

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: P.G. #70-43 Building Date: 1928

Building Name: Robert Cook House

Location: 9206 Crandall Road, Lanham, Maryland

Private/Residence/Occupied/Good/Inaccessible

Description

The Robert Cook House is a one-and-one-half-story gable-roof dwelling constructed of rammed (tamped) earth. It is roughly square, four-by-four-bays, and has a one-story wing to the east. The walls of the house are 18 inches thick, made of earth which was tamped into forms and then coated with linseed oil. Above the first story, in the gable ends, the walls are coated with buff-colored stucco; the first story walls are a natural salmon pink color and are uncoated. Entrance is in the second bay of the east facade, through a panelled wooden door. The southwest quadrant of the house was originally a screened porch, divided and supported by tall piers of local iron-bearing stone. This screen porch is now glass-enclosed on each facade. The gable roof has overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends. Two shed dormers pierce the west plane of the roof; they are covered with rectangular lapped shingle and their eaves are punctuated by exposed rafter ends. A third and narrower shed dormer pierces the east plane of the roof. The east facade of the house is highlighted by a cross gable which surmounts the main entrance and the one-story east wing. The one-story wing extends east from the main block, flush with the north gable end. It is gable-roofed, and is two-by-two-bays. There is an entrance in the second bay of its south facade. A rear door in the second bay of the north facade of the wing is sheltered by a one-story shed-roof entry porch.

Significance

The Robert Cook House is a unique example of a tamped-earth (pise) building. It was constructed 1924-1928 by Robert Cook on land which he received from his father's home place. It is one of very few such buildings known in the Washington area. Robert Cook was the son of Orator F. Cook, a botanist with the U.S.D.A., who in 1901 purchased the Crandell farm in Lanham, and built a large frame dwelling. Several other research scientists purchased adjoining land, and, within a few years, the Cook house had become the nucleus of a small suburban scientific community. In the early 1920's, after his marriage, Robert Cook (who became prominent in the field of genetics) acquired 12 acres of his parents' Lanham property, and set out to build a tamped-earth house, following the example of a few other Department of Agriculture scientists. He built the wooden forms himself, and hired a crew of six unskilled labors and one foreman, who worked together with him from 1924 to 1928 on the construction of the house. Building material was excavated from a portion of the 12-acre property just north of Crandell Road and the excavation itself became the basement of the house. Robert Cook lived in this house until the 1940's, and members of his family occupied it until the 1970's.

Acreage: 10.8 acres

Magi No.

DOE yes no

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Robert Cook House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 9206 Crandall Road ___ not for publication

city, town Lanham, ___ vicinity of congressional district 5

state Maryland county Prince George's

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name William J. Goodman

street & number 9206 Crandall Road telephone no.:

city, town Lanham, state and zip code MD. 20706

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber 4298

street & number Main Street folio 875

city, town Upper Marlboro, state MD.

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title None

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Robert Cook House is a one-and-one-half-story gable-roof dwelling constructed of rammed (tamped) earth. It is roughly square, four-bays-by-four-bays, and has a one-story wing to the east. The house is situated on wooded grounds on the north side of Crandell Road in Lanham.

The walls of the house are 18 inches thick, made of earth which was tamped into forms and then coated with linseed oil. Above the first story, in the gable ends the walls are coated with buff-colored stucco; the first story walls are a natural salmon pink color, and are uncoated. The house faces south, and entrance is in the second bay of the east facade, through a panelled wooden door. Most windows have been replaced. Original windows consisted of three tall vertical sashes, which opened accordion-style; they have been replaced on north, west and south by modern picture windows, or by two-sash vertical sliding windows at upper level in the gable ends. First story windows have decorative sills composed of small chunks of stone-embedded mortar. Basement windows have log lintels.

The southwest quadrant of the house was originally a screened porch, divided and supported by tall piers of local iron-bearing stone. This screen porch is now glass-enclosed on each facade by three banks of five narrow horizontal windows.

The gable roof is covered with brown asphalt shingle. It has overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends. The cornice is a plain board painted dark brown. Two shed dormers pierce the west plane of the roof; they are covered with rectangular lapped shingle and their eaves are punctuated by exposed rafter ends. Each dormer encloses a central sash, flanked by two vertical sliding sashes. A third and narrower shed dormer pierces the east plane of the roof; it encloses a two-sash vertical window.

There is a dirt basement under the main block. The east facade of the house is highlighted by a cross gable which surmounts the main entrance and the one-story east wing. Rising just north of the ridge of this cross gable is a long slim chimney constructed of local sandstone.

The one-story wing extends east from the main block, flush with the north gable end. It is gable-roofed, and is two-bays-by-two-bays. There is an entrance in the second bay of its south facade, its jambs marked by columns of sandstone. There is a rear door in the second bay of the north facade of the wing; it is sheltered by a one-story shed-roof entry porch with a high concrete floor. Concrete steps descend northward from the porch, and then divide to continue the downward flight both to east and west.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1924-28 **Builder/Architect** Robert Cook

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
 and/or
 Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G
 Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Robert Cook House is a unique example of a tamped-earth (pise) building. It was constructed 1924-1928 by Robert Cook on land which he received from his father's home place. Cook used the ancient method of tamping earth to construct this house by hand. It is one of very few such buildings known in the Washington area.

Robert Cook was the son of Orator F. Cook, a botanist with the U.S.D.A., who in 1901 purchased the Crandell farm in Lanham, and built a large frame dwelling (P.G. #70-10). Several other research scientists purchased adjoining land, and within a few years, the Cook house had become the nucleus of a small suburban scientific community, whose residents used the new (1908) Washington, Baltimore and Annapolis electric railway to commute into Washington to the U.S.D.A. laboratories.¹ Robert Cook entered the study of, and became prominent in, the field of genetics. In the early 1920's, after his marriage, he acquired 12 acres of his parents' Lanham property, and set out to build a tamped-earth house, following the example of a few other Department of Agriculture scientists. He built the wooden forms himself, and hired a crew of six unskilled labors and one foreman ("Fixit" Key). The men worked together with Cook from 1924 to 1928 on the construction of the house.²

Building material was excavated from a portion of the 12-acre property just north of Crandell Road and the excavation itself became the basement of the house. The foundation was partly of tamped earth, reinforced on the exterior by six inches of concrete. The walls of the house were raised by tamping earth into wooden forms, approximately 20 feet long and 4-1/2 feet high. The surfaces were then coated with linseed oil, which gave the walls a hard protective surface.²

Robert Cook, who went on to become the editor of the Journal of Heredity, lived in this house until the 1940's, and members of his family occupied it until the 1970's. The house and 12 acres were sold in 1973 to the present owners. The house stands in a beautiful wooded setting set back from Crandell Road, a unique local example of the tamped-earth construction technique.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. P.G. #70-43

Cf. notes, item #8.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 10.8 acres

Tax Map #44, parcel 159

Quadrangle name Lanham, Section D

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Susan G. Pearl, Research Historian		
organization	Historic Preservation Commission	date	September 1986
street & number	c/o County Planning Div., M-NCPPC		telephone 952-3521
city or town	Room 4010, CAB Upper Marlboro,	state	MD. 20772

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
 Shaw House
 21 State Circle
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401
 (301) 269-2438

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM

Survey No. P.G. #70-43

Description (continued)

Section 7 Page 2

The approach to the house is by an unpaved lane which curves northward from Crandell Road and circles to the east of the house. Stone steps descend from the circle to the principal doorway. The wooded grounds are dotted with pines and dogwoods. To the west of the house is a pond created by the excavation of the building material. A fenced barnyard slopes northward from the house.

Notes

1 Prince George's County Deed, #3:133; Who's Who 1895-1940; Census for Prince George's County, 1910; conversations with Cook and Kempton family members, 1985 and 1986. Cf. also MHT form P.G. #70-10, Crandell-Cook House.

2 Prince George's County Deeds, #288:231; #691:284, 286; #4274:663; #4298:875; conversation with Robert Cook, 1986.

M. N. C. P. B.
3145/10
11A
P. 9

M. N. C. P. B. & P. C.
3309/091
J2 88 A.
P. 182

R-55

GERALD J. DESMOND
5331/237
28.21A
P. 184

150 W. DORSEY
4738/309
13.59A
P. 163

WILLIAM J. GOODMAN
4004/875
10.00 A.
P. 157

PG 70-43

E. ALLEN
& ETAL
5471/6921
4.00 A.
P. 157

4:78
PARK EST. SECT 5

5675/301
2.12A.
P. 156

1.32A
P. 35
4167/761
1.15A.
P. 181

1.05 A
P. 170
3.00A
P. 52-25

2.00A
P. 228
3.00A.
P. 25

CRANDALL
1.75A. P. 218

P/O P. 199
P. 181
P. 27

R-55

MISSOURI J. EARLY
2316/546
7.04 A
P. 199

M. N. C. P. P. C.
5253/151
3.87 A.
P. 28

TABB'S TRACT
3085

1.35A
P. 163

HITFIELD WOODS
6332

MAP 44-P. 157
MAP 44-P. 158
MAP 44-P. 159

1A. P. 179
D. A. PAPPAS
5651/576
2.00 A. P. 31

PAR. B
J. C. ADAMS
8393

2.50 A.
P. 29

MISSOURI J. EARLY
4238/543
4.00 A.
P. 182

JOSEPH P. PROCTOR
6038/839
2.95A P. 32

GRAVEYARD

1.97A.
P. 163

P. 167

LEO J. DORSEY
4340/884
5.92 A.
P. 224

PRUDENTIAL INS. CO. OF AMERICA
5717/274
16.00A.
P/O P. 19
1 OF 2

MAP 44-P. 184

I-1

VOLKSWAGEN SOUTH ATLANTIC DISTRIBUTOR, INC.

PAR. C
113080

VOLKSWAGEN DR

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR HWY

R-R
6.03A.
P. 3



PG#70-43

Robert Cook House
Prince George's County, MD
Susan G. Pearl
April 1986
West elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD



PG#70-43

Robert Cook House
Prince George's County, MD
Susan G. Pearl
April 1986
Northwest 3/4 elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD



PG#70-43

Robert Cook House
Prince George's County, MD
April 1986
South elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD



PG#70-43

Robert Cook House
Prince George's County, MD
Susan G. Pearl
April 1986
Northeast 3/4 elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD



PG#70-43

Robert Cook House
Prince George's County, MD
Susan G. Pearl
April 1986
Southeast 3/4 elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD