

### COVER STORY

# CRANBROOK HOUSE

## The Booths' home at Cranbrook embodies the arts and crafts movement

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Cranbrook House, the home of George and Ellen Scripps Booth and their family, has long come into its own as one of the jewels of the Cranbrook grounds.

To Mr. and Mrs. Booth, the surrounding buildings of the Cranbrook Educational Community were important. To them, their house was just where they lived. But Cranbrook House is a living treasure, an enchanting embodiment of the arts and crafts movement that the Booths so strongly supported and encouraged. They started what is now called Cranbrook Educational Community as a place where artists could live and work. George Booth was one of the founders of the Detroit Society for Arts and Crafts. Cranbrook House contains many examples of artistry. It is a marker of the arts and crafts movement, showing the glory of the past, present and future.

Cranbrook House is at 300 Lone Pine Road, between Woodward and Lathrop in Bloomfield Hills. Guided tours are available 1:30 and 3 p.m. Mondays and 11 a.m. and 1:15 p.m. Thursdays through September. Lunch is offered noon Thursdays with the tour; reservations are required.

**Beginnings**  
George and Ellen Booth were married in 1887. The family lived on Trumbull in Detroit, and enjoyed taking trips out to Bloomfield Hills, which was country at that time. The Booths decided to buy property in the area, and selected a parcel of 174 acres in Bloomfield Hills. (Cranbrook Educational Community — which includes Christ Church, Cranbrook, the Cranbrook schools, the Academy of Art, the art museum and the Institute of Behavior — now encompasses 318 acres.)

Cranbrook House was designed by famed architect Albert Kahn, who also designed and built a cabinet in the reception hall. The first part of the house was completed in 1906. Two major wings, those of the Oak Room and library, were added later.

The Booths decided to develop an art educational community on the estate. George Booth wanted to convert working farm buildings. This wasn't feasible, but the general shapes of the structures were

kept. The blacksmith's shop became a library, a silo became an observatory. The name "Cranbrook" was that of Booth's ancestral village in England.

Cranbrook House is filled with fascinating features, treasures of all sizes. Ceilings bear delicate moulding patterns. Door knobs and scones are small works of art. Paneling is handcarved. Furnishings are original. Windows are leaded (one contains a likeness of a beloved pet dog).

Treasures from around the world are here, including arts and crafts period pieces. An antique Chinese plate on one mantel was used by the Booths to serve plum pudding at Christmas.

#### Fascinating rooms

The Oak Room is lined with paneling in a linenfold pattern, resembling gathered cloth. The first panel was made by hand. Around the top of the room are colorful cartouches, symbols depicting events in the Booth family's life. Tiles around the fireplace show scenes from the Bible.

George Booth, a merrymonger before he became business manager and then general manager of the Detroit Evening News, made the elegant little table. One large portrait is of George Booth's father; a bust of George is nearby. Another painting, done posthumously, is of George and Ellen Booth, with Cranbrook buildings behind them.

The library, nearly 60 feet long, is the largest room in the house. Perhaps this room more than any other best embodies the Booths' dedication to the arts and crafts movement, which emphasized the beauty of handcrafted items. Many media are represented here. Books fill one long wall. Chandeliers hang from medieval-style holders. George Booth designed the handcarved piece over the fireplace that depicts actual figures in the arts and crafts disciplines, along with an inscription in medieval lettering: "Nature I Loved; Next to Nature, Art." The piano in the room was used by Leonard Bernstein when he was at Cranbrook composing "West Side Story."

There was always a full table for Sunday meals in the formal dining room, which seats 24. Such luminaries as architect Elia Saarinen as well as students

were often invited. The chairs were designed for the room. One of the five Booth children, a son, saved the finials off the chairs after a maid caught her sleeve on a finial and spilled soup on a guest.

The Tapestry Room contains 13th and 14th century tapestries, magnificent in their intricate work. One shows the Three Wise Men on their way to adore the Christ Child, another the Lord and Lady of the Manor coming upon a band of gypsies, another Joan of Arc. The latter tapestry was done in overlay weaving that gave it depth. This room was originally the butler's pantry; it became a family room when the Booths chose down part of the house during World War II.

George Booth's gentleman farmer office was a small, cozy room off the reception hall. Workers could speak to him through a door on the porch without bringing their dirty boots through the house.

Later the Booth children made this into a room for Ellen, putting up plasterboard to make it lighter. Recently the room was restored to the way it was when Mr. Booth used it. It was discovered that the original paneling was intact. The fireplace with its Pewabic tile, however, had been taken apart. Pewabic Pottery was able to copy the original tile.

Another small room was called the "Still Room." It was where Mr. Booth would take naps. A Booth son painted the white ceiling with ornate, colorful figures and designs.

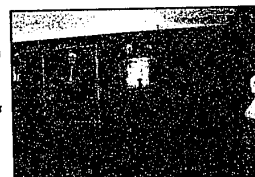
The back porch (which contains hanging light fixtures designed by Dan Hoffman of the current Cranbrook architecture department) looked to what is now Kingswood Lake, formerly the mill pond. After George Booth muttered about how a low stone wall blocked the view, an enterprising son went to work again. This time the younger Booth demolished part of the wall to open up the view; his father made him finish the job.

Admission is \$7 for a house tour, which includes visiting Cranbrook Gardens, plus \$10 for lunch (available only with Thursday tours). Call (810) 645-3148 for more information and buschon reservations.

Cozy room: The "Still Room" was used by George Booth to take naps. One of the Booth children painted an ornate design on the white ceiling.



Artistic figures: This handcarved piece over the fireplace in the library depicts actual figures in the arts and crafts disciplines. It was designed by George Booth.



Oak Room: This room contains linenfold paneling and cartouches representing events in the family's life. The portrait is of George Booth's father, the bust is of George Booth.