Swanson Associates, Inc.
Records
(1924–1982)
18 linear ft.

Acquisition Number:  2009-01
Acquisition: Gift of Ronald Saarinen Swanson
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Preferred Citation: Swanson Associates, Inc. Records, Cranbrook Archives, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan
Photographs: Retained in this collection
Processing: Leslie Edwards, Laura MacNewman
            April 2017
HISTORY

The architectural firm of Swanson Associates had its beginnings in 1924 when J. Robert F. Swanson and Henry Scripps Booth formed a partnership called Swanson and Booth which terminated in 1926. Swanson then practiced on his own from 1927 until his wife, Pipsan Saarinen Swanson, began working with him in 1929. In 1939, Swanson partnered with Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen and his son Eero to form Saarinen and Swanson, which was renamed Saarinen, Swanson and Saarinen until the partnership was dissolved in 1947, at which time Swanson Associates, Inc. was established. This architecture and planning firm, which incorporated interior design headed by Pipsan, carried out a number of significant projects, primarily throughout Michigan. The philosophy of Swanson Associates, Inc. was the integration of city planning, building design, and interior design. The firm went on to acquire real estate and marketable securities in addition to its operating assets.

From 1945-1967, the Swansons operated their offices at 74 West Long Lake Road, Bloomfield Hills in the old Bloomfield Hills Circle School building. When the firm of Saarinen, Swanson and Saarinen was dissolved, the Saarinens occupied one half of the building while the Swansons occupied the other half. The school building/office was demolished in March 1967. Swanson Associates built a more contemporary building on the same site just a few yards away and retained the old school bell onsite.

In December 1965, Swanson Associates, Inc. split into two affiliated companies: Swanson Associates, Inc. was re-established to manage the operating assets of the architectural and planning division, and Countryside Investment Corporation, Inc. was established to maintain the rental and investment assets. Though she drew no salary, Pipsan Saarinen Swanson was director of Countryside Investment Corporation, whose stock was owned by the Swanson family. Pipsan also formed Countryside Design, Inc. with Vincent Vandenburg.

In 1973, Ludwig Jorgensen negotiated the purchase of the “Lone Pine Inn” at the corner of Lone Pine Road and Woodward Avenue from the Cranbrook Foundation, with the intention of designing and building an office space. Countryside Investment Corporation, Inc. began negotiations with Jorgensen in order to save the historic building, originally the home of Bloomfield’s first postmaster, Ezra Parke, and later owned by George Gough Booth and the Cranbrook Foundation. In February 1975, Countryside Investment Corporation, Inc. acquired the building and the 0.7 acres of surrounding property and trees, to ensure it was excluded from surrounding office building ventures. Pine-Wood, Ltd. managed the leasing of office space in the building from 1975, including space for Countryside Investment Corporation, Inc. offices.

Swanson Associates, Inc. was liquidated in 1978.
SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection is closely related to the J. Robert F. and Pipsan Saarinen Swanson Papers (1990-01). Due to multiple accessions, there is overlap between the two collections, with business materials in the biographical collection (1990-01) and biographical materials in this collection. In order to get a full understanding of the work of either the Swansons or Swanson Associates, Inc., it is necessary to look at both collections.

This collection is divided into five series: **Personal, Professional, Project Files, Photographic**, and **Oversize**.

**SERIES I: Personal** is arranged into five subseries: **Correspondence** contains letters relating to personal purchases and affiliations, family history, and genealogy; **Legal** consists of wills, trusts, and legal correspondence relating thereto; **Memorial** contains memorials and condolences for Pipsan and Robert; **News clippings** contains articles relating to Pipsan, the Swanson family, and Frances Erickson, a former employee of Swanson Associates; and **Publications**.

**SERIES II: Professional** is divided into two subseries: Swanson Associates, Inc. which contains correspondence and financial documents (1940-1975); and Countryside Investment Corporation (CIC). The Countryside Investment Corporation series is arranged into four sub-subseries: Administration which contain correspondence, financial and legal documents (1973-1987); Financial which contains financial documents relating to CIC and Pine-Wood; and Legal which contains agreements and legal instruments relating to the purchase of the property at Lone Pine Road and Woodward by Jorgensen, Pine-Wood and CIC, materials relative to the design and construction of an office building, as well as documents relative to the preservation of the Lone Pine Inn. This venture led to the creation of the partnership Pine-Wood, Limited (1973-1982). The News clippings sub-subseries contains articles relating to the purchase of land and the construction of the office building.

Of particular note is **SERIES III: Project Files** which is divided into six subseries: Commercial, Competitions, Educational, Industrial, Institutional, and Residential. This series documents the architectural and interior design projects of Swanson Associates, Inc. and include correspondence, financial documents, bids, notes, and meeting minutes. These records illustrate the working relationship between Bob and Pipsan Swanson, as well as their design choices. In several cases, samples of textiles are included with invoices that show Pipsan’s use of contemporary materials.

**SERIES IV: Photographic** is arranged by architectural and design projects (1924-1977), photographs relative to Countryside Design, Inc. (1968-1978), and those specific to the preservation of the Lone Pine Inn and the relocation of the Teahouse building.

**SERIES V: Oversize** contains publications and correspondence relating to the architectural design (by Smith Hinchman and Grylls) and construction of the State Capitol Building in Lansing. Pipsan sat on the State Legislative Committee that considered bids for the new building. This series also contains oversize architectural project portfolios as well as loose photographs.
RELATED COLLECTIONS

• J. Robert F. Swanson and Pipsan Saarinen Swanson Papers (1990-01)
• Saarinen Family Reproductions Records (1990-01)
• Benedict House Records (2009-01)
• Saarinen Family Papers (1990-08)
• Saarinen/Swanson Reunion Records (2001-14)
Box Number--Description

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5. Pipsan Saarinen Swanson, 1968-1977
6. Albert Christ-Janer, 1972
7. Family History, 1936
11. Family History – Abrahamse Vacation, 1978

Subseries 2: Legal
17. Pipsan Saarinen Swanson, 1952-1979

Box 2

Subseries 3: Memorial
1. Pipsan Saarinen Swanson, 1979-1981
2. J. Robert F. Swanson, 1981

Subseries 4: Newslclippings
3. Swanson Family, 1934-1971
4. Pipsan Saarinen Swanson, 1966-1971

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4. New Castle Courier Times, 1959
7. New Castle Courier Times, Brochures
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15. Proposed Hotel (Detroit), 1961-1962
16. Proposed Hotel (Detroit), Clippings, 1961
17. Race Track Facility, 1973
19. Royal Oak Community Center, 1972

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6. U.S. Postal Service Remodel, 1976
7. Wabeek Building, 1940-1941
8. Wabeek Golf Club, 1971

Subseries 2: Competitions
12. Michigan Society of Architects, 1941
13. National Cowboy Hall of Fame, 1957

Subseries 3: Educational

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7. Michigan State University – Oakland Library, Feb-Jun 1960
8. Michigan State University – Oakland Library, Jul-Dec 1960
10. Northern Michigan University Residence Hall, 1963
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12. Northern State Teachers’ College, 1939
13. Oakland Community College – Southeast Campus, Oct 1975
14. Oakland Community College – Southeast Campus, Nov 1975
15. Oakland Community College – Southeast Campus, Dec 1975-1976
17. Oakland Community College – Southfield Campus, 1974-1977
18. Suomi College, 1938
19. Suomi College, Jan-Apr 1939
20. Suomi College, May 1939
21. Suomi College, Aug 1939

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6. Suomi College – Contractor, Apr-May 1939
7. Suomi College – Contractor, Jun-Jul, 1939
8. Suomi College – Contractor, Aug 1939
9. Suomi College – Contractor, Sep 1939
10. Suomi College – Contractor, Oct 1939-Jan 1940
11. University of Michigan Bursey Hall, Feb-Oct 1957
15. University of Michigan Cedar Bend Housing, 1966
17. University of Michigan Engineering School, 1974
18. University of Michigan Residential College, 1966 (1 of 2)
21. Woodrow Wilson High School, 1956

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