

CRANBROOK: A BRIEF HISTORY

What distinguishes Cranbrook from other educational complexes is not the types of institutions established -- for there are great centers of learning the world over -- but what was conceived and built on these grounds. At Cranbrook, institutions were conscientiously developed and designed to encourage individual growth and excellence by providing a built environment that promoted artistic, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual ideals.

The institutions of Cranbrook never would have been established had it not been for the dream of its founders, George and Ellen Booth, to achieve something of lasting value and service with the resources they possessed. As George Booth stated at the dedication of Cranbrook School in 1927:

We were unwilling to go through life with our aims centered mainly in the pursuit of wealth and with a devotion wholly to the ordinary opportunity for social satisfaction. We were not willing to leave all of the more enduring joys for our children or the joy of work in so good a cause entirely to our friends after we had passed on; rather did we wish, in our day, to do what we could and give tangible expression now to our other accomplishments by adventures into a still more enduring phase of life. We wished to see our dreams come true while we were, to the best of our ability, helping to carry on the work of creation.

The dream of the Booths was a lifetime in the making. Despite their widely divergent backgrounds, each was raised in a family setting that encouraged personal growth, spiritual development, and a commitment to community service -- values that remained with them throughout their lives.

Born into a modest household in Toronto, Ontario on September 24, 1864, George Gough Booth left school at 14 to apprentice as a metalworker. A business venture of his father brought the family to Detroit in 1881, and it was there, through church activities, that the young Booth first made the acquaintance of his future bride. When still in his teens, Booth acquired a half interest in a Windsor iron works firm which manufactured grilles, fences, and gates of his own design. At 23 he sold the business and, at the invitation of his father-in-law, James Scripps, became the business manager of the Detroit Evening News. Booth rose through the company ranks to build the News into a great metropolitan daily and to head its parent firm, the Evening News Association. Booth began purchasing small newspapers in several Michigan cities in the 1890s. These he combined in 1914 with others belonging to his brothers Ralph and Edmund to form Booth Newspapers, Inc., one of the industry's largest chains. Secured of a substantial fortune, he devoted the remaining decades of his life to the development of the Cranbrook institutions.

In contrast, Ellen Scripps Booth enjoyed a very comfortable home life as a young woman. She was born in Detroit on July 10, 1863, the eldest child of Harriet and James Scripps, who founded the Evening News Association in 1873. Upon her graduation

from high school, she accompanied her parents on several trips to Europe, where the Scripps' made extensive purchases of paintings, prints, rare books, and other works of art for their home on Trumbull Avenue. Many of these were later donated to the Detroit Museum of Art and today form the nucleus of the Detroit Institute of Art's collection of old master paintings and prints and the Detroit Public Library's rare book collection.

The couple were wed in 1887 and resided for the next 21 years in Detroit. In 1904, the Booths purchased a badly run-down and overgrown farm in the gently rolling countryside of Bloomfield Hills, then a sparsely populated farming community some distance from the city. They immediately named the property Cranbrook after the village birthplace of George Booth's father in Kent County, England, and set about improving the land as a vacation spot and potential homesite for the family, now grown to include five children. Working largely from plans drawn up by Booth, teams of landscape architects, farmers, gardeners, and laborers were engaged to transform the untended fields of Cranbrook into a beautiful country estate and working farm. Dams and bridges were constructed, miles of roads and winding paths were laid out, cottages and farm buildings erected, and thousands of trees and shrubs were planted to shade the barren hills and supplement the natural growth of the property.

In June 1908, the family moved into their new home, Cranbrook House, which was designed by the noted Detroit architect Albert Kahn. Under provisions made in the will of James Scripps, who had died two years previously, the vacated city estate was purchased, the home doubled in size by Kahn's firm, and donated to the city as the Scripps Library and Park. George Booth personally designed the wrought iron fences and gates of the park and laid out the gardens surrounding the library.

As improvements progressed at Cranbrook, the Booths committed an ever larger share of their expenditures on buildings intended for public use. The first to be constructed was the Greek Theater, completed in 1915. The next was the Meeting House, built as a center for a variety of social, recreational, political, and religious community gatherings at the same time major additions were being made to Cranbrook House in 1918.

In 1922, the Booths joined with a few local parents to organize a school for neighborhood children at the Meeting House and thereby began the first of the Cranbrook institutions. Known as the Bloomfield Hills School in its early years, the institution was helped considerably by the Booths, who set up a trust to underwrite its educational programs and made additions to the Meeting House as required to accommodate the growing number of pupils. In 1929, the facility was greatly enlarged by Henry Booth, the founders' son, and its name was changed to Brookside School Cranbrook in the following year.

By this time, the Booths had begun to seriously consider establishing other educational institutions at Cranbrook. As a focal point of the proposed complex of buildings, they decided to erect an Episcopalian church, Christ Church Cranbrook, to service the new institutions. By virtue of its inspiring beauty -- an "expression of the essential unity of things spiritual and artistic" -- the church was intended to promote an ideal of education in which intellectual development, beauty and character building are infused.

Groundbreaking for the church, designed by the New York firm of Goodhue Associates

and decorated by some of the leading crafts firms and artisans in the country, occurred in 1925. On September 29, 1928 the church was consecrated. Once Christ Church was under construction, the Booths turned their attention to the remaining institutions they wished to establish on their estate: a boys' school, a girls' school, and an art academy.

Of the three proposed institutions, the academy was foremost in George Booth's mind. On a trip to Europe in 1922, the Booths had visited the American Academy in Rome. Deeply impressed by the quality and strengths of that institution, he returned home hopeful that a comparable academy of arts could be established at Cranbrook. To help him formalize his ideas, he approached Eliel Saarinen, a visiting professor of architectural design at the University of Michigan, at the suggestion of his youngest son, Henry, a student of Saarinen's. Whereas the plans for the Cranbrook Academy of Art that Saarinen presented to Booth were far too ambitious to be seriously acted upon, Booth did recognize that Saarinen possessed many of the qualities that he was searching for in an architect. Booth authorized Saarinen to serve as design consultant to the building erected to house the Cranbrook Architectural Office in 1925 and to develop plans for the construction of Cranbrook School for boys. Satisfied that he could work successfully with the Finnish architect, Booth invited Saarinen to come to Cranbrook and head the architectural activity that was poised to commence under terms of a new trust created by the Booths in 1927, the Cranbrook Foundation.

The first project that Saarinen undertook for the Foundation was Cranbrook School, completed in 1928. This was followed by residences, crafts studios, and other additions to the Art Academy in the same year. In 1929, Saarinen began work on designs for the girls' school, Kingswood School Cranbrook. With Booth's consent, Saarinen engaged the members of his family and other Cranbrook artisans, who had arrived to work on Christ Church and Cranbrook School, to create furniture, fabrics, and other decorative elements in the school, which was conceived in Wright's "prairie school" idiom. Kingswood opened to students in 1931.

In 1930, while Kingswood School was being constructed, the Cranbrook Foundation created a new institution to further instruction available to students at Cranbrook in the natural sciences. Housed in a building designed by George Booth, the Cranbrook Institute of Science however quickly became the most popular of Cranbrook's institutions to residents in the surrounding communities. So taxed were the facilities of the Institute that the Foundation authorized construction of major additions to the building. These were done under Saarinen's supervision from 1936 to 1937. Although instruction in the arts had been carried on by Saarinen and other artists at Cranbrook since the late 1920s, it wasn't until 1932 that the Cranbrook Academy of Art was officially sanctioned under the aegis of the Cranbrook Foundation. Saarinen was installed as its first president and formal classes were begun the same year under the tutelage of the department heads, including Carl Milles (advanced sculpture), Eliel Saarinen (architecture), Zoltan Sepeshy (drawing and painting), and Arthur N. Kirk (jewelry and enameling). The Great Depression forced the closing of the crafts studios in 1933, but by the end of the decade the economy had improved sufficiently to allow for a new museum and library building for the Academy. This last major project of Saarinen's at Cranbrook was completed in 1942, the same year the Academy was

granted full institutional status by the Cranbrook Foundation. A year later the Academy began conferring degrees to its graduates.

Although the endowments provided for by the Booths remained intact after their deaths in the late 1940s, the additional gifts they frequently made to the Cranbrook institutions ceased and the financial picture of the Community dimmed somewhat. Escalating costs over the next several years continued to erode the fiscal foundations of Cranbrook. Although contributions to the institutions offset some of the difficulty, the beauty of the grounds and the attractiveness of Cranbrook on a whole began to noticeably slip. Many of the amenities of Cranbrook life that had been long a mainstay of the Community experience had to be abandoned, and board members and administrators began to take other measures to balance their budgets. Some actions were quite extreme, such as the decision made by board members of the Cranbrook Academy of Art to sell off major holdings of the Academy Museum in 1972 to raise money for educational programs.

One obvious solution to the fiscal predicament facing Cranbrook was to change the way Cranbrook did business. As conceived by the Booths and organized by the Cranbrook Foundation, each institution at Cranbrook was established as a separate entity, governed by a board that controlled the institution's assets. The Foundation also controlled its own assets, consisting primarily of the central endowments and the Homestead Property.

Attempts to centralize a few Cranbrook offices had begun in the 1930s but each movement in that direction resulted in dismal failure. The first breakthrough of any magnitude occurred in 1970, when an agreement was made to create a single board to govern the three schools -- Brookside, Kingswood, and Cranbrook -- and to adopt measures that would enhance the administrative and educational interplay between the schools.

This event was quickly followed by another of even greater importance, a massive reorganization of Cranbrook in the early 1970s that culminated in the creation of the Cranbrook Educational Community (CEC). Under this agreement, the Cranbrook Foundation was terminated and all assets of Cranbrook, those pertaining to both the institutions and the Foundation, were transferred to a new Community trust. The Articles of Incorporation of CEC called for the Community to be comprised of three divisions -- Cranbrook Institute of Science, Cranbrook Academy of Art, and Cranbrook Schools – each headed by a chief officer who, in consultation with a divisional board of governors, reported to the administrative officer of CEC, the president of the Community. In turn, the president reported to the Board of Trustees. Significantly, church canon precluded Christ Church Cranbrook from becoming a part of the new organization.

The present organization of Cranbrook Schools, begun in October 1984 and completed the following autumn, included the merging of Cranbrook and Kingswood upper grades to create Cranbrook Kingswood Upper School, a co-educational school, on two campuses. Similarly, the middle grades were reorganized as Cranbrook Kingswood Middle School with two gender-specific programs on two separate campuses.

Brookside School, the Cranbrook Kingswood Lower School, continues to operate in its historical quarters as a co-educational school.

Cranbrook's financial situation improved enormously in 1985 when the Community reaped the benefits of a heated bidding war for the purchase of the Evening News Association (ENA). As the largest single stockholder of ENA, Cranbrook realized nearly \$45 million when it sold its shares to Gannett Co., Inc. This, coupled with earlier sales of Cranbrook's holdings of Booth Newspapers, Inc. stocks to the Newhouse group, brought the assets of the endowment to more than \$95 million. As of June 30, 2003, the value of the endowment is \$175,027,000.

The Board of Trustees has authorized many significant initiatives designed to enhance the educational offerings of the divisions, to better manage the care and rehabilitation of Cranbrook's historic physical plant and grounds, to strengthen Cranbrook's fundraising efforts and financial well-being, to improve the Community's wage scales and human resources practices, to upgrade Cranbrook's information technology capabilities, and to encourage greater use of its grounds and public attractions. Perhaps most significantly, the Board authorized the acquisition of property and several capital projects to satisfy Cranbrook's outstanding strategic and programmatic needs.

This activity commenced in 1984 when Cranbrook acquired Vaughan School for middle school purposes and a 25-acre parcel of land fronting Woodward Avenue for future use as an entrance to campus. Through a gift from Peggy deSalle, the Albert and Peggy deSalle Auditorium, designed by Robert Saarinen Swanson in conjunction with George Zonars, opened at the Academy in 1986. In 1992, the new roadway opened; two years later the entrance booth, designed by Dan Hoffman and Ted Galante, and the arrival feature, designed by Hoffman and Juhani Pallasmaa, were completed to commemorate Cranbrook's 90th anniversary. The addition to Brookside designed by Peter Rose opened in the fall of 1996. The expansion of the Institute of Science designed by Steven Holl opened in the spring of 1998, and the renovation of the older Saarinen building was completed in the autumn of 1999. The natatorium for the Schools, designed by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, also opened in the autumn of 1999. New studios for the Cranbrook Academy of Art, designed by Rafael Moneo, opened in September 2002. All have met with critical acclaim. Cranbrook is presently building a parking deck and new West Entrance or "Gateway" at the Institute, both designed by Hoffman, to provide for more parking and to better accommodate groups visiting the Institute. In the recent past, Cranbrook has also enlarged its land holdings through the acquisition of the Lyon House near Kingswood and has undertaken several significant restoration projects, including the replacement of Kingswood's copper roof.

In the late 1990s, Cranbrook began an exhaustive campus-wide assessment of its physical plant and capital needs. This work culminated in early 2001, when the Board of Trustees approved a comprehensive master plan designed to chart the Community's development over the next decades. Efforts are currently underway to aggressively advance the plan through a comprehensive capital campaign.

Mark Coir
Director Cranbrook Archives, 2005

CRANBROOK

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1904 George and Ellen Booth found Cranbrook.
- 1908 The Booths move into Cranbrook House.
- 1922 Bloomfield Hills School (now Brookside School) is established.
- 1925 Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen moves to Bloomfield Hills.
- 1927 Cranbrook School opens.
- 1928 Cranbrook Foundation is established by the Booths to help sustain the educational and cultural development of Cranbrook.
- 1928 Christ Church Cranbrook is dedicated.
- 1930 Cranbrook Institute of Science is established.
- 1931 Kingswood School opens.
- 1932 Carl Milles, Swedish sculptor, begins working at Cranbrook.
- 1932 Cranbrook Academy of Art is established under the aegis of the Cranbrook Foundation; Eliel Saarinen is elected president of the Academy.
- 1942 Cranbrook Academy of Art Library and Museum is opened.
- 1942 Cranbrook Academy of Art is established as an independent institution at Cranbrook.
- 1948 Ellen Scripps Booth dies.
- 1949 George Gough Booth dies.
- 1950 Eliel Saarinen dies.
- 1973 Cranbrook Educational Community is established with three divisions: Academy of Art, Institute of Science and Schools.
- 1984-85 Schools are reorganized to create a single school, with Brookside School (a lower school), Cranbrook Kingswood Middle School (a middle school with gender-specific programs), and Cranbrook Kingswood Upper School (a co-ed upper school with appropriate gender-specific classes and traditions.)
- 1985 Cranbrook's endowment is bolstered through the sale of its Evening News Association (ENA) holdings
- 1986 Albert and Peggy deSalle Auditorium opens at the Academy of Art.
- 1992 Cranbrook opens a new Woodward Avenue access to campus.
- 1994 The entrance and arrival features are constructed.
- 1996 Peter Rose's addition to Brookside School is opened.
- 1998 Steven Holl's addition to the Institute of Science is opened.
- 1999 The first phase of the Athletic Complex, Tod Williams' and Billie Tsien's natatorium, is opened; renovation of the Institute is completed.
- 2002 Rafael Moneo's studio addition for the Academy of Art is opened.
- 2003 Cranbrook expands its campus by acquiring the Lyon House.
- 2004 Cranbrook celebrates its centennial.