

## 2019 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois

### Booth Cottage

#### QUICK STATS

- **Location:** 239 Franklin Street, Glencoe, Cook County
- **Built:** 1913
- **Architect:** Frank Lloyd Wright
- **Current owner:** Private owner, out of state
- **Historic significance:** A Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home for Sherman and Elizabeth Booth, prominent members of the Glencoe community in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- **Why it is endangered:** The home is unprotected. The current owner is looking to sell the house and, due to its small size, it is likely new owners would demolish the house to build a larger one on the property. The house has already received tear-down offers.
- **Take Action:** Promote this house to preservation-minded owners who will celebrate and honor its unique architecture!



*Courtesy: Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy*

#### BACKGROUND

A significant but little-known work by Frank Lloyd Wright, the Booth Cottage is a one-story frame house in Glencoe. Currently on the market and unprotected, this charming small house is located on a big lot amid much larger residences, putting it at risk for tear-down and redevelopment. Local preservation groups have banded together to help locate a preservation-minded buyer for this architecturally important property.

The Booth Cottage was originally built as a temporary home for Sherman and Elizabeth Booth while their Wright-designed permanent house at 265 Sylvan Road was being constructed. At the time of the Cottage's construction, Sherman and Booth were one of the more important couples in the Glencoe community. Sherman was a prominent attorney who would also develop the area

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now known as Ravine Bluffs, a neighborhood also conceived by Wright. Elizabeth was well-known as an influential Illinois suffragist.

Due to intended use as temporary housing, the Booth Cottage represents one of Wright's early attempts to minimize materials and streamline construction assemblies, concepts central to much of Wright's later work. The house displays many hallmarks of Wright's later Usonian designs, such as a flat roof with broadly overhanging eaves and a band of windows along the front of the house to reinforce its horizontality. The Booth Cottage is believed to have been originally located at 201 Franklin Road, to the northeast of Wright's Sylvan Road Bridge. After the Booth's permanent house was completed around late 1916 or early 1917, the cottage was moved to its current location.



*Courtesy: Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy*

#### CURRENT THREAT

Originally about 1,100 square feet in size, the small Booth Cottage is now approximately 1,800 square feet. It sits on a large lot that, by current zoning standards, would allow construction of a house up to 4,322 square feet in size. Neighboring houses vary from 3,000 to 5,000 square feet. The most recent resident of the Booth Cottage passed away in 2014, and since 2017, the house has been on and off the market. Although the family is open to preservation and would prefer that

the house remain standing, the Booth Cottage—like roughly half of Wright-designed houses around the country—is not legally protected through either a preservation easement or local certified landmarking. Thus, unless purchased by a preservation-minded new owner, the Booth Cottage is at serious risk for demolition to make way for a larger new house. Since putting the house back on the market at a reduced price at the end of March 2019, the owners have already received at least one tear-down offer for the property.

To help save this architectural gem, the Glencoe Historical Society, Glencoe Historic Preservation Commission, and Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy (FLWBC) have been actively engaged in efforts to preserve this house and find a new owner interested in preservation rather than



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demolition. Collaborating with the Village of Glencoe's Planning Department, AIA Chicago and Landmarks Illinois, the FLWBC has developed a number of adaptive reuse solutions. With sensitive modification, the house could remain a single family home. Alternatively, it could become a guest cottage for an additional new house on the property, which could accommodate an additional 3,200 square feet of construction under the current zoning regulations.

The FLWBC has also helped the current owner consider the option of moving the house. Given the strong ties of both the house itself and the Booth family to the Glencoe community, this option is not preferred; however, a move—especially one within the Village—would be preferable to full demolition. Currently an honorary Glencoe landmark, the building is subject to a Village-imposed six-month demolition delay.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Spread the word! Share this information with potential preservation-minded buyers. [See the listing here.](#)
- For more information, contact the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy at 312.663.5500 or [preservation@savewright.org](mailto:preservation@savewright.org).

#### FURTHER READING

- [Booth Summer Cottage information](#)  
Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy
- [WRIGHT REPORT: BUILDING UPDATES AND CONSERVANCY ACTION](#)  
Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, March 26, 2019