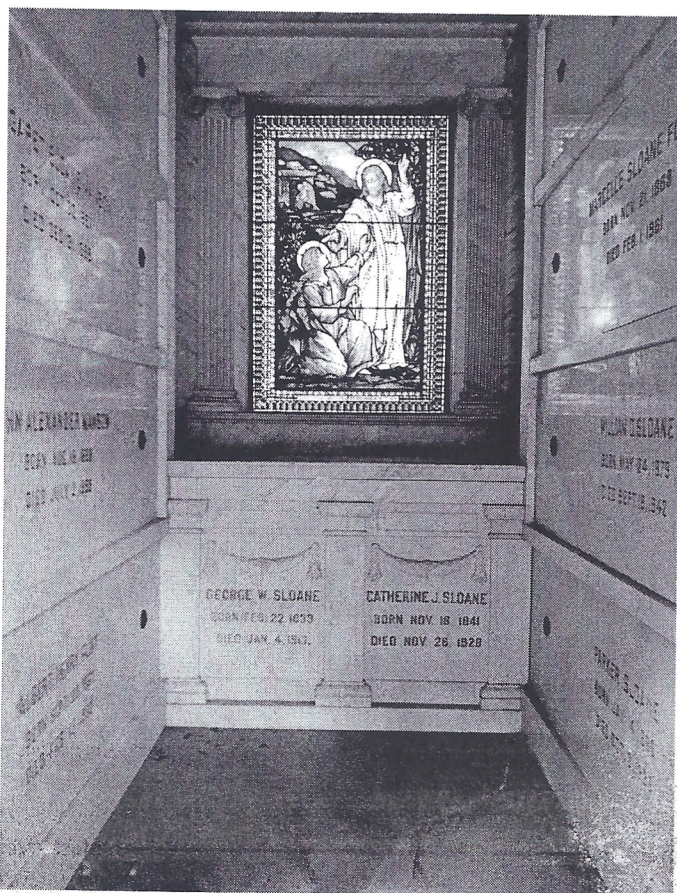
<sup>8</sup> "C. P. Case's Estate Put at \$7,932,569, Two Daughters of Woolworth Head Chief Beneficiaries," *New York Times*, June 28, 1939.



much like his brother, had added to the family fortune through his many business ventures by the end of his own life.

The Sloane mausoleum currently holds J. Parker and his father, mother, brother, both sisters and brothers-in-law, and his niece and niece's second husband. The Sloane family endowed the mausoleum in perpetuity, though based on observation, it has not been visited for quite some time. There are still two empty crypts, but no remaining family members since both brothers died bachelors and only one sister had a daughter.

Regarding the architecture of Sloane Mausoleum, the family's wealth and affluence is clearly exhibited in the design and placement of the structure within the greater cemetery context. The mausoleum is located directly off Park Avenue, a main road within Woodlawn



Cemetery. It was obviously meant to be seen from the road as the structure is placed in the center of a relatively smaller site with little landscaping blocking the structure from view. Due to the closeness to the road, the mausoleum seems highly visible within the context of the Dogwood plot. The entrance faces the road, giving a clear view of the elegance and ornamentation used by the architects on the front façade. There are two other mausoleums within sight of Sloane, but

Figure 2. | Interior of Sloane mausoleum with crypts. Photograph by author.



not facing the same direction of the main street, that look very similar—down to the size, shape, and subtle details. It is not known whether they were constructed before or after 1913.

Stone, Gould and Farrington designed the structure in a typical Ionic order Greek temple style with an exterior made of granite. The temple style was likely chosen for its ability to exude a refined elegance, even in death. The classical Greek style is popular amongst mausoleum design because of the permanence of its aesthetic. There are many other Farrington, Gould and Hoagland (the firm's name changed after the early 1900s) designed mausoleums and memorials around Woodlawn. Some other famous mausoleums by the firm include the Julliard Mausoleum in a square plan, but still Greek style, and the Woolworth Mausoleum in an Egyptian style

(another popular design for monuments). Interestingly, although mausoleums generally were the costlier option for a monument, Sloane Mausoleum was even more elaborate and costly than the average Woodlawn mausoleum.<sup>9</sup>

The front façade consists of four Ionic order columns with fluting and slight attenuation, and a classical Greek entablature and pediment with



Figure 3 | Front elevation of Sloane mausoleum. Photograph by author.

<sup>9</sup> It was noted in a Presbrey-Leland, Inc. trade catalogue that granite mausoleums cost upwards of \$5000. "Commemoration: the Book of Presbrey-Leland Memorials," Presbrey-Leland, Inc., 1932



a blank frieze and architrave. There is also some smaller ornamentation around the doorway, including a large classical Greek lintel held up by two scroll brackets. The bronze-paneled entrance doors are another extravagant feature on the structure with their sophisticated cast metal elements. Bronze panel doors are typical for mausoleums of certain cost, implying the Sloane mausoleum spared no expense.<sup>10</sup> The side elevations feature two engaged pilasters at the two ends of the structure, but minimal ornamentation. The rear façade is similarly simple, with two engaged pilasters and a stained glass window in the center below the entablature. Based on the Farrington, Gould and Hoagland trade catalogues available, many of the structures they were advertising were simpler than the Sloane mausoleum.<sup>11</sup> They did not feature the fluting on the columns, or the stained-glass window, or often used rusticated, rough-faced stone because that was cheaper than granite for the side elevations.

The interior design of the Sloane mausoleum is even more opulent than the exterior. The structure employs a light-colored marble for the interior walls and crypts and a dark polished granite for the floor plane. There are very intricate wreath carvings and reliefs on the marble of George and Catherine Sloane's crypts, which are located at the rear of the mausoleum and act as the focal point. There are short engaged pilasters with no fluting and Doric capitals on either side of their crypts. In the center of the rear wall there is an extremely elaborate stained-glass window depicting a biblical scene; it is framed by longer engaged pilasters with fluting and Ionic capitals. The glass is very colorful, in stark contrast with the rest of the nearly white interior. There were no documents or correspondence found regarding the origin of the stained-glass window, but it

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<sup>10</sup> Catalogue 1300, "Standard Bronze Equipment for Mausoleums and Memorials," *The Vulcan Company* (Detroit, MI) February, 1913.

<sup>11</sup> "Farrington, Gould, and Hoagland, Inc. New York," *Farrington, Gould, and Hoagland, Inc.* (New York, NY), 1927.



can be assumed that it was another expensive design choice by the Sloane family. There are also a pair of marble carved benches inside on either side of the door, which implies that the family expected guests to stay and visit the mausoleum for longer.

None of the design choices of material or ornamentation on the exterior and interior were simple or cheap. The visibility of the structure from the road is also a key feature of the mausoleum that was important to the family. Overall, everything about the Sloane mausoleum, from the location of the purchased plot to the stained-glass window, indicates the high level of affluence that the family maintained beyond their deaths.