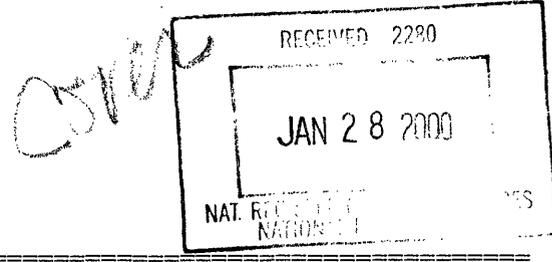


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form



New Submission  Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Lustron Houses in Alabama

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Prefabricated Housing  
Lustron Corporation 1946-1950  
Lustron House  
Lustron Dealerships  
Lustron Planning Guides  
Lustron Development in Alabama 1949-1950

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Gene A. Ford, Architectural Historian; Trina Binkley, Alabama Historical Commission NR Reviewer

street & number 13075 Moundville Archaeological Park telephone (205) 348-7774

city or town Moundville state AL zip code 35474

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]  
Signature and title of certifying official

1/20/00  
Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)  
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper  
Box

2/24/2000  
Date

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

**Prefabricated Housing**

The Lustron House was touted by many writers for *Architectural Forum* and *Business Weekly* as the crowning achievement of the prefabricated housing industry in the late 1940s. With its unique mass production and distribution system, a streamlined contemporary design with a package of built-in creature comforts, and a liberal infusion of federal funding, the steel house was expected to compete favorably in the national housing market and, more importantly, facilitate the end of the most severe housing shortage in American history.

The all steel Lustron House represented the culmination of decades of experimentation with prefabricated building parts. Builders had toyed with aspects of prefabrication since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). The mass production of component form metal parts originated in the early nineteenth century. By mid century, cast-iron columns and wrought iron rails had become the standard technique for rapid production and erection of market halls, exchanges, and arcades in industrialized nations (Frampton 1992).

Such technology was implemented in residential construction in the early part of the nineteenth century. The first house utilizing prefabricated wrought iron elements was built circa 1830 in Staffordshire, England (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). Some time later, England and America were shipping metal component houses to the California goldfields and colonial settlements throughout the British Empire.

Experimentation in prefabricated housing continued in the early twentieth century. Three prototypes evolved in England in response to economic hardships associated with World War I. The Weir and Atholl models, both of which were developed in 1924, featured a wood frame skeleton clad with steel (Raflo 1995). The Dorlonco model abandoned wood in its construction altogether and utilized a unique combination of steel framing and sprayed-on concrete exterior sheathing (Finnimore 1989). Due to construction costs and the general public's reservations toward nontraditional housing, the three prefabricated housing types never crossed over from the experimental phase to the mainstream.

Back in America, prefabricated residences built of wood fared well in the market. During a period from 1908 to 1937, retail giant Sears, Roebuck & Co. sold some 100,000 kit houses via mail order catalogs (Schwartz 1985). The success of Sears' prefabs was based on their use of a traditional building material, wood, and popular designs. The 1935 Strathmore model evoked images of medieval English cottages and manor houses; the Magnolia was the very essence of a Southern style plantation house replete with portico and Corinthian columns; and there were numerous renditions of the bungalow (Schwartz 1985). In other words, the Honor Bilt and Standard Bilt lines of the Sears' ready-to-assemble homes did not challenge preconceived notions of house building.

Early prefabricated metal houses did not enjoy much success in America. Buckminster Fuller designed a factory-made steel podlike "livable dwelling unit" in 1927 (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). Evidently, the public viewed the structure more as an experiment than viable housing. The structure never went into production.

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Had favorable economic conditions prevailed throughout the rest of the twentieth century, prefabrication may have never passed the experimental stage; but both England and the United States of America suffered through some trying times. The Great Depression had a profound impact on the American housing industry. By 1933, the peak of the Depression, there were 1000 foreclosures per week; residential construction dropped to 93,000 units from 937,000 in 1925; most of these were built for the well-to-do (Wright 1981). The resources of both nations were allocated for the allied cause. In America, there was a moratorium on new construction during the war, and in England an estimated 25,000 homes were destroyed and another million partially to seriously damaged by German bombing (Finnimore 1989). These problems combined with a major boom in population after the war forced both nations to direct attention to the development of housing alternatives.

To combat the housing shortage in Great Britain, the 1944 Temporary Housing Programme was established. Under the aegis of the agency, some 156,623 prefabricated homes were built between 1944-1949 (Vale 1995). During this five-year period four models were produced: the Arcon (38,859 were built), Uni-Seco (28,999), Tarran (19,014), and Aluminum (54,500). The Arcon House employed structural steel tubing for the framework and asbestos cement for roof and exterior wall sheathing. The Uni-Seco was constructed of premanufactured and assembled timber framing and wood panels. The Tarran bungalow featured timber framing and a concrete panel exterior membrane. Produced in the greatest numbers and, incidently, at the greatest expense, the Aluminum temporary bungalow utilized aluminum in the construction of the walls and roof. It had a wood floor fastened to an aluminum framework. The walls were insulated with lightweight concrete. Built in four sections, the Aluminum bungalow was shipped in sections and bolted together on site. In 1964, 88,367 of these temporary homes remained in use with only 29 per cent, or 36,088 removed from use (Vale 1995).

Despite the lack of success with steel prefabs in the early part of the century, American designers continued to examine the medium. Charles Rowley and Associates of Cleveland developed a model with an enveloping membrane of interlocking steel panels in 1932 (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). Concurrently, American Rolling Mills Co. produced the Armco-Ferro House. It featured a system comprised of load-bearing enamel steel panels. By 1935, twenty-one out of thirty-three prefabricated housing firms based their product on steel components (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). However, technical difficulties, such as problems with corrosion and insulation, and poor financial support limited production of these prototypes.

In late 1937, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) began to explore the possibilities of factory-made houses for workers at various dam sites. Architects Louis Grangent and Carroll A. Towne devised a small plywood structure consisting of a bedroom, bathroom, and a kitchen (Rosenbaum 1993). With a flat roof, bands of clerestory windows, and low profile, the design of these houses was quite reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian house. Constructed in two sections at a factory in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, the TVA prefabs were shipped on a trailer to such locales as Oak Ridge and Fontana Dam. During World War II, the plywood houses also saw action as defense worker housing, and many were shipped to England as part of the lend-lease agreement (Vale 1995).

Even Frank Lloyd Wright entertained notions of entering the prefabrication market. His Usonian House was aimed at the middle-class buyer. He intended for sections of the house to be manufactured at a factory and then shipped to the site where a crew experienced with his designs could quickly assemble the various components (Rosenbaum 1993). While Wright designed and built several hundred Usonians, including the Rosenbaum House (1939) in Florence, Alabama, he was never successful in keeping costs down such that they were affordable for the middle class. Thus, the Usonian never became an industry staple.

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World War II proved to be just the stimulus that the prefabricated housing industry needed to advance. The United States government required instant shelter for millions of military personnel and defense industry workers throughout the country and abroad. The federal government pumped millions of dollars into the prefab industry. As many as seventy companies produced 200,000 units during the war (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). The Quonset Hut was among those mass produced in high numbers. It featured a half cylindrical form sheathed with sheet metal. The all metal hut could be quickly and inexpensively manufactured, shipped to site and assembled, and dismantled for deployment elsewhere. Military bases and defense industry villages made ample use of them.

The end of World War II presented America with new problems. A two-decade construction hiatus combined with a serious population boom focused everyone's attention on the critical need for housing. The government estimated that the country needed three million units for the year 1946-1947 and twelve million over the next decade (Raflo 1995); consequently, the federal government subsidized production of prefabricated housing. Under this aegis, some three hundred companies built factory-made residential units of one type or another (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). Two firms in particular, the Lustron Corporation and General Panel Corporation, received federal funding to manufacture steel prefabs. Plagued by design and production bugaboos, General Panel Corporation mustered the production of only a few hundred houses before closing its doors in 1951.

### Lustron Corporation 1946-1950

When Chicago Vitreous Enamel Product Co. executive Carl Strandlund traveled to Washington, D. C. in the summer of 1946, he had no idea he would soon be embarking on one of the most ballyhooed endeavors to manufacture an all steel factory-built residence of the period. Prior to his meeting with representatives of the Civilian Production Administration (CPA), Strandlund's agenda consisted of securing materials for the production of five hundred porcelain enameled steel gas stations for Standard Oil (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). But, the CPA dissuaded him from his appointed task, encouraging him instead to consider plans for a prefabricated house that utilized his porcelain enameled steel components. Thus was born the Lustron Corporation, an affiliate of Chicago Vitreous Enamel Product Co.

Upon his return to Chicago, Strandlund contacted architect Morris H. Beckman to draw up plans for a prefabricated steel house. Beckman devised a two-bedroom prototype featuring built-in shelves, cabinets, and drawers, radiant heat, large picture windows, and ample closet space (Kansas State Historical Society 1995). The prototype was favorably received in Washington. Housing Expeditor Wilson Wyatt endorsed Strandlund's project. Congressional proponents of Strandlund's prefab included Senators Ralph Flanders and Joseph R. McCarthy. The Lustron Corporation reportedly paid McCarthy \$10,000 to write an article of support (Wright 1981). Although the controversial senator never wrote the article, he became an advocate, helping to secure sizable loans for the corporation.

With the plans officially approved, Strandlund applied for a staggering loan of \$52 million from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), a federal agency. The RFC obliged but at a more modest rate of \$15.5 million (*Architectural Forum* 1949). Although Wyatt's attempts to secure an erstwhile Dodge plant in Chicago for the Lustron Corporation failed, the prefab firm was granted the rights to the Curtiss-Wright plant in Columbus, Ohio. Additionally, the federal government allocated much

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coveted supplies of steel for the enterprise (Keister 1995). The Lustron Corporation was the most heavily subsidized prefabricated housing manufacturer of its time.

While waiting for the Curtiss-Wright plant to be refitted with the machinery necessary to build a completed Lustron House from rolls of steel, Strandlund built a two-bedroom prototype dubbed the "Esquire" in a plant in Cicero, Illinois. The Esquire was erected in Hinsdale, Illinois in 1946. Author Tom Fetters, who has written a manuscript on Lustron Houses and is awaiting word of its publication, toured the houses. He related that the interior had mock-up plywood shelves and cabinets (Personal Interview 1993). The prototype was recently dismantled. Although The Lustron Corporation expected to produce ten houses per day at the Cicero plant, it did not build another house until 1948 (*Architectural Forum* 1947). The city of Chicago's use of code regulations to bar the construction of Lustrons in the Chicago area may have accounted for the cessation of construction at the Cicero factory (Bey 1996).

When the RFC granted the Lustron Corporation its initial loan, the federal agency realized that the firm would require additional capital. The company raised \$840,000 through the sale of stock to individuals, but the sum was far short of what was believed to be adequate. After Strandlund failed to solicit a loan from the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), the executive was forced to return to the RFC. Once again, the RFC succored the prefab firm, loaning it an additional \$10 million (*Business Week* 1948). The Lustron Corporation would procure two more RFC loans amounting to \$17 million, bringing the overall total to an amount in the neighborhood of \$37 million.

In the meantime, Strandlund marshaled the Columbus plant to order. In an *Historic Preservation* article, Joe Tucker, Jr., who served as director of quality control for the Lustron Corporation, hailed the Lustron factory as "awesome even by American mass-production standards" (Keister 1995). It occupied 107 acres of land and had one million square feet of floor space. The plant boasted of twenty-three acres of presses, porcelain enamel sprayers, welding machines, and furnaces (Wolfe and Garfield 1989).

The Lustron plant was operated on the principle of a closed system. Each of the 3,000 Lustron House components were manufactured in house from either large rolls or some basic forms of steel. Ceiling and interior and exterior panels as well as roof shingles were pressed from sheet metal at one station and then sent through large porcelain enamel spraying machines (*Business Week* 1948). After which, the panels were transported via conveyor belts to large ovens where the porcelain enamelled panels were baked at 1500 degrees to ensure a permanent coating. In other sections of the factory, metal wall frames and roof trusses were preassembled. All 3,000 parts were loaded on to specially designed trucks in the order that they would be unloaded and erected on site (*Architectural Forum* 1947). The trucks, which were designed to hold one Lustron House, were conveyed through the plant via conveyor belts. The vehicles served the dual purpose of storage and transportation.

The production line at the Lustron plant was designed to produce large quantities of houses. At one point, Strandlund promised 17,000 Lustron Houses by January, 1949 (*Business Week* October 1949). That the factory could produce 100 houses every 23 hours, or one every 14 minutes, was projected. But, actual numbers and expectations were worlds apart. Production did not begin until November, 1948. At peak manufacturing, only 26 houses were made per day in August 1949 (*Business Week* August 1949). By late October of 1949, only 2100 Lustrons had been made. In all, the Lustron Corporation made only 2,495 Lustron Houses.

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Despite low production numbers, the architectural press proclaimed Strandlund's enterprise a success. According to the writers of *Architectural Forum* (1949), the Lustron Corporation overwhelmingly proved that a prefabricated house could be manufactured in a manner similar to that of an automobile. Moreover, the corporation demonstrated that prefabricated housing could compete against traditional housing in terms of production time. For every Lustron House, 280 hours were required for manufacturing and 350 hours for construction (construction time decreased as crews became more familiar with assembly techniques and in some cases four working days was all that was needed to build a complete Lustron), bringing the total in at 630 hours. The average time for the construction of a traditional house was estimated at 1,600 hours (*Architectural Forum* 1949). The Lustron House certainly looked appealing to the buyer who required immediate housing.

Although the Lustron Corporation was hailed as a critical success, the company was beset by financial woes. The simple truth was that Lustron was losing an estimated \$1.2 million per month (*Business Week* October 1949). The second RFC loan was due in full in October 1949. The RFC calculated that the Lustron Corporation had to produce 50 houses daily to break even, a production quantity that Lustron never met. After calling for Carl Strandlund's resignation and waiting for the prefab manufacturer to make money, the RFC filed suit for foreclosure of the Lustron Corporation in February 1950, demanding the company repay \$22 million (*Business Week* 1950). The RFC sold the Lustron Corporation at auction in May 1950.

Critics of the Lustron Corporation did not find fault with the product, method of production, or industrial organization. The RFC and architectural press gave the Lustron House high marks. Advocates of the all steel prefab considered its design to be very streamlined and modern. More importantly, they believed it would blend well with the traditional housing stock of the period, especially the ranch and its variations, such that it would not be rejected by house buyers seeking the status quo. Too, the RFC was pleased with the innovative and efficient technological means by which the Lustron House was manufactured.

Critics, however, faulted Carl Strandlund for his inability to grasp all the variables that constituted a rather complex American housing market. Perhaps the most critical error came when the company missed the primary window of opportunity. By the time the prefab firm began manufacturing houses, the housing crisis had largely passed and the firm was forced to compete in a rebounded market (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). Lustron could not keep up with such firms as Levitt and Sons, which based their wood frame homes on traditional styles and modern construction techniques. Levitt and Sons built many planned communities designated as Levittowns on the East coast featuring their homes. From 1947 to 1951, the Levitts built upwards of 17,000 homes (Wright 1981).

When Lustron failed to produce its house in large quantities, it was unable to keep unit costs down. Consequently, the initial price of a Lustron House rose from \$7,000 to \$11,000, pricing it well out of reach of the middle class, the targeted consumer group (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). At \$11,000 the Lustron House had a difficult time competing against a \$6000 to \$7000 (lot and foundation included) Levitt House which featured a full array of built-in amenities.

Other aspects of the building market were out of Strandlund's control as well. Lacking its own internal financing system, the Lustron Corporation had to contend with the preconceived notions of external financial institutions. Most banks and the FHA were quite hesitant to loan money for non-traditional housing arrangements (Wright 1981). Building codes were not universal throughout the United States. In certain markets, all steel prefabs were banned altogether. Chicago was one such place (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). Other areas banned the use of copper wiring. Local builders often had no prior experience in erecting all

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metal houses. Inexperienced builders often caused the cost of erecting a Lustron to skyrocket. Too, there were hidden costs in the pouring of a concrete slab foundation. All of these facets, and many more, contributed to the downfall of the Lustron Corporation.

Nonetheless, the practical and progressive aura of the Lustron appealed to people. Many recently polled owners both past and present gave the all steel prefab high marks. Jane Barnard, an owner of a Lustron in Ann Arbor, Michigan, stated that "The use of space is perfect. There is nothing that I would change" (Shackman 1989). Edward Newman in Sheffield, Alabama, an owner for 47 years, appreciates the low maintenance costs, especially since he has been retired for a number of years and is living on a fixed income (Personal Interview 1996). Many have commented on the excellent durability of the house. Marge Read related that another Lustron in Ann Arbor, Michigan, "looks as good as it first did" after nearly fifty years of wear and tear (Shackman 1989).

### The Lustron House

The design of the Lustron House was firmly grounded in the aesthetic of machine age modernity. Like planes, trains, and automobiles of the 1920s and 1930s, the all steel prefab evinced a no nonsense, practical functionalism indicative of the very machinery and industrial organization by which it was manufactured. Stripped of superfluous embellishment, the Lustron sported a sleek, streamlined mein with a low pitched gable roof. Its fabricated steel materials promised durability and ease in maintenance. The house included a package of built-in amenities that served the multipurpose of maximizing space, reducing clutter, and reducing additional furnishing costs. While declaratively assertive in its state of the art technology, the Lustron House made a conscientious effort to resemble popular traditional housing of the era. With its rectangular form and gable roof, the Lustron looked very similar to the ranch and versions of Cape Cod cottages that were then popping up across the nation.

The component part construction of the Lustron prefabricated house consisted of a number of basic elements, all of which were produced at the Lustron plant. Twenty wall sections composed of vertical and horizontal steel members cross braced by diagonal rods formed the skeletal framework of the house (*Architectural Forum* 1947). To the exterior of the wall framework were attached a series of 2 ft. square, interlocking, porcelain enamelled panels, the interior shell of which were filled with 1 1/2 in. thick fiberglass batting. To the interior of the framework were affixed 2 ft. wide by 8 ft. high porcelain enamelled panels. Ten steel roof trusses crowned the top of the walls (Raflo 1995). Panels of steel shingles measuring 1 ft. by 8 ft. served as the exterior enveloping roof membrane. Ceiling panels configured in 4 ft. squares were fastened to the under carriage of the roof trusses. The entire structure rested on a site built concrete slab (in some instances a concrete block foundation).

The Lustron House featured a system that employed an oil or gas forced-air furnace and made use of the ceiling panels as part of the heating system. The heating unit, which is encased in porcelain enamel panels, was suspended over head from the ceiling in order to free floor space for other uses (*Architectural Forum* 1947). The heating unit forced air into a plenum chamber that evenly distributed it throughout the entire house. The plenum chamber is essentially the 6 in. space between the ceiling panels, which were fastened to the bottom cord of the roof trusses, and an amalgam of insulation formed from a bottom layer of 2 in. thick fiber glass batting, thin layer of aluminum foil and top layer of loose insulation, which was suspended from the top cord of the roof trusses. The ceiling panels served as a radiant heat source directing warm air to the living spaces below (Raflo 1995).

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Polyvinyl chloride gaskets sandwiched between the exterior panels helped reduce heat loss, making the house even more energy efficient.

Considered an absolute necessity by Carl Strandlund, the Lustron House included a package of built-in creature comforts. The galley kitchen had a full range of steel cabinets and drawers and a pass-through counter that made for ease in serving food from the kitchen to the adjoining dining room. Additionally, the kitchen was stocked with an interesting combination dishwasher/clothes washer (Morrow 1995). On the opposite of the pass-through counter was the dining alcove. It consisted of a number of drawers, cabinets, and shelves for dish, napery, and doodad storage and display. One wall of the living room featured a built-in book case. The master bedroom sported a vanity. In addition to providing much needed storage and display space, the built-in amenities helped maintain the sleek, smooth, streamlined appearance of the house interior (Morrow 1995).

The interior of the house utilized an open floor plan for a maximum of space. Between the kitchen, living room, and dining room, there was little partitioning in order to create the feeling of one large expansive space. Of course, the bedrooms and bathroom were enclosed for privacy. The utility room was hidden from view by a wall. Open floor plans, a concept that Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture promoted, was a popular feature of contemporary housing of the time.

Another attractive characteristic of the Lustron House was its paint scheme. The prefab houses were factory painted and came in one of seven pastel colors, blue, yellow, gray, tan, rose-tan, aqua, and green (Raflo 1995). Although the finish was intended to be permanent and rust proof, the Lustron Corporation foresaw the possibility of accidents and included matching touch up paint. The porcelain enamelled finish made for easy cleaning. The exterior could be washed with a garden hose, and the interior wiped down with a damp wash cloth.

The Lustron Corporation also manufactured garages and breezeways. These structures were built of the same porcelain enamelled panels. The garages and breezeways were produced with the seven stock Lustron pastel colors in order to match the houses. Because the porcelain panels did not fade, garages and breezeways could be added at any time (Raflo 1995). Initial models of the Lustron House did not feature a garage; however, the Lustron Corporation had a deluxe Lustron House replete with garage in the planning, but the company folded before it could market this model (*Architectural Forum* 1949).

### **Lustron Dealerships**

In order to nationally market its product, the Lustron Corporation established a nationwide dealership network. The prefab corporation recruited well-financed men and companies with building experience as potential sales representatives (*Architectural Forum* 1949). Dealers came from a variety of backgrounds. A number had experience in heavy construction; some were acknowledged house builders; general contractors, hardware and lumber retailers, and even real estate agencies joined the ranks of the Lustron sales family.

One of the most versed dealers was C-B Homes, Inc. The President, Stanley Crute, was a civil engineer, who was for a number of years in charge of state building in Connecticut (*Architectural Forum* 1949). His partner Gregory Bardacke was a

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former consultant to Wilson Wyatt on industrial housing. He helped Carl Strandlund fashion a labor deal with unions and also served as vice president of the Fuller Corporation which attempted to mass produce Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House.

The organization of the dealer network was not as well formulated as the other operations within the Lustron Corporation. The prefab giant had not worked out the hard facts of sales territories when it began to award franchises. Initially, the Lustron Corporation granted exclusive franchises over large areas, such as Connecticut, New Jersey, Michigan, Wisconsin, and New York City (Raflo 1995). After Lustron realized that dealers could not often raise the capital required to maintain an exclusive franchise, it ended the practice. The prefab company even began to decrease the size of some of the sales areas, permitting new dealers into the heretofore exclusive territories much to the displeasure of the original dealers (*Architectural Forum* 1949).

The recruitment of dealers proved to be an easy task. Skeptical of building houses with lumber, the price of which at that time was seriously inflated, many builders viewed the all steel prefab as an attractive alternative with a great potential for success, and subsequently joined the Lustron team. By spring 1949, Lustron claimed 143 dealers, mostly in the East and Midwest (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). Dealers were located in Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia (Lustron Corporation 1950). Due to the heavy "volume of dealership correspondence," prospective Lustron dealers were sent a general summary explaining "How Lustron Dealers Operate" and "How Lustron Dealers are Selected" (Attachment 1)(Raflo 1995).

Realizing that dealers and builders would need to become acquainted with the Lustron House, the Lustron Corporation established a training and education center at its headquarters in Columbus, Ohio. Dealers attended a Sales and Management Training Clinic while building crews trained at the Lustron Service School (Raflo 1995). Additionally, the company provided sample cost estimate sheets, which addressed costs of the house, land, freight, services, construction costs, site improvements, landscaping, and commission (Attachment 2). Dealers had at their disposal a 1949 fact sheet that introduced potential customers to the Lustron House and company (Attachment 3)(Raflo 1995).

Despite efforts by the Lustron Corporation to assist sales representatives, the hardships born by them were many. Probably the biggest headache endured by dealers was the lack of production (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). Demand far outstripped production. Customers were forced to wait long periods for their Lustron House. In one instance, a New York customer who had waited ten months for delivery sued the dealer (*Architectural Forum* 1949). The dealers, not the factory, bore the direct assault of the customer's anger.

The Lustron Corporation required its dealers to pay for a house in advance. Additionally, the sales representative had to pay for transportation and on site assembly (Wolfe and Garfield 1989). Consequently, dealers sought customers who had complete financing. The Lustron Corporation offered interim financing, but many dealers failed to take advantage of this offer as the loan was considered an additional sales item that reduced profit margins (*Architectural Forum* 1949). In order to make the Lustron House affordable to the middle-class market, the company set a strict upper limit on the price that a dealer could charge with slight regard for local variations in transportation and construction costs (Raflo 1995). These costs often reduced the profit margin.

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**Lustron Planning Guides**

Money issues aside, the Lustron Corporation made great strides to assist its dealers in selling the Lustron concept to the public. The corporation decided that demonstration models would be one of its most effective sales aids. Dealers were encouraged to erect demonstration houses. The Lustron Corporation engineered a comprehensive planning guide entitled "Lustron Home Planning Guide for Your Demonstration Home" to properly orient dealers to the importance of site selection, site planning, interior decoration, and site plans (Attachment 4). Too, the guide could be used to acquaint prospective buyers to Lustron's "New Standard for Living."

The chapter on site selection stresses the importance of choosing an attractive setting for the Lustron demonstration house. The guide recommends placing the model house in the most suitable environment, preferably a residential neighborhood (Raflo 1995). In this setting, the public could witness first hand how attractive the Lustron appears when compared with other houses and how naturally it is suited for such a place and use. The planning guide suggests erecting the model house with the intent that it remain on its site permanently. No doubt, headquarters did not want the Lustron to be typecast as temporary shelter as Americans had their fill of it during World War II. The guide recommends selecting a lot that would allow for customers to walk through and around the house comfortably (Raflo 1995).

Site planning covers proper grading and drainage and landscaping needs of the property. As Lustrons were typically built on top of a concrete slab at ground level, ensuring that water was kept from building up around the house was a necessity. The guide considers hedges planted at the front of the Lustron House as being in keeping with the "modern character of its architectural style." Terraces, which facilitate indoor-outdoor living for the modern lifestyle, are an attractive landscaping feature, according to the writers of the guide. Lawns, evergreens, flowers, and vegetable borders are also elements believed to enhance the outdoor Lustron milieu.

The section of the planner pertaining to interior decoration emphasizes a contemporary ensemble to compliment the scale, color, form, and arrangement of the Lustron House design.

The Lustron Corporation provided dealers with "The Lustron Planning Guide" (Attachment 5). The guide provides sound advice in the economical development of the property on which the Lustron House is built (Raflo 1995). Information from the Federal Housing Authority is utilized in the planning guide.

In the introduction, the Lustron philosophy toward planning is stated thus: "good planning is good Lustron business...Well planned, properly improved residential neighborhoods have long been recognized as essential factors in the marketing of properties in all price ranges. Lustron Homes situated upon lots in well-planned neighborhoods will have greater marketability and stability of value. The product which you merchandize is essentially a house, lot and its environment--the Lustron Corporation provides the house--the dealer and the customer provide the lot and environment."

The first chapter of the planning guide presents information on constructing Lustrons on improved lots. To assist with planning, the guide illustrated its principles with eight plot plans (Attachment 6)(Raflo 1995). The diagrams illustrate the layout of hedges, terraces, privacy borders fashioned out of fences and evergreen stands, flower and vegetable borders, and most

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efficient, attractive, and economical orientation of the Lustron House and garage to the site. The plot plans account for regular and irregular shaped lots. The second chapter pertains to strategies for developing unimproved lots. The chapter also addresses the possibilities of creating Lustron subdivisions (Raflo 1995).

### Lustron History in Alabama 1949-1950

According to the *Dealer Performance Report of 1950*, a total of twenty Lustron Houses were ordered in Alabama (Lustron 1950). That all of these orders were filled is unknown. To date, only eleven Lustron Houses are extant. A twelfth was dismantled in 1994 (Jones 1996). There may be a Lustron House located in Mobile, but a preliminary search for it has not revealed its whereabouts nor are local historians and preservationists aware of it. Rumor has it that Mr. Elton Darby, owner of Southern Sash in Sheffield, the Muscle Shoals area Lustron dealer, incorporated a Lustron House into the design of his mansion on his estate. As of yet, Darby has not been reached to confirm or deny this rumor as he is a recluse and spends most of his time at his estate in Florida.

The two extant Lustron Houses in Jackson, which is located approximately 70 miles north of Mobile, were among the first ordered in the state. Orders for the two prefabs were placed between January and March of 1949 (Lustron 1950). These two houses represent the sum total of orders in the Jackson vicinity. They may be the first that were built in the state.

The Lustron dealer in Jackson was J. P. McKee of McKee Construction Company, Inc. A road builder by trade, McKee bought two lots catty-cornered to each other and erected the Lustron Houses (Finlay 1997). McKee placed advertisements in the *Clarke County Democrat*. One advertisement appeared in the newspaper's March 3, 1949 edition (Attachment 7). This ad announces to the public that McKee Construction Company, Inc. had been awarded the area franchise. The ad briefly introduces the public to the "New Standard of Living" that is the all steel prefabricated house. Another advertisement invites the interested parties to "See the house America is talking about" (Attachment 8)(*Clarke County Democrat* April 1949). An open house for the Lustrons was held for a week beginning on April 16, 1949. They were furnished by Woodson Furniture Company of Jackson (Finlay 1997). The two houses currently serve as rental property.

The largest concentration of Lustron Houses is located in the Muscle Shoals area, which includes Florence, Sheffield, Tuscumbia, and Muscle Shoals. Florence claims three houses while Sheffield has two. However, a total of eight were actually ordered from the factory (Lustron 1950). Mr. Edward L. Newman asserts that his Lustron House served as the demonstration model (Personal Interview 1996). He moved into his home in May of 1949. Mr. Newman believes that there was once a Lustron in Tuscumbia used first by a Catholic church then later by an automobile dealership; but he does not know what became of it. Mr. Newman and Mr. Basil Luff, another Sheffield resident who has lived in his Lustron House since its construction in 1949, worked for the TVA (Personal Interview 1996).

Mr. Elton Darby, who owned Southern Sash in Sheffield, was the Lustron dealer for the Muscle Shoals area. Southern Sash sold doors, windows, treatments, and hardware to local builders. In addition to the two Lustrons in Sheffield, Darby erected three more in Florence.

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Only one Lustron was ordered in Huntsville. Lloyd Steel Building Company of Huntsville served as the sales representative. As early as 1948, Lloyd Steel purchased a number of lots on Harrison Avenue in anticipation of doing brisk sales in Lustrons (Jones 1996). The builder took out space in the *Huntsville Times* to advertise the sale of the steel factory-built houses (Attachment 9). In the September 11, 1949 edition, the ad piques the interest of readers with the caption "Never Before in America a House Like This." The ad announces the opening of the Lustron on Harrison Avenue for inspection beginning on September 11. Mason Furniture Co. and Dunnnavants supplied the furniture and draperies, respectively. Evidently, the house did not create as much business as hoped as Mr. and Mrs. William Lloyd of Lloyd Steel ended up living in it from 1949 to some time around 1961 (Jones 1996). In 1985 the house was sold to Robert T. and Agatha Blevins. The North Alabama bank bought the steel prefab house at auction in 1992 and later passed it on to someone who dismantled the house with the intention of rebuilding it elsewhere in the county. That the Lustron was reassembled is unknown.

In Northport, which is situated across the Black Warrior River from Tuscaloosa, Milton Cooper was awarded a Lustron dealership. Cooper headed Cooper Contracting Company, Commercial and Residential Building. Cooper placed and filled one house order (Lustron 1950). Two advertisements (not attached as permission to Xerox was denied) were placed in the *Tuscaloosa News* in September 1949, one on the 5th and the other on the 29th. The ad on the 29th proclaims a "New Standard of Living" in the Lustron House. The house was erected on Parkview Drive in Tuscaloosa.

The greater metropolitan area of Birmingham claims the second largest collection of Lustrons in the state. Three extant Lustron Houses have been identified; however, a total of seven were ordered from the factory (Lustron 1950). As promoted in November editions of the *Birmingham News*, Lustron Houses and lots were offered as prizes in a national Durkee Oleomargarine contest. Realty Investment of Birmingham owned the rights to the Lustron franchise in the greater Birmingham area.

### Summary

Most of the Lustron Houses located in Alabama are Westchester two-bedroom models; however, one is a Newport and another is classified as a Westchester three-bedroom model. The identified Alabama Lustrons have neither Lustron model garages nor Lustron breezeway connectors. One of the two Sheffield Lustrons features an addition constructed with Lustron panels recycled from a razed Tennessee Lustron.

### F. Associated Property Types

#### Lustron House and Associated Resources and Buildings

##### **Property Type Description**

##### **Design**

Architects Morris Beckman and his associate Roy Blass worked on the seminal design of the Lustron House for the Lustron Corporation. Designated the "Esquire," the Lustron prototype varied very little from the second generation Lustron

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model known as the Westchester (Attachments 11 and 12), the two exceptions being the projection of the kitchen and utility wall beyond that of the rear bedroom and the placement of wash basins in the utility room of the Esquire. For the Westchester, the wall of the rear bedroom and bathroom was realigned with that of the kitchen and utility room, giving the bedroom and bathroom more space; and the wash basins were moved to a more advantageous location within the utility space.

The all steel prefabricated house was designed to be modern in appearance. It represented the culmination of several decades of prefabricated housing technology as well as state of the art industrial technology in terms of factory layout, construction techniques, and transportation means. The Lustron House was intended to be durable and filled with amenities. It features a sleek look with a low pitched gable roof and interior and exterior membrane of porcelain enamelled steel panels secured to a structural steel frame and concrete slab foundation. The exterior panels are configured in 2 ft. x 2 ft. squares; interior panels in strips measuring 1 ft. x 8 ft; and the ceiling panels in 4 ft. x 4 ft. squares. All steel parts, including the aforementioned panels, cabinets, doors, gutters, downspout, roof shingles, shelves, and bedroom vanity, are enveloped in a porcelain enamel finish. Asphalt tiles cover the concrete slab foundation. Heat is provided via an oil or gas furnace which distributes warm air throughout the house through a plenum system.

The color scheme of the Lustron House was given careful consideration. Color expert Howard Ketchum, Inc. was consulted to develop an aesthetically pleasing array of colors for the Lustron Corporation (Raflo 1995). Ketchum devised seven pastel tints for the exterior of the house: tan, gray, yellow, blue, rose-tan, aqua, and green. Interiors came in white, gray, rose, yellow, blue, and tan. The roof panels were offered in brown, gray, light or dark green, and dark blue. As all the interior and exterior surfaces were finished with porcelain enamel, they were quite durable and afforded ease in maintenance. Exterior surfaces could be washed down with a hose and interior panels could be wiped with a damp cloth. The durable finish resisted decay and rust.

### **Porcelain Enamelled Steel Finish**

The porcelain enamelled finish of the steel members of the Lustron House are manufactured via a pulverized frit fused to a base surface at approximately 1500 degrees Fahrenheit. The frit is a finely ground amalgam of inorganic minerals combined in proportions of three-quarters feldspar, silica sand, and borax to one-quarter clays and other inorganic materials which provide adhesion and whiteness or tints (Raflo 1995). Once baked on, the porcelain enamel finish emits a subtle, lustrous shine. It is impervious to moisture.

According to Don Sauder, spokesman for the Porcelain Enamel Institute based in Nashville, Tennessee, the porcelain enamelling process, which basically amounts to glass fused to steel at high temperatures, has been around since a couple of years before Christ (Bey 1996). Technological advances in the twentieth century enabled it to be applied to lighter gage metals. Stoves, washers, dryers, bathtubs, pots and pans, and hot water heaters also utilize this technology.

### **Floor Plans**

According to Lustron promotional literature, the Lustron Corporation offered 8 house types: three models with either two- or three- bedroom floor plans. The Westchester model also came in a deluxe (built-in amenities) or standard (economy)

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version. Nine Westchester two-bedroom models are located in Alabama. There is one Westchester three-bedroom model and one Newport two-bedroom model in the state as well.

### **Lustron Property Models**

#### **Westchester- Attachment 12**

The first and most widely sold type was the Westchester. The two-bedroom variety measured 31 ft. x 35 ft. on the exterior with a recessed porch measuring 6 ft. x 12 ft. The plan featured 1,085 square feet of space.

The three-bedroom Westchester was slightly larger with a rectangular configuration measuring 31 ft. x 39 ft. This model did not have a recessed entry space. It contained 1,209 square feet of space.

The Westchester Deluxe offered a creature comfort package replete with a bay window, dining room pass-through counter, living room book shelf, and bedroom vanity. The economy version, Westchester Standard, lacked the built-ins and bay window.

#### **Newport- Attachment 12**

Like the Westchester, the Newport had two- and three- bedroom versions. The two-bedroom model measured 23 ft. x 31 ft.; it contained 713 square feet. The three-bedroom model was slightly larger with dimensions of 31 ft. x 31 ft. The interior had 961 square feet.

#### **Meadowbrook- Attachment 12**

The Meadowbrook Lustron is essentially an enlarged Newport model. The dimensions of the two bedroom measured 25 ft. x 31 ft. with 775 square feet of interior space while the three-bedroom boasted a 33 ft. x 31 ft. rectangular configuration with 1,023 square feet.

#### **Garages/Breezeway Additions- Attachment 12**

The Lustron Corporation developed two garage packages in late 1949-50. The garages did not feature steel framing; rather, they utilized wood framing, the wood of which could be obtained locally, to which the Lustron steel panels were affixed. The steel house manufacturer also produced a breezeway that connected house and garage or could be used without a garage. Garage Model G-1 measured 15 ft. x 23 ft. while Model G-2 measured 23 ft. square.

### **Property Type Significance**

The Lustron House is significant under Criterion C in the area of engineering based on its association with important developments in the post World War II housing shortage and prefabricated housing. The all steel prefabricated house represents

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the culmination of decades of attempts to manufacture a steel component house. It is an excellent example of an innovative approach to prefabricating an all steel house utilizing assembly line production. The Lustron House commands an important chapter in a national effort combining the resources of both private enterprise and federal government assistance to alleviate one of the worst housing shortages in our nation's history.

The Lustron House is significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture based on its modern design. The Lustron House represents the application of state of the art industrial technology used to mass produce sleek, streamlined machines, such as trains, planes, and automobiles, to house construction and design. The all steel prefabricated house features many elements of the modern architectural vocabulary: sleek and simplified appearance; subtle and lustrous color schemes; open floor plan; built-in furniture and conveniences; economical use of space; durability; and easy maintenance. The Lustron House embodies the efforts of the Lustron Corporation and associate design consultants to create a "New Standard of Living."

#### **Property Type Registration Requirements**

To meet the property type registration requirements, the house must be a one-story, ranch-type Lustron with exterior two-foot square, porcelain enamelled steel panels and porcelain enamelled steel roof shingles. The interior must retain a significant portion of enameled steel ceiling and wall panels. The house must be manufactured by the Lustron Corporation and maintain a high degree of integrity by retaining most of its metal construction, and intact floor plan, aluminum casement windows, and a concrete slab or block foundation. Additions made to Lustron Houses on the rear or side facade do not represent loss of integrity as long as the square footage of the addition does not exceed that of the Lustron House or its massing does not overwhelm or obscure the original form. Alterations made to a Lustron House such as vinyl siding, artificial siding, major front facade changes (i.e. removing bay window), or doubling the size of a Lustron House with an addition, would result in its loss of historic integrity and therefore would not be considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

#### **G. Geographical Data**

The State of Alabama.

#### **H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

This multiple resource nomination is largely based on the information culled from sources listed under References Cited, from site visits made to the Alabama Lustron Houses, and interviews of current and past Alabama Lustron owners. Lisa Raflo's *Lustron Houses in Georgia Multiple Property Nomination*. Atlanta: Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 1995 provided the format for the Alabama Lustron nomination as well as the Lustron literature presented in the attachments. This MPS is the result of a survey and National Register Grant from the Alabama Historical Commission and the University of Alabama, Office of Archaeological Services conducted by Gene A. Ford in 1997.

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INFORMATION ABOUT LUSTRON DEALERSHIPS

Thank you for your inquiry about a Lustron dealership. While we would much prefer to send you a personal reply, the heavy volume of dealership correspondence forces us to answer your questions by furnishing you with a general summary on how Lustron dealers are selected and how they function.

I. How Lustron Dealers Operate -

Lustron dealers are franchised on a non-exclusive basis to operate in their community. Generally, a dealership will be limited to a city and its immediate trading area. The Lustron dealer erects, sells and services Lustron homes and helps arrange mortgage financing for home purchasers.

He is entirely responsible for putting in foundations and erecting the house packages which are purchased from the Lustron Corporation. To hold down costs and to ensure quality, Lustron dealers are not permitted to subcontract this work.

In a good many instances the dealer may wish to incorporate for the purpose of bringing into the corporate structure an established home building or construction organization to satisfactorily meet these requirements.

No Lustron homes are sold to middlemen for resale. The Lustron dealer sells directly to the owner-occupant. We feel that the best way to build customer good will is to give the Lustron home purchaser the best possible buy in housing today; that means eliminating intermediaries who would take extra profits and raise the price to consumers.

II. How Lustron Dealers are Selected.

Lustron dealers are enfranchised dependent upon their ability to fully realize the sales potential in the territory requested. The principal factors involved in judging the qualifications of an applicant are:

- A. Current experience as a builder and contractor.
- B. Record of past business success.
- C. Ample financial backing.
- D. Good local reputation.
- E. An organization composed of personnel experienced in construction work, real estate sales and financing.

III. How Lustron Dealerships are Set Up.

As soon as a franchise is granted, a dealer will make arrangements for several of his construction personnel to attend the Lustron Service School. At the school, the basic essentials of Lustron home erection

are taught. In addition to this training of his crew, the dealer receives aid from a Lustron service representative in the erection of his demonstration home.

A sales representative coordinates erection of the demonstration home with plans for its public showing. The Lustron Sales Promotion department assists the dealer planning publicity, advertising, furnishing and landscaping.

#### IV. Lustron Plans

The schedule for Lustron homes calls for production increases to a high level and very rapidly. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that this is a huge and entirely new business which must be organized systematically. It will take some time to develop smoothly operating dealerships everywhere.

Therefore, a dealer applicant should continue in his present business to provide income and employment for his personnel until the dealership becomes fully operative.

#### V. Conclusion:

The men we seek for Lustron dealers are those who desire to establish a permanent business - who have the long-run pull definitely in mind and can organize for it, men who can see the importance of giving good value now to build good will for the future. We are not interested in the kind of business-men who continually shift from one enterprise to another on a speculative basis.

If after considering this information, you believe you can qualify as a Lustron dealer, you are invited to submit the enclosed Application for Dealership blank, a financial statement and a Personal Data Supplement for each principal in your organization. Additional pertinent data may be attached. Your application will receive our careful and thorough investigation - which may take sixty days or longer.

Whether you apply or not, we want you to know that your interest in the Lustron home is appreciated, and we hope that you will continue to follow our progress in presenting to America a new standard for living.

## (SUGGESTED FORM)

LUSTRON DEALERS' COST ESTIMATE SHEET

Cost of Complete Lustron Package		\$	<u>6000.00</u>
Land Cost			<u>2200.00</u>
Freight			<u>195.00</u>
Services			<u>          </u>
Sewer Extension			<u>145.00</u>
Water Extension			<u>60.00</u>
Gas Extension			<u>75.00</u>
Electric Extension			<u>135.00</u>
Septic Tank Installation			<u>          </u>
Oil Tank Installation			<u>95.00</u>
Erection Costs			<u>8905.00</u>
Site Improvements			<u>          </u>
Foundation and Floor Slab			<u>900.00</u>
Sidewalk	_____	ft. wide	<u>90.00</u>
Curb and Gutter	_____	ft.	<u>75.00</u>
Walks	_____	ft.	<u>75.00</u>
Drive	_____	ft.	<u>375.00</u>
Fill	_____	yds.	<u>160.00</u>
Excess Dirt Removal	_____	yds.	<u>          </u>
Tree, etc. Removal			<u>90.00</u>
Grading			<u>40.00</u>
Landscaping			<u>          </u>
Plant Material and Labor			<u>235.00</u>
Seeding or Sodding			<u>40.00</u>
Dealer's Commission			<u>1000.00</u>
Total Sales Price		\$	<u>11,925.00</u>

## FACT SHEET

Lustron Corporation  
420 East Fifth Avenue  
Columbus 16, Ohio

The House

Precision built Lustron Homes are manufactured by straight line production methods. This newest application of lifetime porcelain finish on steel marks a radical departure from conventional building methods. Standard 2' x 2' exterior wall panels, standard 2' x 8' interior wall panels, standard 4' x 4' ceiling panels and shaped roof panels cover the interior and exterior of the home. All are designed as basic porcelain panels, coated on both sides to insure permanence.

CONSTRUCTION The skeleton of the house is made of steel framing, factory-welded into wall sections and roof trusses. Porcelain finish steel panels cover the roof, exterior and interior walls. Interlocking with each other, they are attached to the frame with concealed screws. Compressed between the panels is a permanent plastic sealing strip which forms a gasket and assures an air tight moisture resistant enclosure. This all steel construction provides great durability and strength.

DESIGN A choice of several colors in carefully blended combinations is available for the exterior. Interiors are finished in rich neutral tones which blend with any furniture or decorating scheme and which never need painting. Lustron colors have been carefully designed with the help of Howard Ketchum, Inc., one of the nation's foremost color experts. General lines follow the one-story modified ranch style architecture which has proved so popular in the past few years.

ROOF Specially shaped roof panels are designed both for strength and rugged appearance. The panels are finished on both sides with lifetime porcelain on steel. They are fastened to the steel roof trusses with concealed screws, giving the house a permanent and unusually attractive roof.

PERMANENCE The nature of lifetime porcelain finish is such that a Lustron Home never needs re-roofing or painting. The home is built of consistently high quality materials. Fire-safe, Lustron Homes receive the same low insurance rates as solid masonry construction. Rat-proof, decay-proof, termite and rodent-proof. The Lustron finish will not fade, crack or peel. Damage resulting from abuse can be easily repaired. All-aluminum sash windows open out, are easily operated from inside by crank type handles. Screens are included.

FOUNDATION The house is erected on a concrete slab. No basement, no expensive excavation necessary. Foundation is insulated with the best known material for foundation insulation.

INSULATION Walls and ceiling are fully insulated with high quality, fire resistant permanent material, making the home wonderfully cool in summer and snug and warm in winter. Special attention has been paid to cross ventilation of the bedrooms by the arrangement of the windows.

MODELS At present the Lustron Home is available in two Westchester DeLuxe Models. One is a two bedroom home of 1093 square feet, including a porch. The other is a three bedroom plan containing 1217 square feet. Both are equipped with

many deluxe features including built-in bookshelves, bedroom vanity-storage wall, eleven closets and overhead storage cabinets, oil or gas radiant panel heating, dishwasher-clotheswasher combination, china cabinet passthrough, large picture windows, large service and storage area.

GARAGES The same exterior wall and roof panels which are used in the Lustron Home are sold to Lustron dealers in packages for one- and two-car garages to match the houses. These are fastened to wood framing supplied by the dealers. Breezeways, patios, carports, screened porches can be added by the dealer, at the customer's option, using Lustron panels in combination with conventional materials to give unlimited variety to Lustron Homes.

PRICE Lustron cannot quote a delivered and erected price for any home. To the factory cost of the house and transportation charges, the local builder-dealer adds the cost of erection labor, which amounts to 300 to 400 man hours at prevailing carpenter rates. Plumbing requires 40 hours, electrical work 25 hours, asphalt tile installation 12 to 16 hours. Site preparation, installation of electric, water, gas (or oil tank), and sewage lines is additional, as is the design and preparation of walks, driveways, landscaping and the addition of garages, breezeways and other features at the customer's option. Many of these costs vary according to size and condition of the lot.

### The Plant

THE LUSTRON CORPORATION plant is leased from the War Assets Administration at \$35,000 per month. It is located directly east of Columbus, Ohio, near the Pennsylvania and B & O railroads. It is conveniently accessible to US highways 40, 62, and 33, a stone's throw from the Columbus airport.

In area it comprises 1,100,000 square feet of floor space in two huge buildings having floor space under roof equivalent to 22 football fields. Within the plant there has been installed \$15,000,000 worth of furnaces, presses, dies, welding machines and other tools necessary to turn out homes on full three-shift operation at the rate of 100 per day. Best production record to date is 27 in a single eight-hour shift. Forty-two houses have been shipped in one day.

Engineering of the plant has placed fabricating and processing equipment for manufacture of panels, cabinets, and sanitary ware in one building. The second building provides fabrication and assembly of structural members along with the integration of manufactured pieces with purchased parts. Huge truck-trailers serve as the assembly line package. These trailers are loaded inversely to the order in which parts are needed during house erection, so that they serve as warehouses on the construction site.

Production is controlled by orders on hand, with virtually no warehouse space for completed houses. Parts are fabricated on 163 presses, ranging from 50 to 1500 ton capacity. The largest of these presses can draw a bathtub in a single operation. Three huge automatic presses can turn out 2' x 2' panels in steady stream. The manufacturing processes are sustained and production flow maintained by more than 2 miles of constantly moving conveyors.

The largest porcelain enameling setup in the world is housed in one building where eleven specially designed furnaces with their accessory equipment might be considered as eleven enameling plants. Two of the eleven furnaces, electric ones, have the largest rated capacity of any in the world. The other nine furnaces are much

Welding is an important process in the manufacture of the Lustron Home. Here too, the Lustron plant is equipped to do projection and spot welding. One of the most complicated industrial welding applications is the automatic machine used in the assembly of roof trusses, in which 31 welds are completed in a 40-second cycle.

One important Lustron development is the use of cold rolled automobile body sheet steel of standard gauges. Ceramic engineers developed the process and materials to enable firing the porcelain at much lower temperatures than other plants. By permitting lower firing temperatures, this method cuts fuel costs, decreases warpage, and reduces tooling materially. Also of a revolutionary nature, was the use of cover coat porcelain enamel directly to the steel with the elimination of the conventional base or ground coat.

All labor within the plant is A.F. of L., workers being members of the carpenters, plumbers, or electricians unions.

### Transportation

Lustron homes are carried from the Columbus, Ohio plant on specially built trailers to the site where they are to be erected. The country has been divided into zones, to permit uniform delivery prices at points equidistant from the factory.

Trailers used in the movement of the houses from the factory to the site are loaded on the plant assembly line, in proper rotation to permit rapid unloading and erection in the field. When it is necessary to ship homes by rail, the trailer is placed on a flat car, or specially crated to comply with railroad classifications. Tests are being conducted for export shipments, both by special crating and by shipping the loaded trailer.

The overall length of the Lustron truck and trailer is 45 feet. Trailer length is 32'6", width 8' and overall height 12'3".

Trailers are designed to accommodate the parts of the house without crating. Compartments and racks are designed to prevent damage to the materials while in transit, as well as during loading and unloading operations.

Tractors and trailers are leased by Lustron. Combination trailer-tractors are brightly colored in blue and yellow to permit ready visibility and an appearance of neatness and cleanliness which is evident in the house. On December 31, 1949, there were 800 of these specially designed trailers and 200 tractors available to Lustron.

### Dealers

Builder-dealers are franchised to erect houses within a given geographical area. Prerequisite to receiving a franchise is experience in the construction and sales field, a good credit record, sufficient working capital and willingness to use AFL union labor.

At the end of 1949, Lustron has 234 dealers located in 35 states, and one in Venezuela. The dealer organization is growing constantly.

Dealers are responsible for initiating their own sales, and for constructing the homes. Any variations from the standard plans are the responsibility of the dealers.

Lustron conducts a Sales and Management Training Clinic at the factory to train dealers in the successful operation of a dealership.

### Erection

A standard erection procedure has been prescribed by the Service Department of the Lustron Corporation, which is responsible for instruction of dealer erection crews, quality control of erection in the field, and replacement of parts damaged in shipment.

When the first Lustron homes were erected, workmen required as many as 1500 hours to piece the buildings together in the field. Engineering developments and improved erection methods have cut this time to an average of 350 hours—with some houses being put up in as few as 250 hours. Normal building time is approximately two weeks. AF of L carpenters, electricians and plumbers are used for all field construction labor.

Lustron maintains an Erection Training School at the factory to train dealers' supervisors and foremen in efficient erection methods.

### Home Finance

Lustron homes are being financed through all sources of mortgage financing. Loans have been made by many of the largest insurance companies through their branch offices throughout the country. Savings and loan associations have been prominent in Lustron customer financing, making a large number of loans without government guarantee.

Almost all Federal Housing Administration offices east of the Rocky Mountains have by now processed mortgage insurance applications on Lustron homes. Field offices of the Veterans Administration have guaranteed second mortgage loans to veterans in many localities thereby enabling them to buy Lustron homes with little or no down payments. The amounts which the lending institutions, FHA and VA, are willing to loan or guarantee are being gradually raised as the Lustron home demonstrates its potentialities for market acceptability and owner satisfaction.

Lustron Corporation and the Galbreath Mortgage Company, of Columbus, Ohio, have developed a plan for interim financing of dealers which has been acclaimed by everyone in the home manufacturing industry as a distinct contribution to the solution of one of the major problems of the industry. The plan has been made available to one other company and the Galbreath Mortgage Company has received overtures for its extension to many others. Under the plan, Lustron dealers may receive a loan for erection costs plus payment for the Lustron house package as it leaves the gate on the Lustron special trailer.

Shipments and Inventory

Shipments of Lustron Homes have diminished completely the inventory of homes built up during the production testing of the factory. At the present time, only a minimum inventory of ten or fifteen houses is maintained to provide for color and other options to meet the needs of customers and zoning regulations.

Shipments by states to and including December 31, 1949, have been as follows:

Alabama	15	New Jersey	12
Arkansas	12	New Mexico	7
Connecticut	42	New York	103
District of Columbia	20	North Carolina	39
Florida	16	North Dakota	12
Georgia	18	Ohio	275
Illinois	307	Oklahoma	8
Indiana	142	Pennsylvania	116
Iowa	112	South Carolina	2
Kansas	70	South Dakota	27
Kentucky	28	Tennessee	29
Louisiana	22	Texas	13
Maryland	7	Virginia	81
Massachusetts	22	West Virginia	64
Michigan	48	Wisconsin	129
Minnesota	29	Export	5
Mississippi	5	Test & Demonstration	<u>11</u>
Missouri	97		
Nebraska	25	TOTAL SHIPMENTS	1970

Public Acceptance

A total of 404,061 letters and written inquiries have been received by Lustron Corporation since April 1948, when its national advertising began. In addition, it is estimated that more than two million people have visited and inspected demonstration Lustron Homes in communities throughout the country east of the Rocky Mountains.

Independent surveys of Lustron homeowners show almost universal satisfaction with the Lustron Home by those who have invested their money and who are in the best position to judge. In localities where a number of Lustron Homes have been erected, dealers report no difficulty securing additional sales. Public acceptance or customer orders have not been serious problems in most localities.

Sales have held up surprisingly well in November and December, and prospects are good for January and February, in spite of winter weather.

As dealers become better organized to handle the widespread demand for Lustron Homes, and as financing arrangements are being simplified, the sales prospects for the months ahead look very good.

Current Financial Summary

Lustron has not borrowed any money from RFC since September 13, 1949. At the present time, Lustron has liquid assets in the form of cash and receivables of over two and a half million dollars. The only money needed now is to

provide for additional working capital on a stepped up program beginning in March—dictated by an improvement in sales.

Expenses of creating the manufacturing facilities were at a peak in June 1949. Losses as of November have been reduced by almost one million dollars per month. The loss in November was \$628,431.83, which included \$158,734.56 for interest and rent paid back to the government, \$107,370.93 charged off for depreciation and amortization of equipment already paid for, and \$159,180.54 charged off for unused mileage which is subject to recovery when volume increases, leaving a net loss excluding these fixed charges of \$203,145.80 for November.

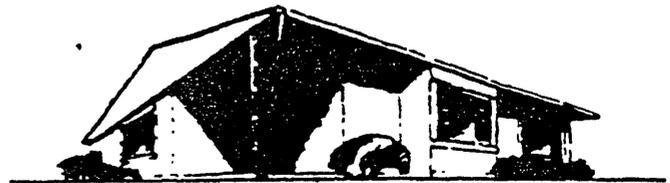
The last loans from RFC were granted on a short term basis with the understanding that re-payments would be scheduled by RFC to meet Lustron's ability to pay.

December 31, 1949

*THE* **LUSTRON** *HOME*

# PLANNING GUIDE

FOR YOUR DEMONSTRATION HOME



**SITE SELECTION**

**SITE PLANNING**

**INTERIOR DECORATION**

**SITE PLANS**

**LUSTRON CORPORATION**

**COLUMBUS, OHIO**

THE

*L*USTRON

PLANNING GUIDE

**location**

**size**

**cost**

**streets**

**blocks**

**lots**

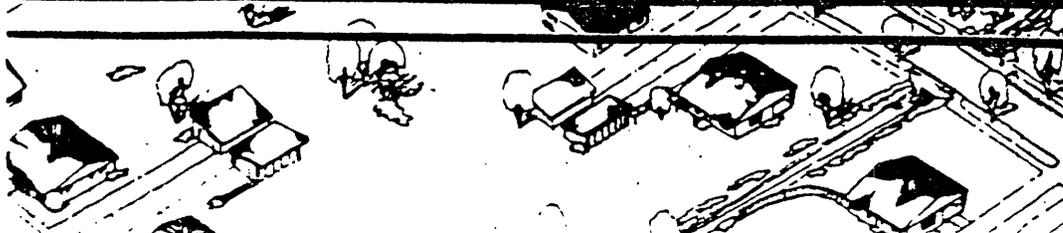
**utilities**

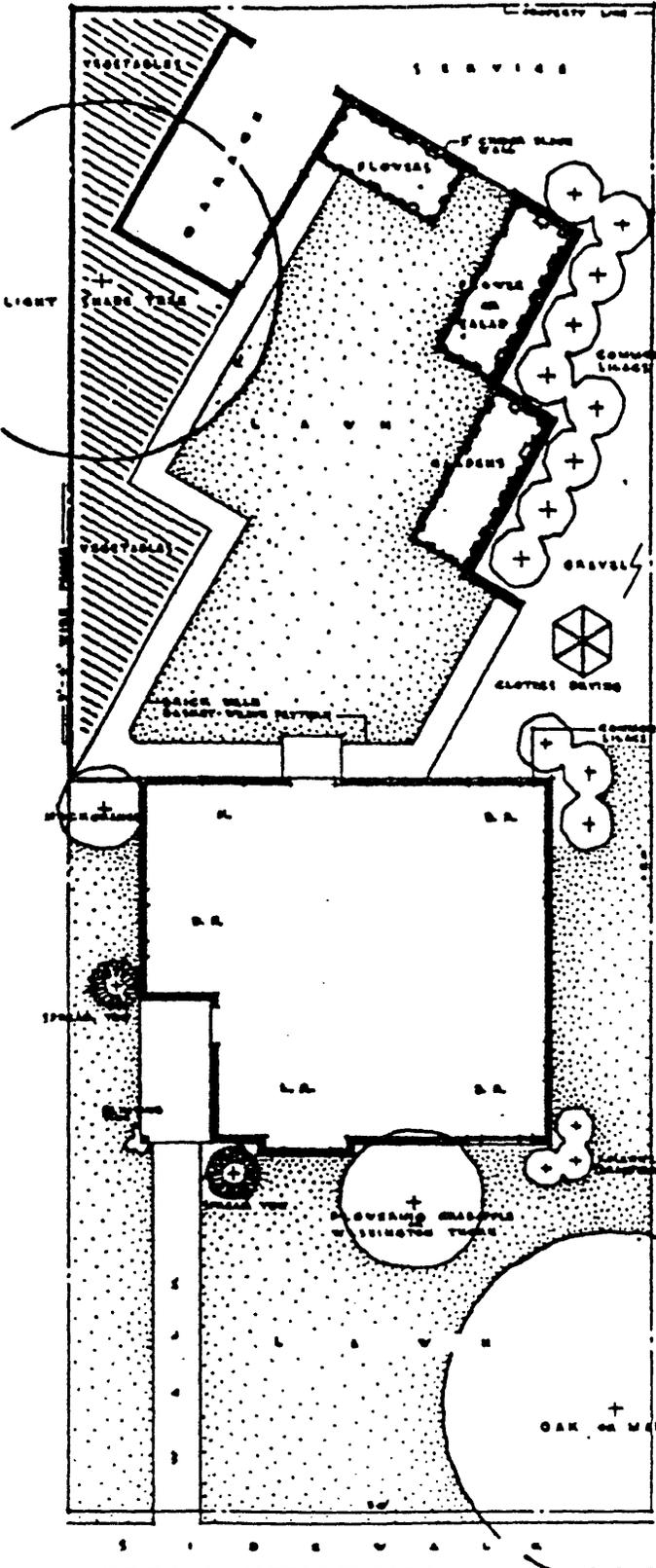
**plantings**

**illustrations**

LUSTRON CORPORATION

COLUMBUS, OHIO





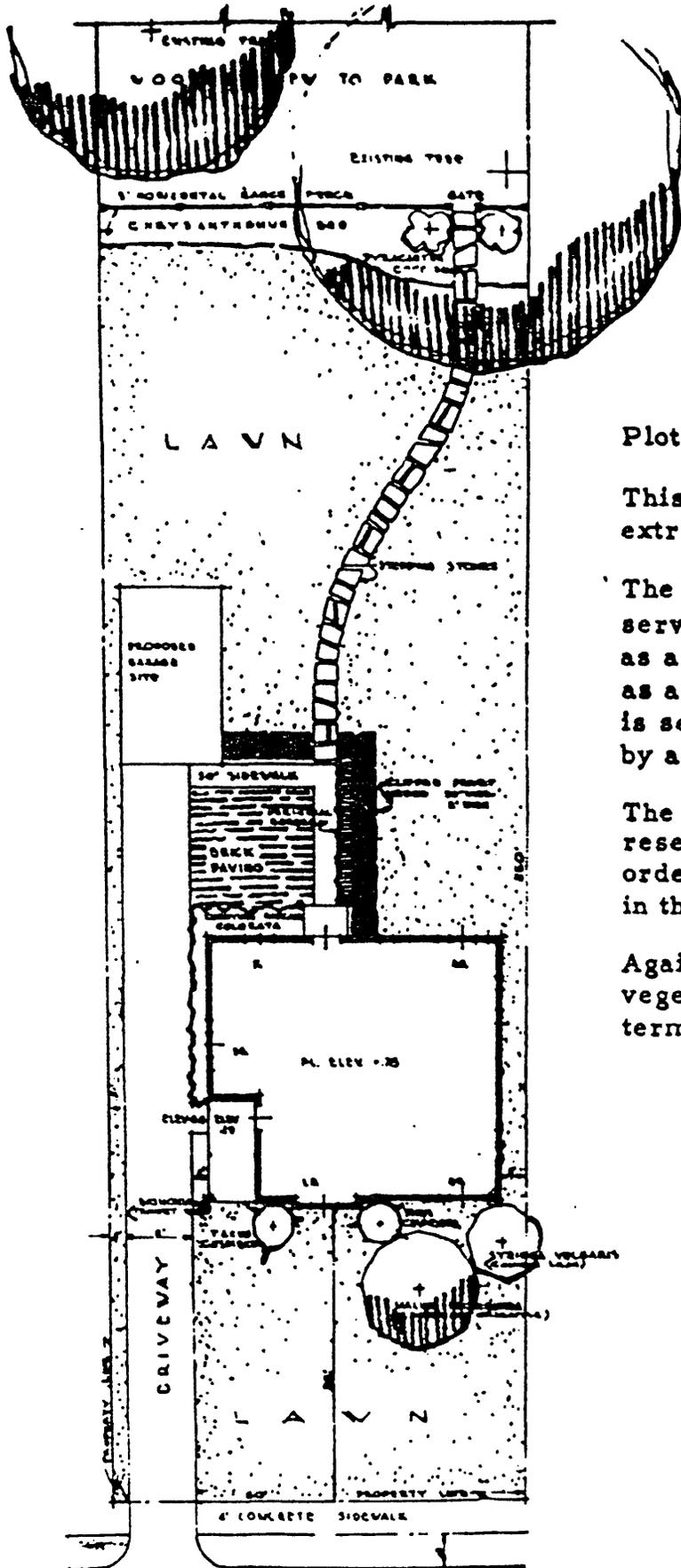
Plot Plan No. 1

This plan is suggested for an interior lot, 50 x 120 feet.

The garage is located at an angle to provide easy access from the alley.

To make the back yard seem deeper, a diagonal arrangement is used for the living-lawn and flower or vegetable plots.

The clothes lines are conveniently located near the service entrance and are reached by a brick walk.



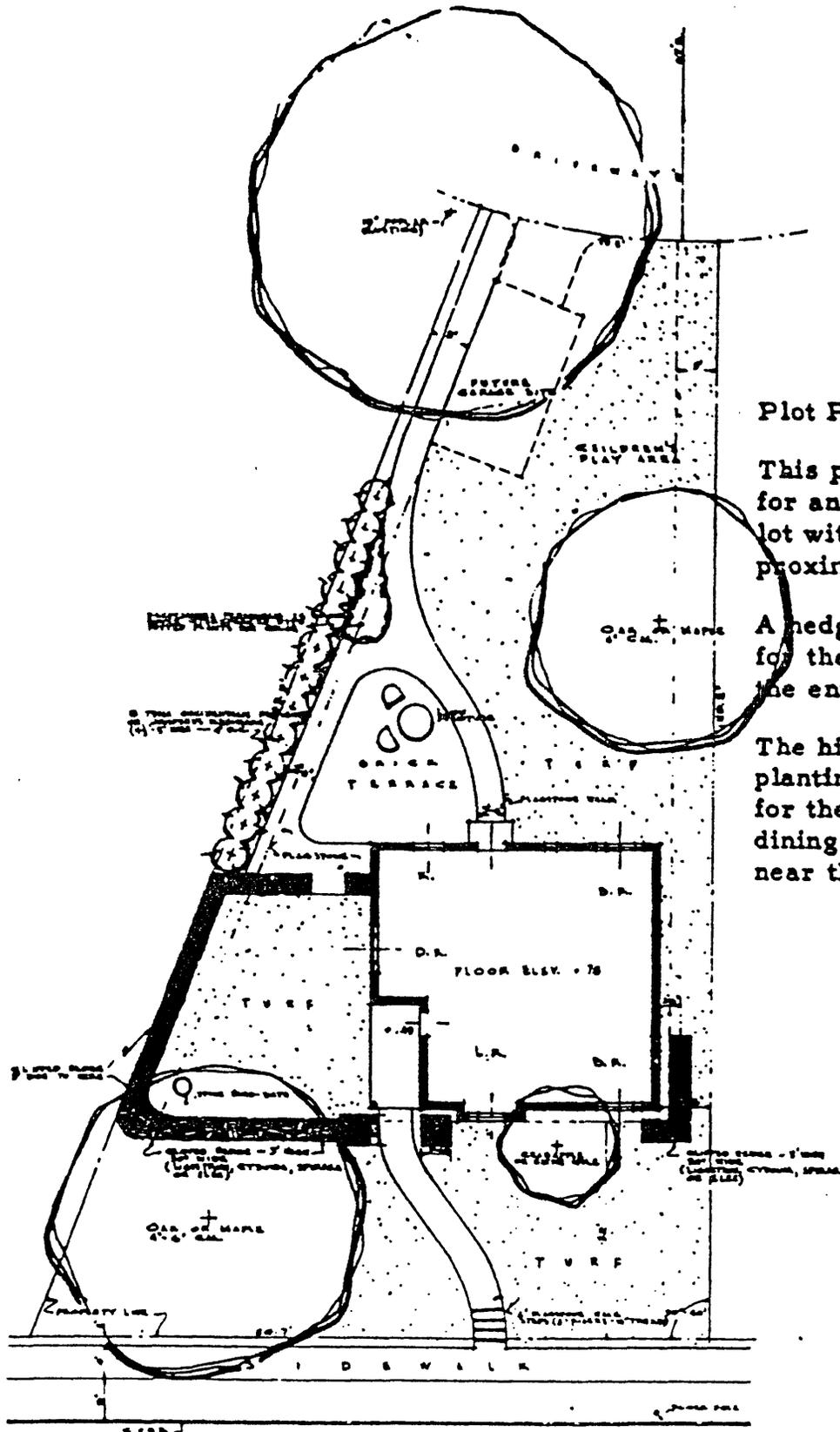
### Plot Plan No. 2

This plan was designed for an extremely deep lot 50 x 250 feet.

The terrace is located near the service entrance and can be used as a play area for children or as a living-dining terrace. It is separated from the lawn area by a hedge.

The extreme rear of the lot is reserved as a copse woodland in order to reduce the maintenance in this expensively deep lot

Against the woods, a flower or vegetable border is suggested to terminate the lawn area.



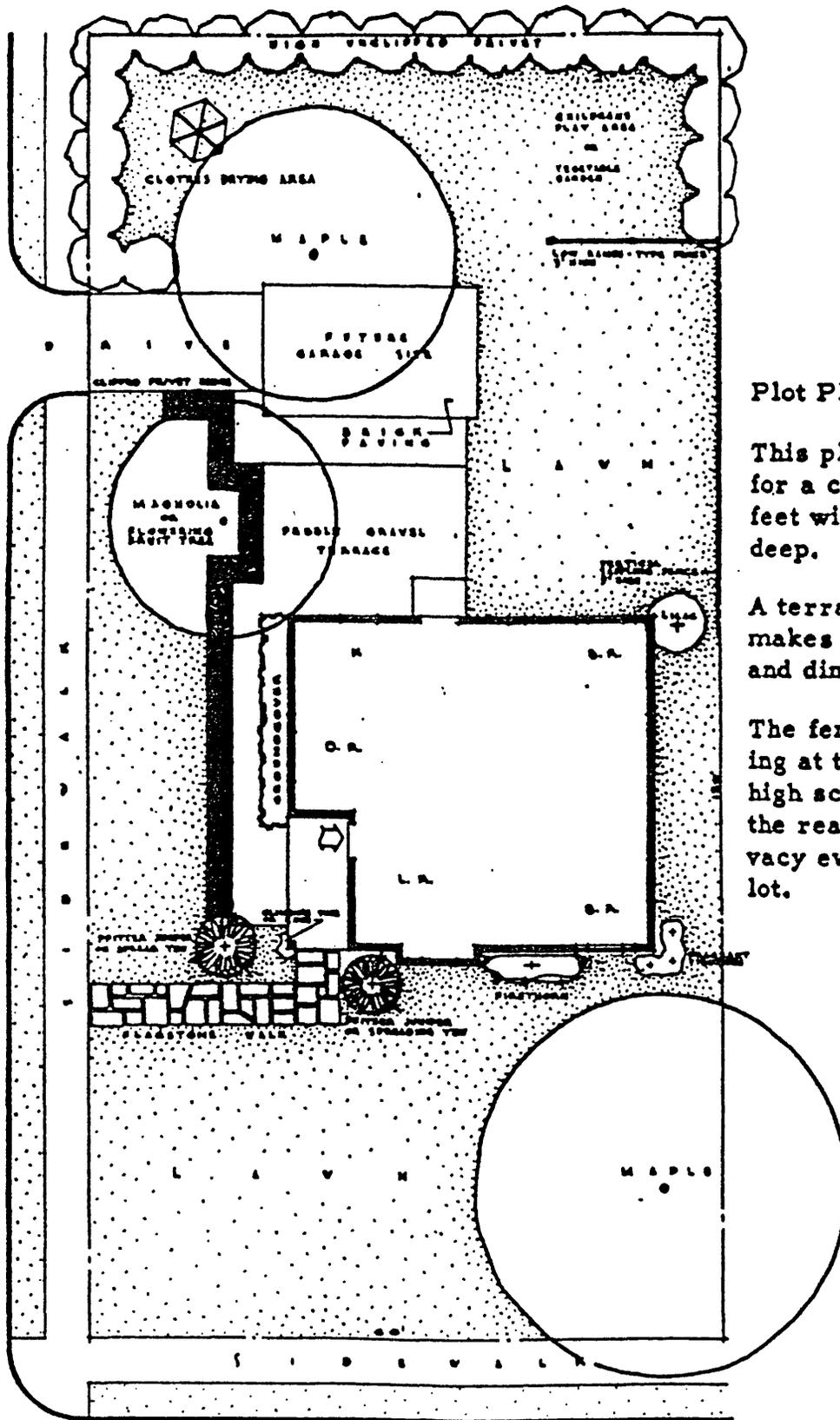
**Plot Plan No. 3**

This plan was designed for an irregular shaped lot with a frontage approximately 80 feet.

A hedge provides privacy for the area adjacent to the entrance porch.

The high evergreen screen planting provides privacy for the paved living or dining terrace located near the service entrance.



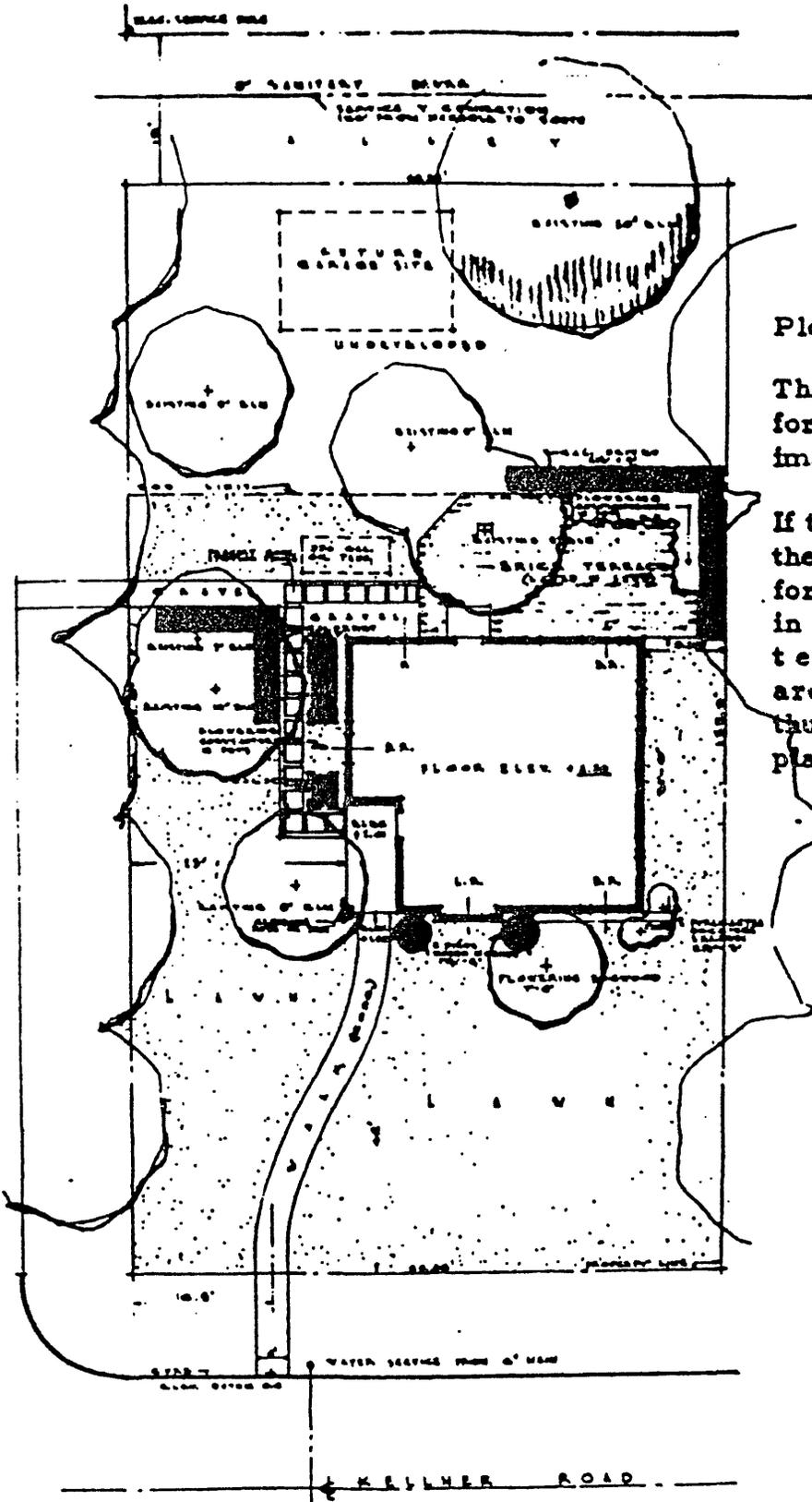


**Plot Plan No. 5**

This plan is suggested for a corner lot, 60 feet wide and 120 feet deep.

A terrace at the rear makes an outdoor living and dining area.

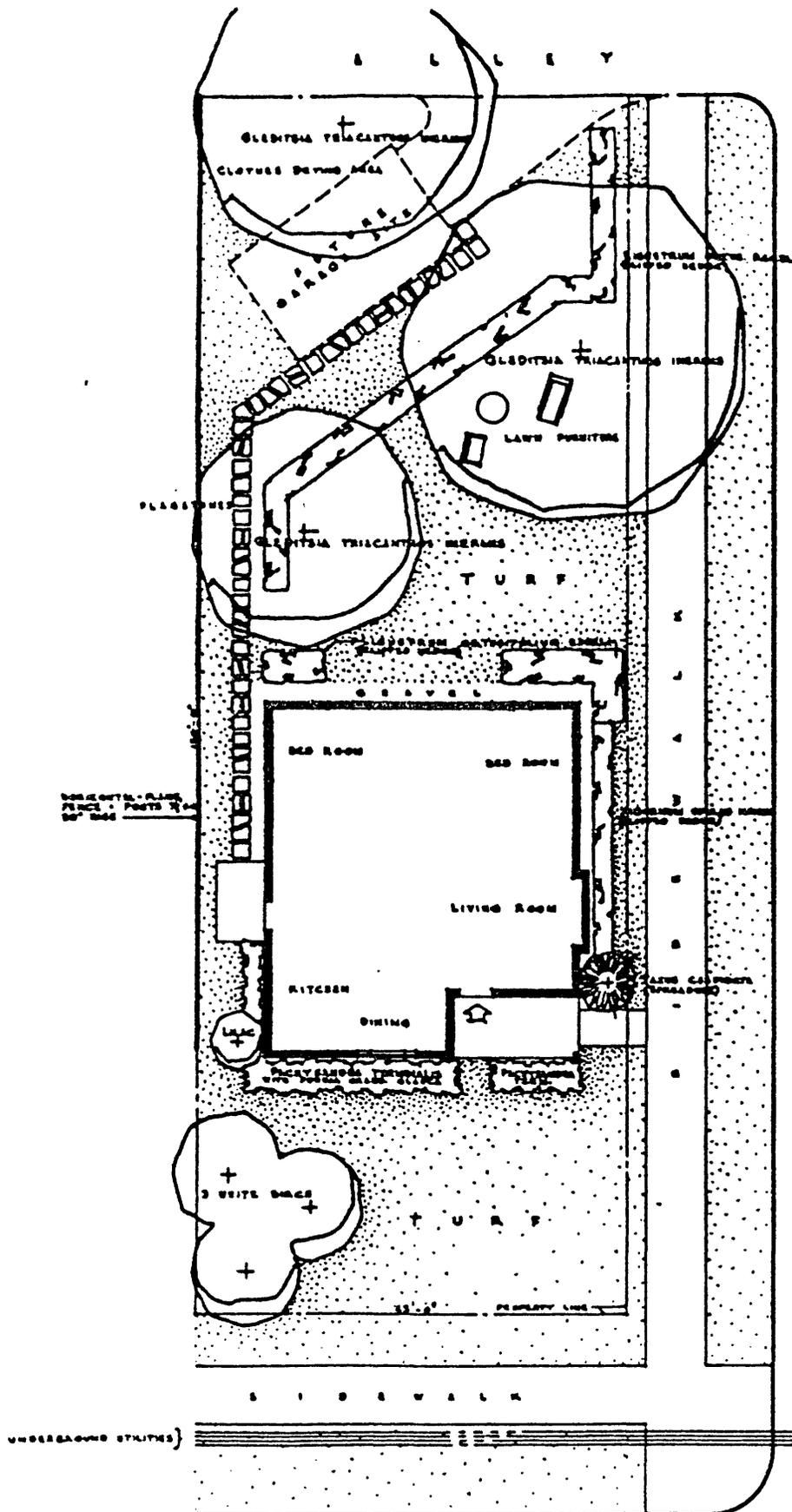
The fence and the planting at the sides and the high screen planting at the rear provides privacy even on this corner lot.



Plot Plan No. 6

This plan is suggested for a corner lot approximately 70 x 122 feet.

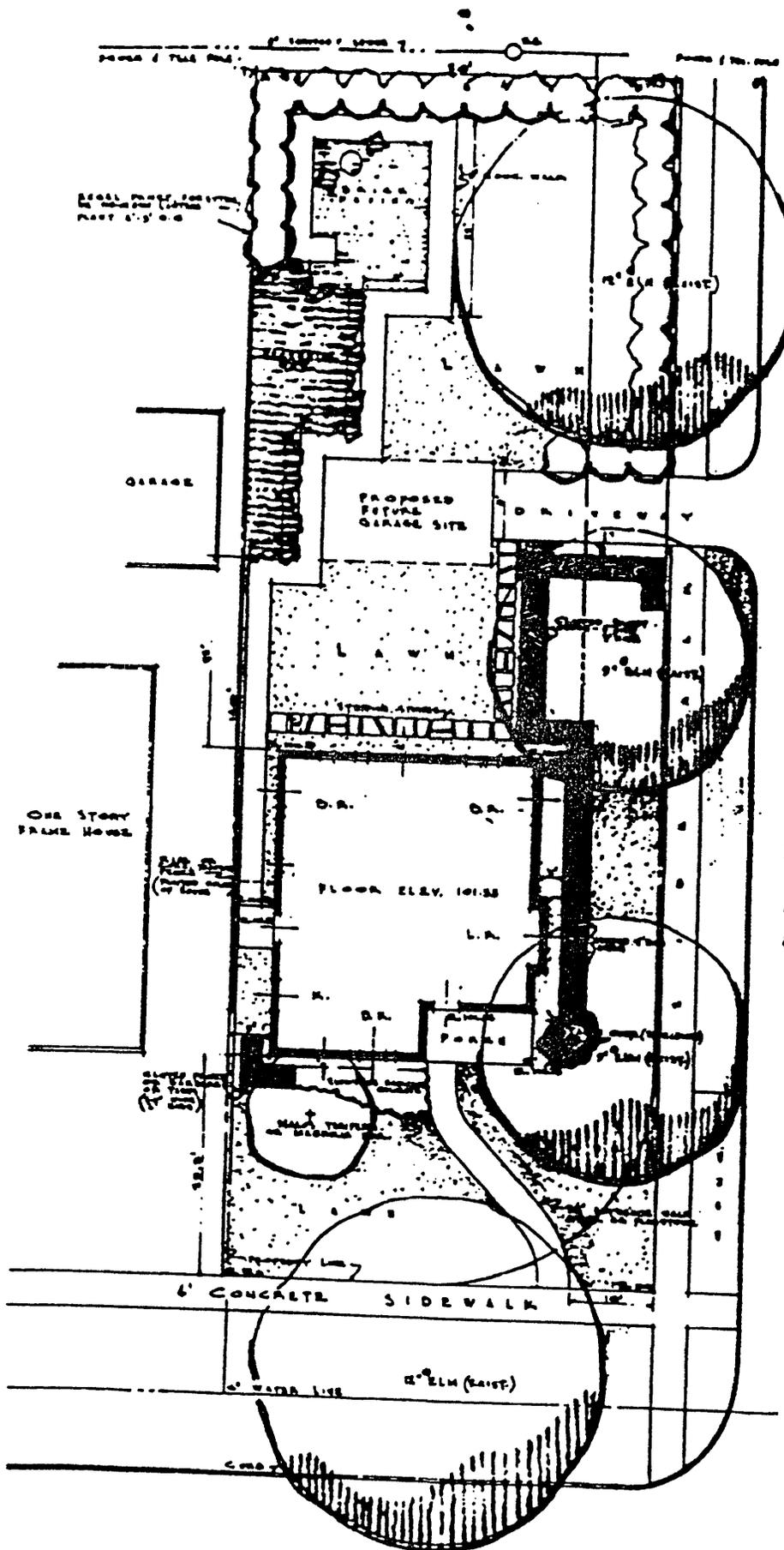
If there are children in the family, a play area for them could be arranged in the area behind the paved terrace. The various areas are separated by a hedge, thus simplifying the entire planting and plant material.



Plot Plan No. 7

This plan is suggested for an extremely narrow corner lot, 43 x 120 feet.

If the building restrictions pertaining to the side yard limit lines will permit the house to be erected on the lot, this plan is particularly pleasant. The garage located at the rear of the lot, and at an angle, provides easy access from the alley. The hedge repeating the angle screens the service area from the living lawn.



**Plot Plan No. 8**

This plan is another suggestion for a corner lot 50 x 140 feet.

The existing trees on the right side of the property determined the placement of the house. The hedge and screen planting at the rear of the property is suggested to provide privacy. The lawn near the rear of the house could be used as a play area for children.

Look 2, at Page 14 in the office of the Judge of Probate, Clarke County, Alabama.

And said default continuing uncorrected, now, therefore, under and by virtue of the powers of sale contained in said mortgage, notice is hereby given that in order to secure the collection of said indebtedness, said mortgage will be foreclosed and said property sold at public auction, for cash, to the highest bidder by sale to be held in front of the Courthouse Door of Clarke County, Alabama on Tuesday, March 22, 1949 at 12 o'clock noon.

Institutional Securities Corporation, Assignee of said mortgagee. T. Watrous Garrett, Armbrrecht, Inge, Twitty & Jackson, Attorneys for said Assignee. 47-3t

Attachment 7

See Hopson **Signal**

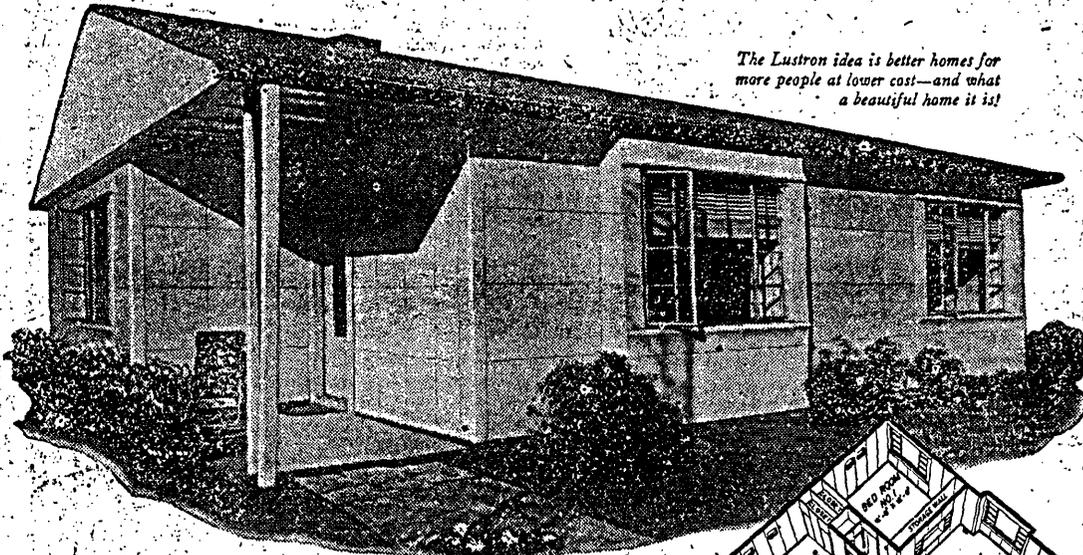
# Stewart Buick Co.

Jackson

Alabama



## McKee Construction Co., Inc. appointed Lustron dealer



The Lustron idea is better homes for more people at lower cost—and what a beautiful home it is!

Lustron Corporation, Columbus, Ohio, is pleased to announce the appointment of a new builder-dealer

Here's the good news so many of you have been waiting to hear.

There is now a Lustron builder-dealer in this community. Carefully selected from a number of applicants on the basis of knowledge of local construction and real estate conditions, this firm will be responsible for the sale, erection, arranging for financing and servicing of Lustron Homes here.

This announcement means that you will soon be able to see and inspect the Lustron Home—the new standard for living—you have heard so much about.

This is the new idea in homes—the house with the strength of steel and the lifetime beauty of porcelain enamel. Here is more in living space, more in convenience and more in real value received than has ever been offered in home construction.

Watch for the announcement of the opening of the Lustron home in Jackson.

**McKee Construction Co., Inc.**  
Jackson, Ala.

See what you get when American engineering "know-how" goes to work in the home building field. Five spacious rooms—more than 1000 square feet of usable floor area. No repainting, redecorating, reroofing—with the enduring beauty of porcelain enamel. Automatic radiant panel heating system. Combination dishwasher-clothes-washer. And look at all the built-in shelves, cupboards, closets, and storage space.

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he'd never make a farmer. All this talk about his wanting to study engineering and such nonsense—I won't have my daughter be his wife!"

"Now, listen, Elviry," he said boldly, "you're just carrying on so because Jennie's outwitted you! This would never have happened if you hadn't been so stubborn and would have consented to their marrying in the first place. If there's anything you women-can't stand it's to have another woman outdo you—even if she is your own daughter!"

She read the note over again. "Jennie says they're leaving for the city. That must mean the 11:15 train. It's just eleven now; if we hurry we can catch her." Under her breath she added to herself, "So she thinks she can outwit me!" and drawing her lips into a hard, thin line, she grimly barged out the door. Hiram followed.

She opened the squeaky garage doors with an effort, and they went inside. He puffed away on his pipe as she fumbled in her huge handbag.

"Hiram, have you the car key?"

"No, Elviry, I ain't seen it all day." She dashed out the door and he followed with a flashlight. They searched the driveway. They overturned flagstones and ran their fingers over short blades of grass. But there was no key. They went into the house and turned everything upside down. But no key.

"HIRAM," she exclaimed suddenly, "you sat in that rocking chair when you came in. What did



"Hiram," she exclaimed suddenly, "you sat in that rocking chair when I came in. What did you do with my things?"

"Why, I set them on the table over there."

"Yes you did!" she accused. "You set everything there but the car key. Don't try to lie to me now, Hiram! I know very well you'd like to see her get away, but I won't have it! Hiram, if you got that

car key, I swear to goodness, I won't see it."

The train leaves in two minutes," she wailed as she glanced at her clock. Her spirit was entirely broken. Her great frame even seemed to sag.

Hiram patted her benevolently. "Well, you go to bed now, Elviry. I have a good cry. Crying always does women folk good. You'll be along in a while."

He walked onto the porch. The air was sweet with the smell of hay. In the distance he heard the melancholy whistle of a train, then he was quiet again. He puffed contentedly for a while on his corn-cob pipe, then he took it from his mouth and knocked the bowl against the railing. There was a bright flash and a small clink of metal as the ashes tumbled to the ground. Hiram smiled shyly to himself, pocketed his battered old pipe and started in.

Released by WNU Features

for hog grazing. It can be kept through the winter by treating for weevils soon after it is harvested. U. S. 13 is very quick making, good for earliest hog grazing, and is not recommended for storage.

The rush of farm work will probably slow down carrying out PMA practices for about three months now, but there are still a few practices that might be well carried out at this time. If your pasture has not been fertilized, an application of 0-14-10 right now will greatly increase your summer grazing. It is also all right to

of the last meeting were read by Mrs. A. L. Payne, Sr., secretary, and Mrs. Mary Carter, treasurer, gave a financial report. Mrs. C. B. Peavy gave a report for the nominating committee for officers for the coming year. All of the old officials were re-elected with the exception of a new vice-president, Mrs. Graham Waita.

There will not be a meeting on Monday, April 11. The circle meeting and mission study will be combined for Monday, April 18th. The meeting closed with the watchword.

Lustron Houses in Alabama MPN

Attachment 8

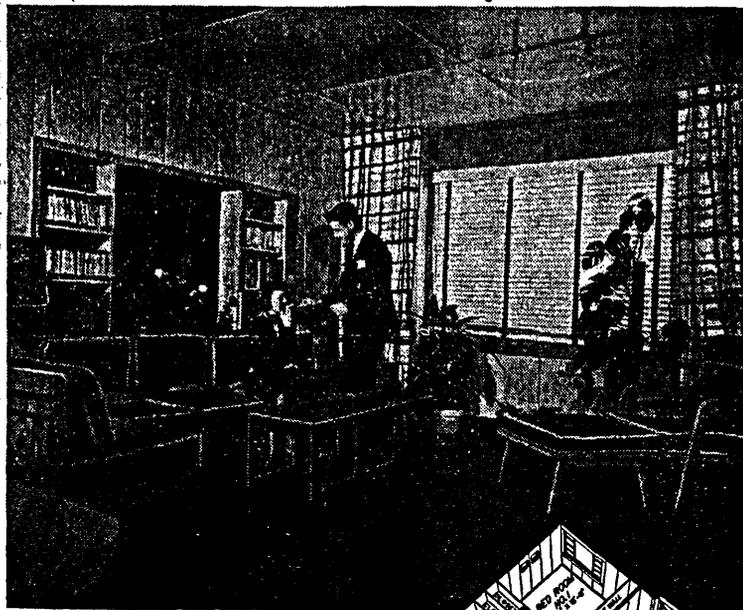
FURNITURE CO.

THOMASVILLE, ALA.



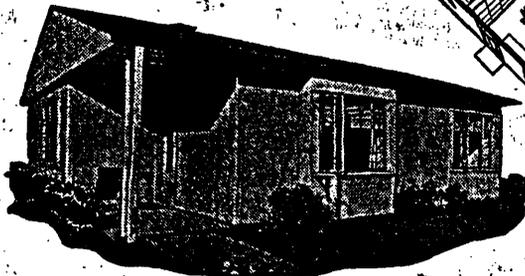
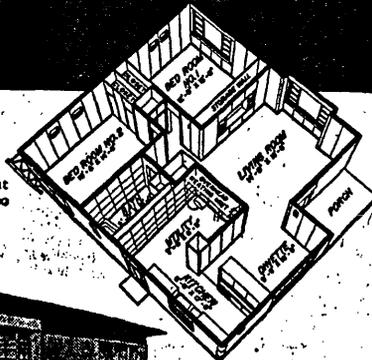
# See the house America is talking about

OPEN FOR INSPECTION  
Every afternoon from 1 P.M., daily and Sunday for one week starting Saturday, April 16th.



We call it "a new standard for living"—and so will you when you see the spacious rooms, bright colors and big windows of the Lustron Home.

Functional floor plan demonstrates step-saving arrangement of five big rooms, plus utility room—more than 1,000 square feet of floor area.



It's beautiful, colorful, livable—and it comes to you complete and ready to move into, with a host of new features found only in the Lustron Home.

Of course you have heard about Lustron.

It is the most talked-about new idea in the home building field. All over the country people are applauding this new conception of a better home for more people at lower cost.

Now we invite you to see for yourself. Come and inspect the first new Lustron Home to be exhibited in this community.

It is your opportunity to see for the first time what American engineering "know-how" is doing to provide housing in volume for more American families.

You will see the strength and permanence of steel and the lifetime beauty of porcelain enamel combined in a great new home building material.

You will see a home that never needs repainting, redecorating, or reroofing. Your only cleaning materials are soap, water and a damp cloth. Neither sunlight, salt water, chemical fumes nor smoke can fade or stain the porcelain enamel finish.

Radiant panel heating offers the latest word in healthful comfort, cleanliness, and even distribution of heat. Big closets and ample storage space are contained in working walls without sacrifice of floor area.

Don't put off seeing this new contribution to the art of living. Visit the Lustron demonstration home now.

**McKee Construction Company, Inc.**

JACKSON

ALABAMA

# THE LUSTRON HOME

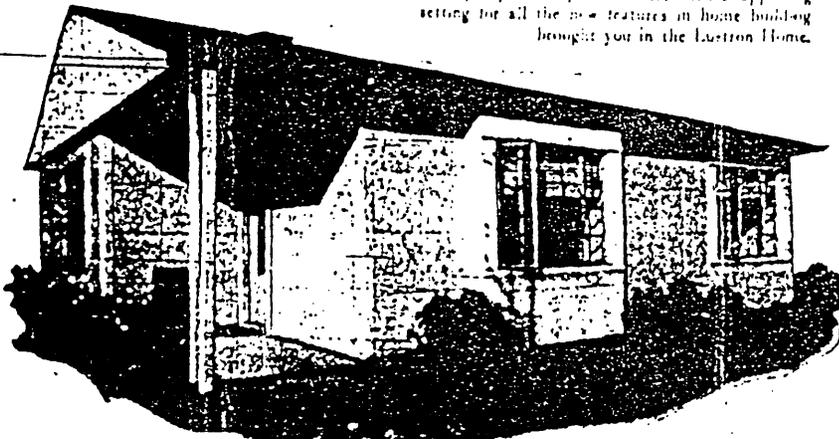
Lustron Houses in Alabama MPN

Attachment 9

## Never before in America a house-like this

NOW READY FOR  
YOUR INSPECTION AT  
**HARRISON AVE.**  
(OFF CALIFORNIA STREET)

Contemporary ranch-style architecture makes appealing setting for all the new features in home building brought you in the Lustron Home.



THIS IS YOUR INVITATION to inspect the first new Lustron Home in this community.

It is your opportunity to see for the first time what American engineering "know-how" is doing to provide desperately needed housing for more American families. The Lustron Home has become the most talked-of home in America because it is produced by modern straight-line factory production methods, making it the first truly mass-produced house in America. For decades this has been the objective of all progressive building men.

Living in the Lustron Home is modern living, designed expressly to meet the needs of the American family.

You get five spacious rooms, plus a large utility room — more than 1,000 square feet of floor space.

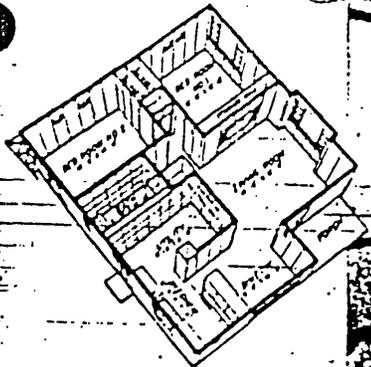
You get a home with the strength and permanence of steel and the lifetime beauty of porcelain enamel built with precision engineering techniques applied for the first time to home construction.

Your only cleaning materials are soap, water and a damp cloth. Neither sunlight, salt water, chemical fumes, nor smoke can fade or stain the finish.

Women will appreciate the many features that make this "the home of cheerful convenience." Big closets and ample storage space are contained in working walls without sacrifice of floor space. Radiant panel heating offers the last word in comfort, cleanliness, and even distribution of heat.

Remember, the Lustron Home comes to you complete, including built-in bookcase and cabinets, combination dishwasher-clotheswasher sink, radiant panel heating system, exhaust fan, complete bathroom fixtures, closets, drawers, cabinets, and shelves. All you need to buy is your own range and refrigerator, and, of course, your own home furnishings.

Don't put off seeing this new contribution to the art of living. Visit the Lustron demonstration home now.



San how designers have arranged maximum space for each room in this functional floor plan.



Master bedroom includes this working wall of drawers, shelves, and closets; big mirrored dressing table is feature women exclaim over. Both bedrooms take twin beds, have cross ventilation.



Furniture By—MASON FURNITURE CO.

Draperies By—DUNNAVANT'S

OPEN

SUNDAYS ..... 2:00 - 8:00 P.M.

DAILY ..... 5:00 - 8:00 P.M.

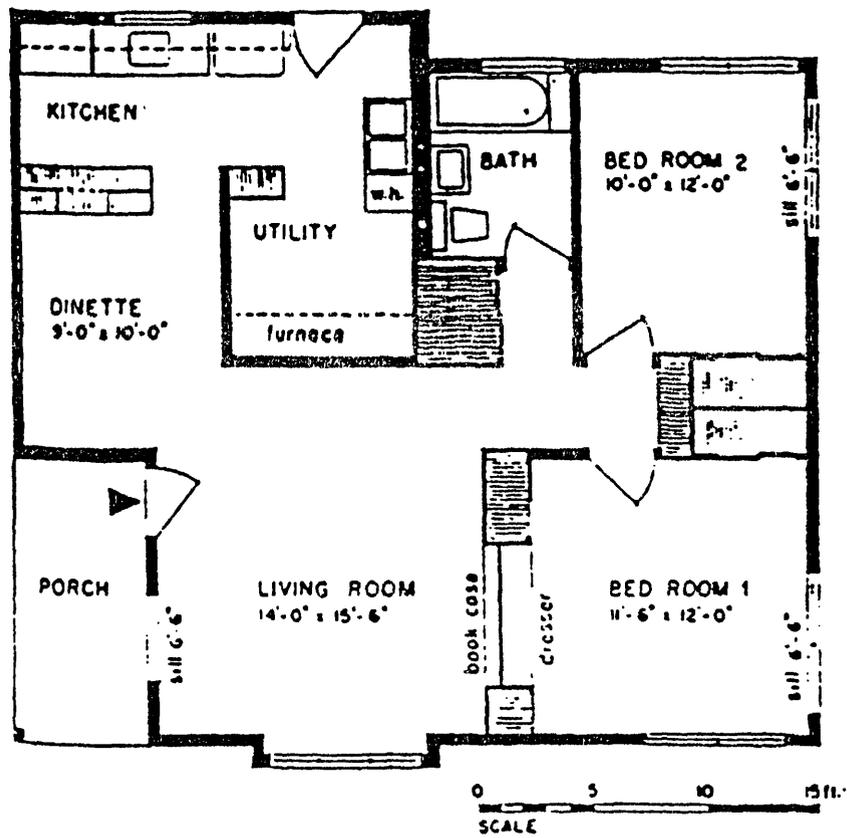
**LLOYD STEEL BLDG. CO.**

140 BROWN ST.

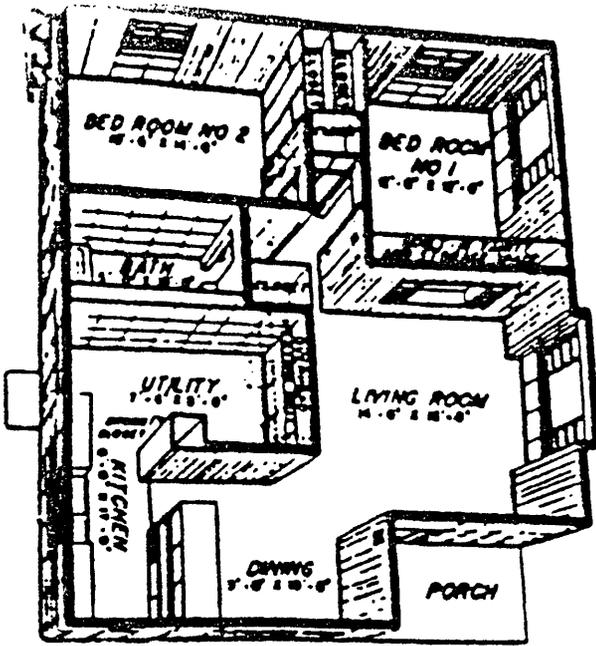
**Alabama Lustron Locations**  
**2/97**

<b>Current Owner</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>NR Eligible</b>
<b>Jackson</b>		
Michael Blount 513 College Avenue Jackson, AL 36545	Westchester 2 Bedroom	Yes
Jewel Hinton 116 W. Pearl Street Jackson, AL 36545	Westchester 2 bedroom	No
<b>Tuscaloosa</b>		
Morgan Tunstall 27 Parkview Drive Tuscaloosa, AL 35401	Westchester 2 bedroom I.D. #632	Yes
<b>Birmingham</b>		
Cynthia Thomas 2420 Cahaba Road Birmingham, AL 35223	Westchester 3 bedroom I.D. #2056	Yes
Harvey E. Moore 2424 Cahaba Road Birmingham, AL	Westchester 2 bedroom I.D. #1969	Yes
Shade Valley Garden Apts. 430 Columbiana Road Birmingham, AL 35259	Newport 2 bedroom	Yes
<b>Florence</b>		
William M. Bowen 1145 Wildwood Park Road Florence, 35630	Westchester 2 bedroom	Yes
Evelyn C. Keenum 1822 Ridge Avenue Florence, AL 35630	Westchester 2 bedroom I.D. #2019	Yes
Price A. Jr. Irons 321 Beverly Avenue Florence, AL 35630	Westchester 2 bedroom I.D. #1396	Yes
<b>Sheffield</b>		
Basil Luff 211 Pickwick Street Sheffield, AL 35660	Westchester 2 bedroom	No

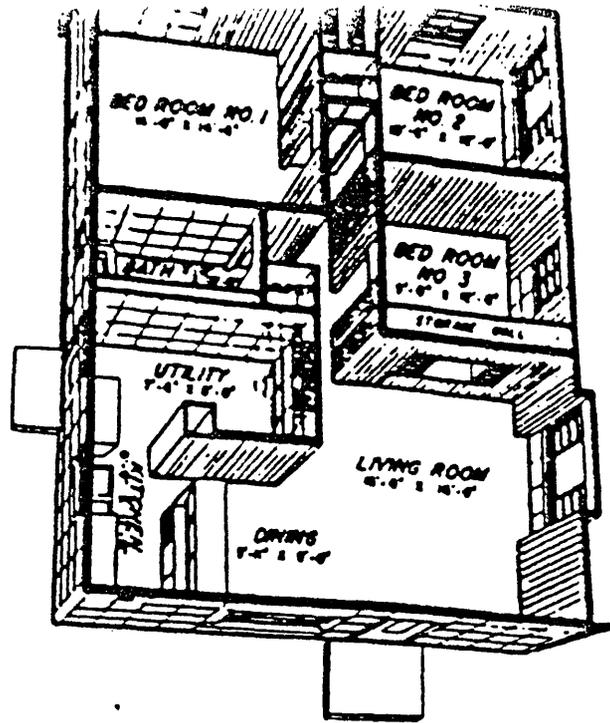
<b>Current Owner</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>NR Eligible</b>
Edward L. Newman 1406 34th Street Sheffield, AL 35660	Westchester 2 bedroom	Yes



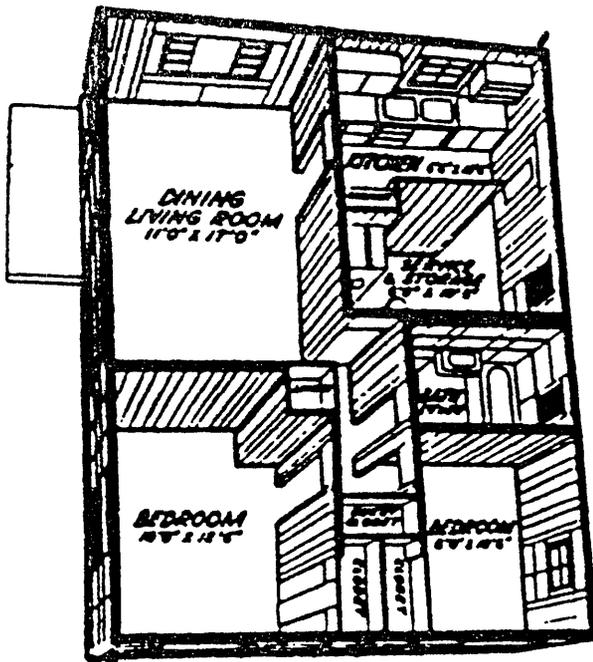
Blass & Beckman, proposed floor plan (Architectural Forum).



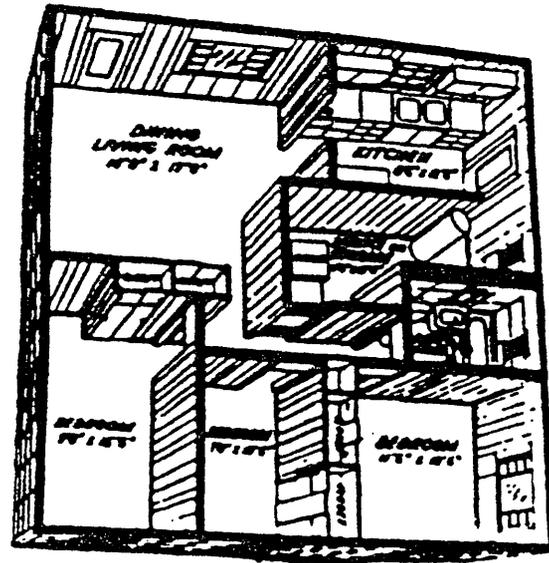
Floor plan,  
Westchester two-bedroom  
model.



Floor plan,  
Westchester three-bedroom  
model.



Floor plan,  
Newport two-bedroom  
model.



Floor plan,  
Newport three-bedroom  
model.