



***WELCOME TO BROOKBY ESTATE & GARDENS
originally built by John W. and Minnie Blodgett***

PAST

- John W Blodgett was a lumberman, capitalist and civic leader in the tradition of his father Delos A. Blodgett
- John gained great prosperity by expanding the family lumbering industry and eventually took full control of the Blodgett businesses when his father retired.
- Beginning with \$48 million he inherited from his father. John amassed a fortune conservatively estimated in today's dollars at over \$350 million.
- In 1895, John married Minnie Cumnock, who came from a prominent Massachusetts family.
- Work began on the Brookby Estate in 1926, with Walker and Gillette as architects and Owens-Ames-Kimball as builders. The Olmsted Brothers were chosen as the landscape architects.
- Walker and Gillette was a famous New York based architectural firm.
- Owens-Ames-Kimball is a Grand Rapids construction company that built much of Grand Rapids beginning in 1891.
- The Olmsted Brothers was at the time the most prestigious and well-known landscape architects in the country.
- Percival Gallagher/Olmsted Brothers designed the landscape at Brookby following in the tradition of Frederick Law Olmsted known for Central Park, the US Capitol grounds, the Biltmore estate and many others.
- The estate is named for the brook that runs behind it. The house is approximately 11,000 square feet with 41 rooms.
- John and Minnie had two children, John W. Jr. (Jack) and Katherine.

- The eight acres of Brookby took five years to design and complete.
- Minnie only lived at Brookby for 3 years. In 1931 she died from a sudden heart attack at the St. Regis Hotel in New York City while visiting her daughter, Katherine. The funeral was at Brookby.
- In 1951, John Sr. died. The funeral was at Brookby.
- Brookby Estate remained in the Blodgett family for seventy years except for one year after John Sr. willed it to Blodgett Hospital. When John Jr. returned from Oregon after the death of his father, he purchased it from the hospital and lived there until his death in 1986.
- The Chinese garden was redesigned sometime during WWII, making it more English in style.
- All of the Blodgetts are buried at Oak Hill “ in the Blodgett plot.
- Edith Blodgett sold the estate in the early 1990s. After having several owners, Sam & Janene Cummings donated the estate to Aquinas College.

PRESENT

- In the spring of 2016, Aquinas College received a grant from a private foundation to restore the formal gardens to their original Olmsted Brothers/Gallagher design.
- There are three phases planned for restoring the historic gardens: cleaning; rebuilding; replanting.
- The first two phases are fully grant-funded, with funding for phase three pending.
- The Kent Garden Club will volunteer their time to help with garden design and maintenance.
- It costs approximately \$25,000 per year to maintain Brookby Estate's landscaping.



Aquinas College is honored to be entrusted with stewardship of Brookby Estate. With your support, together we celebrate the legacy of the Blodgett family.

To find out how you can become more involved/support this effort, please contact Ric Underhile at brookby@aquinas.edu.