John Robert Crouse, Sr. Industrialist

Humanitarian Visionary

John Robert Crouse, Sr. was born January 1, 1874 in Hartland, the son of John Bernard Crouse and Betsey Westfall Crouse. He lived in Hartland until the family moved to Cleveland, Ohio in 1891. He graduated from Central High School in Cleveland in 1893 as Valedictorian and class president. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1897 with a Bachelor of Arts degree having majored in languages with minors in philosophy and mathematics.

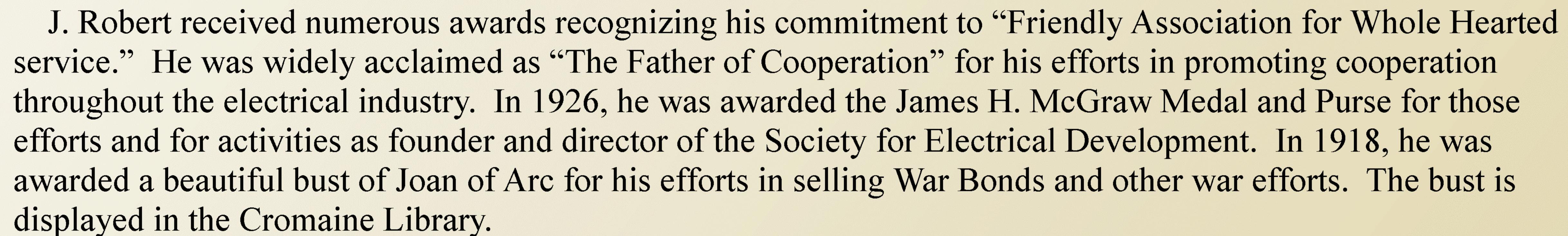
After graduation, he joined his father and an uncle, Henry Abner Tremaine, in Fostoria, Ohio. At the time, they were operating the Fostoria Incandescent Lamp Co. there. His first job was on the road selling lamps. Two years later he was named vice president of the company.



Fostoria, Cleveland, Washington D.C., Detroit

J. Robert's father and uncle were already highly successful businessmen, having founded several

carbon arc companies in Fostoria and Cleveland. In ensuing years they established the Seneca Banking Co., the Fostoria Bulb and Bottle Co., the Fostoria Glass Specialty Co., and The National Lamp Co. in Cleveland. They later created the National Lamp Association and were further involved in the Arctic Dairy Products Co., Tabor Ice Cream Co., Telling-Belle-Vernon Co., Fussell-Young Ice Cream Co. and Nizer Laboratory Co.



On October 12, 1898, J. Robert and Fanny Emmaline Clark were married in Ovid, Michigan. They would eventually have six children: Doris (1902-1979), Alma (1903-2001), J. Robert Jr. (1905-1979), Henry (1907-2001), Mary (1911-2007), and Bill (1913-2000). The family moved into the Cleveland house at 2893 Euclid Heights Boulevard in 1909. In 1926, J. Robert retired from active work. His interests then focused on the place of his birth, Hartland.



Hartland

He first set about acquiring nearly 1,500 acres surrounding the ancestral farmstead on Crouse Road. Three beautiful buildings, designed by Emil Lorch, the University of Michigan Dean of Architecture, were begun in 1924 on the shores of Lake Walden (at that time named Brophy Lake) and completed in 1926. Their original purpose was for use by organizations with which J. Robert was associated. He focused on his conviction of the importance of cooperation as a unifying ideal. He was convinced that through "Friendly Association for Wholehearted Service", the result would be that "business shall not only be a patron of the arts but truly the finest of the arts." Many buildings and cottages were constructed on the lake for summer use by his relatives and his rapidly growing family.

His love for the Hartland area led to a desire to encourage its people to help themselves and to enhance social, cultural, educational and economic opportunities. In 1927, he completed the Cromaine Library as a living memorial to his mother, Betsey Westfall Crouse. Over the next several years, he initiated the Hartland Area Project. He donated the Music Hall, restored the mill, built a Field House, and the Community Office. He converted a tavern into the Craft Shop and built the Recreation Hall. Seven salaried persons were employed in the early 1930's to direct activities in Music, Library, Health and Welfare, Dramatic Arts, Helping Teacher, Continuing Education, and Accounting. He established and endowed the Hartland School Foundation, the Heartland Foundation, and the Hartland Area Educational Loan Fund.

The expanded and modernized Crouse Farm became a showplace and was extensively used to test experimental projects suggested by agricultural experts from Michigan Agricultural College (later Michigan State University.) Dairy and beef cattle, sheep and hogs were raised. Programs such as soil conservation, field drainage, crop rotation, mechanization and tree planting were instituted.

John Robert Crouse, Sr. died July 18, 1846 of a cerebral hemorrhage at the Hartland Township home of his son J. Robert Crouse, Jr. He is buried in the Hartland cemetery.



J. Robert at Waldenwoods