



**THE TRUSTEES OF RESERVATIONS
ARCHIVES & RESEARCH CENTER**

Guide to

Robert Cameron Papers (1918-1973)

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by Laura Kitchings

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Extent: 1 box

Linear feet: 1

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

PROVENANCE

One album and folders of papers are on long-term loan from Marily English, great-granddaughter of Robert Cameron. Digital images from a second photograph album have been shared with The Trustees via a Digital Sharing Agreement in June 2016.

OWNERSHIP & LITERARY RIGHTS

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CITE AS

Robert Cameron Papers. The Trustees of Reservations, Archives & Research Center.

RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS

The collection is open for research.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

ROBERT CAMERON (1860-1957)

Robert Cameron was the Superintendent at the Crane Estate from 1919-1934.

Robert Cameron was born February 27, 1860 on a farm in Inverness-shire in the Highlands of Scotland. As a boy, he worked on the farm and earned money doing forestry work, through which he cultivated an appreciation of plants and horticulture. He apprenticed at gardening on an estate in Inverness-shire before he applied to be and was subsequently accepted as a student gardener at the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew in Richmond, England in 1884. After completing more than three years of studies, he emigrated to the United States in 1887 and took a series of positions in and around the Boston area including: the Payson Residence, originally known as the Cushing Estate in Belmont; the Waban Rose Conservatories in Natick; and the Wellesley estate of H. H. Hunnewell. (Hunnewell was an amateur botanist and horticulturist. He is credited with popularizing the rhododendron in the United States.) Cameron applied for and received the position of Head Gardener of Harvard Botanic Garden, a post he held for more than 20 years, from 1888-1919.

The Harvard Botanic Garden was founded in 1807 and occupied about seven-acres of land at the corner of Linnaean and Garden Streets in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The site was developed into a center for research and instruction which housed a herbarium, laboratories, an auditorium and a library. More than 5000 species of plants were cultivated for educational and scientific purposes. (Due to the cost of this endeavor, research and instruction at the Botanic Garden was discontinued by the 1940s and the grounds themselves became overgrown. Today an apartment complex stands at the original location of the Botanic Garden.)

During Cameron's tenure as Head Gardener at the Harvard Botanic Garden, he traveled with German glass artisan Rudolf Blaschka to Jamaica in 1892 to collect specimens for the famed "glass flower" collection that Blaschka and his father were creating for Harvard University. (Today, that collection is housed at the Harvard Museum of Natural History.) In 1907, Cameron assisted Mabel Cabot Sedgwick with the publication of her book *The Garden Month by Month*.

Cameron resigned his Harvard post in 1919 to take a position offered by Richard T. Crane, Jr. as the Superintendent of the grounds at Crane's Ipswich, Massachusetts summer home, Castle Hill. There he oversaw a 165-acre parcel with designed and natural landscapes, situated on the northwestern end of Castle Neck. Cameron led a team of gardeners responsible for the care and maintenance of the gardens and grounds, supervised the creation of a vegetable garden, installed irrigation systems and oversaw the construction of the Labor-in-Vain Golf Course.

During his tenure, the Cranes replaced the original Italian Renaissance Revival villa in 1924 with a new mansion in the style of an English country house of the late 17th century. Cameron interacted with the "farmerettes" during World War I, noting that while at first he did not favor the idea, but he changed his mind when he saw how the young women took a great interest in their work and were steady laborers as well.

Robert Cameron married Ann Stewart in Cambridge, MA in 1894. Ann Stewart Cameron died in 1901 of tuberculosis. The couple had one child, Bessie. Cameron lived with his daughter Bessie in the cottage on the Crane Estate grounds.

In 1921, Cameron was elected President of the National Association of Gardeners and received many awards over the course of his career, including one from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for his "eminent service rendered in the cause of horticulture" in 1924.

Cameron retired to Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1934 after working at the Crane Estate for 15 years. He died August 29, 1957 at the age of 97. In 1949, the Crane Estate was bequeathed to The Trustees with additional land added over the years.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MATERIALS

The Robert Cameron Papers consists of newspaper clippings about Robert Cameron and a photograph album. Additional digital photographs were shared with The Trustees of Reservations in June 2016.

Series I, Papers, includes an article from the Ipswich Chronicle about Robert Cameron's career at the Crane Estate.

Series II, Photograph Album, includes a photograph album of the Crane Estate. Digital Images from a second Photograph Album were shared with The Trustees of Reservations in June 2016.

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
Series I. Papers			
0.2' (1 box) Dates: 1934-1947			
Series I, Papers, includes letters regarding the Crane Memorial Reservation, Castle Hill Foundation, and personal notes.			
PAPERS			
1	1	Newspaper Clippings	1934-1947

Series II. Photographic Material

0.4' (1 box)
Dates: 1934-1947

Series II, Photographic Material, includes three loose photographs, a photograph album, and digital materials.