

# Moffett Mausoleum



## **PROJECT 3: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis**

**Faculty: Françoise Bollack, Ward Dennis & Andrew Dolkart**

**FALL 2013 HP Studio – Hee Joo Kim - October 14, 2013**



The Moffett mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery was built for James Andrew Moffett and his family by the monument company Stone, Gould & Farrington Inc. in 1913 upon James's death. The lot was owned by James A. Moffett's wife, Kate I. Moffett, and his two sons, George M. Moffett and James A. Moffett, Jr., who are all resting in the mausoleum (Fig 1).

In this lot, eight family members including George's second and last wife, Madeline B. Moffett and Odette Moffett, Helen Barker and Herold Barker, James A. Moffett's daughter and her husband, have rested (Fig 2).

The Moffetts were one of the largest families of Augusta County in Virginia and lived there practically from the beginning of white settlement.<sup>1</sup> They immigrated from Scotland in the late 17C~ early 18C. James A. Moffett (1851~1913) was born in Huntersville, West Virginia, U.S. He began his career in the Parkersburg refinery which eventually became consolidated with the Standard Oil Company. In 1890, he moved into New York City. Truly, he was a co-pioneer in petroleum with the late John D. Rockefeller, who was one of the developers and first officials of the Standard Oil Co. Also James A. Moffett was a chairman of the board of directors of the Corn Products Refining Co., president and director of the National Transit Co., and president and director of the N.Y. Transit Co., as well as vice-president and director of the Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey.<sup>2</sup> After his death, his two sons, George and James succeeded his positions separately. Moreover, James A. Moffett Jr. was as prominent a figure as his father. He was the first Federal Housing Administrator in 1934, senior vice-president and operation head of Standard Oil Co. of

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<sup>1</sup> *USGenWeb Archives Special Projects*, "Biography of JAMES A. MOFFETT" <http://files.usgwarchives.net/>

<sup>2</sup> "James A. Moffett Dead." *The Wall Street Journal*, February 27, 1913.

New Jersey. He was also a close friend of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, as a lay adviser on Far Eastern policy. He died in his house in Manhattan at 765 Park Ave.<sup>3</sup>

This mausoleum was designed and erected by Stone, Gould & Farrington Inc., a well-known firm that specialized in mausoleums, monuments and statuary. In their 1910 and 1927 catalogs of completed projects, a total of 194 mausoleums were listed--85 of which were located at Woodlawn Cemetery.<sup>4</sup> Although the firm was based in New York, they always used granite quarried in Barre, Vermont. The documents and receipts from Avery archive at Columbia University shows that the family did not participate much in the design process of the building.

This mausoleum is easy to approach, so people can easily appreciate the building's rectangular massing and Classical proportion. The façades are Classical, echoing Greek Doric temples in its simplicity of form and ornament. The building is raised on three-steps stylobate, set apart from its surroundings. On top of the base are four fluted Doric columns forming a tetrastyle temple. The intercolumniation, which is even on either side of the door, but has eustyle spacing ( $2 \frac{1}{4}$  modules where the module is the width of one column shaft at the base) in the center, emphasize the centrality of the entrance.

The basic rhythm of emphasized columns and deemphasized space and overall proportion of the façade follows the Greek Doric style. Moffett's mausoleum has similarity with 'Selinus Temple 'B'' which has prostyle and tetrastyle in Doric (Fig 3). The mausoleum's ornaments are triglyphs. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a period of 'heroic' archaeology. The excavations of the ancient Palace of King Minos, on the Mediterranean island of Crete, which has deep relation with Greek, received great publicity at the time.<sup>5</sup> This atmosphere surely

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<sup>3</sup> "James Andre Moffett Dead" New York Herald Tribune, March 26, 1953

<sup>4</sup> They changed the company title from Stone, Gould & Farrington Inc. to Farrington, Gould & Hoagland.

<sup>5</sup> Simon Unwin. *Twenty Buildings Every Architect should Understand*. Routledge, 2010.

affected architects and architectural style in that time. Since the mausoleum was made by 1913, its Greek style would be influenced by the trends (Fig 4).

This has a few details inside as well as outside. The elaborated and detailed rectangular, dark green bronze door has a fair contrast effect to the light granite. Inside, the Angel Gabriel stained glass window is the only path of light. Since the mausoleum is relatively small and there is no window except the glass, it makes a great impression and has a key role for creating sacred atmosphere.

Woodlawn's landscape has been shaped by many notable designers. Landscape is quite an important factor with light, sound, texture to create or intensify an emotional experience. In short, the design of this mausoleum, which lacks elaborate details, is to create a pleasant and modest place for the deceased and the family to cherish their memory with above elements.

James A. Moffett's character was combined with a kindly, generous and just nature.<sup>6</sup> He continued to be active in business until his death on February 25, 1913. Even if the family donated huge scholarship funds at Harvard and Princeton University, their last place for resting is not extravagant and gaudy.<sup>7</sup> It would be related to their modesty. It looks like they want to have eternal sleep in classic-cozy space, regardless of their social status.

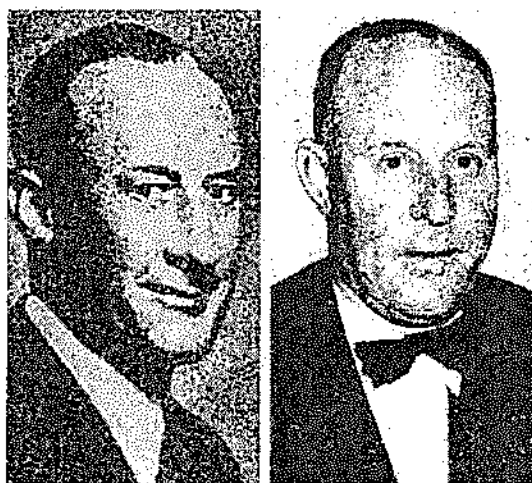
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<sup>6</sup> Valerie Crook, "Biography of JAMES A. MOFFETT," *USGenWeb Archives Special Projects*, September 20, 2013. <http://files.usgarchives.net>.

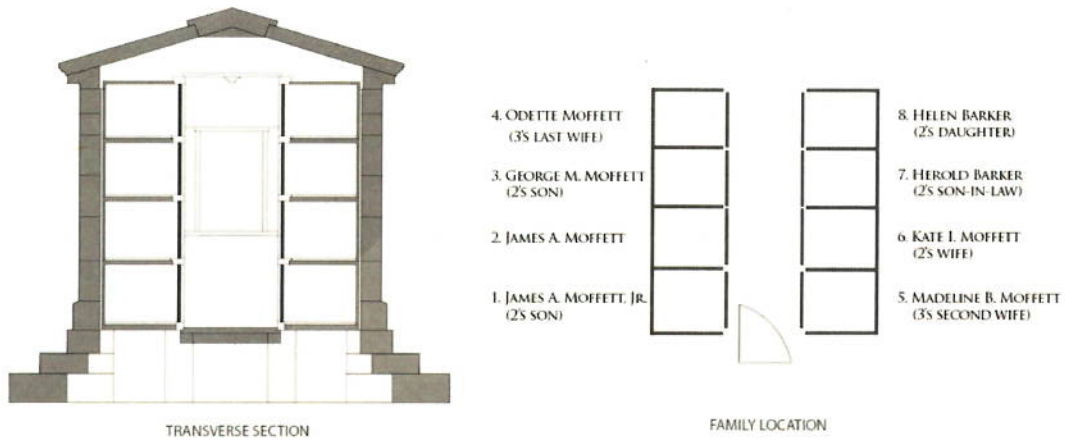
<sup>7</sup> "College Study Aided By Moffett Millions." *The New York Times*, January 9, 1952.

## Bibliography

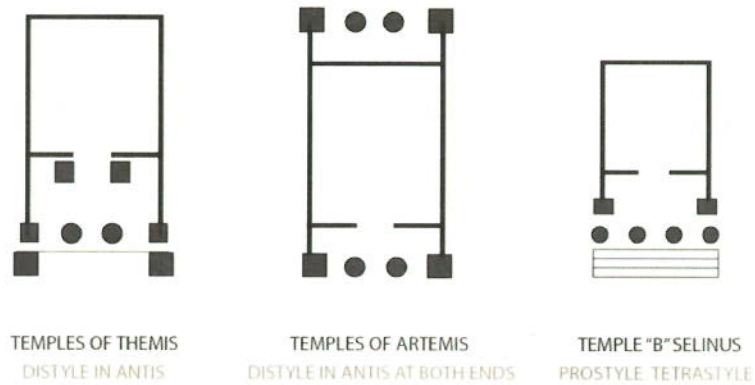
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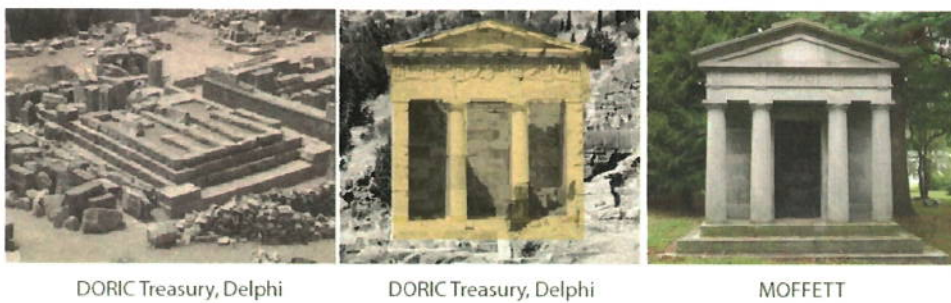
<Figure 1. George M. Moffett & James A. Moffett Jr.>



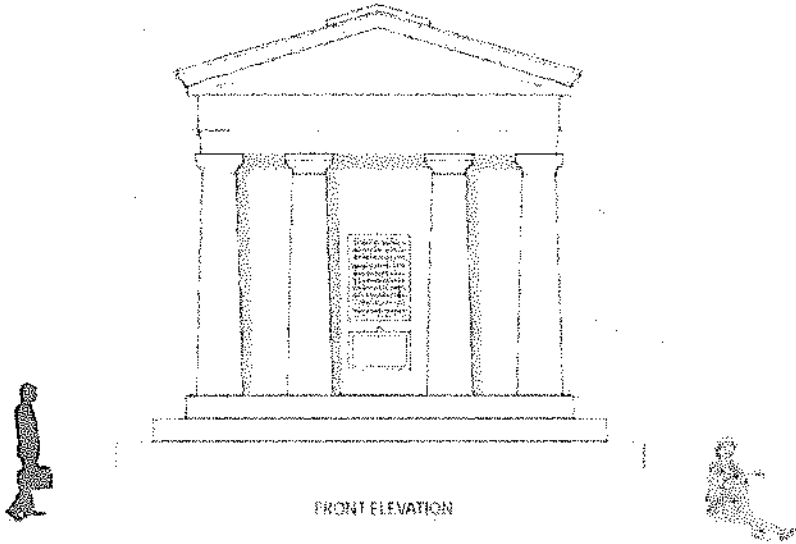
<Figure 2. Locations of family members within the mausoleum>



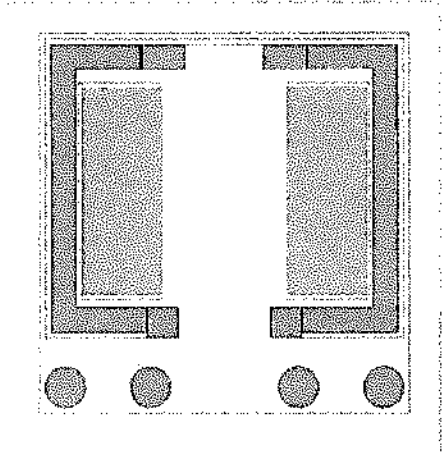
<Figure 3. Plans the Small Temples (Doric) >



<Figure 4. Comparison with Greek Doric Temple and the mausoleum >



FRONT ELEVATION



GENERAL PLAN



DETAIL