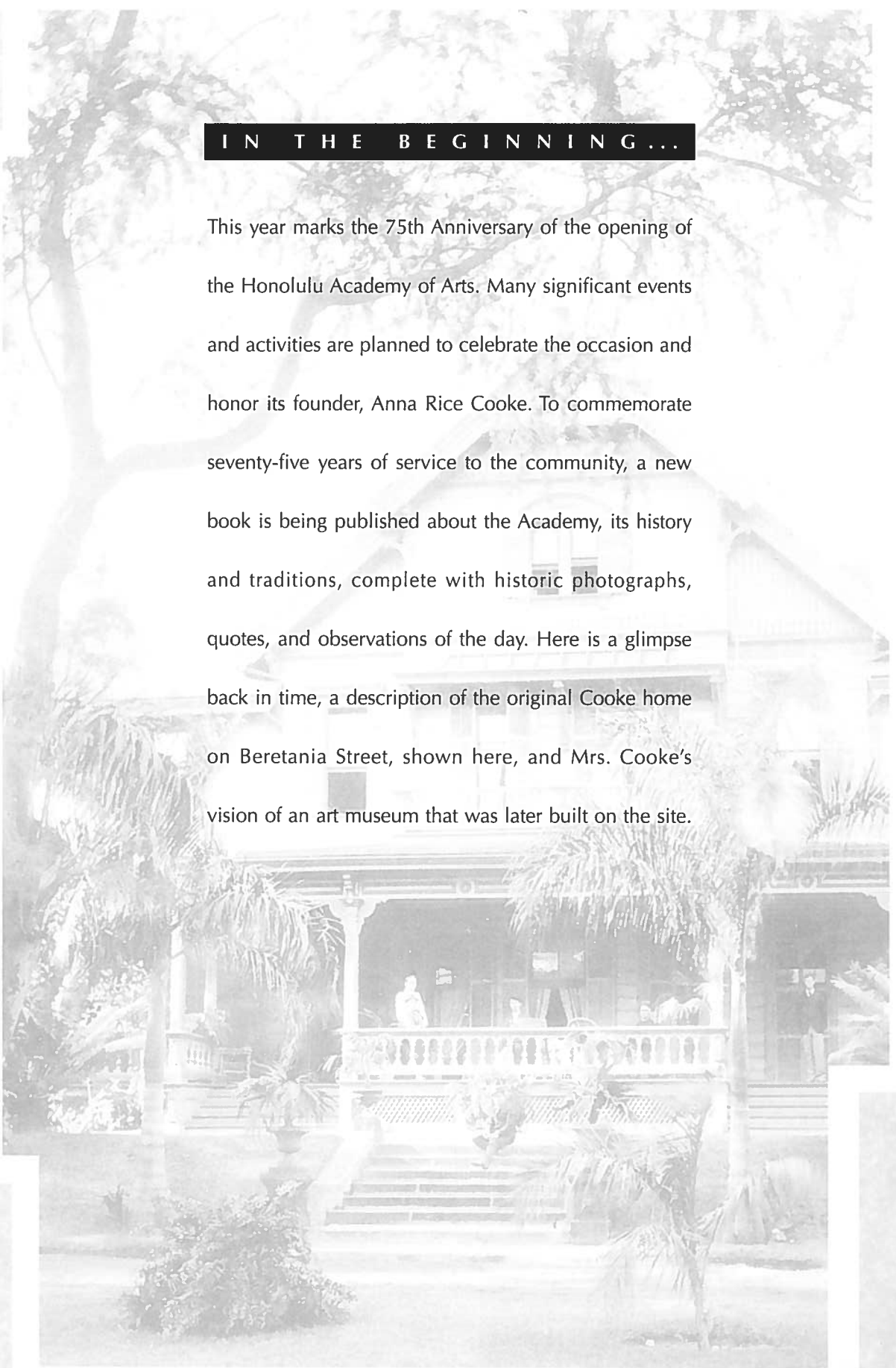


I N T H E B E G I N N I N G . . .

This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the opening of the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Many significant events and activities are planned to celebrate the occasion and honor its founder, Anna Rice Cooke. To commemorate seventy-five years of service to the community, a new book is being published about the Academy, its history and traditions, complete with historic photographs, quotes, and observations of the day. Here is a glimpse back in time, a description of the original Cooke home on Beretania Street, shown here, and Mrs. Cooke's vision of an art museum that was later built on the site.



German brother-in-law, Paul Isenberg, would delight the young girl with descriptions of the wonders of the Dresden Museum. Later, Paul and Hannah Maria Rice Isenberg guided Anna and her mother through the great museums of Europe.

As their children matured, Charles and Anna were free to travel widely. Usually they took one or two of their youngsters with them but sometimes they were alone. First they visited British Columbia, then Europe, and finally Asia, in each country acquiring a variety of precious objects.

In 1894, when Charles retired, the Cookes moved to California, but their roots in Hawaii were too deep and, by 1898, they were back in Honolulu. Charles was appointed President of the Bank of Hawaii and of C. Brewer & Co. and remained active in business and community affairs for the rest of his life.

Charles and Anna gradually accumulated such a large and eclectic collection of art and antiques that the house on Beretania Street was soon overflowing and many objects were loaned to members of the family, to close friends, and to schools. These loans, however, did not stop the Cookes from collecting; what they loaned out simply made room for new acquisitions. Even after Charles' death of a stroke, on 27 August 1909, Anna and her daughter Alice continued to collect. Together they traveled widely and brought back all sorts of treasures.

An Art Academy for Hawaii

Honolulu in the 1870s and 1880s was a seaport town typical of others throughout the Pacific. Its population of about 15,000 was a diverse mix of native Hawaiians, and more recently arrived Asians, Europeans and Americans. Bound together by their common pursuit of business, agriculture, or government, the men and women of Honolulu were divided by race, education and culture. Anna and Charles Cooke were aware of the divisions within their community and appreciative of the cultural richness that each group had brought to the islands. They firmly believed that if these varied influences were to continue to enrich rather than sunder the lives of all the people of Hawaii the younger generation had to be encouraged to understand and value the traditions of all the diverse people gathered in the islands.

They also knew that many immigrants came from the most impoverished and poorly educated level of society in their homelands and arrived destitute, not only of money but also of a knowledge of their cultural heritage. They were unequipped to pass along to their children the richness and significance of their former homeland. Mrs. Cooke was well aware of her own good fortune in having an early introduction to the art treasures of the world from her brother-in-law, her subsequent opportunities to travel widely, and her ability to afford to purchase art.

As the nineteenth century came to a close Mrs. Cooke's role in bringing art to the people of Hawaii was still an unformed dream but the idea of an art museum for Honolulu was already germinating in

background: Original plans by architect Bertram Goodhue, later to be revised.

the community. For years the people of Hawaii had lingered before storefront displays of paintings or photographs by visiting artists. Then, in 1894, the Kiloana Art League began to arrange more formal exhibits, still in the downtown stores of friendly shop-keepers. Later, Charles Cooke offered the League the use of a whole building at Beretania and Miller Streets where they could offer the public not only art exhibits but also music, drama and literature. Thus the Cookes took a tentative step toward founding the Honolulu Academy of Arts where the treasures of East and West could be displayed and the children of Hawaii could be introduced to their own culture and those of the other peoples of their world.

In 1917, the Hawaiian Society of Artists took up the torch laid down by the Kiloana Art League and two years later the Honolulu Art Society was formed. Mrs. Cooke was

aware of the increasing interest in art and anxious to foster it. At the same time she had begun to open her own home to the public for special exhibits such as those of painter Lionel Walden and wood block printer Charles W. Bartlett, two of her favorite artists, both then working in the Islands. A few years later, when Mrs. Philip Spalding invited the public to her home for an exhibit of her mother's large collection of Chinese paintings, Mrs. Cooke's dear friend and collaborator Catherine Cox was asked to lecture on the scrolls. A pattern of exhibit and education was begun.

Meanwhile, back in 1898, Charles had made a will in which he merged his own and his wife's holdings in a corporation known as Charles M. Cooke Ltd. whose objective was "to hold my wife's and my own estate intact for the benefit and enjoyment of our children..." Her husband's foresight

provided Mrs. Cooke with the funds she needed when she began laying plans for an art academy in Honolulu. First she set up a separate trust, funded with 300 shares of Charles M. Cooke, Limited.

Its purpose was broad and not confined to the support of the Academy but it provided her, and eventually her family, with funds with which they have been able to assist the Academy ever since. (In 1971 the Trust was incorporated as The Charles M. Cooke, Ltd. and Anna C. Cooke, Ltd. and on July 1, 1980 the name was changed to the Cooke Foundation, Limited but the trustees of the Foundation continue to be members of the Cooke family and each year one of their major grants is to the Honolulu Academy of Arts.)

On March 16, 1922, a charter of incorporation was issued to the Honolulu Museum of Art, a name which was soon changed to Honolulu Academy of Arts as more reflective of Mrs. Cooke's abiding interest in education.

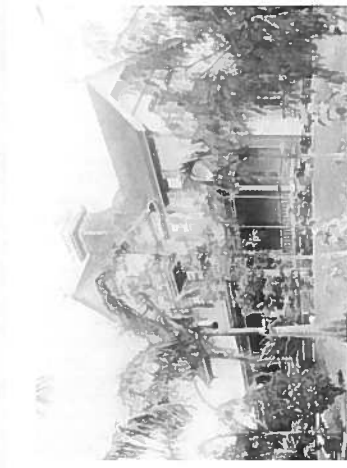
Having provided for the financial security of the new museum, Mrs. Cooke and the Philip Spaldings moved to their new houses in Makiki leaving a spacious block of land on Beretania Street to the bulldozers and builders.



The Asian (above) and Mediterranean (below) courtyards as they appeared on Opening Day.



The Cooke home on Beretania was demolished to make way for the new art museum.



The original Cooke residence on Beretania Street, site of the present day Honolulu Academy of Arts.

From the manuscript by Rhoda E. A. Hackler, *The Honolulu Academy of Arts: The First Forty Years of Anna Rice Cooke's Legacy*.

The new house was a large, wood, three-story, Victorian building. It fronted on Beretania Street which, at that time, was neither paved nor drained. According to family lore, in the rainy season the Cooke boys would sail their boats up and down the street. Across Beretania was Thomas Square but the trees, so impressive today, were only waist high then, which allowed the Cookes an unbroken view of the ocean from Diamond Head to Honolulu Harbor. Across the front of the house was a deep lanai and inside were huge living and dining rooms on the main floor and many bedrooms upstairs. One of the Cooke granddaughters

remembers the house as "gloomy," but for the earlier generation it was a wonderfully happy home. Behind the main building was a carriage house, a barn, and a marble-lined swimming "tank" built in the shape of a cross, fed by very cold artesian water, and protected by a lath house which bore a bower of maidenhair ferns. Best of all, in the opinion of the children, was a large false Kamanī tree, perfect for climbing and the site of many adventures.

It was in her new Beretania Street home that Anna began her collection of art with what were known as "parlor pieces," displayed in the front room and periodically changed. Her enthusiasm for art developed early, when she was growing up on Kauai. After supper and chores were over her



It was in her new home that Academy founder Anna Rice Cooke began to collect and display her growing art collection.

above: Floral displays adorned the Academy on Opening Day in 1927.

below: The original Hawaiian Room was to the left of the entrance.

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