

Early American Missionaries in Korea: Photographs of Vanished Modern Architecture in the Moffett Korea Collection

Introduction

The Moffett Collection on Korean Church History and Asian Christianity (Moffett Korea Collection) is housed in the Theodore Sedgwick Wright Library at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey. Samuel Hugh Moffett (1916–2015, H. Moffett, Ma Samrak in Korean) and his wife Eileen Flower Moffett (1928–) officially gifted the collection to the library on March 16, 1994.¹ The collection consists of personal papers of the couple, manuscripts, publications, photographs, clippings, and objects they brought from Korea. The 230 boxes in the “Manuscript Collection” are classified into five series, each corresponding to the biography, writings, and collected materials about Samuel Austin Moffett (1864–1939, A. Moffett, Mapo Samyeol in Korean), one of the earliest American missionary and H. Moffett’s father, materials related to history of Christianity in Korea, H. Moffett’s papers, genealogical and personal papers from the Moffett family, and other non-print materials.² The other 118 boxes, classified as the “Photograph Collection” contain fourteen series, albums of selected images of old Korea, and a box of glass lantern slides. The photograph collection includes personal photos taken by the Moffett family, postcards, photos of the early American missionaries in Korea, Korean people, as well as photos of Korean landscapes, scenery, buildings, and streets constructed in Seoul, Pyeongyang, and other areas of Korea from the late 19th to the late 20th century. The “Book Collection,” the third and final part of the collection,

1 Samuel Hugh Moffett and Eileen Flower Moffett, “Letter to Dr. Thomas W. Gillespie, Office of the President, Princeton Theological Seminary” (July 27, 1994, Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary).

2 As the first and last names of Samuel A. Moffett and his third son Samuel Hugh Moffett are identical, this paper indicates Samuel Austin Moffett as A. Moffett and his son Samuel Hugh Moffett as H. Moffett.

features more than 1,000 books related to the socio-cultural and religious history of Korea with a focus on the development of the history of Christianity in the country. Substantial parts of the collection have been digitized and published on the library's website, but the genealogical and personal papers of the Moffett family, some non-print materials, five series from the photograph collection, and the box of glass lantern slides are yet to be digitized.³ The complete collection is currently housed in the Special Collection and Archives Department located on the second floor of the Wright Library at Princeton Theological Seminary. Some of the Korean objects that H. Moffett and Eileen Flower Moffett brought from Korea are displayed in the Korean Room on the same floor.⁴

The collection is especially worth further investigation, as it witnesses and records the early modern history of Korea during the late Joseon dynasty (1392–1897), the short-lived Korean Empire (1897–1910), and the following Japanese colonial period (1910–1945) from the perspective of A. Moffett, a Western missionary. Several scholars researched the history of Korean church witnessed and recorded by A. Moffett, including Samuel Hugh Moffett and Eileen Flower Moffett, who conducted the expansive initial research on the topic. Lee Jong Hyeong's doctoral dissertation "Samuel Austin Moffett: His Life and Work in the Development of the Presbyterian Church of Korea 1890–1936" (1983) and Kim In-su's (2000) and Sung-Deuk Oak's (2017) translations of the writings of A. Moffett from English to Korean enriched the study about A. Moffett. Whereas these scholarly works focus merely on documenting the history of Christianity in Korea since the arrival of A. Moffett to Korea in 1890 and chronicling his detailed biography, the Seoul Museum of History in Seoul, Korea published a catalogue titled *Missionary's Life in Seoul 100 Years Ago: Photos of the Moffett Korea Collection in Princeton Theological Seminary* in 2022, which contains a selection of 163 photographs of Seoul from the 1890s to the 1950s from the Moffett Korea Collection (Oh 2022, 201). In the catalogue, art historian Oh Ji-young (2022, 196–207) wrote an introduction about the Moffett Korea Collection and its contribution to the history of modern Seoul

from a holistic lens. Another study by historian Cho Sun-hye (2022, 208–235) on the work and life of early American missionaries who lived in Seoul from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the twentieth century through the photos included in the same collection is also worth mentioning. However, an analysis on the church buildings and residences in Pyeongyang where A. Moffett lived and worked is yet to be part of the discussion. This paper thus traces A. Moffett's early settlement in Pyeongyang from the 1890s through the original materials from the Moffett Korea Collection and then examines the concept of hybridity in the now-vanished early modern Christian buildings and missionary residences in Pyeongyang through a few selected rare images.

Samuel A. Moffett's Settlement in Pyeongyang

A. Moffett was born in Madison, Indiana on January 25, 1864 (Figure 1).⁵ He received a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Hanover College in 1884 and earned another bachelor's degree in theology at McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, in 1888. After that, he was appointed as a missionary to Korea on September 9, 1889, by the Foreign Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church. A. Moffett departed from San Francisco on December 16 and arrived at the seaport Jaemulpo in Seoul, Korea, on January 25, 1890. In his first letter to Frank Field Ellinwood (1826–1908) of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in 1890, he writes, "Arriving here my first impression, deepened as times goes by, was that the people show an utter lack of positive happiness...I do not see how the first impression can be aught else than that the people do greatly need the gospel" (Moffett and Moffett 2007, 7).⁶ According to this letter, he found great possibilities in Korean people in believing in God. He viewed Koreans as intelligent and attractive and that they would grow into a strong

5 Eileen F. Moffett, *Chronology: Samuel Austin Moffett (1852-1939)* (date unknown, Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary), 1.

6 Paul Cleveland, "Congratulatory Message Delivered by Deputy Chief of the United States Mission Paul Cleveland at the Commemorative Service on the 100th Anniversary of Korean American Relations" (May 22, 1982, Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary), 2. Paul Cleveland marks the arrival of A. Moffett and the date of the letter to Ellinwood as 1889, but the letter may have been written after his arrival in Korea in 1890.

3 The website address of the digital library of the Moffett Korea Collection is <https://commons.ptsem.edu/moffett>.

4 The materials presented in this paper were retrieved from the author's research visit to the Special Collection and Archives Department on the second floor of the Wright Library at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, from February 28 to March 1, 2023.



Figure 1. Samuel A. Moffett on the Cover Page of *Presbyterian Life*, Vol. 7, No. 15, July 24, 1954. Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary

people once relieved from official extortion.⁷

A. Moffett's arrival was approximately five and a half years after Horace Allen (1858–1932), the first American Protestant missionary and physician, arrived in Korea on September 20, 1884. Allen was one of the key figures who opened the closed door to Christian missionaries during the reign of Emperor Gojong (1852–1919) in the late Joseon dynasty (1392–1897) by saving the life of a seriously wounded prince Min Young Ik (1860–1914). He eventually became a court physician. Historian Robert Neff describes him as being notoriously impatient and having a quick temper, based on his research of Allen's diaries. In the diaries, Allen raised numerous complaints about Korean food and hygiene and viewed the methods used in Korean traditional medical practices as inferior.⁸ In contrast to Allen's imperialistic attitude, A. Moffett

wished for a more humane and enlightened development of Korea. In a note he wrote in July 1890, he criticized Allen's engagement in politics and opposed his assignment to Seoul. He wrote that if Allen comes to Seoul, "...we immediately subject ourselves to the enmity of those who are very bitter toward him...Our aim must be to lay stress upon our spiritual mission."⁹ Perhaps his opinion about Korean culture stemmed more from a missionary's perspective rather than from the lens of a physician like Allen, but it seems he had a more sound, calm temper compared to Allen. H. Moffett later described his father in his late twenties as "a tall six-footer, silky haired, quick-motoned, blue-eyed, and as thin as a rail."¹⁰ A photograph, taken in 1893, of the Korean mission of the Presbyterian Church shows A. Moffett, still in his youth, seated in the middle of the back row, among other key figures of the Korean mission (Figure 2).



Back Row-- Mrs. Sam Moore, Mrs. Vinton, Rev. Lee, Rev. & Mrs. Gifford, Rev. Moffett, Dr. Brown, Rev. Gale, F. S. Miller and Dr. O.R. Avison. Front Row-- Rev. Sam Moore, Dr. Vinton, Freddie Vinton, Mrs. H.G. Underwood and Horace, Dr. H.G. Underwood, Dr. & Mrs. Baird with Jan, Rev. & Mrs. Swallen, Misses Doty, Strong and Arbuckle, Mrs. F. S. Miller, Mrs. O.R. Avison & Wilber. Seated on the ground are Lawrence and Lera Avison.
This is the Korean Mission of the Presbyterian Church in 1893.

Figure 2. Korean Mission of the Presbyterian Church in 1893. Photograph. Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary

7 Paul Cleveland, "Congratulatory Message Delivered by Deputy Chief of the United States Mission Paul Cleveland at the Commemorative Service on the 100th Anniversary of Korean American Relations" (May 22, 1982, Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary), 4.

8 Robert Neff, "Horace N. Allen: Treating the Masses," *The Korea Times*, March 20, 2023. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2023/03/721_347296.html.

9 Paul Cleveland, "Congratulatory Message Delivered by Deputy Chief of the United States Mission Paul Cleveland at the Commemorative Service on the 100th Anniversary of Korean American Relations" (May 22, 1982, Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary), 5.

10 Samuel H. Moffett, "Mission to North Korea: Samuel A. Moffett of Pyeongyang," (date unknown, Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary), 16.

After arriving in Korea, he spent the first six months in Seoul learning the Korean language. He made his first trip to Pyeongyang, the current capital of North Korea, on August 29, 1890, accompanied by two other American missionaries, Henry G. Apenzeller (1858–1902) and Homer B. Hulbert (1863–1949). A. Moffett continued to travel back and forth to Pyeongyang until he relocated to the city on May 15, 1893, marking his sixth trip to the North.¹¹ Korean helper Han Suk-chin purchased a small house on A. Moffett's behalf, and he delivered a sermon to about twenty people in Mr. Han's house before he returned to Seoul around June 10, 1893. On June 1, 1899, A. Moffett married Alice Fish from Indiana, who arrived in Korea on December 3, 1897, as a Presbyterian missionary and physician, in Seoul. After their marriage, the couple continued to photograph their life in Korea and sent the photos to their parents in California and Indiana.¹² On February 6, 1901, A. Moffett founded the first Protestant Theological Seminary in Pyeongyang, Korea (called Jangdaehyeon yebaedang in Korean) in 1901 and started teaching two Korean students, Kim Jong-seob (1862–1940) and Bang Gi-chang (1851–1911) in his residence.¹³ Due to the continuous efforts of American missionaries, the number of students multiplied in the next couple of years to 138 students in 1909. Having served as president at this school until 1924, A. Moffett remained a dedicated faculty member until his retirement in 1934 (Malone 2007, 6–7). He stayed in Pyeongyang until 1936 when he experienced a stroke. He finally left on September 24, 1936 after facing pressure from Japanese officials for resisting the obligatory attendance of Christian schools at Shinto shrine ceremonies.

11 Eileen F. Moffett, *Chronology: Samuel Austin Moffett (1852-1939)* (date unknown, Moffett Korea Collection), 1; "Dr. Samuel Moffett the Missionary and Rev. Khil Sun Joo," from the Missionary Biography 1: Kiel Sun-Joo, by Khil Chin-Kyung (date unknown, Moffett Korea Collection), 1; "Biographical Sketch," in *Historical Address Delivered at the Memorial Service for Dr. Moffett held by Rev. Kim Hwa Sik* (March 22, 1940, Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary).

12 After Alice Fish Moffett died from dysentery on July 12, 1912, he married his second wife Lucia Fish Moffett, the first cousin of Alice who came to Korea as a teacher of missionaries' children, on June 30, 1915, and his third son Samuel Hugh Moffett was born on April 7, 1916. For this, see Eileen F. Moffett, *Chronology: Samuel Austin Moffett (1852-1939)*, 4–5.

13 Shin Sae-won, "Munsojae eseo Pyeongyang sinhakgyo choecho iphaksang" [From Munsojae: The Admitted Students at Pyeongyang Theological Seminary], *Gidok sinmun* [Christian Daily], May 20, 2014. <https://www.kidok.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=85863>.

Architectural Style of the Protestant Theological Seminary and Residences in Pyeongyang

Between September and October of 1900, the construction of the Central Presbyterian Church building was completed in Pan-dong (Neoldari), Pyeongyang (Figure 3). With over 1,500 seats, the one-story church building was constructed in an L-shape with separate entrances on each side. The white walls were divided by half-timbered wooden beams while two windows with six divided glass panes were vertically stacked together to allow ample light into the main service area. Short diagonal wooden beams adorned the frieze just under the traditional tiled roofs, which were made of *giwa* (Korean traditional roof).¹⁴ This hybrid architectural style was an interesting blend of American suburban Tudor revival style characterized by the use of brick and stone, decorative half-timbering, and the Korean roof. The newly constructed Theological Seminary



Figure 3. Central Presbyterian Church (Jangdaehyeon yebaedang), 1900. Photograph. Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary

14 A 1/5 scale replica of the original building of the Central Presbyterian Church is housed inside the Korean Church History Museum in Icheon, Gyeonggi-do.

building in Hasugu-ri 100, Pyeongyang, also adopted a similar hybrid architectural style. A photograph, taken in 1912, of a men's bible conference showcases the architectural style of the new building (Figure 4). With funds gifted by Nancy "Nettie" Fowler McCormick (1835–1923), an American philanthropist and businesswoman, the construction of this building was initiated on May 12, 1908. With its completion in 1909, 138 students moved to the new building.¹⁵ The implementation of the elements of the traditional Korean *hanok*, such as the use of *giwa* and the first floor tapered with typical brick walls surrounding the outer walls, exemplifies the hybrid architectural style of the early 1900s in Pyeongyang. On the first and second floors, the glass windows with six divided glass planes were put, along with smaller, narrow windows with three glass planes on top. The simple, half-timbered wall surfaces on the second floor echo the Tudor style of the Central Presbyterian church. For some of the windows on the second floor in the back, four Korean traditional



Figure 4. Men Bible Conference at Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pyeongyang, 1912. Photograph. Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary

windows made with *hanji* (traditional Korean paper) and dense diagonal lattices were used. Later photos show that the windows were all covered with lattices. Staircases were added in the front of the building, as seen in a separate photograph from 1921 depicting students practicing calisthenics (Figure 5). The new brick and mortar two-story recitation building was built in 1922 with additional funding from Nettie McCormick (Figure 6). Its exterior design



Figure 5. Students at Calisthenics at Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pyeongyang, 1921. Photograph. Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary



Figure 6. The New Recitation Building, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pyeongyang, Built in 1922. Photograph. Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary

15 "History," Presbyterian Orthodoxy Union Assembly Theological Seminary. Accessed March 12, 2023. <http://www.chongshin.name/subs/sub1c.php?ckattempt=1>.

followed a simplified Collegiate Gothic style, a sub-genre of Gothic revival architectural style that was popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for high school and college buildings in the United States and Canada. Most of these schools were owned and operated by Christian associations. The protruding main entrance with an arched door and the simplified fortress-style roof are reminiscent of the main buildings built for American colleges, such as the main buildings of the Bryn Mawr College, founded in 1885 in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

Another photograph, which is from the Baird Family Papers collection at the Presbyterian Historical Society, shows the early missionary residences adapting Western living style into a renovated Korean *hanok* (Figure 7). The information written on the back of the photo suggests that the picture was taken in the yard of William Leander Swallen (1859–1954) and his wife Sarah “Sallie” Willison Swallen’s (1863–1945) house in the fall or winter of 1923 or 1924. The writing on the back of the photo reads:



Figure 7. Pyeongyang Station Group Photograph, ca. 1923–1924. Photograph. Baird Family Papers Collection, Presbyterian Historical Society

The Swallen house in the background was one of the early missionary residences in Pyongyang. The Rev. Graham Lee adapted the basic Korean bungalow style to install such comforts as stoves, closets, cupboards, etc. Mr. Lee experimented in this case by building in one second story room.

In 1973, Richard H. Baird (1898–1995) added his own note: “In rear may be seen ‘Daddy’ Swallen’s famous Model T Ford in which he and Mrs. Swallen visited rural churches bringing many blessings and great clouds of dust.”¹⁶ During the early settlement years in Seoul and Pyeongyang, the missionaries purchased the houses of *yangban*, the Korean elites, and renovated both the interior and exterior spaces to suit their own living style. As described, it was common to tear down the walls to make space for Western furniture and add appliances that they brought from the United States. Most of the time, they put curtains inside the glass windows instead of using Korean lattice windows. According to Cho Sun-hye (2022, 222), the families of the missionaries preferred the Western living style to create a familiar Western atmosphere in their residences to add stability to their daily life. The front wall of the added second-story room at the end of the house was partially covered with *giwa*, but all the windows were replaced with Western style glass windows. In the picture, A. Moffett is the ninth person from the left standing in the back row.

Rare Photographs and Journals with Photos of Pyeongyang

Two of A. Moffett’s five sons became missionaries, including H. Moffett, the Henry W. Luce Professor of Ecumenics and Mission at Princeton Theological Seminary (1981–1986). A picture from the personal photobook of A. Moffett taken at his Pyeongyang residence shows A. Moffett holding his son H. Moffett on his right side (Figure 8). H. Moffett was born in Pyeongyang in 1916. After completing his bachelor’s degree of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1942 and his doctoral degree at Yale University in 1945, he became a missionary and stayed in China from 1947 to 1951. The Chinese

¹⁶ Text on the flip side of the “Pyongyang Station Group Photograph” is available in the Baird Family Papers Collection, Presbyterian Historical Society. Accessed March 1, 2023. <https://digital.history.pcusa.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A115948>.



Figure 8. A. Moffett Holding H. Moffett on his Right, Pyeongyang, ca. Late 1910s–Early 1920s. Photograph. Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary

communists detained him and then dismissed him from his duties in 1951. He returned to South Korea in 1955 and started working with his wife Eileen as missionaries in 1956, especially in the rural areas in Andong, Korea (Figure 9). H. Moffett served as the Director of the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission from 1974 to 1981 and then returned to the U.S. in 1981, starting his professorship at Princeton Theological Seminary the same year. He is well known as the author of a multivolume book *A History of Christianity in Asia* (1998). Eileen Moffett received her degree in Christian Education from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1955 and married H. Moffett the following year. Personal photographs of this couple, such as the photos of their wedding ceremony held at Yeongdong Presbyterian Church in Seoul, Korea, and their travel photos in the rural areas of the North Gyeongsang region, provide a glimpse into the life of the American missionaries in Korea immediately after the Korean War (1950–1953).

The printed media owned by H. Moffett include rare photographs of buildings in Seoul and Pyeongyang, such as the *Japanese Photo Album of Korea* published in 1914 and the Japanese magazine *History of Colonies of Japan I: Joseon* published in July 1978. The photographs of Pyeongyang during



Figure 9. Samuel H. Moffett and Eileen Flower Moffett in Gyeongju, South Korea, Early 1970s. Photograph. Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary

the Japanese colonial period, especially in the 1930s, are significant research materials because most of the buildings built by the Japanese architects were demolished during and after the Korean war. With the rise of Communism in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the North Korean dictator Kim Il-sung (in office 1948–1994) promoted a new social agenda as he rebuilt the heavily devastated Pyeongyang after the Korean War. From the mid-1950s, the city grew out of its ashes, rejuvenated by reconstruction programs based on a model known as the Soviet-aid program (Soryeon wonjo program). The photograph of the original building of the Pyeongyang History Museum (current Joseon Central History Museum), which is featured in the magazine *History of Colonies of Japan I: Joseon*, is one of those rare photographs. The Joseon Central History Museum (1945), originally established as the National Central History Museum, was housed in a building that opened in October 1933 during the Japanese colonial period (Figure 10). The museum was relocated once before finding its current place on the east side of Kim Il-Sung Square. It was renamed as the Joseon History Museum on August 28, 1964 and then as Joseon Central History Museum in 1977. The original building, now demolished, had a turret, following the Imperial Crown style, in which tented



Figure 10. Pyeongyang History Museum, Opened October 1933. Photograph. Moffett Korea Collection, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary

roofs (*hōgyō tsukuri*) were used in decorating modernist architecture in Korea during the 1930s. Its wings that ran tangentially on either side of the central lobby, horizontal lines, and cantilever principles to stress the verticality of the building followed the style of the Imperial Hotel (1913–1923, demolished in 1968) designed by American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959), which had replaced the previous Imperial Hotel (1888–1890) designed by Japanese architect Watanabe Yuzuru (1855–1930).

Conclusion

In this paper, I have provided a general overview of the Moffett Korea Collection, focusing on the work and life of A. Moffett as documented in the manuscripts and photographs housed in the collection. The examination of the relatively under-studied architectural style of early modern Christian architecture was conducted through an analysis of buildings in which A. Moffett's work and life was centered around: the Central Presbyterian Church and the Theological Seminary. The yearbooks *Kulsi* (*Letters*)—published in the late 1920s and 1930s by the Pyeongyang Foreign School (founded in 1900)—reveals the life and culture of the missionary kids in Pyeongyang and merits further examination. I hope future studies of the Moffett Korea Collection will facilitate the study

of early modern Korean history and culture and fill in the many gaps currently existing in the history of Pyeongyang during the Japanese colonial period.

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Suzie KIM (skim8@umw.edu)
University of Mary Washington