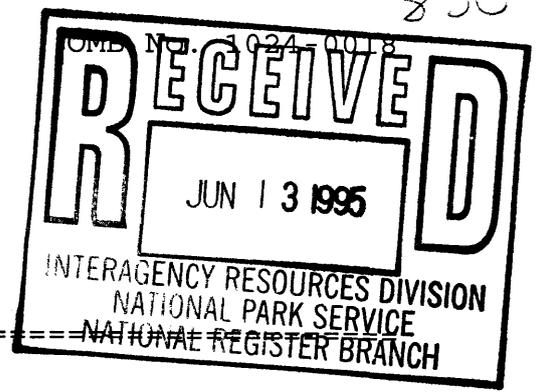


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: TRACY HOUSE _____

other name/site number: _____

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number: 18971 Edgecliff Drive SW _____

not for publication: _____

city/town: Seattle _____

vicinity: NA

state: WA county: King _____ code: 033 zip code: 98166

=====

3. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property: Private _____

Category of Property: Building _____

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
____ 2	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
____ 2	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA _____

Name of related multiple property listing: NA _____

=====

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

=====
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Gray M. Sampson
Signature of certifying official

6/1/95
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====
5. National Park Service Certification
=====

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
_____ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the
National Register
_____ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the
National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Careal O'Shull

7-13-95

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic: DOMESTIC _____
DOMESTIC _____

Sub: single dwelling _____
secondary structure _____

Current : DOMESTIC _____
DOMESTIC _____

Sub: single dwelling _____
secondary structure _____

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification:

MODERN MOVEMENT/Wrightian _____
MODERN MOVEMENT/Usonian _____

Other Description: NA _____
Materials: foundation: concrete_ roof: concrete
 walls: concrete_ other: wood _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: State _____.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C _____

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : G _____

Areas of Significance: Architecture _____
Period(s) of Significance: 1954-1956
Significant Dates : 1956
Significant Person(s): NA _____
Cultural Affiliation: NA _____

Architect/Builder: Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect _____
Ray Brandes, Builder _____

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

X See continuation

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- X Other -- Specify Repository: William and Elizabeth Tracy _____

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property: Approximately .6 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
 A 10 549060 5253200 B _____
 ___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.

Lot two (2) block fifteen (15) Normandy Park, Riviera Section, according to plat recorded in Vol. 33 of plats, page 1 in King County, Washington.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

These boundaries coincide with the original lot lines and current ownership.

=====

11. Form Prepared By

=====

Name/Title: Marilyn Sullivan _____

Organization: Preservation Consultant _____ Date: February 10, 1995 _____

Street & Number: 4649 41st Avenue NE _____ Telephone: (206) 522-6686 _____

City or Town: Seattle _____ State: WA_ ZIP: 98105 _____

Owners: William B. and Elizabeth Tracy
 18971 Edgecliff Drive SW
 Seattle, Washington 98166
 (206) 243-8439

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The Tracy House is located in Normandy Park, a 1950s suburb south of Seattle. It is nestled into the crest of a cliff on the east shore of Puget Sound.

Barely visible from the street, the house is partially below grade on the east side and oriented to the west and southwest. A detached garage/workshop is situated east of the house and connected to it by masonry terraces, steps and retaining wall. Three concrete pools descend the slope from the garage toward the street.

The Tracy House is constructed of concrete textile blocks joined by one inch steel reinforcing bars. According to William Storrer's catalog of Wright designs, "although the blocks appear to be uniform, there are several different ones for inside and outside corners, roof and walls." Some are perforated and glazed while others are coffered. Glazed perforated blocks form the structural columns between loggia doors. All operable windows are also glazed perforated blocks set in horizontal bands.

The Tracy House rests on a slab-on-grade foundation built according to Wright's specifications for "dry wall footings." A gravity heating system is built into the foundation. The exposed concrete slab floor is tinted a warm terra cotta color and is scored into large blocks indicating the two foot square planning grid Wright used in his design.

Interior spaces are open with the living and dining areas combined. A portion of the ceiling is raised creating clerestory lighting and natural ventilation.

Three bedrooms and a bath are connected to the public areas by a narrow gallery finished in flush mounted vertical redwood paneling and coffered blocks. The bedrooms are similarly finished with fine wood paneling, concrete blocks and built-in furniture.

The entire house is furnished with Wright-designed redwood furniture built-in cabinets and bookcases. (See attached floor plan.)

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Significance

Criterion C: Architecture

The Tracy House, 1954-1956 is an excellent example of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian solution to the problem of the small, single family residence. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of the type including definitive horizontal massing; slab on grade foundation with exposed concrete slab floor; flat roof with no attic; flowing interior spaces with combined living and dining areas; kitchen-utility "workspace"; small bedrooms along a gallery; gravity heating; fenestration grouped in continuous horizontal bands; a dominant fireplace; and Wright-designed furniture. The Tracy House also expresses Wright's Usonian ideal that the house should be literally a part of its site as well as open and connected to the outdoors. The Tracy House is built into a dramatic bluff above the Puget Sound.

The Tracy House is one of only three Wright-designed houses in the state of Washington and remains in original condition.

Criterion Consideration G:

Although less than fifty years of age, this property is of exceptional importance as one of only three known Frank Lloyd Wright houses in the State of Washington. Despite its recent history, sufficient scholarly analysis exists to assess Wright's work and its seminal importance in the history of American architecture. Specifically, the Usonian House gives form to 20th century housing ideals and trends and had major influence on the development of contemporary housing.

Locally, the Tracy House has been of continuous public interest since its construction.

The Tracy's seek designation at this time in order to incorporate protective measures for the house in their estate plan.

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Context

Somewhere in the evolution of the "American dream", individual home ownership became more than a simple need for more housing. It became a singular symbol of democracy's success. By the 20th century, great hopes were held that affordable housing could provide "images of democracy on its way to fulfillment" and foster social stability. During the 1920s, this idea became conventional wisdom when the Federal government established specific programs and agencies to promote affordable individual housing for all who wanted it.

In 1923, Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, stated government policy when he asserted that "maintaining a high percentage of individual homeowners is one of the searching tests that now challenge the people of the United States. The present large proportion of families that own their homes is both the foundation of a sound economic and social system and a guarantee that our society will continue to develop rationally as changing conditions demand." Thus, Hoover promoted government programs that would encourage single family construction and the Federal government endorsed private efforts and local initiatives to do the same.

These efforts included the "Own Your Home" campaign started by the Department of Labor and an expanded Bureau of Standards which tested and encouraged standardization of such things as building materials. The Division of Building and Housing, established in 1921 "sought to modernize American building practices" and Homemaking Information Centers offered a variety of public education opportunities on topics such as family budgets and house planning. And the Better Homes in America movement which had begun in 1922 provided a cooperative link between private and government housing promotions by sponsoring local committees that encouraged modest, affordable housing primarily through National Better Homes Week.

The government's efforts to promote the "small house"; that is, moderate-cost dwellings, dovetailed with, and was, perhaps, highly influenced by the already popular mail-order house industry which reached its heyday in the early twenties. Major retailers such as Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward as well as numerous specialty firms had begun selling

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everything from house plans to entire houses by mail in the late 19th century. Catalogues and plan books reflecting popular architectural tastes proliferated.

It is important to note that none of the housing-by-mail catalogues offered innovation in architecture. Rather, they followed popular culture which sometimes meant copying designs out of popular women's magazines as well as from Craftsman and Bungalow Magazines, magazines which were advocating simple efficient houses "free of senseless ornamentation."

One of the leading magazines in establishing popular tastes was the Ladies Home Journal which began its own "model Journal houses" campaign in the late 1890s and offered designs by some of the best architects of the day. The idea was to present innovative designs which cost between \$3,500 and \$5,000. For \$5.00 readers could order an entire set of plans and specifications with which to build copies of the designs.

In 1901, Edward Bok, editor of the magazine, launched the first of a series of designs for modern dwellings by young Frank Lloyd Wright, an architect, who for the rest of his career would demonstrate passionate concern for the problems of the small, single family house.

Indeed, half century later Wright said "the American 'small house' is still a pressing, needy, hungry and confused issue."

"The house of moderate cost," he said, "is not only America's major architectural problem but most difficult for her major architects."

"As for me," he continued, "I would rather solve it with satisfaction to myself and Usonia, than build anything I can think of at the moment..."

In making this statement Wright was prefacing a discussion of his solution to the problem - his Usonian house. "Usonia" was Wright's euphemistic term for the United States.

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Wright, too, held to the notion that housing was an expression of democracy. Architecturally, the typically long, low Usonian designs were greatly influenced by Wright's early 20th century Prairie designs, particularly their horizontal massing. But Wright saw this massing as representative of freedom. "I see this extended horizontal line as the true earth line of human life, indicative of freedom. Always. The broad expanded plane is the horizontal plane infinitely extended. In this lies such freedom for man on this earth as he may call his."

Thus it was that in 1937, Frank Lloyd Wright at age 70 began producing designs for modest, single family dwellings which would, for the next three decades, give form to twentieth century ideals and trends in housing and powerfully influence contemporary housing.

Of the some 400 Usonian Houses he designed, three were built in Washington State. The Tracy House in Seattle is an excellent case study not only for its architectural significance but for the information it offers about our social history. The post World War II United States, its challenges, ideals, opportunities and spirit are clearly reflected in the Tracy House story.

Elizabeth Tracy grew up in Michigan and studied art under Alma Goetsch and Katherine Winkler at Michigan State University before deciding to train as a physical therapist. The polio epidemic of the late 1940s and early 1950s increased the demand for therapists and she was offered a job in Boise, Idaho working with polio survivors.

Bill Tracy grew up on the Oregon Coast and attended college on the G.I. Bill after serving in World War II. In fact, it was Veterans Administration counseling that encouraged him to study architecture. Subsequently, he graduated in architecture and engineering from the University of Idaho.

The Tracy's met and married while he was in school. In admiration of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture, the Tracy's sought out examples of his work and visited them at every opportunity.

When Bill Tracy took an engineering job with Boeing in 1952, the

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Tracy's moved to Seattle. Serendipitously, they met architect Milton Stricker, a Wright apprentice, through mutual friends. It was Stricker to whom the Tracy's turned when they purchased a lot in the newly incorporated town of Normandy Park south of Seattle in 1953. Normandy Park was relatively undeveloped at the time and Bill laughs when he tells about trying to show friends the new lot and not being able to find it himself along the curved wooded bluffside.

Stricker looked at the dramatic site overlooking the Puget Sound and suggested that he contact Frank Lloyd Wright on their behalf. The first contact with Wright was in 1953 but he felt they "needed more money". In August, 1954 when Stricker contacted Wright again, he responded in his typically concise way, saying he would like to help the Tracy's if he can. Bill Tracy believes the remark reflects what a busy year it was for 85 year old Wright who was working on the Guggenheim Museum and Beth Sholom Synagogue at the time.

The Tracy's specified their desire for a textile block house and then left the design to Wright, committed to building whatever Wright designed.

Elizabeth Tracy left her job and for the next two years Bill and Elizabeth built concrete textile blocks for their house. Under a shed on a vacant lot adjacent to their South Park duplex, they produced about eight blocks at a time, two shifts a day.

They contacted builder Ray Brandes, who had completed his own Wright-designed house in 1953, and worked side by side with him and his crew of three to build their house. (Brandes House previously nominated.) Elizabeth packed a lunch and reported to the construction site everyday. Among other tasks, she is largely responsible for the furniture-quality finish on the redwood interior paneling and furniture. Bill's engineering skills were invaluable. He reviewed the structural plans for the house and added compression steel to the cantilevered corners and diagonal bars in the corners of the floor - "just to be sure." He also employed new airplane technology to install operable glazing in window openings of the perforated textile blocks.

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In 1956, Bill and Elizabeth Tracy moved into their new house. Over the last thirty years the Tracy's have been inundated with requests for tours, photography sessions and interviews. Most recently the house was featured as the opening plate in Carla Lind's new book Usonian Houses.

The Tracy's share a belief that living in "a work of art" implies a responsibility to share and protect the resource with present and future generations. Thus, they seek designation of their house at this time as an integral part of planning for its long-term protection.

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Storrer, William Allen. The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

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Tracy House

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Tracy House:

1. Viewed from the northeast.
2. Garage viewed from the northeast with house in background.
3. Entrance detail viewed from the northeast.
4. Garage and landscape elements viewed from the south.
5. Garage workshop viewed from the southwest.
6. House viewed from the southeast.
7. Loggia and terrace viewed from the south.
8. Detail of western elevation viewed from the southwest.
9. Western elevation viewed from the west at bluff's edge.
10. Living room. Camera facing east.
11. Dining area adjacent to hearth with living area in the foreground.
12. Furniture detail.
13. Gallery looking toward master bedroom. Camera facing south.
14. Master bedroom detail. Camera facing southwest.
15. Bedroom detail with boxed light built into shelving.