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BUILDING & BUSINESS

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BUILDING & BUSINESS OBSERVER STARS

This column highlights promotions, transfers, hirings and other key personnel moves within the suburban business community. Send a brief biographical summary — including the towns of residency and employment and a black-and-white photo, if desired — to: Stars, Building & Business, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Our fax number is (313) 591-7279.

Jason Sherman was promoted to senior account executive with Casey Communications Management Inc. in Southfield. Sherman had been an account executive with the company. Before he joined the company in 1993, Sherman had been communications director for RE/MAX Detroit Metro Inc.



Sherman

Gary T. Wade of Troy was appointed corporate marketing manager with TM Smith Tool International. Before joining Smith Tool, Wade was sales/marketing manager for Innovations Inc. in Farmington Hills. Wade is a member of the Troy Business Enterprise Development Center.



Wade

William M. Maclean joined Automotive Industries Inc. in Rochester Hills as vice president of business development. Before joining Automotive Industries, Maclean was vice president of IVES Packaging Corp. He also held numerous positions with the Tenneco Automotive Group.



Maclean

Brian Freshwater of Birmingham was promoted to vice president and general manager of Canadian Operations for Little Caesar Enterprises Inc. Freshwater has been with Little Caesars for 15 years, most recently as vice president of restaurant concepts.



Freshwater

Robert J. Michelotti of Birmingham joined Detroit-based Roney & Co. as director of branches and sales. Michelotti had been associate group president and executive vice president of the Great Atlantic Group at Smith Barney. He will be responsible for offices in three states.



Michelotti

John Seger of Troy was promoted to director of engineering at FW & Assoc. Inc. in Beverly Hills. Seger has been with FW for 27 years, starting as a project engineer.



Seger

Brian M. Connolly of Farmington Hills was named president and chief executive officer of Mission Health, a new multi-hospital corporation. Connolly joined Providence Hospital in Southfield in 1984 and was named president and chief operating officer of Providence in 1988.



Connolly



A new era: Max Brook Realtors' broker-owner Bowen Brook had the Birmingham branch at 300 S. Woodward renovated last year. The family-owned firm, which has five Oakland County offices, was founded 100 years ago.

Milestones

Max Brook Realtors marks its centennial

■ One family-owned real estate firm has endured economic ups and downs during 100 years of business in Oakland County. It remains a strong force at a time of increasing franchise operations.

■ "Any business that lasts 100 years is a testament to someone. It's significant in this day and age for a service-oriented business like ours to last so long."

Bowen Brook
Broker-owner

BY JANICE TIGAR-KRAMER
SPECIAL WRITER

Max Brook Realtors, Inc. is used to celebrating. The Bloomfield Hills-based firm was founded 100 years ago, but it's reached other milestones since the first sales office opened on Woodward Avenue in Detroit.

For a century, the firm has adapted to an ever-changing marketplace rocked by war, the Great Depression and economic ups and downs. It pioneered some important Metro Detroit real estate developments, championed the Multiple Listing Service in the 1950s and welcomed open housing legislation that grew out of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

When Max Brook's Birmingham branch opened in the 1940s, nearby bungalows sold to modest-income families, and a four-bedroom house on Quanton Lake fetched \$15,000 to \$20,000.

Many business that lasts 100 years is a testament to someone. It's significant in this day and age for a service-oriented business like ours to last so long," said broker-owner Bowen Brook, grandson of founder Max Brook. More recently, Max Brook Realtors has developed a successful relocation division, which last year reported \$23 million in closed sales, and opened branches in Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham, Rochester, West Bloomfield and Clarkston.

The firm's total closed sales for 1994, including relocations, was nearly \$308 million.

Max Brook's 140 sales associates are a close-knit group for a large firm, are heralding the centennial. But this milestone is a personal one for Bowen Brook, who joined the firm in 1958 after turning down a promising labor relations job at Ford Motor Co. in Dearborn.

"At the time, I didn't realize what the historic consequences of my decision would be," said the 60-year-old Orchard Lake resident, who grew up in Bloomfield Hills near Cranbrook School.

It's significant for Max Brook's ownership, which passed in and out of the family for years, to be in the hands of the founding family at the centennial. Bowen Brook became sole owner in 1984 after seeing the company barely endure a depressed real estate market that knocked many Oakland County Realtors out of business. Daughter Kathy Brook, a fourth-generation Realtor licensed in 1988, works from the Bloomfield Hills office.

"We're very proud to be family-owned, and that's definitely part of our celebration," the owner said.

Besides Max Brook, only a handful of businesses have received a centennial business plaque from the Historical Society of Michigan. Today, the Realtor's familiar black, white and red advertising logo, unchanged since the 1930s, boasts the slogan "100 Years."

"You don't achieve 100 years in business without being customer-oriented," said Jon O'Connell, Birmingham-Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce executive director. "The event speaks well of the people who run the company. To achieve this milestone, the founder must have handed down strong business principles and standards."

Max Brook has come a long way from the small Detroit office opened the year Thomas Edison invented the phonograph. The city had a quarter-million residents and Metro Detroit, including rural Wayne and Oakland counties, wasn't governed by a state Realtor board. The Michigan Association of Realtors formed in 1915, the year Max Brook died.

"Max Brook was a pioneer," said Dan Dressman, Michigan Association of Realtors executive vice president. "In an age of franchises, it's significant for Max Brook to be privately owned and to continue to be a viable player in the marketplace. They're the exception, not the rule."

Early this century, the firm had a hand in some important Detroit developments. It assembled property for one of Henry Ford's first plants, and for General Motors first production plant at St. Aubin and Highland. Max Brook agents sold lots in Arden Park, Detroit Golf Club and Virginia Park (the first subdivi-

sion with land-use restrictions), and 100 acres near Palmer Park, a fashionable Detroit United Railway stop in the 1920s.

In 1920, Ford Brook, the founder's son, assembled land for the Fisher brother's ambitious commercial development on West Grand Boulevard — now called New Center.

The firm's big setback came during the Great Depression. Banks were jammed with mortgage foreclosures and it was nearly impossible to sell houses or commercial property at any price. So new owners Max Ramm and Ferd Brook (Bowen Brook's father) ventured outside Detroit, selling farms in Oakland and Western Macomb counties. They later helped develop the property into some of Birmingham-Bloomfield's most desirable subdivisions — Overbrook, Lone Pine Court, Quanton Lakes Estates, Rudgate, Bingham Road Estates, Lone Pine Woods, and homesites near Kirk in the Hills and Forest Lake Country Club.

"The feeling in the 1930s was if you owned land, you could take care of yourself, so farmland was desirable to people who could afford it," Bowen Brook said.

As the firm's reputation grew, so did the number of Max Brook offices. Birmingham branches opened at Maple and Chesterfield in 1935 and at Woodward and Brown in 1946, where Bowen Brook started his career. The building was renovated last year to include computer work stations and other updates.

"The renovation produced an office of tomorrow, but I had a lump in my throat when it was torn apart. I felt a twinge (of regret) because of the history and memories attached to the building," he said.

Max Brook still has a hand in Oakland County developments, like redividing Darb Lake in West Bloomfield, but its focus is selling upscale property as far north as Clarkston.

Over the years, many Max Brook agents have headed the Birmingham-Bloomfield Board of Realtors and Michigan Association of Realtors. Around Christmas last year, its staff volunteered more than 2,500 hours at Lighthouse, a Pontiac-based agency that provides food, housing and clothing to low-income families.

Max Brook's next challenge will be maintaining its close-knit sales staff at a time when Realtors equipped with a home computer and modem can get listing information without going to the office.

"We trace our accomplishments to a business environment of mutuality and interdependence," Bowen Brook said. "Teamwork is important to us, and we attract sales people who share that philosophy. Dad believed in it. He was a principled man, a tough act to follow."

Employee reception nears

Max Brook Realtors' lengthy time line resembles a family tree of sorts.

Founder Max Brook started selling real estate from his small Woodward Avenue office in Detroit in 1895. For a century, this privately owned business, now headquartered in Bloomfield Hills, has developed important commercial and residential property in Metro Detroit, including premier areas in Oakland County.

The firm now has branches in Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham, Rochester, West Bloomfield and Clarkston, and runs a successful relocation division that expects to close \$35 million in real estate sales in 1997.

Max Brook employees will celebrate the firm's centennial with local and state officials June 21 at Meadow Brook Hall in Rochester Hills. The reception may include a visit by Gov. John Engler, but no epic-length speeches, promises broker-owner Bowen Brook: "We're a one-man shop, so it will be a low-key event."

Digging through public records and the Brook's family papers, historian Dan Williamson of Northville assembled a chronological history of the firm's business deals. Here's a rundown of the firm's ownership since 1895:

- 1895 — Max Brook opens Detroit office.
- 1915 — Max Brook dies.
- 1916 — The founder's nephew, Max Ramm, and widow, Elizabeth Forkel Brook, run the firm.
- 1923 — Ed Brook, the founder's son, buys the firm from Max Brook's estate.
- 1934 — Fred Pew becomes a partner.
- 1962 — Ferd Brook retires.
- 1968 — Fred Pew sells to Ed Douglas.
- 1972 — Ed Douglas sells to Steve Pew and Bowen Brook.
- 1984 — Bowen Brook becomes sole owner.

—Janice Tigar-Kramer

Your guide to Community Classified

CLASSIFICATION	SECTION
AUTOS FOR SALE (900-891)	A
EMPLOYMENT (900-024)	F & G
HELP WANTED (900-294)	E, F & G
HOME & SERVICE GUIDE (1-899)	G
MEDICARE/MAJOR FOR SALE (700-740)	G
REAL ESTATE (900-372)	D, E, F
RENTALS (900-430)	F