AUTOMOBILES

CRANBROOK ARCHIVES
SUBJECT GUIDE
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this subject guide is to provide researchers with a guide to all materials at the Cranbrook Archives that pertain to cars or the automotive industry.

This guide has a special focus on James Scripps Booth, the eldest son of George Gough Booth and Ellen Scripps Booth, who had a lifelong passion for cars and was a self-taught automotive engineer. The archives collection includes his unpublished autobiography as well as some of his auto engineering drawings and a large number of photographs of his automotive designs. There is also a large collection of photographs of the Booth’s family cars, including their first car, a 1904 Winton (later nicknamed “The Bus”).

It also details the impact of Cranbrook-affiliated women in the auto industry. They include Suzanne Vanderbilt, Gere Kavanaugh, and Jane Van Alstyne, who worked for General Motors from the mid-1950s to the late 1970s designing car interiors and doing automotive human factors testing. Textile designer and former head of the Academy of Art’s Weaving Department Marianne Strengell also created fabrics for automotive interiors.

The Cranbrook Archives also maintains a sizable collection of general automotive history, including numerous publications on Henry Ford and the Model T. The Cranbrook Community hosted a number of events featuring automobiles, including Chrysler’s 1955 model year show and “Concours d’Elegance,” which was held for three successive summers from 2003 to 2005.

James Scripps Booth’s “Bi-Autogo” at Cranbrook.

Bi-Autogo Emblem, ca 1913
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Automobile quarterly: the connoisseur's magazine of motoring today, yesterday and tomorrow. Vol. XIII, No. 3. TL1.A588


COLLECTIONS

James Scripps Booth and John McLaughlin Booth Papers (1990-14)
This collection contains a variety of images and correspondence about the Scripps-Booth Motor Company and the cars that James Scripps Booth designed, including the “Bi-Autogo,” “Da Vinci,” and cyclecars (including the “Da Vinci Pup” and “JB Rocket”). It also contains James Scripps Booth’s diaries and his unpublished autobiography, as well as ephemera like automobile emblems and Scripps-Booth advertising materials.

George Gough Booth Papers (1981-01)
The collection includes James Scripps Booth’s correspondence with his father (including a letter about George Booth’s investment in Scripps-Booth Company). There is also information on the Booth family’s automobiles, including receipts for purchases and repairs, registration information, and dealership catalogues.

Suzanne E. Vanderbilt Papers (1998-02)
Vanderbilt was one of the first women designers at General Motors, beginning as a Junior Designer in 1955 and working her way up to Chief Designer in the Chevrolet #2 Studio by 1971. She was also a member of the “Damsels of Design,” a pioneering group of women hired by VP of Design Harley Earl in the mid-1950s to work on automotive interiors at GM. This collection includes her designs for motorcycle helmets, car interiors, and experimental cars. It also features news clippings, correspondence, and human factors studies from her years as a designer at GM. The photographs and slides featured in this collection include images of her with the other “Damsels” in the studios at GM and personal photos of Vanderbilt with her own cars, particularly Corvettes.

Jayne Van Alstyne Papers (1990-51)
Although Van Alstyne is primarily known for her design of appliances for GM’s Frigidaire division, she also worked from 1965 to 1969 in GM’s Safety and Human Performance Group within its Automotive Division. This collection includes articles and teaching materials on human factors in automobile and industrial design. Also included is a thesis on hand controls in automobiles from one of her graduate students at Cornell.

Cranbrook Academy of Art Records of the Administration (1981-09)
The collection includes newspaper clippings and correspondence about the 1950 Packard Motor Car design competition at the Academy of Art.
Festa Vettriano Papers (#2005-10)
Collection includes the financial records of the Cranbrook fire truck restoration.

DRAWINGS

Architectural Drawings Series 23 consists of drawings by James Scripps Booth, including chassis layout, chassis assembly, and axle assembly.

E&M FILES

Booth, James Scripps
This file contains biographical information, articles, and correspondence about Booth and Scripps-Booth automobiles.

Chrysler Corporation Press Preview
Includes press kit for the 1954 press preview of the 1955 Chrysler model year show.

These files contain introductory statements, news clippings, and programs for each of the three Concours d’Elegance events held at Cranbrook. The 2003 event file is especially notable as it featured two Scripps-Booth cars and a special focus on James Scripps Booth and his connections with automotive design and Cranbrook.

Detroit – Automotive National Heritage Area
The file includes a “Drive Your Way Through Our Automotive Heritage” booklet (c. 2001) featuring driving itineraries for the six corridors of the Automobile National Heritage Area.

Detroit, History – Automotive Golden Jubilee
Includes the program for the 1946 Automotive Golden Jubilee and Detroit Sesquicentennial.

General Motors Print Advertisements
This includes two print ads for the 1953 Plymouth Cranbrook—one for the Sedan and another for the Convertible Coupe model. There is also a third print ad for the 1960 Cadillac “V” that was set at Cranbrook House.

All three ads are located in the oversize map drawers in the Archives Reading Room.

Kavanaugh, Gere
The file includes news clippings featuring her automotive design work as a member of the “Damsels of Design.”
Scripps-Booth Automobiles
Includes “Scripps-Booth Information” packet done by Tom Booth (JSB’s grandson) as well as an article about Scripps-Booth automobiles featuring Tom Booth’s 1916 Scripps-Booth Roadster and Issue #16 of the Scripps-Booth Register.

Strengell, Marianne
The file includes a listing of fabrics in the Cranbrook Art Museum’s collection, including six automotive samples, as well as articles referencing her work on automotive interior fabrics.

Vanderbilt, Suzanne
This file includes news clippings about her career at GM and transcript of a 1989 interview for The Henry Ford’s oral history collection.

IMAGES
The Booth Family’s personal photographs have been organized into albums. There are also two specialized albums--“JSB Boat/Cars/Homes” and “JSB Cars and Boats” that feature his automobiles more prominently.

Booth Family Photographs (2 albums, 1904-1923 and 1924-1992)
These albums have photographs of the Booth family cars, including their Winton and Pierce Arrow, James Scripps Booth and his first wife Jean in a 1-cylinder Brust Runabout, and a 1920 yellow and black Lincoln.

Chrysler Show 1954
Photographs from Chrysler’s 1955 model year show (held at Cranbrook), which took place in 1954.

James Scripps Booth (Albums 1-5)
All five albums include photos of James Scripps Booth with cars—of special note are the early photographs of him as a young boy driving (and tinkering with) the family’s 1904 Winton and a rare photograph of him in the driver’s seat of the “Bi-Autogo.”

Packard Motor Car Competition
The file includes photographs Academy of Art student designs for car exteriors, hood ornaments, and trunk lid medallions.

Cranbrook Fire Department
Photos of the Cranbrook Fire Department members and the Department’s fire truck.
**Oral Histories**

Tape 197, Suzanne E. Vanderbilt Oral History Interview (April 22, 1986).

This interview was done as part of a series on automotive design history by David Crippen of the Edsel B. Ford Design Center. A copy of the transcript is in Suzanne Vanderbilt’s E&M File, also available at: http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Design/Vanderbilt/Vanderbiltinterview.htm

**Cultural Properties**

- The Cranbrook Archives possesses a collection of paintings by James Scripps Booth of automobiles, including a colored drawing of the “Bi-Autogo” and watercolors of auto races. In addition, art work from James’s student days also illustrates his early interest in motorized travel.

- While living in Tower Cottage, James Scripps Booth painted murals of automobile races on the walls of the garage. These murals are a part of Cultural Properties.

- The Booth family carriage and the Cranbrook Fire Engine are currently part of Cultural Properties.

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James Scripps Booth, *Untitled (Automobile Racing)*, 1908