

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

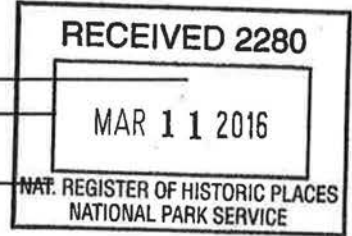
Historic name: Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District Amendment

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)



### 2. Location

Street & number: 431 First Street S.E., 11, 15, 21 Rock Glen, 507, 511, 525, 541 East State Street, 22, 28, 110, 120, 204 South Carolina Avenue, 56, 68, 78, 86 River Heights Drive, 121 South Connecticut Avenue

City or town: Mason City State: IA County: Cerro Gordo

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

	<u>7 March 2016</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>State Historical Society of Iowa</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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**Signature of commenting official:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Title :** \_\_\_\_\_ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register

other (explain:) *Accept Additional Documentation and Boundary Decrease for this previously-listed historic district.*

*Patrick Andrus*  
Signature of the Keeper

*4/26/2016*  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure

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Object



**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>9</u>	<u>                    </u>	buildings
<u>3</u>	<u>                    </u>	sites
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>2</u>	<u>                    </u>	objects
<u>16</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register                     

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Prairie School

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundations: Stone/Limestone; Walls: Stucco, Concrete, Wood; Roofs: Asphalt, Synthetics/ Rubber, Other

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### EXPLANATION OF AMENDMENT

The Rock Crest/Rock Glen National Register Historic District is being amended for the National Register of Historic Places at a national level of significance. This submission amends an earlier nomination done in 1979. The amendment has been done at the suggestion of the National Park Service, in order to expand and clarify the argument for national significance, in preparation for the possible nomination of the district as a National Historic Landmark. A completely new list of historic resources has been developed for the amendment, because in the 1979 nomination historic resources were not formally listed. Also, the boundary map of the earlier nomination implied the inclusion of properties on South Carolina Avenue between the Drake House and East State Street. These properties were not included in the text of the earlier nomination and are not included in this amendment. This amendment has been supported by a State of Iowa Historic Resource Development Program grant. The HRDP grant was matched by funding by the City of Mason City.

### Summary Paragraph

The Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District lies five blocks east of the center of Mason City, Iowa. The district covers 7.2 acres. The district straddles the banks of Willow Creek, which curves from the southwest corner of the district to the northeast corner. The district consists of sixteen contributing resources. There are nine single-family houses. There are three sites: the

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preserved open space on the northwest side of Willow Creek, the limestone bluffs on the south and east sides of the creek, and the foundation of a flour mill on the bank of Willow Creek. The mill pre-dates the creation of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development. There are two structures: a dam across the creek (adjacent to the mill) and a series of low limestone walls along the street boundaries of Rock Glen. There are also two objects: two exterior light fixtures designed for houses in the development by Walter Burley Griffin. One is located on the low limestone wall to the north of the James Blythe House. The other is located at the entrance to the Joshua Melson House. A fence along the street boundary of the Joshua Melson Property constructed after the original construction of the Melson House is listed as a non-contributing resource. The nine houses are all related to the Prairie School in their design, either as examples of that style, or, as is the case of one later house, as an example of one of the Prairie School's direct offspring, the Usonian house. The district's open space includes Willow Creek itself, the low, open land on the northwest or "left descending" side of the creek, and the series of limestone bluffs on the south and east, or "right descending" side of the curving creek.<sup>1</sup> The approximately 4.5 acre portion of the district on the northwest side of the creek slopes from the creek's bank up to relatively higher ground along the district's north and west boundaries, between twenty-five and thirty feet above the creek. Because of its low, gently sloping terrain designer Walter Burley Griffin named this area "Rock Glen." Rock Glen contains seven of the nine houses in the district. These houses sit on relatively high ground at the district's west and north edges. They are the James Blythe House, the Harry Page House, the Tom MacNider House, the Arthur Rule House, the Edward V. Franke House, the Hugh Gilmore House, and the Sam Schneider House. Opposite Rock Glen, on the right descending side of Willow Creek, limestone bluffs rise dramatically above the level of the creek. Griffin named the land at the top of the bluffs, overlooking the Glen, "Rock Crest." The two houses on Rock Crest included in the district are the Samuel Davis Drake House, to the east of the creek, and the Joshua Melson House, to the south. On each Rock Crest property grade slopes down gently from its street side to the top of the bluff. At the bluff grade drops quickly to the level of the creek below. The houses of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen district are of similar scale, typically two stories in height. A majority of the houses are stucco-covered with rusticated limestone bases. Exceptions to this are the Joshua Melson House, which is almost completely covered in rusticated limestone (with concrete accents), and the Tom MacNider House, which is covered with concrete bricks (smaller than standard concrete blocks). The historic integrity of the houses ranges from good to excellent. Rock Glen has remained open and undeveloped, as the original owners and designers intended. While Rock Crest was not completely built to Griffin's plan, its later development, with single-family houses, has not infringed on qualities to which Griffin aimed for the area, particularly the preservation of the bluffs and Willow Creek as they were at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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### **Narrative Description**

The Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District lies five blocks east of the center of Mason City, which, for the purposes of this nomination, is defined as Central Park. The park's southern boundary is West State Street. Five blocks east of the park, East State Street becomes the

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<sup>1</sup> The direction of flow of the creek is from the southwest corner of district to the northeast, so the south and east sides of the creek (Rock Crest) will be referred to as "right descending" and the northwest side of the creek (Rock Glen) will be referred to as "left descending."

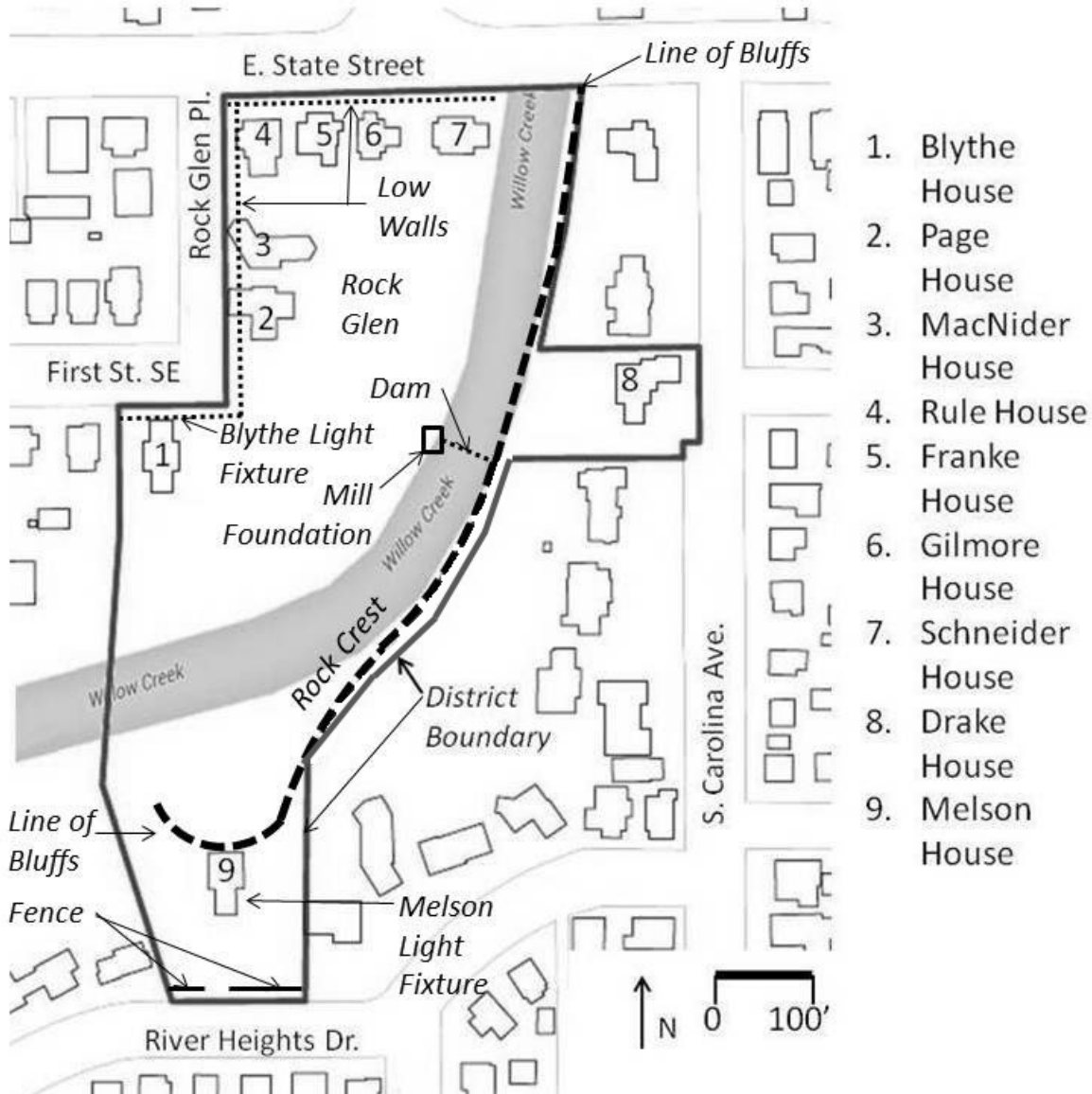
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northern boundary of the district. The district covers approximately 7.2 acres straddling Willow Creek, which curves through the district, flowing from the district's southwest corner to its northeast corner. The district consists of sixteen historic resources: nine single-family houses, the preserved open space on the northwest side of the creek, the limestone bluff on the south and east sides of the creek, the foundation of a mill on Willow Creek, the adjacent dam, the series of low limestone walls on the street boundary of Rock Glen and two Walter Burley Griffin-designed exterior light fixtures, one at the Blythe House and one at the Melson House.



**Fig. 1: Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District site plan.**

Base map, City of Mason City, formatted 10 December 2014.

On the left descending side of the creek is approximately 4.5 acres of land named by Walter Burley Griffin "Rock Glen," because of its low-lying, gently sloping grade (see contour plans,

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figs. 5-8). This grade rises up from the creek, which bounds the Glen on the south and east sides, to higher land at the north and west edges of the district, between twenty-five and thirty feet above the creek. The Glen is bound on the north by East State Street and on the west by Rock Glen Place, First Street S.E., and the western boundary of the James Blythe House. Rock Glen contains seven of the nine houses in the district. These houses are all privately-owned, single-family residences. They are the James Blythe House (431 First Street, S.E., 1913, Walter Burley Griffin), the Harry Page House (21 Rock Glen Place, 1912, Griffin), the Tom MacNider House (15 Rock Glen Place, 1959, Curtis Besinger), the Arthur Rule House (11 Rock Glen Place 1912, Griffin), the E.V. Franke House (507 East State Street, 1917, Francis Barry Byrne), the Hugh Gilmore House (511 East State Street, 1915, Byrne), and the Sam Schneider House (525 East State Street, 1915, Griffin). Except for the MacNider House, these houses are all of Prairie School design. The MacNider House is an example of the Usonian house, which, as a housing type developed by Frank Lloyd Wright later in his career, bears a direct stylistic relationship to the earlier Prairie School houses. Between the houses of the Glen and the creek, the Glen's rolling lawn is shaded by large trees. A driveway to the south of the four State Street houses allows access to their basement garages. The creek drops approximately eight feet in elevation as it curves through the district. This drop in elevation allowed for the construction of a dam and flour mill. The construction of the dam itself created a waterfall. At the west end of the waterfall the grade in Rock Glen rises to the site that formerly held the flour mill. The dam and concrete foundation of the mill still remain in this area and are included in the nomination as contributing resources: the dam as a structure and the foundation as a site. The mills site and dam are described by Robert E. McCoy, owner of the James Blythe property (which is adjacent to the mill site and dam):

The description is made from my observations over the past 50 years during which we have occupied the James E Blythe house. I presume the mill wheel was 60% inside the stone base of the mill and 40% inside the lower floor of the two-story wooden superstructure of the Mill. The force of the stream moving the mill wheel could be increased or diminished by raising or lowering the flood gate. It was reputed to turn out 70 barrels of wheat flour/day. The concrete dam (still functioning, but with some signs of early failure) is probably 15-20 feet taller than the water level below the dam. It runs straight across the stream from the SE corner of the mill to connect directly with the lower 15-20 feet of the 40-50 foot vertical cliff opposite. In the center of the dam is an approximately 20 foot horizontal segment that is probably 2 feet lower than the two sides of the dam, thus giving relative protection to the cliff on the east side and the mill and creek shore on the creek's west side, except at times of maximum water flow....<sup>2</sup>

On the public side of the Rock Glen, along First Street, Rock Glen Place, and State Street, the development is surrounded by a low wall of rusticated limestone, which is included in the nomination as a contributing structure. While the low height of the wall in no way obscures the houses from the street, the wall is an important component in unifying the design of the development. On the low wall along First Street S.E., to the north of the Blythe House, sits a concrete light fixture in the form of a Japanese lantern, designed by Griffin. This light fixture is

<sup>2</sup> Email from Robert E. McCoy to author, 26 September 2015.

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one of two concrete light fixtures that are included in the nomination as contributing objects. At the intersection of First Street S.E. and Rock Glen Place the low walls are curved to allow for a traffic circle at the intersection. This radial configuration of the wall and street was a part of the original Griffin design.

On the right descending side of the creek are limestone bluffs that form a dramatic counter-point to the gently sloping grade of Rock Glen (see contour plans figs 9-16). Griffin named the section on this side of the creek "Rock Crest." Here two houses are included in the district: the Samuel Davis Drake House (28 South Carolina Avenue, 1914, Einar Broaten), on the east side of the creek, and the Joshua Melson House (56 River Heights Drive, 1912, Griffin), to the south. The development of Rock Crest, as proposed by Griffin originally, included all the land on the right descending side of Willow Creek bound by East State Street to the north, South Carolina Avenue to the east, and River Heights Drive to the south. In this area only the Melson House and the Drake House were built as a part of the earliest construction on Rock Crest, using Prairie School designs, or designs directly related to the Prairie School, and so are the only Rock Crest houses included in the district.

The Historic Integrity of the landscape of Rock Crest/Rock Glen:

**Location:** The location of landscape features within the Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District retains a high degree of historic integrity. The open space of the Glen, the locations of the houses around it, as well as the bluffs and the locations of the contributing houses above it, have not significantly been altered since their construction.

**Design:** The major concepts of the design of Walter Burley Griffin at Rock Crest/Rock Glen can be clearly seen in the district. While Griffin's entire design for the district was not carried out, its most important components were brought to fruition. These components include the grouping of the houses around the perimeter of Rock Glen, the preservation of the bluffs of Rock Crest, and the relationship of the two contributing houses on Rock Crest (most particularly the Melson House) to the bluffs. All these components relate to the preservation of the landscape of the district. Restrictive covenants were put in place at the onset of development so that no structures have been built between the houses of Rock Glen and the creek. On Rock Crest, the development of single-family houses not of Griffin's design has not infringed on the qualities to which he aimed for the area.

**Setting:** The integrity of the setting of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District is critical to the overall integrity of the District. This setting straddles the banks of Willow Creek and is notable for the contrasting topography of each side of the creek. The open lawns of the Glen are sheltered by the bluffs of the Crest on the south and east. The relationship of these varying topographies was recognized by Griffin at the outset of the development. That relationship remains today in large part as Griffin envisioned it.

**Materials:** The materials of the District were intended to be taken from nature and have remained so. The lawn of the Glen and the limestone of the bluffs have continued to be the major materials of the landscape. Griffin left no detailed planting plan or pallet for the landscape, but the scale and overall density of his site plan have remained in place over the last hundred years. The most significant built design element of the landscape, independent from the houses themselves, is the continuous series low, limestone walls that follow the street edges of Rock

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Glen. These walls follow working drawings created by the Griffin team and remain an important unifying feature of the development.

Workmanship: The workmanship of the landscape can be seen in the low walls along the streets surrounding Rock Glen, and also in the retaining walls that mediate between the landscape and the houses. Today the lawns of the Glen are cared for cooperatively by residents, maintaining Griffin's vision for a unified, communal, natural space.

Feeling: Integrity of feeling is an extremely strong component in overall integrity of the District. The whole of the major components: the bluffs of Rock Crest, the creek, the open area of Glen, and the houses that surround the Glen, is greater than the sum of their parts, and work together to create a protected, preserved space that is a manifestation of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century attempts to create havens of nature within the context of growing urban environments.

Association: The District's location within the urban fabric of Mason City remains much as it did a century ago. It is surrounded by single-family residential developments with more traditional street and individual lot designs. It remains a short walk from a still active central business district.

The James Blythe House, 431 First Street, S.E., 1913-14, Walter Burley Griffin

The Blythe House sits on a lot of one and one-quarter acres, the largest individual lot in the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development. In the lot's northwest corner approximately 115 feet of the west end of its northern boundary is adjacent to First Street S.E. The Blythe property boundary turns north and runs along Rock Glen Place to a point in line with the center of First Street, then turns east to run to the left descending bank of Willow Creek. The western Blythe property boundary runs from First Street south to the adjacent property on the south known as Stonyacre. There the boundary runs east approximately 66 feet before turn slightly southeast and running to the creek. The house itself is located in the northwest corner of the lot, with its northern end facing First Street. The lot slopes from a high point at its northwest corner at First Street down approximately twenty-two feet to the bank of Willow Creek. Along the creek is the berm-like rise in grade just above the dam of the creek. Between the house and the creek is open lawn. The lawn is framed on the north and south by large trees. Among the trees to the south, and along the creek as well, is an understory of smaller trees and shrubs. To the south of the Blythe House is a small lawn, edged on the south by trees and smaller shrubs. To the west of the house is a relatively narrow space between the house's west elevation and the adjacent property. The driveway, coming from First Street on the north, covers a little over half of the western face of the house. The southern edge of the driveway is bound by a retaining wall. To the south of this retaining wall grade slopes down fairly noticeably along the face of the western elevation of the house.

The house is oriented with its main elevation facing east, toward Rock Glen and Willow Creek. One of its narrower elevations faces north toward First Street. The other narrow elevation faces south across the Stonyacre property toward Willow Creek. The nominal back, or service, elevation of the house faces west toward the driveway and a neighboring house. In general, grade at the house slopes from the northwest to the southeast. Though grade is near the level of the first floor at the northwest corner of the house, it drops approximately six feet, enough to allow a fully exposed basement on the south elevation.

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The east elevation is generally symmetrical. It sits on a rusticated limestone foundation. In front of this elevation are terraces whose walls are faced with limestone with decorative concrete details. The east elevation itself is made up of three major blocks separated by two minor connecting sections. In the center is the largest of the three major blocks. The center block's façade projects forward of the flanking blocks. The rusticated limestone of the foundation continues up in this section to the height of the top of a large, single-paned picture window in the center of the block's first floor. In front of the picture window is a limestone and stucco-faced planter that projects from the façade of the central block. Above the picture window, and the limestone on either side of it, stucco covers the hollow-tile construction of the walls. The upper portion of the central block projects forward in two stages on either side of a central window grouping. The three windows of this second-floor grouping are directly above the picture window below. In the spandrel, below the three windows, are three identical panels of abstract geometric decoration incised in the surface of the stucco. These panels are the only ornament on the walls of the east elevation. The pattern of the ornament in the panels compliments the design of the angled muntins in the three windows above the panels. Above both the first-floor picture window and the second-floor window grouping continuous bands of projecting stucco provide horizontal shadow lines on the wall of the central block. Above the upper horizontal projection is an abstracted triangular cornice that conceals a low hip roof with an integrated gutter system. The roof is covered with a modern rubber membrane. At the center of the roof is the stucco-covered chimney. Integrated with the chimney is a monitor with a clerestory window facing east that lights the second floor interior.

On either side of the central block are two similar, but not identical, blocks which recede from the central one. Both blocks sit on limestone foundations and are capped by abstracted triangular cornices. Each block is framed by projecting vertical planes of stucco that can be interpreted as pilasters. In the lower wall of the northern block, between the pilasters, is a large, single-paned picture window lighting the garage. This window is balanced by three openings on the southern block. The center opening of these three is a door. The flanking openings each contain a single-paned window. Above the first floor windows of the north and south blocks, between the framing pilasters, is a wide plane of recessed stucco. The pilasters and stucco planes are capped by a continuous projecting horizontal band of stucco, similar to the horizontal bands on the central block. On the northern block, between the horizontal band and the block's triangular cornice is a long, horizontal slit window which lights the block's second-story interior. Above the southern block what was originally an open roof deck has been enclosed. This enclosed space for many years held twenty-five art glass panels that were lay lights for a skylight in Mason City's Park Inn, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The lay lights were installed in the enclosed space by its first owner, James Blythe, after they were removed from the Inn. With the restoration of the Inn's skylight in 2011, the lay lights were returned to their original location.

Between the three main blocks of the east elevation are connecting sections. These sections are the most formally complex zones on the elevation. While the main wall planes of these connecting sections are at the same depth as those on the north and south blocks, the cornices of those blocks overlap the second floor of the connecting sections, appearing to put the connecting sections in a recessive position, relative to the north and south blocks. This recessive position is made ambiguous by the projection of square roofs at the first floor ceiling level, in the reentrant,

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or inward angle, created by the meeting of the connecting sections and the central block. While the connecting sections appear to recede at the second floor, they project forward at the first floor ceiling level. The ambiguity of the projection and recession of planes is reinforced because the treatment of the spaces below the projecting roofs is different on either side of the central block. On the south side of the central block the space below the projecting roof is enclosed, while on the north side it is left open, providing a porch roof for the main entry to the house. Ambiguity of wall plane location is reinforced even further by the opening up of the width of the connecting sections' second-floor walls for windows. Finally the connecting sections, which are engaged behind the ends of the north and south block cornices, are capped by the cornice of the central block, which projects to the north and south, covering the connecting sections.

The south elevation sits on a high foundation of rusticated limestone. Due to the lower grade on this side of the house, nearly the entire basement is exposed and its limestone wall is pierced by two full sized windows with angled muntins. Above the limestone basement, at the level of the first floor window sill, the house's stucco wall is divided by a projecting horizontal band which wraps around onto the east and west elevations as well. Above this band is a large, single-paned picture window. Above the picture window a panel of stucco wall projects beyond the surrounding walls, giving the south elevation some of the ambiguity of wall depth seen on the east elevation. The house's triangular cornice continues above the south elevation. Above the cornice is the enclosure of the roof deck.

The west elevation is similar to the east elevation, though not identical. As with the other elevations, this one sits on a foundation of rusticated limestone. To the south the lower grade level allows most of the basement to be revealed in the southern block. The basement wall of the southern block contains three full-sized windows. In the connecting section between the southern block and the central block the foundation projects forward from the face of the connecting section on the first and second floors. There is a door to the basement in the south face of this projection. The basement of the central section contains three windows which are obscured in an areaway between the basement wall and the driveway. In the central section, the basement's rusticated limestone rises up to cover the first-floor wall to the top of the first-floor windows. In contrast to the large picture window in the center of the first floor of the east elevation, the center of this section of limestone is pierced by two separate single windows. A small window also pierces the limestone wall of the central block, to the north of the two windows in the center. The first floor of the north block is filled by a garage door. Other features on this elevation are practically identical to the east elevation, though, because the secondary entrance aligns with the primary one on the east, the door on this elevation is on the left side of the central block instead of the right.

On the north elevation a relatively small portion of the limestone base is exposed, due to the higher grade on this side. At the first floor is a central window, with angled muntins, lighting the garage. Above this the wall plane projects in the center and contains three second-floor windows with angled muntins. Topping the north elevation is the north block's triangular cornice.

The Historic Integrity of the James Blythe House

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Lived in by only three families over the last hundred years, the Blythe House has been excellently maintained. It meets the seven aspects of integrity as follows:

**Location:** The Blythe house has not been moved and sits on its original foundation.

**Design:** The footprint remains unchanged from its original construction. The only major alteration to the form of the house has been the enclosure of the south roof deck by the first owner.

**Setting:** Aside from the natural maturing of plantings around the house, its relationship to its surroundings is unchanged from when it was first constructed. To the west the surrounding single-family residential neighborhood retains a scale which is very similar to that which existed when the Blythe House was first constructed. To the east the Glen runs unobstructed to the bank of Willow Creek.

**Materials:** The visible exterior materials of the Blythe House remain unchanged from first construction and are an important part of its design. Concrete stucco covers the walls, and original windows, with Griffin-designed wood muntins, remain in place. The roof, which is not visible from the surrounding area has been replaced with a synthetic rubber membrane.

**Workmanship:** The workmanship of the exterior of the Blythe House retains its original qualities. In particular, this includes the exterior limestone masonry and the decorative stucco-work on the upper east and west facades of the house's central block.

**Feeling:** The Blythe House's relationship to its surroundings, its retention of original materials and general form, give it an excellent level of historic feeling. The massing of its stucco walls give it an almost primitive feeling of abstract design.

**Association:** The relationship of the Blythe House to its surroundings, including its relationship to the surrounding houses, limestone street wall, the neighboring houses in Rock Glen, and particularly to the Glen itself, give the Blythe House a very high level of integrity of association.

#### The Harry D. Page House, 21 Rock Glen Place, 1912, Walter Burley Griffin

The Page House sits on a rectangular lot that is ninety-nine feet wide along Rock Glen Place and extends from Rock Glen Place to Willow Creek. The high point of the property is along Rock Glen Place. The grade gradually slopes down to the creek, approximately twenty-two feet below the elevation of the street. The house is sited fairly close to the street. The land between the house and the creek is covered with lawn and some large trees.

The east elevation of the Page House sits on a rusticated limestone foundation. Above the limestone, stucco covers the house's hollow tile walls. The northern section of the east elevation projects east from the rest of the house as a two-story wing. This wing is covered by a roof with an east-facing gable. This projecting east wing is the tail of the T-shaped core of the house. The eaves of its gable roof are horizontal and enclose an integrated gutter system. This eave configuration is typical of all the roofs of the house. The limestone base of east elevation of the east wing is pierced by a semi-circular window. The limestone of the base rises up to the level of the first-floor window sill. Above the limestone the corners of the wing recede, creating a square, east-facing bay in the center of the east-facing wing. The receding of the corners allows for planters on either side of the square bay. The square bay is divided into four sections by stucco verticals which project forward of the main wall surface. These verticals, together with a projecting horizontal at the head of the first-floor windows create a grid pattern on the face of the

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square bay. On the first floor the areas between the grid lines are filled with windows. Originally there were four windows aligning with the four infill areas between the grid lines. The center vertical has been removed at the first floor to combine the center windows into one picture window. The original angle-muntined windows in the side panels on the first floor have been replaced by single-paned windows. At the second floor the central vertical and the four original windows with angled muntins remain. On either side of the east wing are one-story roofs extending to the north and south from the T-shaped core of the house. The roof to the north extends only a short distance and covers a porch at the public entry to the house. The roof to the south covers a glazed veranda. The T-shaped core of the house is most apparent on the second floor, where wings project to the north and south from the side walls of the east wing of the house.

On the south elevation the gabled roof of the one-story, glazed veranda projects forward from the T-shaped core of the house. The south elevation of the veranda, below this gabled roof, is made up of four stucco-covered vertical elements sitting on a limestone base. Between the verticals are single-paned windows. The central window is approximately double the width of the side windows. On the east side of the veranda, beneath its wide eave, a section of enclosed space projects from the veranda's east elevation. The south end of this projection is recessed from the main section of the south elevation of the veranda, creating a square recess at the veranda's southeast corner. The east-facing projection is not matched on the west side of the veranda. At the second floor, set back from the veranda gable, is the south-facing gable roof of the T-shaped core's south-facing wing. Beneath this roof, at the second floor, are two doors to a small balcony on the veranda roof. To the east, on the south elevation of the T-shaped core's east-projecting wing, at both the first and second floors, are two sets of windows. On the west of the house's south elevation is the south face of the garage, a one-story addition, with detailing similar to the original house. The base of the garage is rusticated limestone. On the garage's south elevation, between its stone base and the roof eave, are two window openings of size and proportion similar to the original windows of the house.

On the west elevation the garage addition projects forward from the main mass of the house. The peak of the gable of the garage roof is flattened so it does not interfere with the original windows on the second floor of the house. In the original portion of the house, behind the garage, the glazed veranda extends to the south. The west eave of the veranda roof runs across the face of the west elevation of the two-story core of the house, meeting the eave of the roof of the garage. The west elevation of the two-story core is divided into six sections by stucco-covered verticals which project from the face of the wall. The southern two of these sections are exposed on the first floor and are filled with windows. All six sections are exposed on the second floor and are filled with windows.

On the north elevation, the two-story east wing extends to the left. At the east end of this wing, a single, recessed window on each floor forms the north elevation of the square bay which projects east from the east facing wing. On the north wall of the wing is a set of three windows on each floor. One set is directly above the other. To the west of these windows is the north face of the north wing of the T-shaped core. On the north elevation of this wing is the gabled roof of the porch that covers the main entry door. In the western portion of the north elevation of the wing

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is a double window at the first floor. On the second floor of the wing are two single windows. In the one-story wing of the garage to the west, a single window is located at the east end of the garage wing next to the original portion of the house.

#### The Historic Integrity of the Page House:

This house has recently been restored by its current owners and overall has excellent historic integrity. It meets the seven aspects of integrity as follows:

**Location:** The Page house has not been moved and sits on its original foundations.

**Design:** The only major alteration is the addition of a two-car garage on the street side of the house. Although larger in mass than the garage planned by Griffin, this addition was detailed sensitively with similar materials to the house, including a limestone base supporting stucco walls.

**Setting:** Aside from the natural maturing of plantings around the house and the construction of the MacNider House to the north in 1959, the Page House's relationship to its surroundings is unchanged from when it was first constructed. To the west the surrounding single-family residential neighborhood retains a scale which is very similar to that which existed when the Page House was first constructed. To the east the Glen runs unobstructed to the bank of Willow Creek.

**Materials:** Concrete stucco covers the walls and with one exception original window and door openings remain unchanged in the original mass of the house. In the east-facing bay of the east elevation the center stucco-covered vertical has been removed at the first floor to create a picture window and the original first-floor windows with angled muntins have been replaced with single-paned windows (the angled-muntined windows of the second floor remain).

**Workmanship:** The workmanship of the exterior of the Page House retains its original qualities.

**Feeling:** The Page House's relationship to its surroundings, its retention of original materials and general form, give it an excellent level of historic feeling.

**Association:** The house's relationship to its surroundings, including its relationship the surrounding houses, limestone street wall, its neighboring houses in Rock Glen, and particularly its relationship to the Glen itself, give the Page House a very high level of integrity of association.

#### Tom MacNider House, 15 Rock Glen Place, 1959, Curtis Besinger

Like the Page House, the MacNider House sits on a rectangular lot which extends from Rock Glen Place on the west to Willow Creek on the east. Also like the Page House, the lot's grade slopes down to Willow Creek with its high point adjacent to Rock Glen Place approximately twenty-two feet above the elevation of the creek. At sixty-three feet, the north to south width of the MacNider lot, though, is significantly narrower than that of the Page House, necessitating a long narrow house. The plan of the house is laid out on a 60-degree module, therefore walls are typically placed at 60- or 180-degree angles from one another.

From the east, the house is fronted by a concrete brick wall that encloses an exterior concrete terrace at the first-floor level. Because of the lower ground elevation at the east end of the house, the terrace is approximately eight feet above grade. The angled module of house's plan is

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manifested at its east end by the 60-degree angle created by the terrace enclosure walls. The terrace is triangular in plan, with a clipped northern tip. One edge faces due south, one edge faces northeast, and the third edge, created by the glazed exterior wall of the adjacent living room, faces northwest. To the north of the glazed living room wall is the outside face of the chimney. Angled to the northeast, the chimney encloses the northern portion of the east wall of the living room. The living room is covered by a gabled roof whose eastern end follows the 60-degree grid and so its edge projects forward as it rises to its peak. Beyond the living room, on either side of the house, exterior walls extend to the north and the south. These walls are on the 60-degree grid and so recede to the west as they move out from the house. The wall on the south is nearer to the eastern end of the house and contains two large window openings, one above the other, lighting the first floor and the exposed basement. The wall to the north is the rear of the carport. The concrete brick of this wall rises from grade to create what is, from the carport side, a low wall. Above this wall a wood grille fills the open space between the wall top and the eave of the roof above.

On the north elevation is the northeast-facing wall of the exterior terrace. Next to that, the angled chimney encloses the east end of the living room. To the west, between the chimney and the carport, the wall is covered with concrete brick. The wall is broken up evenly by nine narrow windows which extend from the first floor, down to the basement level. To the west is the angled wall of the carport, with its wood grille. The carport is terminated on its north end by a concrete-brick-enclosed storage area. Above the north wall of the house and the angled wall of the garage are the eaves of the gravel roof.

The west elevation faces the street. Its street edge of the house, which is on the 60-degree module, recedes to the east as the elevation moves south. This elevation contains the carport and public entry to the house. To the north is the concrete-brick-enclosed storage area at the end of the carport. To the south of the storage area there is no wall and the carport roof is held up by four columns. At the south end of the carport the public entry is in a wall angled to the northwest, beneath the carport roof. Adjacent to this wall is another wall, angled to the southwest. This wall contains a window opening whose sill is a short distance above grade.

At the west end of the south elevation is the southwest-angled wall and window described on the west elevation. To the east of this is an expanse of wall covered in concrete brick. To the east of this expanse are the southeast-angled wall and window openings that can be seen in the first floor and basement of the east elevation. This southeast-angled wall, and its windows, balance the wall and window opening facing southwest at the west end of the south elevation. To the east of the southeast-angled wall, grade continues down exposing a basement wall of concrete brick. At the first floor the wall is completely glazed and meets the glazed living room wall adjacent to the exterior terrace at the east end of the house. An exterior stairway, below the first-floor glazed wall, gives access from the lower grade level to the terrace. In front of the western half of the south elevation is a free-standing, concrete-brick base for a television antenna. The brick base rises to approximately the height of the roof eave in this section of the house.

The Historic Integrity of the MacNider House:

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This house has excellent historic integrity, having been well maintained throughout its existence. It meets the seven aspects of integrity as follows:

**Location:** The MacNider house has not been moved and sits on its original foundations.

**Design:** The MacNider House retains its original footprint and form. The only notable alteration is the addition of a window lighting the basement on the south-east-angled wall of the south elevation. The detailing of this window matches that of the original window above it.

**Setting:** Aside from the natural maturing of plantings around the house, its relationship to its surroundings is unchanged from when it was first constructed. To the west the surrounding single-family residential neighborhood retains a scale which is very similar to that which existed when the MacNider House was first constructed. To the east the Glen runs unobstructed to the bank of Willow Creek.

**Materials:** The concrete brick walls and natural woodwork of the exterior remain unchanged from the time of the house's construction.

**Workmanship:** The workmanship of the exterior of the MacNider House retains its original qualities.

**Feeling:** The MacNider House's relationship to its surroundings, its retention of original materials and general form, give it an excellent level of historic feeling.

**Association:** The house's relationship to its surroundings, including its relationship the surrounding houses, limestone street wall, its neighboring houses in Rock Glen, and particularly its relationship to the Glen itself, give the MacNider House a very high level of integrity of association.

Arthur Rule House, 11 Rock Glen Place, 1912-13, Walter Burley Griffin

The Arthur Rule House sits on the southeast corner of Rock Glen Place and East State Street. The house is roughly centered in its rectangular lot, with relatively small yards on its north, east, and west sides. To the south is a driveway which gives access to the house's basement garage and to the right-of-way leading to the basement garages in the other three houses along East State Street. The elevation of the property has its high point along its northern, State Street side. The west side, along Rock Glen Place slopes down relatively gradually. Along the property's eastern boundary the grade slopes down fairly quickly to a low point at the property's southeast corner, ten feet below the elevation of the northwest corner of the lot.

The south elevation consists of two stories above a fully exposed basement. The walls of the basement are stucco over structural tile. The Rule House is the only house by Griffin in the development which does not sit on a rusticated limestone base. Access to the basement garage is through a garage door centered in the south elevation. The face of the wall containing the garage door projects forward from the main wall of the south elevation. The projecting garage wall extends up to the sill level of the first-floor windows. The first-floor wall above the sill level is divided into seven sections. The center section contains a door giving access to a balcony on top of the projecting garage wall. The three sections of the first-floor wall, on either side of the balcony door, are fully glazed with single-paned windows. Above the first-floor windows is a trellis which projects south from the face of the south wall and wraps around the east and west sides of the house. Above the trellis is the second floor wall. This wall is predominately stucco, with wood boards dividing the wall into stucco-filled panels. There are

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two sets of paired windows in the second-floor wall. Above the second floor is the broad eave of the low, hip roof.

The east elevation faces the adjacent property. From the south end grade slopes up concealing the stucco-covered basement wall as it rises. There are no openings in the basement wall. At the first story, windows similar to those on the south elevation fill the southern portion of the east elevation. Above these windows is the trellis that wraps around from the south elevation. The second floor level of the southern section of the east elevation is finished in a similar manner to the second floor of the south elevation: wood boards divide the face of the wall into panels, which are filled with stucco. A set of three windows fills the center panel. The broad eave of the roof projects above the second floor. On the northern portion of the east elevation is the main block of the house. Only a relatively small portion of the stucco-covered basement is exposed in this section. The cubic form of the main block of the house is bracketed by unrelieved planes of stucco that rise from the basement to the sills of the second-story windows. Between these corner planes the wall recedes. At the basement level small stucco-covered blocks project from the corner planes. These blocks bracket three basement windows in the recessed portion of the wall. The small projecting blocks conceal the basement windows from view from the north and south, helping to emphasize the solidity of the base on which the main block stands. At the first story the recessed portion of the wall is filled with a set of five identical windows. Above the windows a wood trellis projects from the wall. The second floor wall, directly above the first floor windows and trellis, is a blank plane of stucco. Windows at the second floor are pushed to either corner of the main block, where there are pairs of identical windows. Thus open and closed wall areas alternate on each floor in the main block, with the central windows of the first floor flanked by broad planes of stucco, while on the second floor the two sets of windows are separated by a broad plane of stucco. Above the main section of the house the broad eave of the hip roof projects. In between the northern block and southern section of the house the wall is recessed to emphasize the difference between the two portions of the house. In this recess a wood stairway leads to a door at the first floor. This provides the veranda a garden entrance that is hidden from street and alley. There is a window in this recess at the second floor.

The north elevation is very similar to the elevation of the main block of the east elevation. On the first floor a set of five windows is bracketed by large planes of projecting stucco. At the second floor there are paired corner windows. There are two differences from the east elevation. In the first floor the sill elevation for the western two windows of the central set of five is slightly higher than the eastern three. This subtly differentiates the windows of the dining room on the east from the windows of the kitchen on the west. The other difference is a window in the second story in the center of the stucco plan between the pairs of windows in the corners.

The west elevation is similar to the east, though here there are also variations. To the north is the main block of the house with its bracketing planes of stucco on the first floor. To the south is the glazed first floor and stucco-paneled second floor. In the center of the first floor of the main block is a projecting entry vestibule, which fills the area between the bracketing planes of stucco. The base of the vestibule is built of rusticated limestone, the only actual use of the limestone on the exterior of the Rule House. Above the limestone base the vestibule is glazed. There are single doors on the north and south elevations of the vestibule. The vestibule is covered with a

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low hip roof. In the recess between the north and south sections of the west elevation, there is a window at the first floor, but no opening at the second. Finally, the grade slopes down to the south less dramatically on the west side than the east, exposing less of the basement on the west side.

#### The Historic Integrity of the Rule House:

The current owners have restored this house, which has very good overall historic integrity. It meets the seven aspects of integrity as follows:

**Location:** The Rule house has not been moved and sits on its original foundations.

**Design:** The Rule House retains its original footprint. The house was altered by its original owners who added bedroom space above its south-facing sun porch and enclosed the entry porch with a slightly larger vestibule. Although these alterations were done using similar materials to the original house, to some degree they, particularly the bedroom addition, camouflage the original cubic form of the house from the south.

**Setting:** The house's relationship to its surroundings is largely unchanged from when it was first constructed. To the west is a single-family residential neighborhood which was being developed when the Rule House was first built. Directly to the east of the Rule House the Franke House, designed by Francis Barry Byrne, was built in 1917. To the south of the Rule House the MacNider House, designed by Curtis Besinger, was built in 1959. Each of these two houses are similar in scale to houses that Griffin originally proposed for their sites.

**Materials:** The stucco walls and wood windows of the original mass of the Rule House remain and are excellent condition. Similarly, the stucco, wood trim, and wood windows of the early additions are also in excellent condition.

**Workmanship:** The workmanship of the exterior of the Rule House retains its original qualities.

**Feeling:** The Rule House's relationship to its surroundings, its retention of original materials and general form, give it an excellent level of historic feeling.

**Association:** The house's relationship to its surroundings, including its relationship the surrounding houses, limestone street wall, and its neighboring houses in Rock Glen, give the Rule House a very high level of integrity of association.

#### E.V. Franke House, 507 East State Street, 1917, Francis Barry Byrne

The Franke House sits on a rectangular lot running from East State Street on the north to the adjacent MacNider property on the south. The lot's highpoint is along State Street. The low point of the property is at the lot's southeast corner, approximately twelve feet below the State Street sidewalk. The house sits on a rusticated limestone base, with smooth planes of stucco covering the walls above. At the south end of the lot is the driveway for vehicular access to the Franke House, and to the houses in the Glen to the east of it.

On the south elevation the eastern portion of the house projects forward, to form a two-story wing on a fully-exposed basement. In the basement is a single-car garage. To the east of the garage door at the eastern edge of the basement wall is a stone buttress. The limestone base of the south-projecting wing rises up to the level of the first-floor window sill. A picture window fills most of wing's first-floor wall above the limestone base. The second floor is stucco-

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covered. Directly under the shallow eave of the wing's flat roof there is set of four casement windows. To the east of the projecting wing, and set back some distance from it, the south face of a small one-story, flat-roofed wing extends to the east. The exposed basement level of this wing is limestone-covered and contains a door. The limestone rises up to the sill level of the first floor. The first floor contains a sun porch which is glazed by two casement windows on its south elevation. To the west of the south-projecting wing containing the garage, the main core section of the house sits on a limestone base. There are four relatively small basement windows in the limestone. The center two windows are grouped together as a pair. While the limestone in this area generally stops at the first-floor level, in the center of this section the limestone projects forward slightly and rises to the height of the first-floor window sill. At the first floor there is a group of five casement windows above the raised section of the limestone base. This set of windows has an exposed stone lintel. Directly above these windows, at the second floor, is a similar set of five casement windows. Above these windows is the shallow eave of the core section's hip roof.

On the east elevation, is the east face of the wing with the garage in its basement. This wing projects south from the house's core section. At the basement level this wing is covered with limestone which goes up to the sill level of the first floor. At the south edge of the limestone base is the projecting face of the stone buttress. In the limestone basement are three individual window openings which light the garage. At the wing's first-floor sill are a series of casement windows. The windows are in groupings, starting from the south, of three, three, and two, and fill a majority of the first-floor wall of the south-projecting wing. On the wing's second floor, in its stucco-covered wall, is a set of three casement windows, placed near the north end of the wing. Above these windows is the shallow eave of the flat roof of the south-projecting wing. To the north of the projecting wing is the east face of the core section of the house. The base of this section up to the first floor level is limestone. Above the limestone the wall of this section has, at each floor, a set of three casement windows. The set on the first floor is topped by an exposed stone lintel. To the north of the east face of the core section is the sun porch. The base of the porch, up to the sill level is covered with limestone. The first floor of the porch is glazed with four casement windows. Above the windows is the eave of the porch's flat roof. Beyond the porch roof, to the west, is the second floor of the north wing of the core section. In the east-facing wall of the north wing's second floor is a single window opening filled with glass block.

On the north elevation, just east of center, the north wing of the house's core section projects forward. It sits on a limestone base, of which very little is exposed, due to the higher grade on this side of the house. At the first floor is a set of three casement windows with a stone lintel. On the second floor there is a set of three casement windows directly above those on the first floor. To the east of the core section's north wing, and set back from its face, is the enclosed sun porch. As was the case on the east elevation, the base of the porch is covered with limestone up to the level of the window sill. On the north elevation of the porch are three windows and one door. On the west side of the north wing of the core section is a two-story, flat-roofed section sitting in the reentrant between the projecting north wing of the core section and a wing of the core which extends west. This flat-roofed section contains the interior stair. Its north face has a small window at a level below the intermediate landing of the interior stair. Above this window is a set of three casement windows with a limestone lintel which lights the stair's intermediate

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landing. To the west of the stair block, in the reentrant of the stair block and the wing of the core which extends west, is a one-story entry vestibule. The vestibule has a single door in its north elevation. Above the entry vestibule, in the wall of the west wing of core section, is a single, small casement window. In the hip roof of the core section is a broad stucco-covered chimney.

On the west elevation the west wing of the core section of the house projects forward. This block sits on a limestone basement which has two windows in it. On the first floor there are two sets of paired casement windows with stone lintels. On the second floor there are four separate but identical single window openings, grouped closely together in the center of the wall. Immediately above these windows is the shallow eave of the core section's hip roof. To the south of the core section, set back some distance, is the west elevation of the south-projecting wing which contains the garage. At the basement level this side of the wing is covered with limestone. The limestone rises up to the level of the first story window sill. Above the sill the wall of the wing's first floor is nearly completely glazed. Here there are two sets of three casement windows. At the second floor there is a single casement to the north end of the wall and a pair of casements to the south. To the north of the core section west wing, and set back from it, is the flat-roofed block containing the interior stairway. Near the top of this block, lighting the stair's intermediate landing, is a set of three casement windows covered by an exposed stone lintel. In front of the stair block, in the reentrant of the stair block and the core section's west wing, is the narrow side of the main entry vestibule. There are no openings in this narrow wall.

The Historic Integrity of the Franke House:

The Franke meets the seven aspects of integrity as follows:

**Location:** The Franke house has not been moved and sits on its original foundations.

**Design:** The Franke House retains its original footprint and overall form. Major alterations include the enclosure of the south-facing sun deck and the addition of bedroom space above that.

**Setting:** The house's relationship to its surroundings is largely unchanged from when it was first constructed. On either side are the single-family houses of Rock Glen, and to the south is the Glen itself.

**Materials:** The stucco walls of the original mass of the Franke House remain and are in excellent condition. The original windows have been replaced throughout.

**Workmanship:** The workmanship of the exterior of the Franke House generally retains its original qualities.

**Feeling:** The Rule House's relationship to its surroundings, and general form, give it a good level of historic feeling.

**Association:** The house's relationship to its surroundings, including its relationship the limestone street wall and its neighboring houses in Rock Glen, give the Franke House a very good level of integrity of association.

Hugh Gilmore House, 511 East State Street, 1915, Francis Barry Byrne

The rectangular lot on which the Gilmore House sits is oriented, like the Franke lot, between East State Street on the north and the MacNider property on the south. The lot slopes from a

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high place along State Street to a low point at the lot's southeast corner, approximately fourteen feet below the State Street elevation. As the Rock Glen lots move east along the relatively level State Street, the difference between the street level and the ground level at the houses that face State Street becomes more pronounced as the Glen slopes down to Willow Creek. Reconciling this difference is a significant part of the design of both the Gilmore House and the Schneider House, to the east. At the Gilmore House, immediately to the south of the limestone wall along State Street, is a series of low retaining walls which bring the level of grade down to the level of the house's main floor, which is approximately four feet below State Street.

The south elevation is made up of two sections. To the west is a two-story block, which sits on a fully exposed basement, and has a roof whose gable end faces south. To the east a wing is set back from the western block and has a gable facing east. The basement of the western block is covered with rusticated limestone which typically rises to the floor level of the first floor. On the western block, the central section of the limestone basement projects forward. Here the limestone rises to the level of the first floor window sill. This section contains a single door in the center, which is flanked by a window on either side. Above the projecting basement section is a square projecting bay at the first floor. The bay is filled with a large single-paned picture window in the center and single casement windows on either side. The casement windows have rectilinear muntins. The east and west sides of the bay have paired casement windows with rectilinear muntins. The bay has a shallow hip roof. Above this roof are three window openings at the second floor. The central opening contains four single-paned casement windows. These windows are flanked symmetrically by a single casement window opening on either side. The western block's gable roof has very little overhang on the south side. At the east and west sides, before the roof meets the side walls, it stops, allowing for a short vertical wall, and a flat-appearing section, which contains an integrated gutter system. This vertical-then-flat termination of all the major roof slopes of the Gilmore House gives the house a particularly distinctive look among the houses of Rock Crest/Rock Glen. To the east of the western block, the receding wing has a limestone basement. In the wall of the basement is a garage door. Above the basement the walls of the wing are covered in stucco. At the first floor there is a window opening containing three windows. At the second floor there is a large window opening also containing three windows: a large picture window in the center, with a narrow casement window on either side of it. Above this window opening is the long face of the roof's integrated gutter. In the reentrant between the western block and the east wing of the house is a wood deck at the first-floor level with a stairway that runs north toward the square bay in the western block, then turns east to reach the deck. There is a paved area under the deck, in front of the garage, that is large enough to park a car.

On the east elevation the wing containing the garage in the basement projects forward on the north side of the elevation. The basement of the wing is covered in limestone and contains three window openings to light the garage. The east wall of the east-projecting wing is covered with stucco starting at the floor level of the first floor. In this wall at the first floor there is a large, single opening, with three windows in it. Between the window sill and the stone basement below a panel of stucco projects slightly, giving visual interest to the wall. A line of stucco projects above the window for the width of the wall. Above this projection the second floor is covered in stucco and contains a set of three casement windows. Above these windows is a gable with

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integrated gutter system similar to the one described on the south elevation. To the south of the projecting wing is the east elevation of the wood deck. Beyond the deck is the east elevation of the main, western block. To the north of the east-projecting wing is an exterior stair which leads up to a landing where a door once led into the dining room on the first floor. The north side of this stair is shielded from the street view by a limestone wall the same height as the basement limestone facing. Beyond the stair landing is the east face of house's western block. There is a single small window in this wall at first floor level. To the north of the western block is a limestone wall at the first-floor level that leads toward the retaining wall at the State Street sidewalk. Near the southern end of this wall is a service door. Above this door, at an intermediate level between the first and second floors is the stucco-covered east face of the entrance vestibule.

The north elevation appears from the street to be only one story. Looking over the retaining wall at the edge of the State Street sidewalk reveals that the house's first floor is well below the level of the street and sidewalk. The entry vestibule at street level is at an intermediate level between the first and second floors. It is reached from the sidewalk by a walkway with low limestone walls on either side of it. The stucco-covered vestibule contains a door with flanking sidelights. The sidelights are separated from the door by verticals of stucco. The vestibule sits in front of north elevation of the house's western block. On the first floor of this block there are paired casement windows on either side of the projecting entry vestibule. These windows are matched by pairs of casement windows on the second floor, directly above those on the first. The western block is topped by a gable with the house's typical integrated gutter system on either side.

The west elevation is two stories tall, with a basement which is obscured in an areaway necessitated by the higher grade to the west. The basement is covered in limestone, which rises to the level of the first floor. There are three window openings in the limestone basement. The first and second floor each have two sets of paired casement windows, one above another, symmetrically placed in the stucco-covered wall of the first and second floors. The spandrel between each set of first- and second-floor windows is slightly recessed. This unites the windows on the first floor to those on the second and gives the west elevation a somewhat vertical appearance. To the north of the main block is the west side of the entry vestibule. The one-story block of the vestibule sits on a limestone wall which runs beneath the entry walk to the State Street sidewalk. On the south end of this wall, beneath the vestibule is an opening in the stone for a small casement window.

The Historic Integrity of the Gilmore House:

The Gilmore House meets the seven aspects of integrity as follows:

Location: The Gilmore house has not been moved and sits on its original foundations.

Design: The Gilmore House retains its original footprint and overall form. Major alterations include the enclosure of a small balcony on the south face of the living room, the addition of bedroom space above the dining room, and of a wood deck at the east end of the south elevation.

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**Setting:** The house's relationship to its surroundings is largely unchanged from when it was first constructed. On either side are the single-family houses of Rock Glen, and to the south is the Glen itself.

**Materials:** The stucco walls of the original mass of the Gilmore House remain and are excellent condition. A majority of the original windows have been replaced.

**Workmanship:** The workmanship of the exterior of the Gilmore House generally retains its original qualities.

**Feeling:** The Gilmore House's relationship to its surroundings, and general form, give it a good level of historic feeling.

**Association:** The house's relationship to its surroundings, including its relationship the limestone street wall and its neighboring houses in Rock Glen, give the Gilmore House a very good level of integrity of association. In particular its notable entry bridge from the State Street sidewalk, which spans the change in grade from the street to the house, remains unchanged from the time of construction.

The Samuel A. Schneider House, 525 East State Street, 1915, Walter Burley Griffin

The Samuel A. Schneider House sits on a lot that, like the three lots to the west of it, runs from State Street on the north to the MacNider property on the south. It is bound on the west by the Hugh Gilmore property and on the east by Willow Creek. The fairly dramatic eight foot drop in grade between State Street and the north side of the house requires an extensive system of retaining walls in this area. Immediately around the house grade changes are relatively gradual. On the west side the grade slopes down just over two feet from north to the south. On the south its slopes down nearly two feet west to east. On the east side the grade drops four feet from north to south to meet the grade on the south elevation. Grade on the north side is relatively even, but is complicated by the construction of an entry walk. This walk will be described with the north elevation proper.

The south elevation is made up of a central block of two stories, on a high basement, flanked by two-story wings to the east and west. Approximately two-thirds of the central block's basement wall is exposed. The exposed wall is covered with rusticated limestone. There are four small, rectangular, vertically-oriented windows in the basement wall. The windows' stone sills are nearly at grade level and each window opening is spanned by a single block of rusticated limestone. The rusticated limestone covering the basement rises to the floor level of the first floor. Above the limestone the walls are sheathed in stucco. The general form of the two-story central block is very similar to that of the north block of the Rule House. In the center of the Schneider House's first floor is a broad window opening. The window is flanked on either side by large planes of stucco which wrap the corners of the central block on the east and the west. The stucco planes rise to the level of the second-floor window sills. Similar to the Rule House these corner planes project from the plane of the wall in which the window openings are placed, accentuating the corner planes' apparent massiveness. At the second floor, paired windows at the east and west corners sit above the projecting planes, and are separated at the second floor by an area of stucco-covered wall. The central block is then capped by a low, hip roof with a projecting eave. While the configuration of the central block has a general similarity to the Rule House, there are differences in detail. The central window opening of the first floor, instead of being broken into equal-sized windows, is filled with a tripartite window made up of a broad

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picture window in the center, flanked by a smaller casement window on either side. The separation between the three windows is accentuated by vertical posts which project significantly from the plane of the windows and are seemingly carried on limestone blocks that project slightly from the plane of the basement wall. On the Rule House the first-floor windows are topped by a wood trellis. On the Schneider House a small, flat roof projects above the three-part window. Above this roof is a short clerestory which extends the length of the three-part window. This clerestory is a nod to the split-level plan of the interior. From the raised dining room in the northeast corner of the house it is possible see directly through the clerestory when seated at the dining table. Another important difference from the Rule House is that the corner planes of stucco project less distance from the adjacent wall planes, giving the Schneider House planes less prominence than those on the Rule House. To the west of the central block, the basement and first-floor walls of the adjacent wing recede significantly, forming a pier which supports the cantilevered second floor. At the basement level limestone wraps this pier. At the first-floor level a flat stucco plane on the south side of the pier is framed by limestone which is carried up the pier's west side. At the second floor a glazed sleeping porch extends south from the central block. The porch cantilevers from the central block on the east, with support in its center from the limestone pier below it. To the east of the central block another flanking wing projects toward Willow Creek. At the basement level of this wing its limestone wall is interrupted by a single-car garage door. The spandrel between the head of the garage door and the sill of the first-floor windows is filled with stucco. The limestone facing of the basement resumes to the east of the garage door. At the first floor the eastern wing contains a sun porch enclosed by wood-framed casement windows. At the second floor is a second glazed sleeping porch which balances the sleeping porch on the west. The windows of the sleeping porch sit on a stucco-covered knee wall. The knee wall rises above short, wide clerestory windows that light the sun porch. Above, the broad eave of the sleeping porch is contiguous with the eave of the central block and western sleeping porch, giving the house a strong horizontal cap.

On the east elevation, the east wing projects from the central block of the house. The wing's fully-exposed basement wall is covered with rusticated limestone and contains three separate window openings lighting the garage. The limestone wall rises to the level of the first-story window sill, where it is capped by three sets of the sun porch's paired casement windows. On either side of this band of windows the glazed sun porch wall recedes from the face of the central windows, and the face of the limestone wall below them, allowing for planters in the north and south corners of the wing, at the top of the limestone wall. Above the sun porch's casement windows the porch's flat roof projects to the east. Above this roof the walls of the wing recede on the north, east, and south, so that the northeast and southeast corners of the second floor align with the reentrant corners of the recessed corner planters of the first floor. Directly above the first-floor roof are the short, wide clerestory windows that light the sun porch. Above the clerestory windows rises the knee wall of the second-floor sleeping porch. The sleeping porch contains three sets of paired casement windows, sitting on the stucco knee wall. Above these windows is the eave of the main roof. To the south of the sleeping porch is the east elevation of the main block. In the main block's limestone basement wall is an opening for a single casement window. Above this at the first floor the wall is a continuous plane of stucco. On the second floor, at the wall's south corner, is single casement window. The effect of the first floor's wrapping corner planes is diminished on this elevation due to the projecting sun porch wing. To

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the north of the sun porch the elevation of the central block mirrors the elevation to the south, but the basement level is obscured by the rise in the grade to the north.

The north elevation of the house, as seen from State Street, is largely obscured. Only the second floor and roof are visible from this direction. On the south side of the State Street sidewalk the low limestone wall which surrounds the houses of the Glen acts as a retaining wall, as the grade between the sidewalk and the house drops significantly. Two more sets of low walls retain the grade as it drops. While grade at the State Street sidewalk is nearly the same as the elevation of the Schneider House's second floor, at the house itself, approximately twenty-five feet away from the sidewalk, grade has dropped eight feet, enough to reveal a small portion of the limestone basement of the house. At the second floor of the north elevation, the central block, with its paired, corner casement windows, is clearly distinguishable, but below the second floor the configuration of the elevation is much more complex. As noted, a small portion of the limestone-clad basement of the central block can be seen. This basement has a window with an areaway in front of it. On the east side of the central block's first floor is the block's corner plane of stucco, which projects slightly from the adjacent, central wall plane. In the recessed plane of stucco is a pair of casement windows. Further west in the recessed plane is a single, smaller casement. The first-floor windows are not grouped to create an exterior composition; instead they reflect the configuration of interior spaces. Further to the west, straddling the recessed plane of stucco and what would be the west corner's projecting plane of stucco, is an enclosed vestibule for the first-floor service entry. This vestibule has a door in its east face and a small window in its north face. The vestibule is covered by a shallow hip roof. To the east of the central block is the north elevation of the east sleeping porch wing. The elevation of this extension is very similar to the porch's south elevation, with limestone up to the first-floor sill, banded windows above that, and the first floor's nearly flat roof above that. Above the first-floor roof are the short, wide windows of the sun porch's clerestory. At the second floor the banded windows of the sleeping porch sit on a stucco knee wall. Above those windows, the porch is covered by a shallow hip roof. West of the central block the entryway walk steps down from the State Street sidewalk to a lower walkway that leads to a door in the public entry vestibule. This entry is sheltered by the cantilever of the second floor sleeping porch above. As on the west wing's south elevation, the sleeping porch itself is enclosed by banded casement windows sitting on a stucco wall and is covered by a shallow hip roof.

On the west elevation the entry stair steps down from the street to the walk that connects the stair to the public entry vestibule. Beneath the walk to the entry is an archway which shelters a recessed alcove. This arch gives the walk to the entry a bridge-like appearance. The inner, west face of this alcove contains a door and window at basement level. In the center of the first floor the limestone face of a pier rises to support the sleeping porch at the second floor. On the first floor to the north of the entry vestibule, in the plane of the central block wall, is a single casement window. On the opposite side of the pier, in the central block wall are two separate, single casement windows. At the second floor, at the corners of the central block, are single casement windows, similar to those found on the east elevation. Between these casement windows the second floor sleeping porch projects, with its banded casement windows and shallow hip roof. On the west elevation the components of the entry sequence are subtly articulated by differentiated wall plans. Most recessed is the wall of the main block of the house,

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which is seen at the back of the alcove beneath the entry walk. In front of this is the face of the bridge-like entry walk. Slightly forward of the entry walk is the projecting plane of the entry vestibule. In front of the vestibule is the limestone face of the pier supporting the sleeping porch.

The Historic Integrity of the Schneider House:

The Schneider House meets the seven aspects of integrity as follows:

**Location:** The Schneider house has not been moved and sits on its original foundations.

**Design:** The Schneider House retains its original footprint. It was altered by Barry Byrne for Lieutenant Colonel Hanford MacNider in 1927. At that time sleeping porches were added to east and west sides of the upper floor, but the exterior has been little altered since then.

**Setting:** The house's relationship to its surroundings is largely unchanged from when it was first constructed. On the west are the houses of Rock Glen, on the east is Willow Creek with the bluff of Rock Glen on the opposite side of the creek. To the north is the complex relationship of the house to the steep grade change between it and the State Street sidewalk. To the south views from the house are unobstructed across the Glen and along Willow Creek.

**Materials:** The stucco walls of the original mass of the Schneider House remain and are in excellent condition. A majority of the original windows on the first floor have been replaced, but those on the second floor remain in place.

**Workmanship:** The workmanship of the exterior of the Schneider House generally retains its original qualities.

**Feeling:** The Schneider House's relationship to its surroundings, and general form, give it a very good level of historic feeling.

**Association:** The house's relationship to its surroundings, including its relationship the limestone street wall and its neighboring houses in Rock Glen, give the Schneider House an excellent level of integrity of association. In particular, its notable entry bridge, which spans the change in grade from the street to the house, and the house's relationship to the Glen and Willow Creek to the south, remains unchanged from the time of construction.

The Samuel Davis Drake House, 28 South Carolina Avenue, 1914-16, Einar Broaten

The Samuel Davis Drake House sits on a lot in the Rock Crest portion of the district. The lot stretches east to west from South Carolina Avenue to the limestone bluff on the right descending side of Willow Creek. The north boundary of the lot is approximately 283 feet south of East State Street and it is approximately 118 feet wide north to south. The lot overlooks Rock Glen, with the house itself approximately in line with First Street S.E. Between the street and the house there is little grade change. There is an approximately two foot drop in elevation between the east and west elevations of the house. West from the house grade drops more noticeably, approximately six feet, to the top of the bluff. Because the original top elevation of the bluff was uneven, a curving retaining wall has been constructed, allowing for a relatively even top edge of the bluff, before grade drops to the creek approximately thirty-six feet below. The house is made up of a major rectangular block, which has an enclosed sun porch projecting to the south, and a garage attached to its northeast corner.

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On the east elevation the main block sits on a stucco base. At the height of the first-floor window sill a continuous horizontal band projects from the stucco surface and wraps the house. Toward the south end of the first floor, is a grouping of three casement windows with geometric muntins. In the approximate center of the east elevation is a one-story, gable-roofed entry porch sheltering a vestibule and entry door. At the north end of the east elevation the one-story wing of the garage projects to the east. This wing is made up of the garage proper, which opens to the south. The garage space is lit by a grouping of banded windows on its east elevation and is covered by a gable roof whose ridge runs north to south. The garage is connected to the main block by a hyphen which has an entry in an alcove in its south elevation. The second floor of the main block is set off by a projecting horizontal band at the level of the second-floor window sill. Above this band there are paired casement windows at either corner. This pairing of corner windows is similar to the second floor of the Rule and Schneider Houses, though because the Drake House main block is noticeably wider than those houses, the proportions here are much different. In the center of the stucco plane separating the two sets of corner windows is a single casement. The main block is covered by a hip roof. At the peak of the roof is a chimney. Adjacent to the chimney is a monitor with clerestory windows lighting the interior stairway below.

The south elevation of the main block, like the east elevation, is divided into horizontal sections by projecting bands at the first-and second floor-window sills. On the east side of the south elevation the base below the first-floor window sill is covered with stucco. On the west side the base is covered with rusticated limestone, similar to the rusticated limestone bases on other houses in the district. Near the east and west edges of the main block's first floor wall are small window openings. Each opening contains a group of three windows. Each group contains one larger central window with geometric muntins, flanked by two smaller windows without muntins. These window openings flank an enclosed sun porch that projects south from the house's main block. The porch has a rusticated limestone base to the height of the first-floor window sill. Above the sill, on all three sides of the porch, is a continuous band of casement windows with geometric muntins. The porch is covered with a shallow hip roof with broad eaves. There is a modern skylight in the center of the south slope of the porch's hip roof. On the main block, above the second-floor window sill are paired casement windows at either corner. In the center is a doorway to a small balcony in the center of the sun porch roof.

The west elevation of the main block has a symmetrical layout. The base is rusticated limestone up to approximately the floor level of the first floor. Above the top of the rusticated limestone the wall is covered with stucco. Approximately half the basement wall is exposed. In the center of this wall is a door to the basement reached by a stair in an areaway in front of the door. The door is flanked by a double-hung window on either side. To both the north and south of these double-hung windows is a set of three triangular or prism-shaped vertical projections from the wall. Between each of the vertical projections are narrow vertical windows. The two groupings of projections support box-like, stucco-covered forms which project from the wall below the first-floor windows. At either end of the basement is another double-hung window. At the first floor are two sets of three-part windows, placed symmetrically in the wall of the main block. Each grouping is made up of a large center picture window, flanked on either side by a single casement window with geometric muntins. The large picture windows are centered on the

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projecting boxes which are held up by the prism-shaped vertical elements described on the basement level. Above the second-floor window sill there are paired casement windows at either end of the elevation. There is a single casement window in the center of the second-floor wall. To the south is the west elevation of the sun porch. Similar to its other elevations the porch has a limestone base below a continuous band of windows. The band of windows is terminated at its northern end by an exterior door. The door is reached from the ground below by a stairway that is faced on the west by a rusticated limestone wall.

On the north elevation the main block of the house is to the west, while the garage wing is to the east. The main block sits on a rusticated limestone base. The limestone rises up to the floor level of the first floor. On the west half of the first floor the limestone projects out and rises up to form a shallow projecting bay. The top of the bay is just above the top of the first floor windows. In the bay is an opening which contains a three-part window. The central window of the group has a simple rectilinear muntin design. The small side windows have no muntins. On the second floor of the main block there are paired casement windows at either corner. To the east of the main block, the one-story hyphen, between the main block and the garage, steps north from the face of the main block. In the north wall of this section is a pair of casement windows with geometric muntins. To the east of the hyphen, the garage wall steps north from the wall of the hyphen. The garage elevation is capped by the north gable of the garage roof.

#### The Historic Integrity of the Drake House:

The Drake House has been maintained fairly well since its construction, with no significant alterations. The Drake House meets the seven aspects of integrity as follows:

**Location:** The Drake house has not been moved and sits on its original foundations.

**Design:** The Drake House retains its original footprint and massing.

**Setting:** The house's relationship to its surroundings is largely unchanged from when it was first constructed. It sits near the center of a relatively large lot and is surrounded by single-family houses to the north, east, and south. On the west is the bluff overlooking Rock Glen.

**Materials:** The original limestone foundation, stucco walls, and wood muntined windows of the Drake House retain a high degree of integrity.

**Workmanship:** The workmanship of the exterior of the Drake House generally retains its original qualities.

**Feeling:** The Drake House's relationship to its surroundings, and general form, give it a good level of historic feeling.

**Association:** The house's relationship to the surrounding neighborhood and its location on the bluff overlooking Rock Glen give the Drake House a good degree of integrity of association.

#### The Joshua G. Melson House, 56 River Heights Drive, 1912-14, Walter Burley Griffin

The Joshua G. Melson House sits on a lot that stretches from River Heights Drive on the south to the banks of Willow Creek on the north. Its east boundary is perpendicular to River Heights Drive, while its west boundary is perpendicular to the northeast flowing creek, giving the lot an irregular four-sided shape, whose width expands as it moves from the street to the creek. Along the north edge of the property is a series of sections of iron fencing between rusticated limestone

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posts. There are a total of twelve of these posts. The space between the third and fourth posts is left open for the drive-way. These two posts are larger than the others and on top of them are bronze light fixtures. The fence and posts do not date from the original building of the house and are listed on the nomination as a single non-contributing structure.<sup>3</sup> The site slopes down gently approximately five feet from the River Heights sidewalk to the south elevation of the garage, the part of the house closest to the street. Grade drops more noticeably, approximately ten feet over the length of the house, until the north elevation of the house is reached. The north elevation is aligned with the limestone bluff facing the creek. Here the grade drops off approximately twenty-four feet to level of the flood plain beside the creek. The flood plain is surrounded to the south and east by the quarried walls of the bluff. The plain itself is lightly wooded, allowing views of the house between the trees. A driveway from River Heights Drive leads to a paved, circular loop that runs through the garage, which has doors on both its east and west elevations.

The north elevation of the Melson house is its most striking elevation. It is dramatically located on edge of the limestone bluff that faces Willow Creek. The bluff was quarried previous to the development of the property and the face of the quarried stone was covered with roughly laid limestone blocks. Rising above the face of the roughly laid blocks, the north elevation of the house is covered with rusticated limestone. The transition between the rough-laid blocks on the bluff and the rusticated blocks of the house is gradual and helps to obscure where the bluff wall ends and the house wall begins. The relief of the rustication on the Melson House is much more pronounced than on the other houses of Rock Crest/Rock Glen, in keeping with this obscured transition. At the corners of the house the stone blocks interlock with protruding ends creating a particularly rugged edge to the house. The north elevation is framed by slightly projecting zones of wall covered in rusticated limestone. These zones are somewhat analogous to the projecting planes of stucco that wrap the corners of the Rule and Schneider Houses, reinforcing the sense of enclosure given by the walls. In the center of the north elevation is a three-sided bay. The bottom of the bay corbels out from the wall at about eighteen feet above the level of the flood plain. The bottom of the bay is faced with rusticated limestone, but at the level of the window sill of the bay's lowest level the material changes to poured concrete with a smooth finish. The three windows of the bay at this, the basement level, are framed and capped by concrete. Above the window lintels, concrete steps out to form a balcony for the first floor above. Here concrete verticals carry the balcony roof. The line of the roof is extended outward from its fascia by a wood trellis on all three sides of the bay. The bay itself projects from a wall of limestone that is recessed from the limestone zones which wrap the corners of the building. This layering of the wall planes gives depth and complexity to the enclosure of the house. Above the bay is a group of five casement windows with geometric muntins. These windows are capped by concrete shapes which take the form of over-sized, fan-like voussoirs, and give an unusual configuration to the house's skyline. The voussoirs are placed in a parapet wall that is in the receding wall plane. This parapet projects up above the corner zones. Below the basement level, on either side of the north elevation of the house, the rough-laid limestone walls covering the bluff face curve

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<sup>3</sup> According to current Melson House owner Peggy Bang, it is believed that the stone for the fence posts was taken from stone that formerly framed the south elevation garage windows. The removal of this stone is described in the section on the Melson House's historic design integrity. The metal fence between the posts was added by the current owners. The light fixtures on the large posts, whose design is based on Arts and Crafts light fixtures, were also installed by the Bangs. They replaced earlier replacement fixtures of inappropriate scale and design.

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to the north. On the west side of the house a stairway rises on the top of the rough-laid wall, from the level of the flood plain to the basement level of the house. Along the bluff side of the stair is a metal picket guard fence.

The west elevation begins at the edge of the bluff, where grade is at the level of the basement. The massing of the west elevation's north block is similar to that of the north elevation. It is a cube shape, with rusticated limestone walls. Like the north elevation, the corners of the north block of the west elevation are emphasized by zones of rusticated limestone that project from an inner wall plane. These zones wrap the corners at the north and the south edge of the north block and rise up through the second floor, terminated at a point below a parapet which is in line with the central, recessed wall plane. In the center of the north block, instead of a bay, like that found on the north elevation, are a series of five openings at the basement, first, and second floor. At the basement level the opening furthest to the north is a door. The remaining openings on all three floors are filled with windows. The windows are typically single panes, though the two southern windows on the second story contain windows with geometric wood muntins. The windows and door at the basement level are separated by vertical concrete members with flat faces. The windows at the first and second floors are separated by vertical members whose faces are triangular, or prism-shaped, in plan. These vertical members are similar to those described on the basement windows on the west elevation of the Drake House. They extend from the sill of the first-floor windows to the lintel of those on the second. Above the windows of the first floor a wood trellis projects from the rusticated stone wall. Above the windows of the second floor are concrete voussoirs, similar to those on the north elevation. The grade rises as the elevation moves south. In the center of the north block the grade is just below the basement window sill. In the south corner, in the zone of projecting rusticated stone, grade rises to the level of the first floor. An exterior stairway follows the grade in two flights as it rises. To the south of the north block the wall plane recedes to create a one-story link between the north block and the garage to the south. This link section rises to the height of the north block's projecting corner zones, below the level of its recessed parapet. This alignment of the link wall with the north block's projecting, lower wall both joins the link to the north block and separates it, due to the higher, recessed parapet to the north. At the first-floor level of the link is a door. The door is framed by concrete, prism-shaped vertical members on either side, and capped by a triangular concrete roof overhanging the entry. On either side of the concrete members framing the door are narrow sidelites. Above the triangular roof overhang the wall of the link is covered with rusticated limestone. To the south of the link is the garage. Grade level at the garage is nearly as high as the second story of the northern section of the house. The west wall of the garage is filled with two sets of double-leaf, wood garage doors. The pairs of doors are framed by concrete, prism-shaped vertical members of a larger scale than those surrounding the doors and windows of this elevation. The garage doors are made of wood and have windows with geometric muntins in their upper section. The garage doors are topped with shallow arches. At the center of each arch are concrete voussoirs, similar to those above the windows of the northern block. The wall of the parapet of the garage rises above the height of the link wall, to the same level as that of the northern block.

In the center of the south elevation the garage projects forward from the center of the face of the north block. The south elevation of the garage is covered with rusticated limestone. In the

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center are three window openings separated by prism-shaped vertical members. The windows are capped by concrete voussoirs. Projecting from south elevation on either side of the windows are low planters, walled with rusticated limestone. These planters frame the garage elevation. Beyond the garage are the east and west ends of the north elevation of the north block. Except for a square window punched in the first floor of the west side of the elevation, these walls are covered in rusticated limestone. This limestone rises to the same height as the projecting corner zones of limestone wrapping each corner. Above these zones the limestone of the south elevation of the northern block recedes slightly, rising to the height of the typical parapet. In the center of the northern block's south elevation are five sets of concrete voussoirs. These voussoirs cap five windows which are shielded from view by the walls of rusticated limestone above the entries in the links on the east and west elevations.

The east elevation is the mirror image of the west elevation, the only difference being variations in grade. To the south is the garage block with doors similar to those on the west, which allow cars to pull through the garage and out the circular drive without backing up. In the middle of the elevation is the link between the main block and the garage block. This link contains the entry that is designated as the more formal of the two doors on either side of the link. At the east entry is a light fixture designed by Griffin that is listed on the nomination as a contributing object. To the north is the elevation of the north block with its limestone corner zones and groups of five windows on each floor. Grade at the east section of the north block is at the level of the first floor, so the basement windows are in an areaway in front of the elevation. At the elevation's northern corner zone grade drops to the basement floor level before dropping to the level of the flood plain at the north elevation.

#### The Historic Integrity of the Melson House:

The Melson House has been meticulously restored over the last twenty years by its current owners and has an impeccable level of overall historic integrity. The Melson House meets the seven aspects of integrity as follows:

**Location:** The Melson house has not been moved and sits on its original foundations.

**Design:** The Melson House retains its original footprint and massing. The only minor alteration of the form of the house is the lowering of the height of rusticated limestone-covered blocks on either side of the windows on the south elevation of the garage, whose bases are now used as planters. The current owner, Peggy Bang, believes this alteration was done by the third owners of the house, the Shepherds, after they bought the house in 1951, and that the salvaged stone was used to build the fence posts along the boundary at River Heights Drive.

**Setting:** The house's dramatic relationship to its surroundings is unchanged from when it was first constructed. To the east and west are single family houses. To the north is the drop of the bluff to the level of Willow Creek.

**Materials:** The original rusticated limestone walls, concrete voussoirs, and concrete window dividers remain in place with a high level of historic integrity. Some of the original wood-muntined windows have been replaced by single paned windows.

**Workmanship:** The workmanship of the stone and concrete of the house remain in excellent condition.

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Feeling: The use of particularly unusual materials and its location, perched castle-like on its limestone bluff give the Melson House an excellent level of historic feeling.

Association: The house's relationship to the surrounding neighborhood and particularly its location on the bluff overlooking Rock Glen give the Melson House an excellent degree of integrity of association.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
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G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Community Planning

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1912-1917

1959

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1912

1913

1914

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Griffin, Walter Burley

Griffin, Marion Mahony

Byrne, Frances Barry

**Significant dates, continued**

1915

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1917

1959

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### **Architect/Builder, continued**

Broaten, Einar

Melson, Joshua

Rye, Chris

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Rock Crest/Rock Glen development in Mason City, Iowa, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as an important example of Community Planning and Development and Criterion C as the work of a master possessing high artistic values. This amended nomination is being submitted in preparation for a possible nomination as a National Historic Landmark. The district is eligible at a national level of significance as:

- The only American planning project of Walter Burley Griffin, or his partner-wife Marion Mahony Griffin, to be carried out to a notable degree.<sup>4</sup> Griffin is acknowledged as one of the most creative of Prairie School architects, and Mahony herself was an important member of that group. Though the Griffins would go on to do important planning work in Australia, notably the federal capital of Canberra and the residential subdivision of Castlecrag in Sydney, none of their planning work in the United States, other than Rock Crest/Rock Glen, was constructed to a significant extent.
- The only constructed Prairie School planning project in America planned for a private community. Architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson has called Rock Crest/Rock Glen, “the only true example of Prairie School planning.”<sup>5</sup> Landscape architecture historians Philip Pregill and Nancy Volkman called the development, “the only Prairie style housing complex.”<sup>6</sup>
- The largest concentration of individual houses designed as a part of a planned ensemble by early Prairie School architects for a specific site. Other large groupings of Prairie School houses exist, but these were not designed in coordination with one another as a unique community. Notable enclaves of Prairie School houses include the area around the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio in Oak Park, Illinois, and the Ravine Bluffs Development in Glencoe, Illinois. In Oak Park the houses by Wright and other Prairie School architects were located on individual suburban lots and were not designed directly in concert with one another. In the Ravine Bluffs development, although the natural

<sup>4</sup> For clarity, Marion Mahony Griffin will typically be referred to as “Mahony” in this document.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Guy Wilson and Sidney K. Robinson, *The Prairie School in Iowa*, (Ames, The Iowa State University Press, 1977) 16. Attribution of quotation to Wilson was done per a discussion with Sidney K. Robinson 4 September 2015. The only Griffin planning project in America to go beyond the planning stages was Trier Center in Winnetka, Illinois. There two streets were constructed and only one house, the Esentrot House, was constructed.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Pregill and Nancy Volkman, *Landscapes in History: Design and Planning in the Western Tradition*, (New York, Van Nostrand, Reinhold, 1993), 592. Quoted in Kruty, et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, ix.

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setting of the ravines is preserved, the layout of the subdivision does not promote a relationship of the majority of the houses with the unusual features of the area in the way that Rock Crest/Rock Glen does. Though the Ravine Bluffs street system bears a relationship to the surrounding topography, its houses are placed on individual lots with little relation to one another as a communal grouping.

- A highly unusual example of a planned community for upper middle class professionals who, through the use of legal covenants sought to preserve a natural environment for communal use. The significance of Rock Crest/Rock Glen as a planned *private* community goes beyond the Prairie School. Rock Crest/Rock Glen appears to be unique as a privately-owned development for middle- and upper-middle-class residents, living in close proximity to one another, in individual, architect-designed houses, where a substantial portion of the development's residents chose to legally give over their individual ownership rights to a portion of the land in the development to create a communal green space for the use of all of the residents. This is in contrast to large scale, often public, planned communities, aimed at lower- and middle-class residents, with housing designed *en masse* around common green spaces. Conversely, typical upper-class development such as Llewellyn Park in New Jersey to advantage of large lots to increase privacy between houses. In making the choices they did, the residents of Rock Crest/Rock Glen not only gained an important natural amenity, but also preserved a striking landscape setting within the city limits of Mason City.
- The location of several examples of Griffin's best architectural work, particularly the Melson and Blythe Houses. H. Allen Brooks called the Melson House, "a master stroke...The limestone of the cliff and house are one, and the window voids appear as caverns wedged open by great voussoirs."<sup>7</sup> The Blythe house, gracefully sited above the flood plain of Rock Glen, is a more subtle composition of forms, surfaces, and voids.

While the development as envisioned by the Griffin was not completely built out to his design, the portion which was built clearly communicates the concepts they proposed, and has been preserved with a high degree of historic integrity. These concepts include the preservation of the unique qualities of the land within the development, and design of houses which respond to those qualities, both individually and collectively. Due to the long-term commitment of resources, it is not uncommon for planning project to be partially completed or modified in construction. For example, two National Historic Landmark districts that have a design relationship to Rock Glen/Rock Crest, Riverside, Illinois, and Radburn, New Jersey, were not completed to their original plans. It was noted in the Radburn NHL nomination, that while a large portion of the planned project was not constructed, "The portion of the whole town plan that was completed remains intact and is clearly discernable from its surroundings."<sup>8</sup> This is equally true of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development.

An archeological investigation was not a part of this nomination. . There is at least one historic archaeological resource evident among the resources within the historic district, and for which a

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<sup>7</sup> H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School, Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries* (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1976), 244-247.

<sup>8</sup> For the development of Radburn, NJ, see "Radburn" National Historic Landmark nomination, National Park Service, designated April 5, 2005. For quotation above see page 4.

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formal site inventory sheet may not yet have been filed with the Office of the State Archaeologist of Iowa. This resource is composed of the foundation remnants of a 19th-century grist mill and associated dam on the creek that bisects the district. In Photograph 57 of 57 these foundation remnants are seen to be extant as of 2015, and the wooden superstructure of the mill had been in place as late as 1912 (see footnote 65). There is an early 1876 newspaper reference to "Parker's mill" at this location, and the 1884 "bird's eye view" drawing of the area (Figure 17) clearly shows a 2 1/2-story mill structure in the center. The 1895 plat also shows the location of the mill and dam. Additional future archaeological research of this specific archaeological resource, and also of the open area within Rock Glen for potential additional archaeological resources, is advised.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Statement of Significance**

Understanding of the significance of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development has grown over the last decades. While the Griffins' move to Australia in 1914 led to their having better name recognition in that country than the United States through much of the twentieth century, scholarship on the Griffins in general and the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development has notably increased since the 1960s.

- In 1964, in *The Chicago School of Architecture: Early Followers of Sullivan and Wright*, Mark Peisch called the development Griffin's, "most interesting and inspiring commission as a community planner."<sup>9</sup>
- In 1972 in his seminal *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries*, H. Allen Brooks called Griffin's layout of Rock Glen, "an excellent planning scheme which is still in use."<sup>10</sup>
- As noted, in 1977 Richard Guy Wilson, in *The Prairie School in Iowa*, described it as, "the only true example of Prairie school planning."
- Also as noted, in their history of European and American landscape architecture, *Landscapes in History: Design and Planning in the Western Tradition*, Philip Pregill and Nancy Volkman called the development, "the only Prairie style housing complex."
- Australian architect and planner Peter Harrison called the work, "the nearest approach to a complete demonstration of Griffin's talents for the design of a total domestic environment."<sup>11</sup>

The first publication devoted to the development was 1968's "Rock Crest/Rock Glen: Prairie Planning in Iowa," written by Robert E. McCoy and published in *The Prairie School Review*. Forty-six years later McCoy was joined by Griffin scholars Paul Kruty, Professor Emeritus of

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<sup>9</sup> Mark L. Peisch, *The Chicago School of Architecture, Early Followers of Sullivan and Wright*, (New York, Random House, 1964), 96. Quoted in Kruty, et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, ix.

<sup>10</sup> Brooks, *The Prairie School*, 242.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Harrison, *Walter Burley Griffin, Landscape Architect* (Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1995) 23. Quoted in Kruty, et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, ix.

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Architectural History at the University of Illinois; Paul Sprague, Professor Emeritus of Architectural History at the University of Wisconsin; and James Weirick, Director of the Master of Urban Development and Design program at the University of New South Wales, to produce the comprehensive published work on the development, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen, Mason City, Iowa: The American Masterwork of Marion M. and Walter B. Griffin*. Kruty closes his essay in the book by stating:

[The Griffins' work in Mason City,] despite its difficult finale, produced one of the most extraordinary accomplishments in American architecture. The Griffins' idealized representation in 1912 of nineteen houses set into a remnant of pre-settlement America, but prompted by the brimming of ephemeral culture that had rapidly replaced that ancient world, had led to the creation of a group of buildings that, while representing the best of their time and place, simultaneously transcended those limitations to leave to future generations a timeless masterpiece melding landscape, planning, and architecture.<sup>12</sup>

Taking full advantage of the varied topography of the Mason City site, Griffin carefully integrated buildings into this dramatic landscape setting. While Griffin was one of the leading architects of the Prairie School, he was unique among this group in that he considered his roles as a landscape architect and planner to be as important as that of architect.<sup>13</sup> In 1912 Griffin became internationally recognized as a landscape architect and planner by winning the competition for the plan of the new Australian federal capital, Canberra. That same year, on the southeast side of Mason City, only a few blocks from its central business district, Griffin took a site on the banks of Willow Creek and, through careful planning, transformed it from an ignored wasteland to a unique residential enclave. He named the enclave Rock Crest/Rock Glen after the dual qualities of the site's topography. The two qualities were the "Crest," a series of limestone bluffs which lined the right descending side of Willow Creek, and the "Glen," the flood plain on the left descending side of the curving waterway.

For the two topographically different sides of Willow Creek, Griffin used very different planning strategies. Griffin's plan took full advantage of the dramatic qualities of the Crest's topography by siting a majority of the Crest's thirteen houses in direct relation to its limestone bluffs. The bluffs were to be, in effect, podia for individual houses which were showpieces of integrated architecture and landscape. They were not intended to be designed as an integrated group of buildings. These houses were to be viewed individually from the surrounding area, or that area could be viewed from them.

Although only one of the proposed houses for the Crest was actually built to Griffin's design, that house, the Melson House, through both its siting and materials, communicates Griffin's goal to integrate building and landscape more dramatically than any of the other designs he created

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<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Kruty, et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen, Mason City, Iowa* (St. Louis: The Walter Burley Griffin Society in America, 2014), 96. Research done by McCoy, Paul Kruty, and Paul Sprague, has been an invaluable base for this nomination, especially as relates to the local context of the development and the timeline of construction. I would particularly like to thank Robert McCoy for his review of the nomination, and his very helpful comments.

<sup>13</sup>Griffin's letterhead placed the words "Architecture" and "Landscape Architecture" on the same line immediately below his name, indicating that landscape architecture was not a sideline for Griffin.

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for the development.<sup>14</sup> Here Griffin raised a house of rusticated limestone directly above a wall of rough, irregular limestone blocks which covered the face of the bluff. The house appears to be a fully lithic continuation of the bluff's rock wall. As Marion Mahony Griffin put it, the house "was a unity with the whole precipice."<sup>15</sup>

Across Willow Creek, in Rock Glen, a very different type of environment from that containing the individual houses of the Crest was not only proposed but achieved. The qualities which Griffin intended in the Glen are still to be found there, over one hundred years after it was designed. There a flood plain sloped gently from the river's edge up to the north and west. Griffin retained this topography to create a communal landscape area. This area was surrounded by the seven houses facing the Glen. Griffin placed the houses close to one another on higher land at the north and west edges of the subdivision near the adjacent streets. Each house was oriented toward the natural environment of the Glen. Service areas such as kitchens were placed toward the street, while living areas faced the Glen. Over a decade before the development of Radburn, New Jersey, which was touted for attempting to minimize the importance of the street entrances to its houses, it was noted of Rock Glen, "A domestic community in which back doors serve the same purpose as front doors is being tried out in Mason City, Iowa."<sup>16</sup> In placing the houses of the Glen on the north and west sides of the development, Griffin very pragmatically moved these houses to high land, away from the danger of possible flood waters. More importantly, from a design standpoint, he created a boundary that shielded the natural area of the Glen from the surrounding city. As Griffin wrote of the development in an article in the periodical *Western Architect*:

Where the boundaries of the tract were not already set off by the natural screen of forest growth, structures have been disposed to make a frame for this area as complete as possible....<sup>17</sup>

To shelter the Glen on the south and east Griffin relied on the topography of the site itself. There the limestone bluffs of Rock Crest rise as a natural wall enclosing the Glen. By using both built structures and natural topography to create a continuous boundary for the area, Griffin not only related each house with its site, he integrated the ensemble of houses with the bluffs of the Crest. Partnering the entire group of houses in the Glen with the length of bluffs that enclose the Glen, Griffin echoes on a larger scale the partnership of the individual Melson House with its site on the Crest.

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<sup>14</sup> Though all Griffin's proposed Rock Crest house designs, as illustrated in Marion Mahony Griffin's rendering of the development, are integrated into the landscape, only four houses approach the degree of integration of the Melson House. These are the first and third house south of State Street, a T-shaped house with a long east-west wing at the curve of the creek, and the western-most house of Rock Crest, a house intended for William Holahan. None of these houses is a literal continuation of the exiting land forms as the Melson House is of the bluff on which it sits. Additionally these four houses appear to be covered with a significant amount of stucco, which clearly differentiates them from the landscape. As noted, the Melson house has only a small amount of concrete detailing, which is finished to blend with the house's rusticated limestone walls.

<sup>15</sup> Marion Mahony Griffin, *The Magic of America (MOA)*, Volume IV, page 299, [artic.edu/magicofamerica](http://artic.edu/magicofamerica), retrieved April 11, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> O.R. Geyer, *The American City* 14 (June 1916) 565-66.

<sup>17</sup> *Western Architect*, Vol. 19, No. 8, (August 1913), 76.

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Griffin unified the houses of the Glen to one another not only through their close placement and relation to their site but also through their materials. The houses are typically covered with stucco or rough cast concrete and sit on bases of rusticated limestone, similar stone to that used on the Melson House. The related placement and similar materials of the houses in the Glen are very much in contrast with the discrete, individual designs proposed for the opposite side of the creek, such as the Melson House. Marion Mahony Griffin pointed out the difference in the two sides of Willow Creek by describing the site of the Blythe House in Rock Glen: “a gently wooded slope, charming and gracious, extending from the house to the river, a complete contrast to Mr. Melson’s site.”<sup>18</sup> In the Glen Griffin created an outdoor space composed of architecture and nature, whose overall quality is greater than the sum of its individual buildings and topography.

Griffin’s intention for the landscape of the Glen was to preserve much of its existing environmental quality. Again to quote Griffin’s *Western Architect* article:

Moreover by the relegation of the houses to the perimeter the area of gentle slope to the river will be preserved indefinitely for open view very much as nature designed it and for those purposes of retreat and recreation to which nature so well adapted it.

The original site plan which Griffin created for the development shows the retention of large trees, oaks, ashes, and basswoods with diameters of twenty to thirty inches. These are clearly existing trees. Surrounding the trees is lawn. Areas of smaller scale planting surround the individual houses and the approach to a planned bridge crossing the creek.

The preservation of the natural setting of Rock Glen allowed for the continuation of a tradition of the use of the area for community purposes. Activities in the Glen are recorded in the *Mason City Globe Gazette* as early as the Centennial of American independence in 1876. “After a parade of the “fantastics” the people marched to the grove surrounding Parker’s mill (Rock Glen) and John Claggett read the declaration of independence followed by the Hon. S.P. Leland as orator of the day.”<sup>19</sup> In 1931 the Daughters of the American Revolution met for their annual tea at 511 East State Street (the Gilmore House) and were photographed in Rock Glen (fig.29).<sup>20</sup> Similarly in the Fischbeck Collection of the Mason City Library is a photograph of a group of women gathering in the Glen in front of the Blythe House (fig. 28).

On the street side of the Glen, Griffin enhanced its unity by designing low walls of rusticated limestone (figs. 21-22, 25-26). These walls follow the sidewalk along First Street S.E., Rock Glen Place and East State Street from the Blythe House all the way to the Schneider House. Too low to act as privacy or security barriers, these walls provide strong visual continuity around the development. Only on State Street, where the drop in grade south of sidewalk requires a retaining wall, do the walls reach waist high for pedestrian safety. The concrete light fixture on the low wall along First Street, to the north of the Blythe House, designed by Griffin, is one of a

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<sup>18</sup> Griffin, MOA, IV, 299.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Pickford, “Weather was of Interest Fifty Years Ago as Well as Now, Farm Editor Finds”, *Mason City Globe Gazette*, December 4, 1929, 15.

<sup>20</sup> “D.A.R. Members Meet for Annual Washington Tea”, *Mason City Globe Gazette*, February 26, 1931, 9.

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pair of fixtures that he designed for Mason City clients. The other is at the light fixture described in relation to the east entry to the Melson house.<sup>21</sup>

In his plan for the Glen, Griffin set up a concept of outdoor space which would be followed by other Prairie School architects building in the Glen, so that the Glen, now surrounded by works of Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin, Francis Barry Byrne, Einar Broaten and Curtis Besinger, still preserves his design vision. The houses of these architects follow Griffin's precedent in placing service areas such as kitchens toward the street. Living areas are placed toward the Glen. The stucco walls and rusticated limestone bases of Byrne's two houses on the north side of the Glen and Broaten's on the Crest, directly overlooking the Glen, echo closely the materials of the Griffin houses. Besinger's MacNider House of 1959 is masterfully sited on a narrow lot between Griffin's Page and Rule Houses. Its Usonian design brings to Rock Crest/Rock Glen the second generation of Prairie School design. Because of the inclusion of the MacNider House, an important and highly sympathetic addition to the development, the periods of significance for the Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District are 1912-17 and 1959, the years in which the houses were designed.

#### The Participants: the Developers<sup>22</sup>

James E.E. Markley (1857-1939)<sup>23</sup>

Born in Ohio, Markley came to Iowa with his family as a boy. He went to college at Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa, and to law school at the University of Iowa. In 1881 he moved to Mason City to become a partner of James E. Blythe. They would remain partners until Blythe's death in 1938. In 1888 he married Lilly Emsley, daughter of Mary Emsley (1839-1931). Mary Emsley's husband Thomas had founded City Bank in Mason City. After his death in 1886 Mary Emsley became president of the bank and remained so until it was reorganized as City National Bank. Thereafter she remained a major shareholder. Emsley was a Unitarian and became interested in the preacher Jenkin Lloyd Jones, who would stop in Mason City on his preaching circuits. Likewise Elmsley would go to Chautauqua programs in Spring Green, Wisconsin, which featured Jones. Eventually the Markleys' two daughters would go to Hillside Home School in Spring Green, run by Jones's sisters. The school was held in buildings designed by their nephew, Frank Lloyd Wright. Construction of the school's 1902 building was supervised by Walter Burley Griffin. Markley lived in Mason City until his death in 1939, the year after his partner Blythe.

James E. Blythe (1856-1938)<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup>See Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 74-76.

<sup>22</sup> Biographical information on the three major developers at Rock Crest/Rock Glen is taken from Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, in particular chapter one "The Development and the Developers of Rock Crest/Rock Glen," by Robert McCoy.

<sup>23</sup> For information on James Markley see McCoy in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, especially 4-9.

<sup>24</sup> For information on James Blythe see McCoy in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, especially 4-9.

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James Blythe was born in Cranberry, New Jersey, and grew up in Hanover, Indiana, graduating with a Master of Arts degree from Hanover College. He came to Mason City in 1877, reading law in the firm of Goodykootz and Wilbur. Blythe passed the bar and was made partner in 1878. By 1881 both Goodykootz and Wilbur had left Iowa, at which point Blythe asked Markley to move to Mason City to be his partner. Blythe had an active and influential role in Iowa state Republican politics and eyed a seat in the national House of Representatives. This did not come to pass though, and Blythe spent his entire successful law career in Mason City. In 1881 he married Grace Smith (1858-1954) with whom he had two daughters. James and Grace Blythe lived in their Griffin-designed house until their deaths.

Joshua Melson (1865-1945)<sup>25</sup>

A native Iowan, Melson was born in Pocahontas County, Iowa, and came to Mason City to work with local builder E.R. Bogardus. Separating from Bogardus, Melson became a prominent builder-architect. Aside from his brief apprenticeship with Bogardus, Melson was largely self-taught as an architect. Among his extant Mason City buildings are the First Congregational Church (1898) at 100 First Street N.E., and the William Barnard House (1909) at 49 River Heights Drive. He acted as his own contractor for his house at 56 River Heights Drive. In 1900 he married Minnie Spencer (1860-1915) a widowed school teacher. Minnie Melson's early death in 1915, shortly after the couple moved into their house on Rock Crest appears to have robbed Melson of his interest in the development. He did commission Barry Byrne to design a mausoleum for his wife. This impressive structure stands in Mason City's Elmwood Cemetery. In 1920 Melson sold his house in to Mr. and Mrs. A.A. Adams and moved to California. He died there in 1945 and is buried with his second wife Julia outside his first wife's tomb.

The Participants: the Designers

Walter Burley Griffin (1876-1937)<sup>26</sup>

Walter Burley Griffin holds a primary position among the architects of the Prairie School. Paul Sprague has stated that among American architects who were seeking to create an architecture not based in historic precedent:

The only architects whose work embodied greater genius than Griffin's were Louis Sullivan, who initiated the movement that ought rightly to be called the Sullivan School, and Frank Lloyd Wright, who brought to a pitch of perfection one line of development leading away from the modern style Sullivan had originated.<sup>27</sup>

And H. Allen Brooks has written that along with his Stinson Memorial Library in Anna, Illinois: The Melson, Blythe and other Mason City Houses represent his maturity. His achievements had been remarkable, even when measured against his former teacher,

<sup>25</sup>For information on Joshua Melson see McCoy in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, especially 13-16.

<sup>26</sup> Biographical information on Walter Burley Griffin is taken from Brooks, *The Prairie School*, especially 71-75 and Kruty, *Walter Burley Griffin in America*, (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1996), 15-32.

<sup>27</sup> Sprague, "Marion Mahony as Originator of Griffins Mature Style: Fact or Myth?" in Anne Watson, ed., *Beyond Architecture, Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin, America, Australia, India*, (Sydney, Powerhouse Publishing, 1998), 28.

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Wright. He pioneered the development of vertical space in contrast to Wright's concern for horizontal flow. He had exploited the use of concrete and its structural expression in residential architecture at a time when Wright was still proposing, but not building, houses in concrete.... In terms of planning and urban design Griffin's work was more respectful of nature and has proved more realistic and more enduring.<sup>28</sup>

Walter Burley Griffin was born in Maywood, Illinois on 24 November 1876. He was raised in Oak Park before his family moved to Elmhurst 1893. By his senior year in high school Griffin had decided to become a landscape designer. In seeking advice about this career he visited O.C. Simonds, a prominent Midwest landscape gardener.<sup>29</sup> Simonds advised Griffin to obtain an architecture degree and so he entered the University of Illinois in September 1895. There he studied mathematics, physics, economics, and French. As a part of the curriculum he also studied civil engineering, which would have been particularly related to his interest in landscape architecture, and in his last year took two elective classes in horticulture.<sup>30</sup> In June 1899 he was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree in Architecture. After graduation he began working for various members of a progressive group of architects in the Steinway Hall building on East Van Buren Street in Chicago. Among the architects at Steinway Hall were Dwight Perkins, Robert Spencer, Myron Hunt, and Frank Lloyd Wright. This was a group whose members were all, one way or another, influenced by Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. Griffin was no exception. He would say that hearing Sullivan's talk "The Young Man in Architecture," "completely changed my life." As Paul Kruty has written:

It unleashed in Griffin a passionate resolve to create his own kind of modern architecture, not based on past styles but, like Sullivan's work, made from the elements of abstract form itself, then graced with geometric or botanic ornament.<sup>31</sup>

In 1901 Griffin began working in Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park studio. Griffin became a central member of the Oak Park team, writing specifications, checking construction sites, and exercising his own particular interest: landscape gardening. He designed the garden for the Ward Willets House in Highland Park, Illinois, in 1903, and the garden for the Darwin Martin House in Buffalo, in 1904. He appears to have designed the Robert Lamp House in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1904. The Lamp House contains many design elements that are relatively unusual in Wright's work and would become common in Griffin's, especially at Rock Crest/Rock Glen. Its cubic form is bound by corner piers, and its plan is based on an L-shaped layout of living room and dining room that is a basis of the plans of all of Griffin's Rock Crest/Rock Glen built houses.

Griffin's arrangement with Wright allowed him to do work on his own. One of Griffin's independent works is the William Emery House in Elmhurst (1903) is an early example of Griffin's split-level house, where the living room is one-half level below the rest of the main

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<sup>28</sup> Brooks, *The Prairie School*, 260-262.

<sup>29</sup> In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, opinion was divided among landscape designers as to the title of their profession. Many, including O.C. Simonds preferred the term "landscape gardener" to the term which eventually won the day, "landscape architect."

<sup>30</sup> Kruty, *Walter Burley Griffin in America*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Kruty, *Walter Burley Griffin in America*, 16-17.

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floor of the house and has a one and one-half story ceiling height.<sup>32</sup> In 1906 Griffin established his own practice in Steinway Hall. His work included both commercial buildings and individual single-family houses. One of his first works in independent practice was the Harry V. Peters House in Chicago (1906), which was a significant refinement of the L-shaped plan seen in the Lamp House. Griffin's work also began to include paired houses, such as the Gauler Houses, Chicago (1908), the Orth Houses, Winnetka, Illinois (1908), and the Comstock Houses, Evanston, Illinois (1911). These grouped houses clearly show Griffin's interest in the communal arrangement of single-family houses, an interest that would become even clearer in his community planning designs. These designs included projects for the Ridge Quadrangles, Evanston (1911), Trier Center, Winnetka (1912), which was to include his and Marion Mahony Griffin's own house.

Griffin's planning work culminated in his plan for the federal capital Canberra, in Australia, and Rock Crest/Rock Glen in the United States. The drawings for Canberra competition were worked on in late 1911. In the meantime Griffin married Marion Mahony on 29 June, 1911. Mahony became an integral partner in the creation of his work. While waiting for the results of the Canberra competition Griffin's office moved ahead on numerous other projects. It was during this period that Griffin was introduced by Mahony to one of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen developers, Joshua Melson.<sup>33</sup> When the Griffins received the stunning news that they had been awarded first place in the Canberra competition, Walter suddenly became a nationally prominent designer. At that point it was not expected that Griffin would need to spend an extended period of time in Australia, so his American practice continued on course. Eventually it became clear that if Griffin wished to see his Canberra plan implemented, he would need to be in Australia full-time. He left his American practice in the hands of Francis Barry Byrne, a young colleague from Wright's Oak Park studio. The Griffins left Chicago for Australia in April 1914. They expected to stay there only for the three years of their government contract for the carrying out of the design of Canberra, but remained after that. In the 1930's Walter went to India, to design and see through the construction of the Pioneer Press building in Lucknow. He was in the opening stages of negotiating contracts for a number of other projects, when he died unexpectedly following surgery for a ruptured gall bladder. He was buried in an unmarked grave in India, but later reburied in Australia.<sup>34</sup>

Marion Mahony Griffin (1871-1961)<sup>35</sup>

Marion Lucy Mahony was born in Chicago on 14 February 1871. After the Chicago Fire in October 1871 her family left the city for Hubbard Woods, along Lake Michigan, to the north.

<sup>32</sup> Sprague in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 109-112 and Brooks *The Prairie School*, 75-76.

<sup>33</sup> MOA, IV, 296-97

<sup>34</sup> The Griffins' period in India is described in Paul Kruty, *Two American Architects in India*, (Urbana-Champaign, School of Architecture, University of Illinois, 1997). An account of the rediscovery of Griffin's grave is given in Graeme Westlake, "Walter Burley Griffin's Last Days in India," *Inland Architect*, volume 33, January/February 1989, 64-67.

<sup>35</sup> For biographical information, see Janice Pregliasco "The Life and work of Marion Mahony Griffin," in *The Prairie School, Design Vision for the Midwest* (The Art Institute of Chicago, Museum Studies, volume 21, number 2) 164-181 and David Van Zanten, ed, *Marion Mahony Griffin, Reconsidered* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2011) especially 1-20.

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While her family would return to live on the west side of Chicago, in Hubbard Woods Mahony developed an appreciation of nature which would stay with her all her life. She followed her cousin Dwight Perkins to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. When she graduated in 1894 she was only the second woman to receive a Bachelor of Architecture degree from MIT. She became the first woman to become a licensed architect in Illinois, and as such, one of the first female licensed architects in the world. She worked briefly for Perkins, preparing drawings for Steinway Hall, the Chicago building that would later hold the offices of many progressive Chicago architects, include Walter Burley Griffin. In 1895 she entered the studio of Frank Lloyd Wright, becoming an important member of Wright's team. Working on house designs and decorative patterns for windows and walls, she is best remembered for her outstanding rendering abilities, creating many iconic images of Wright buildings integrated into their natural settings.

When Wright left Oak Park for an extended stay in Europe in 1909, he asked Mahony to take over his practice. This she refused, but eventually led an independent team in the office of Herman Von Holst, who had agreed to take Wright's practice. There she completed Wright's remaining projects, a task that included designing from scratch some of the projects which had just entered Wright's office. Von Holst's office was in Steinway Hall. Here she was reunited with Griffin whose independent practice was there. With re-acquaintance a courtship eventually began that was centered on canoe trips on Chicago-area waterways. This shared love of nature was central to their relationship.

With the couple's permanent move to Australia in 1914 Mahony's work focused on such Griffin projects as the ongoing effort to bring the Canberra plan to reality, the Castlecrag development in Sydney, Newman College in Melbourne, and later Lucknow University in India. After Griffin's untimely death in 1937, Mahony returned to Chicago, spending the rest of her long life there. Her last project was a planning competition for a site on the south side of Chicago. She died on 10 August 1961.

The role played by Marion Mahony Griffin in the evolution of her husband's work has been the subject of much study, particularly in recent years. As the second woman to graduate from MIT and one of the first, if not the first, woman to be licensed as an architect, her role in the profession of architecture is acknowledged as pioneering. The assessment of her role as a collaborator of, first, Frank Lloyd Wright, and then Walter Burley Griffin is more complicated. In part this was initiated by Mahony herself, who, relative to her husband's work, cast herself as no more than an architectural renderer:

My specialty is, I suppose, what is known as presentation work. Because my work on the Federal Capital [Canberra] attracted a little notice there are some people who imagine that I had a hand in the actual design. That is all together the work of my husband – I had nothing whatever to do with it.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Henrietta C. Walker, "Woman, the Architect," *The Lone Hand* 7, no. 1, (December 1916) 43. Quoted by James Weirick in David Van Zanten, ed. *Marion Mahony Reconsidered* (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 103.

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Mahony's presentation of her role in the design of Canberra (so close in time to the design of Rock Crest/Rock Glen), was apparently countered by her husband, as an article in a Melbourne journal describes:

[Griffin's] wife is an architect, too, and did not come with him [on a visit to Melbourne], because they could not leave their joint business both at the same time. He says, with a suspicious twinkle in his eye, that he has always contended that the ideas of his plan for the building of the new city of Canberra are much more than half due to his wife, and that she ought to have much more than half the credit for winning the competition.<sup>37</sup>

While Paul Sprague has argued against assigning Mahony too much credit for Griffin's mature style<sup>38</sup>, James Weirick has perhaps given the most eloquent synopsis of the Griffins' respective and combined roles:

The true basis of this mature style is to be found in the dynamics of the partnership between Walter and Marion. They began to work together, on a consultant basis as architect and landscape architect, a year or more before their marriage. It is not possible to identify the precise moment they began to collaborate on architectural design, but it is clearly some time in 1910.... In formal design terms, Griffin's skill was in plan generation and the manipulation of geometric solids – cubes and prisms – endlessly inventing ways to inter-relate mass and void. Marion lacked this ability..., but she was supremely adept at working with motifs – and she could draw anything.

Walter lacked Marion's drawing ability, and Marion lacked Walter's almost limitless capacity for ideation. Together they could see and test, enrich and resolve each other's ideas.<sup>39</sup>

Given this view of the partnership, it would appear that Mahony's contribution to Rock Crest/Rock Glen was significant. Because that contribution can rarely be identified specifically, and because Griffin was the architect of record, for clarity he is referred to as the designer of the development in the body of the nomination.

Francis Barry Byrne (1883-1967)<sup>40</sup>

Born into a working class Irish family on 19 December 1883, in Chicago, Francis Barry Byrne was the oldest son of six children. In 1897 Byrne's father Charles was hit and killed by a train, forcing young "Frank" to leave school to work. He schooled himself at the Art Institute of

<sup>37</sup>Henry Hyde Champion, *The Book Lover – a Literary Review* 16, no. 173, (September 1913), 99. Quoted by James Weirick in Van Zanten, ed. *Marion Mahony Reconsidered*, 103.

<sup>38</sup>Paul Sprague, "Marion Mahony as Originator of Griffins Mature Style: Fact or Myth?" In particular Sprague argues against the extent to which Janice Pregliasco takes the thesis that Mahony was responsible for Griffin's mature style, see Pregliasco, "The Life and work of Marion Mahony Griffin."

<sup>39</sup>James Weirick, "Spirituality and Symbolism in the Work of the Griffins," in Anne Watson, ed., *Beyond Architecture*, 71

<sup>40</sup>Much biographical information on Francis Barry Byrne is taken from: Michael, Vincent, *The Architecture of Barry Byrne, Taking the Prairie School to Europe*, (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield, University of Illinois Press, 2013).

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Chicago, the Chicago Public Library, and by attending exhibitions at the Chicago Architectural Club. One of these exhibits was the 1902 exhibit of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Byrne was able to get an interview with Wright, and though unskilled, he started work for Wright in 1902. Learning quickly, Byrne worked on the Beachy, Tomak, and Coonley Houses, as well as Unity Temple. He left the Wright studio in August 1908. Byrne worked briefly for Griffin before leaving Chicago for Seattle in November of 1908, where he worked with former Wright studio colleague Andrew Willatzen. The two worked together until 1913, when Byrne moved to Los Angeles to work on his own. There he shared an apartment with Wright's sons, John and Lloyd. Lloyd was working for Irving Gill, a former Sullivan apprentice. Gill's buildings of stark wall planes with punched openings had a strong effect on Byrne. In 1914 Byrne agreed to become Griffin's Chicago partner, as Walter and Marion were leaving for Australia for an indefinite period of time and Griffin needed a partner to carry out his firm's existing projects. Among these projects was Rock Crest/Rock Glen.

Among later works of Byrne's career are a number of buildings for the Roman Catholic Church. In Chicago these include Immaculata High School (1919) and St. Thomas the Apostle Convent (1919) and Church (1922). St. Thomas the Apostle Church was considered one of the first modern Catholic churches in that it was a less processional, linear church. Instead its plan had wider cross-axial proportions and a more integrated nave and chancel than earlier churches. Outside of Chicago Byrne's major commissions included St. Patrick Church, Racine, Wisconsin (1924), Christ the King Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma (1926), Christ the King, Cork, Ireland (1931), and St. Francis Xavier Church, Kansas City Missouri (1949), and the Academie Ste. Cecile (Holy Redeemer Seminary), Windsor, Ontario (1959-61). Byrne's independent residential work included the Clarke House, Fairfield, Iowa, (1914), the Kenna Apartments, Chicago (1916), the Rich House, Keokuk, Iowa (1919), the McDermott House, Glencoe, Illinois (1928), and the Williams House in Westport, Connecticut (1936).

Byrne never retired. His death in 1967 was the result of being hit by a car while walking to church.

Einar Broaten (1884-1948)<sup>41</sup>

Einar Broaten was born in Norway in 1884. His name first appears in the Mason City city directory in 1915. In Mason City he worked for the architectural firm Jeffers and Company. In 1915 the name of the firm was changed to Jeffers and Broaten. By 1917 he was in partnership with W.E. Mincy, but in 1918 he listed his employer again as Jeffers. He appears to have left Mason City by 1927 and later was a partner in the firm Broaten and Foss in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. He died by drowning in 1948.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> For biographical information see Jon S. Ewing, Jon S., *Mason City, Iowa: an Architectural Heritage* (Mason City, The City of Mason City, 1977) 9. Additional information comes from unpublished notes by Terry Harrison of the Mason City Public Library, shared on 13 July 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Fergus Falls, Minnesota, *Daily Journal*, April 11, 1973, p. 4. (Twenty-Five years ago column).

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Besides the Drake House, three of Broaten's identified houses in Mason City are on the National Register: the Mier Wolf House (1913), the Lippert House (1914), and the Seney House (1920). All these houses show the influence of the Prairie School.

Curtis Besinger (1914-99)<sup>43</sup>

Curtis Besinger was born on 12 June 1914 in Stanberry, Missouri. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Kansas in 1936. He was a member of the Taliesin Fellowship, working with Frank Lloyd Wright from 1939 to 1955. After this he became a faculty member at the University of Kansas, Department of Architecture, until he retired in 1984. He was also technical editor and architectural consultant for *House Beautiful* magazine. His independent work included the MacNider House, in Rock Crest/Rock Glen (1959), alterations to the Craven House in Stanberry, Missouri (before 1968), and the Aspen Music School, Aspen, Colorado (1965). He died 12 December, 1999, in Lawrence Kansas

At the Taliesin Fellowship Besinger was involved in the design of the Unitarian Meeting House in Madison, Wisconsin (1947), the Mrs. Clinton Walker House in Carmel, California (1948), and the Price Tower in Bartlesville, Oklahoma (1952).<sup>44</sup>

#### Early Mason City and the development of Willow Creek

The Rock Crest/Rock Glen development sits five blocks east of the center of Mason City. Mason City is the county seat of Cerro Gordo County. Formed in 1851, the county was named for a battle in the recently fought Mexican-American War. The first settlement on the banks of the Winnebago River, in the area that was to become Mason City, was founded in 1853. It was named Shibboleth. The settlement's name was later changed to Masonic Grove and finally to Mason City.

Mason City grew steadily in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it was in the first decades of the twentieth, that it experienced particularly significant growth. From 1900 to 1910 its population increased from 6,746 to 11,230, an increase of 66.3%. By 1920 the population increased to 20,065, an increase of 78.7%. From 1910 to 1926 it experienced the highest growth rate of any county in the state.<sup>45</sup> The economy of Mason City was also growing. According to *The Cement and Tile Center of the World*, a Mason City Commercial Club publication, Mason City produced "more brick and tile and more Portland Cement than any city of any size in the world" in 1912. The city also experienced no business failures in 5 years previous to 1912, the year that Walter Burley Griffin was engaged in designing Rock Crest/Rock Glen.

<sup>43</sup> Biographical information on Besinger was taken from his obituary from the *Lawrence (Kansas) Journal-World*, 15 December, 1999, retrieved 4 July 2015 at [http://www2.ljworld.com/news/1999/dec/15/curtis\\_Terry\\_Harrison\\_of\\_the\\_Mason\\_City\\_Public\\_Library,\\_shared\\_on\\_13\\_July\\_2015.besinger\\_obituary/](http://www2.ljworld.com/news/1999/dec/15/curtis_Terry_Harrison_of_the_Mason_City_Public_Library,_shared_on_13_July_2015.besinger_obituary/). The MacNider and Craven Houses are discussed and illustrated in "Some Recent Work", *The Prairie School Review*, Volume V, Number 3, (third quarter 1968), 40-42.

<sup>44</sup> Besinger wrote of his time at the Taliesin Fellowship in Curtis Besinger, *Working with Mr. Wright: What It Was Like* (Cambridge, England, and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1995). Besinger's papers are housed at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas.

<sup>45</sup> Statistics quoted in McCoy in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 3-4

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On the site of Rock Crest/Rock Glen in 1870 Horace Parker built a dam on Willow Creek. Next to the dam he built a flour mill. The dam and the foundation of that mill still remain along Willow Creek. Parker sold the mill, and the land around it, on both sides of the creek, to his cousin A.T. Parker in 1877. At that point the mill was putting out 80 barrels of flour a day. A.T. Parker then owned land that extended from present-day South Georgia Avenue on the west to South Carolina Avenue on the east and from East State to 4<sup>th</sup> S.E. on the south<sup>46</sup>. This property included the land that would later become Rock Crest/ Rock Glen.

Willow Creek is a tributary of the Winnebago River and therefore, ultimately, a part of the Mississippi watershed. The creek's circuitous path flows eastward, surrounding much of the southern half of central Mason City. In the southeast section of the city it winds to the northeast to meet the Winnebago northeast of the town center. Where the creek curves to the northeast it cuts through limestone outcroppings, creating exposed limestone bluffs on either side of the creek. The bluffs dominate the landscape on alternating sides of the creek. First they rise above the creek's north side in the vicinity of South Georgia and South Connecticut Avenues. Past South Connecticut the bluffs rise above the right descending side of the creek, as it curves north. This series of bluffs continues until the creek passes East State Street. It is the area of the creek between South Connecticut and East State that relates to the development of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen District. Because of the difficulty of developing both the steep bluffs on the right descending side of the creek and the flood plain that filled the land on the left descending side of the creek, the city's street grid largely ignored the area. As can be seen on early views of the town, late-nineteenth century development jumped over the area and continued east on State Street (fig. 17, 20).<sup>47</sup>

### The Purchase of Land

A plat map of 1895 shows that the subdivision of A.T. Parker's land on the left descending side of Willow Creek had already begun (fig. 18).<sup>48</sup> This subdivision clearly was aimed at taking advantage of the high, relatively level land at the northwest corner of the property. Building lots were platted in two sections of the property. The block surrounded by State Street to the north, First Street S.E. to the south, South Connecticut Street to the west, and Rock Glen Place to the east became block 103, and the area just to the south of First Street S.E. and east of South Connecticut became Block 102. The area that was to become known as Rock Glen was platted as Block 104, but there is no indication of lot divisions in that area. It was likely considered too difficult to develop, due to its topography. To the south of Block 102 was a section of land that contained a bluff that dropped dramatically down to the creek. This land contained the east end of the bluff that ran along the left descending side of Willow Creek. In 1901 this property was bought from Parker and on it was built a substantial Colonial Revival house facing Connecticut

<sup>46</sup> Unless noted, current street names are used throughout the nomination.

<sup>47</sup> See "Bird's Eye View of Early Mason City, Iowa," 1884, Mason City Public Library. See also, McCoy, Robert, *Mason City Walking Tour Guide* (Mason City, Larson Printing, 2012). The guide notes several pre-1900 houses east of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development.

<sup>48</sup> From "Mason City-East," *Plat Book of Cerro Gordo County, Iowa*, Northwest Publishing Company, 1895, in the collection of the Mason City Library.

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Avenue, just north of the bluff above the creek. The property was called “Stonyacre” a name which is memorialized in the 1912 plat map of Rock Crest/Rock Glen (fig. 19). In 1907 James Markley bought Stonyacre, becoming the first of the group that would develop Rock Crest/Rock Glen to own land there.<sup>49</sup>

The second member of that group was Joshua Melson. In 1908 Melson purchased and surveyed the property that would be known as Rock Crest.<sup>50</sup> This was the land between the creek and East State Street on the north, South Carolina Avenue on the east, and Fourth Street S.E. on the south. As was the case in Rock Glen, Melson began development by platting the relatively level land on the south side of his property. In doing this River Heights Drive was created. This is a curving street on the south of Willow Creek that, to a great degree, follows the curve of the creek as it gradually turns north. The area was called “River Heights.” Due to the area’s gently rolling terrain, curving River Heights Drive is one of the most picturesque streets in Mason City. In developing the land on the right descending of Willow Creek Melson partnered with William Holahan a Mason City entrepreneur and real estate dealer.<sup>51</sup>

In March of 1910 Markley, with Blythe as his partner, gained possession of Lot 104, the remaining portion of A.T. Parker’s land and the bulk of what would be known as Rock Glen.<sup>52</sup> As with the Melson-Holahan partnership, the partnership of Markley and Blythe is not fully documented. Blythe took over active involvement in the development of the Glen and became the most engaged of the original four partners in construction of Rock Crest/Rock Glen.<sup>53</sup>

### The Introduction of Prairie School in Mason City

Mason City’s introduction to the Prairie School was through the commissioning of Frank Lloyd Wright by law partners James Markley and James Blythe to design a complex of buildings that would include a new home to City National Bank, in which Markley’s mother-in-law, Mary Emsley, was a major stockholder. The Emsley-Markley family’s connection to the Lloyd Jones family and Hillside Home School noted earlier made the choice of Wright as architect a logical one. While the bank, hotel and office complex was the first commissioned Prairie School project in Mason City, the first completed Prairie School Building was the George and Eleanor Stockman House, completed in late 1908. Earlier in the year the Stockmans had met Wright through the Markleys and commissioned him to design their house.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Plat map of Mason City, c. 1912, Franke Land & Investment Company, Mason City, Iowa, in the collection of the Mason City Library.

<sup>50</sup> Kruty in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 39.

<sup>51</sup> As Robert McCoy notes in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, “Though Melson was to have had William Holahan as his co-developer of Rock Crest, and he was a co-signator, little is known about the degree to which he made a contribution to the partnership.” 22.

<sup>52</sup> Warranty deed, filed 21 March 1910, book 60 page 339, Cerro Gordo County Recorder’s Office.

<sup>53</sup> Though Melson built just his own house on Rock Crest, Blythe was involved directly or indirectly in the building of four Rock Glen houses: Rule, Blythe, Schneider, and Gilmore. Blythe’s hands-on activity is recorded in a photograph in the Prairie School Review Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago of him on the uncompleted roof of his house in the winter of 1914.

<sup>54</sup> McCoy in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 10-13. Originally located at 311 First Street SE, a block west of Rock Crest/Rock Glen, the house was relocated and restored to a site directly across State Street from the north end of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen in 1989 and is now open to the public as a museum.

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Rock Crest Developer Joshua Melson also decided to have Wright design a house for himself and his wife, Minnie. In 1909 he commissioned Wright to design a house on the north side of River Heights Drive. The design Wright submitted to the Melsons was a variation on one which he had previously proposed for the Reverend William Guthrie for a mountain-top site in Sewanee, Tennessee. The design, which was cruciform in plan and focused on a central, two-story living room, was eventually built for Wright's employee Isabel Roberts in River Forest, Illinois. The exact site of Wright's proposed Melson House is unclear from surviving drawings, but it appears that Wright's house could not have engaged with the bluff overlooking Willow Creek nearly to the degree that the later Griffin design for the site did.

In any event, in September Wright departed for Europe in the company of Mamah Borthwick Cheney, the wife of a former client. As newspaper headlines would soon make clear, Wright had left his wife and children in Oak Park and intended to live with Mrs. Cheney. In addition to the scandal attending Wright's actions, his absence from the country put an end to further progress on his house for the Melsons; though apparently work on drawings for the house continued into the spring of 1910.<sup>55</sup> At some point in 1911 Melson appears to have met with Marion Mahony in Chicago to discuss his house. Mahony would later write that, because of the importance of the topography of the site, she referred Melson to Griffin. Griffin's practice was gaining momentum and the last few months of 1911 were filled with creating the submission for the competition for Canberra. Griffin was not able to travel to Mason City until May 1912, when he met with Joshua Melson, Harry Page and James Blythe. At that point both Griffin and Melson appear to have become completely committed to Griffin's vision of a Melson House perched directly on the south bluff overlooking Willow Creek. At the same time Griffin met Blythe and Page and seeds appear to have been sown for a greater Rock Crest/Rock Glen development.

### The L-Shaped Plan

Wright's plan for the Stockman House is based on a plan which he published in *Ladies Home Journal* in 1907 under the title, "The Fireproof House for \$5,000." The house has a square footprint. Roughly half of the first floor is given over to the living room. Another quarter of the plan is the dining room. The division between the living and dining rooms is largely open, creating an overall L-shaped space. The fourth quarter contains the kitchen. The entire first floor is anchored by a central fireplace. The stair to the second floor is adjacent to the entrance, which is between the living room and kitchen.<sup>56</sup> The L-shaped living room-dining room plan on which the \$5,000 House was based was an important prototype for several the Prairie School houses in the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development, including, with certain variations, all of the houses by the Griffins. In fact, Paul Kruty has argued convincingly that the plan type was originated by Griffin in 1899-1900 for the Ella Gould Cottage on Bustin's Island, Maine, built

<sup>55</sup> Kruty in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 42.

<sup>56</sup> Other houses surrounding the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development that use the L-shaped plan include the Curtis Yelland House on River Heights Boulevard designed by William Drummond in 1910, and on First Street, near the James Blythe House, the Vincent and Mary Farrell Houses, both built in 1911. The relative simplicity of the Farrell Houses indicates that they may have been designed by a local contractor-builder, but they contain all the requisite elements of the L-Plan: living room-dining room L, stair between the kitchen and living room, and central fireplace.

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while Griffin was working for Dwight Perkins.<sup>57</sup> In the 1906 Peters House, one of the Griffin's first commissions after leaving Wright's studio for independent practice, the veranda has separate and equal doors from both the living room and dining room. The veranda is an enclosed part of the living space: living room, dining room, and veranda. Its only exterior access is from the rear of the house, giving it a sense of privacy equal to the fully-enclosed, interior rooms. Griffin's use of this sophisticated layout of living room, dining room and veranda is in advance of both Wright's publication of the Fireproof House for \$5,000 in 1907 and Wright's built versions of the plan. These include "Tanyderi," built for Wright's sister in 1907 in Spring Green, Wisconsin; the Hunt House, built in 1907 in La Grange, Illinois; and the 1908 Stockman House. It is only with the Stockman House that Wright creates a similar level of interconnection of living room, dining room, and veranda, combined with the privacy of the veranda, which is found in the Peters House from two years earlier.

The access to the verandas of Rock Crest/Rock Glen is another indicator of the orientation of the houses, and emphasis on the privacy of the veranda. In the Blythe and Page Houses, access is directly from the verandas to the Glen side of the houses. The Rule House has a door placed in the link between the main block and the veranda on the east side of the house, with a stair leading down from the veranda. At the Schneider House the steeply sloping grade between East State Street and the south elevation of the house, required that access to the veranda was originally placed on the north toward the street. Thanks to that steep grade, though, the level of the porch was well below the level of State Street, allowing a degree of privacy to be maintained. At the Melson House, accommodating the goals of privacy and orientation toward the creek is more complicated. There the Living room and dining room look equally out into space well above the flood plain below. A large veranda/family room is located directly beneath living and dining rooms to accommodate the social function in all Griffin's Rock Glen verandas: providing a private garden entrance not attainable from the street. From the lower Melson family room/veranda, an east door opens onto a ledge cut into the stone cliff, large enough to contain the very private table and two chairs. The importance of this space is emphasized by its inclusion in Mahony's presentation drawing of the Melson House. A symmetrically-places door on the opposite west elevation leads to a curving series of steps leading down to the flood plain.

The orientation of the L-shaped plan in Rock Crest/Rock Glen tells much about the focus of the development. The traditional orientation of houses using this plan type is with the living room facing the public street. This is true in variations on the plan by Wright, and William Drummond, as well as Griffin. In Wright's work this orientation can be seen in the George Stockman House in Mason City (1908), the Laura Gale House in Oak Park, Illinois (1909), and the Frederick C. Bogk House in Milwaukee (1916). William Drummond's own house in River Forest, Illinois (1910), and his Yelland House in Mason City (1910), are variations on this plan with the living room facing the public thoroughfare. Griffin's use of the plan with its living room oriented to the street can be seen in a number of the houses he did in the Beverly section of Chicago, especially the Gunn House (1909), on which Rule House design in Mason City is based. Other houses by Griffin using this plan with the living room facing the street are the

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<sup>57</sup> Paul Kruty, "A Prairie School House in Coastal Maine", *Nineteenth Century*, Volume, 27, Number 2, Fall 2007.

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Peters House in Chicago (1906), and the Orth and Gauler double houses in Winnetka (1908) and Chicago (1909), respectively.

What makes this so relevant to Rock Crest/Rock Glen is that nowhere in the built Griffin houses in Mason City do the living rooms face the street. They always face toward the interior of the development. This is a key indicator of where Griffin and his clients (and later designers) saw the focus of the houses<sup>58</sup>. In the Glen all the houses were to have views of the area's natural setting from their living rooms. On the Crest the Melson House was to have a living room that took similar advantage of the views. Dining rooms in the Griffin houses typically had indirect views through the living rooms. Significantly, the kitchens and other service rooms are located toward the street further indicated the utilitarian aspect of the house's relationship to the street.

### Early Design Work: the Page, Rule, and Melson Houses

When Griffin first visited Mason City he was terrifically impressed with the possibilities of the site he would name Rock Crest/Rock Glen. Griffin's first work at Mason City was for individual houses: one for Joshua and Minnie Melson and another for Harry Page. Griffin presented sketches for these projects in July 1912. The Page House was in Rock Glen, at the east end of First Street S.E., where it meets Rock Glen Place.<sup>59</sup> Page had already received a preliminary design for his house from the Minneapolis firm Purcell, Fieck, and Elmslie. The single existing drawing of this design appears to show the house facing, and close to, the street, Rock Glen Place. Griffin's enthusiasm for the site must have been obvious and communicative, such that Page saw the greater possibilities of his house focusing on the Glen rather than the street<sup>60</sup>. Both Melson and Page both asked Griffin for working drawings as soon as possible. Griffin complied and by 14 September 1912 bids were requested for the Page House and the house was finished before December 1913.

The Page House occupies a central location in Rock Glen. Placed at the corner between the long Blythe House property to the south and the portion of the Glen which stretches north, the Page House is fully visible within the Glen on its east and south sides. In addition its west, street elevation is easily visible from the adjacent lawn of the Blythe House. The Page House's main living rooms (the living room and veranda) are oriented toward the Glen, while the garage and service entry are oriented toward the street. As with all of the Griffin's houses in Rock Crest/Rock Glen, the Page House is based on the L-shaped plan, but this house varies the most from a direct interpretation of that prototype. The narrowing of the living room portion of the diagram gives the house an overall T-shaped plan. This shape is accentuated by the (now enclosed) veranda which extends south. The house's T-shaped plan, covered by gable roofs, gives the design a stronger directionality than is found in the typically cubic form of the L-

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<sup>58</sup> Einar Broaten's Samuel Davis Drake also uses a variation on the L-shaped plan. Though the living room faces both the street and the bluff, the dining room faces only the bluff, indicating the importance of that orientation for the main rooms of the house.

<sup>59</sup> Construction activity for the Page, Rule, and Melson Houses is taken from Kruty in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, especially 52-58.

<sup>60</sup> Robert McCoy suggests that Griffin's plan relating the house to the Glen, may have been very appealing to Page and made his decision to go with Griffin an easy one. Email to author, 20 July 2015.

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shaped plan prototype. This directionality is appropriate to the house's location at the intersection of the north area of the Glen with the long Blythe property to the south.

The Rule House's cubic mass anchors the southeast corner of East State Street and Rock Glen Place. As described in section seven, the house's northern block is a complex interplay of wall levels and window locations. The surfaces at the block's four corners, which appear to be massive piers, are actually folded planes of stucco-covered hollow tile that project from the surfaces of the walls which contain the block's windows<sup>61</sup>. The windows themselves alternate locations from floor to floor, with the first-floor windows grouped together between the folded planes, while on the second floor the windows are pushed to the corners over the folded planes, with blank stucco surfaces over the first-floor windows. As noted the prototype for the Rule House was Griffin's Gunn House (1910, no longer standing), built in Beverly a neighborhood on Chicago's far Southside. The James Blythe family moved into the Rule House in late spring of 1913 and lived there until their permanent house at the south end of the Glen was ready. In the meantime the house was purchased by Blythe and Markley's law partner Arthur Rule, whose name has since been attached to the house.

The Melson House would take longer to build than the Page or Rule Houses. Excavation was announced for the house on 27 July 1912, before the working drawings were even complete on 7 September. Melson's profession as architect-contractor apparently allowed him to move forward on the basis of Griffin's initial sketches. Despite the early start the foundations did not near completion until July of 1913. The house itself was not complete until early 1914.

The house Griffin created for Joshua and Minnie Melson on the bluff to the south of Willow Creek is unique in American Architecture. It rivals Wright's Taliesin and Fallingwater in its integration of building and site, but achieves that integration in a manner very different from Wright's work. Though the works by Wright are grounded to their respective sites by roughly-laid stonework, cantilevered layers, in the form of stucco-covered framing (Taliesin) and poured concrete (Fallingwater), hover over their sites. The sophistication of these cantilevered forms is foregrounded against the houses' rough foundations. Like Fallingwater, finished concrete is used on exposed surfaces of the Melson House, but its use is much subtler at the latter house. Exposed concrete is used for window surrounds and for the bay which projects from the north elevation. The concrete is secondary to the rusticated limestone on the building's exposed surfaces, though. Its color even blends with that of the limestone, in contrast to the light cantilevered balconies of Fallingwater. Where the use of concrete on the Melson House is most noticeable, the projecting, oversized "voussoirs" which cap the second floor windows, the material mimics individual pieces of stone creating a flat arch over the upper windows. The Melson House is a massive, compact response to a dramatic site. Though compact, the design takes full advantage of the bluff-top site to create a verticality augmented by its projecting bay window, the projecting planes which wrap the corners of the building, and the out-sized voussoirs which cap the house.

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<sup>61</sup> Inside, each of the north blocks massive corner piers serves a function: providing storage space. In the living room's two corners are bookcases with doors glazed with wood muntins with the same pattern as the external windows.

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At the Melson House the transition between site and built enclosure is nearly seamless. The rusticated limestone of the house's walls rises directly from the rough-laid blocks with which Melson covered the bluff wall in preparation for construction of the house. The edges of the house are blurred by sharply protruding, interlocking corner blocks. Australian scholar Prof. James Weirick quotes Emerson's "Inspiration" in his discussion of Griffin's first seeing the Melson House site:

The poet cannot see a natural phenomenon which does not express to him a correspondent fact in his mental experience; he is made aware of the power to carry on and complete the metamorphosis of natural into spiritual facts....

Weirick continues:

With that moment in Mason City in 1912, so shortly after the completion of the Canberra competition entry, the decisive step in the evolution of the Griffins' architectural expression occurs. The experiments with cubic forms, roof gardens, crystalline motifs that have been under way since 1910... were combined with rough-hewn ashlar; great stone buttresses; pointed, almost barbaric, corner quoining; and sky piercing voussoirs.<sup>62</sup>

On its north elevation, facing Willow Creek, the Melson House's rusticated limestone blocks are a reinterpretation of the rough limestone blocks from which they rise. Griffin obscured the break between the found condition of the bluff face and the walls of the structure to create a house which is so partnered with its setting that where that setting ends and the house begins is difficult to determine.<sup>63</sup> The inspiration which Griffin took from this location he carried to other sites, most notably The Stinson Memorial Library in Anna, Illinois, and several houses in Castlecrag, a development in Sydney, Australia, designed by the Griffins.<sup>64</sup> The library in Anna and the houses in Sydney clearly show Griffin's unabashed love of lithic construction that first comes to complete fruition in the Melson House.

As noted, the light fixture at the west entry of the Melson House is the second of two fixtures, along with that of the Blythe House, which Griffin designed for Rock Crest/Rock Glen. Unlike the design of the Blythe House, which is a direct interpretation of a Japanese lantern, the fixture at the Blythe House is radially asymmetrical and more abstract in design.

### Completing the Plan of Rock Crest/Rock Glen

In early summer 1912, when Griffin was moving ahead with the designs of the Page and Melson Houses, the actual master plan of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development had not been put on paper. Nonetheless, the concept of the development likely was in his head from his first visit in May. At the time of his second visit in July six restrictive covenants were signed by Melson, Holahan, Markley, and Blythe that articulated the goals of the development. The first two of the

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<sup>62</sup> Weirick in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 150.

<sup>63</sup> The blocks covered the face of a quarry which had been dug into the bluff. Paul Kruty suggests that it was Griffin's client J.G. Melson who had the face of the quarry faced with the blocks. Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 53.

<sup>64</sup> Paul Kruty, *Walter Burley Griffin and the Stinson Memorial Library* (St. Louis, Walter Burley Griffin Society of America, St. Louis, 2010) and Anna Meredith Walker, Adrienne Kabos, James Weirick, *Building from Nature: Walter Burley Griffin and Castlecrag* (Sydney, Walter Burley Griffin Society, 1994).

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covenants were the particularly salient ones in terms of the design of Rock Crest/Rock Glen.<sup>65</sup>

They stated that the development: 1) would be strictly residential, that all houses would face the creek, and that no outbuildings would be placed between the houses and the creek, and 2) that Blythe and Markley would improve the property they owned in common “to the plans and recommendations of Walter Burley Griffin, landscape architect.” With this covenant, the agreement to preserve Rock Glen and the bluffs that surround it was put in writing. The actual design drawings that represented these ideas were probably not completed until December of 1912, when a plan layout of the development was drawn (fig. 31) and Marion Mahony Griffin created an impressive perspective of the entire area (fig. 30).

Griffin’s plan showed six houses surrounding Rock Glen and thirteen on the bluffs of Rock Crest. Included in the plan and rendering were the three houses whose construction had begun: the Page, Rule, and Melson Houses. Also shown was the house for James Blythe at the south end of Rock Glen Place. In many of the other houses connections can be traced to many of Griffin’s earlier projects, built and unbuilt. Nonetheless, these houses were not place holders. They were designs that were specific to the site on which they were to be built.

### The Blythe House

The inclusion of the Blythe House in the plan and Mahony's perspective of Rock Crest/Rock Glen indicate that the concept for the design of the Blythe House had been reached by the end of 1912. Working drawings for the house are dated 24 July 1913 and by late spring 1914 the Blythes had moved into their house. The contractor for the house was Chris Rye, who would construct three other houses in the Rock Crest/Rock Glen Development: the Gilmore House, the Schneider House, and the Drake House.<sup>66</sup> The family would occupy the house for the next forty years, until Grace Blythe’s death in 1954.

The Blythe House is based on a design proposed for the unbuilt William Tempel House (1911) in Winnetka, Illinois. The similarities are such that at times drawings for the Tempel House have

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<sup>65</sup> The remaining covenants were, in effect:

3. Markley would remove a house at the end of Mill Street (now Rock Glen Place), where the Blythe House was to be built.
4. Melson would have control over the mill pond, while the residents of Rock Glen would be granted access to it.
5. Melson would remove the two-story wooden superstructure of the Parker flour mill on the creek, and quit-claim in favor of Markley and Blythe land he owned on the left descending side of the creek. A structure would be built in that location, “in substantial compliance to the plans and recommendations of the said Walter Burley Griffin.”
6. Melson would also be granted access across the Markley-Blythe land to power house to be built in the location of the mill. Markley and Blythe would pay Melson \$350 when the wooden superstructure of the old mill Melson then owned was demolished and the quit-claim was delivered.

<sup>66</sup> “Rye Construction Company Has Large Building Record”, *Mason City Globe Gazette*, May 7, 1931, 10. This promotional article states that Rye (1858-1934) came to Mason City in 1892. His son, Carl, joined the firm in 1915. The article emphasizes the prominence of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen houses, “While Mr. Rye built scores of the larger residences in the community, probably the outstanding ones are a group of the Rock Glen homes.” Rye’s own house is a short distance from the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development at 630 East State Street. Rye is buried in Elmwood-St. Joseph Cemetery, Mason City.

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been confused for the Blythe House.<sup>67</sup> While the original design concept for the Blythe House may have been borrowed from another project, the decision to use that concept on the Blythe property was exceedingly appropriate. The Blythe property slopes down gently and fairly steadily from its northwest corner to the banks of Willow Creek on the east. Griffin took advantage of this topography to create a podium for the Blythe house at the far west side of the lot (fig. 27). The podium is made up of series of terraces on the east side of the house which are faced with rusticated limestone. The rusticated walls of the terraces and lower levels of the house itself appear to anchor it to its site. The house's broad, yet complex east elevation rises impressively above the lawn as the lawn sweeps down to the creek.

The Melson House and the Blythe House

The Joshua Melson House and the James Blythe House, the house on the Crest and the house on the Glen, are two of the Griffins' architectural masterworks. The Melson House and its intense relationship with its site, as well as its relationship with Griffin's subsequent work in Anna, Illinois and at Castlecrag in Sydney, Australia, have been discussed. The Blythe House has a more subtle, but also well integrated relationship with its site. In contrast to the Melson House, which towers above the bluff of the Crest (Marion Mahony Griffin herself called it a "castle", a nick-name that has continued locally), the Blythe House sits elegantly on its site with its long axis perpendicular to its site's long east-west axis that leads down to the creek bank.<sup>68</sup> From the east the house appears to be made up of a series of receding planes. The first planes are the limestone and concrete retaining walls of a terrace that runs most of the length of the east elevation. Beyond these is a concrete planter framed by limestone piers that sit below a large picture window made of a single sheet of glass. Limestone continues up the wall of the house to the top of the picture window to integrate the house with the terrace wall in front of it. From there, multiple planes of the house's concrete walls recede from view, giving the east elevation of the house a strong three dimensionality that continually changes character as the sun rakes across it during the early hours of the day. The Blythe House is, in the words of historian Paul Sprague, "one of his most iconic designs both as an expression of his [Griffin's] accomplishment in America and as a symbol of his achievement in Mason City."<sup>69</sup> The Blythe House, with its reinforced concrete frame and floors, and its exterior walls of hollow tile covered with concrete stucco, is the culmination of a series of concrete houses Griffin designed during his American career. These include the fully concrete houses in Winnetka known as "Solid Rock" that Griffin designed for Tempel in 1911, and the concrete on hollow tile Mess House designed in 1912.

Within the Melson and Blythe Houses, their layout continues to emphasize their relationship with their surrounding environment. This is strongly denoted by the orientation of the living and dining rooms of each. While the main sections of both houses have the L-Shaped Plan layout,

<sup>67</sup> The Tempel House was designed for a relatively flat site north of Chicago. The major differences between the Tempel and Blythe Houses are related to the difference in topography. A limestone podium for the sloping terrain of the Blythe House was created, and the second door of the drive through garage of the Tempel House was eliminated. Also an additional layer of ornamental concrete detailing above Tempel House cornice was not included at the Blythe House.

<sup>68</sup> Griffin, MOA, IV, 299 and Peggy L. Bang, *The Melson House Revealed*, an Owner's Perspective (Mason City, ControlPrint Creative, 2015) 10.

<sup>69</sup> Sprague in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 133.

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the orientations of their main first floor rooms differ from one other. In the Blythe House the living room spans the length of central section of the main, Glen-facing elevation of the house. The fireplace wall is parallel with that elevation, continuing, on the interior, the progression of parallel planes which starts on the exterior with the terrace walls. Beyond the fireplace the dining room in the southwest corner of the house is largely open to the living room. In the relatively ground hugging Blythe House, the dining room has a visual connection through the living room's large picture window to the exterior. It has an even better visual connection through the east-facing picture window in the conservatory to the south of the dining and living rooms. In the Melson House the orientation of the fireplace and, therefore, the adjacent living and dining rooms is turned 90 degrees relative to the main north-facing elevation of the house. Because of the house's height its view has a very different quality than the Blythe House. That height encourages the preference for a vertical view from both the Melson House's living room and dining room, a view which requires direct access to the windows and balcony off the two spaces. This is in contrast to the relatively horizontal view that the Blythe House enjoys. Thus, down to the orientation of the prototype floor plan, the design of these two houses is completely integrated to their respective locations on the Crest and in the Glen.

### The Three Houses for Blythe, and the Schneider House

As construction on his house neared completion James Blythe requested designs for three houses along State Street between the Rule House and Willow Creek, instead of the two houses shown in the original plan and perspective. In response to this request Griffin designed a unique complex of three houses which sat on, and were connected by, a raised terrace.<sup>70</sup> Though the terrace covered a fully exposed basement facing Rock Glen on the south, the first floor of the houses was still well below the level of the State Street sidewalk. To reach the terrace Griffin created a system of multiple-flight stairways down from the sidewalk.

The complex is known as the "Three Houses for Blythe." Soon after the initial design for the Three Houses was created it became clear to Griffin that he would need to go to Australia for an indefinite period of time to oversee the realization of his plan for Canberra. At this point he brought on Francis Barry Byrne, with whom he and Mahony had worked in Wright's studio, as a partner to carry out Griffin's designs for Rock Crest/Rock Glen. Byrne carried out the construction of the furthest east of the Three Houses for Samuel and Cornelia Schneider.<sup>71</sup> Drawings for the Schneider House were announced on 29 August 1914 and excavation was underway the following May. The Schneiders are listed in the Mason City city directory in 1916.

As described in section seven, the Schneider House is a variation on the Rule House design, adapted for its site. The two story block is raised up on a rusticated limestone base and, because the other two of the Three Houses were not built, an individual stairway was designed by Byrne to go from the State Street sidewalk to the entry door on the west side of the house. The 1927

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<sup>70</sup>Discussed in Brooks, *The Prairie School*, 257-259 and in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 77-79.

<sup>71</sup>Construction activity for the Schneider, Gilmore, and Franke Houses is taken from Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, especially 87-92

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addition of second-floor sunrooms by Byrne for the house's second owner Hanford MacNider<sup>72</sup> gives the house a breadth which is appropriate to the houses on the north side of the Glen which screen the Glen from State Street.

### The Gilmore and Franke Houses

While Byrne carried out Griffin's design for the Schneider House, with only a few modifications, the houses that replaced the remainder of the Three Houses were of Byrne's own design (fig. 23, 24). As Byrne executed the houses on State Street, he gradually took control of the designs so that the last house, the Franke House was completely his work. Despite this, in each of the houses at the north edge of the Glen, the main living spaces face the Glen and service spaces face State Street, allowing the houses' relationship with the Glen to remain strong.

The house to the west of the Schneider House, known as the Hugh Gilmore House, was built by James Blythe for his daughter Maud and her husband Hugh Gilmore, who was superintendent of the Mason City Schools. Drawings for the house are dated 27 September and 5 October 1915. The Gilmores are listed as living in the house in the 1916 city directory. The gabled form of the house may have been suggested by the house in this location in Mahony's rendering, but the stark simplicity of the Gilmore's stucco-covered walls may be a reflection of Byrne's interest in California architect Irving Gill. The gable form does give the house a strong identity on both State Street, where only one story is visible, and in the Glen where two stories on a full basement are visible. The house's State Street entry is among its most notable features. The entry vestibule is at an intermediate level between the first and second floors and is reached by a walkway that has rusticated walls on either side, walls that are necessary due to the quickly falling grade between the street and the house.

The Franke House, between the Gilmore and Rule Houses, was designed not for James Blythe, but for banker Edward V. Franke, who had acquired the lot from Markley. Plans for the house were announced on 30 September 1916. In May of 1917 bids were again called for, for a house with larger dimensions than first noted. Surviving detail drawings for the Franke House are dated between December 1916 and August 1917. While the house shows an increasing tendency on Byrne's part toward a stark simplicity of wall, the Franke House design continues the practice of having a living rooms face the Glen. It is also significant as the last house on Rock Glen designed by one of the members of Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park studio.

### The Drake House

In 1914, before leaving for Australia, Griffin prepared sketches for a house for Samuel Davis Drake on lot four of Rock Crest (the location of the third house south of State Street in the original plan, roughly in line with First Street S.E., across Rock Glen).<sup>73</sup> This house would have

<sup>72</sup> At the time the additions were made to the Schneider House Lt. Col. Hanford MacNider (1889-1968) was Assistant Secretary of War under Calvin Coolidge. Herbert Hoover would later appoint him ambassador to Canada and during World War II he would attain the rank of Major General.

<sup>73</sup> Construction activity for the Drake taken from Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, especially 83-85. Griffin's sketches unfortunately do not survive.

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been an alternate design to the dramatically located, bluff-edge house in the plan and Mahony's rendering. As Griffin had already proposed that Melson build this bluff-edge house immediately south of State Street in April 1914, it has been suggested by Paul Kruty that Griffin already was aware that Drake was not interested in the original design for the site. In any event, sketches were created for the house, on which Griffin would have expected Byrne to base working drawings. It was announced on 23 May 1914, that drawings were "in progress." Unfortunately this commission did not stay with Byrne. As Byrne described it later in life, Drake would not pay him for design work that Byrne felt deserved compensation. Byrne said he found Drake "impossible."<sup>74</sup> Drake's side of the story does not survive. In any event, in the fall of 1914 Drake hired a Mason City architectural firm, J.H. Jeffers and Company, to design the house. The actual designer was Einar Broaten.<sup>75</sup> Design and construction was carried out in 1914-15 and the Drakes were listed in the Mason City city directory by 1916.

Unlike Griffin's original design for this site, the Drake House is sited well back from bluff edges. While this has been a point of criticism for the house, it should be remembered that in Griffin's original proposal, the houses on either side of the Drake House site were located well back from the edge of the bluff. Additionally in the absence of Griffin's sketches for Drake, it is not known what design the architect proposed for this specific client. It may have been Drake's preference to have the house sited back from the edge of the bluff.

The house itself is a good example of the Prairie School as interpreted by a local practitioner. Though the house has the rectangular massing common to large houses of the period, in his articulation of the details of the house Broaten clearly looked to Griffin for his inspiration.<sup>76</sup> The wide over-hanging eaves and the placement of paired windows at the corners of the second floor recall the Rule and Schneider Houses. The grouping of its windows, as well as locations of its moldings, emphasize the horizontal. Broaten's use of rusticated limestone on the base of the house's west elevation unites it with the other Prairie School houses in the development. Its plan is a variation of the L-Plan with its living room and dining room looking directly onto the Glen. Most significantly, though, Broaten has placed prism-shaped vertical forms between several basement windows on the Drake House's west elevation. These vertical forms are strikingly similar not only to window divisions on the nearby Melson House, but also to a series of such divisions on a project the Griffins planned for their own house in Trier Center. A rendering of the Griffins' own house was published in *Western Architect* in 1913 and may have been seen by Broaten. Clearly this unusual detail recalls the work of the original designer of Rock Crest/Rock Glen and shows Broaten's interest in creating a house that fits within its design context.

### The Tradition Continues: the MacNider House

<sup>74</sup> From a telephone conversation between Barry Byrne and Robert McCoy, dated 5 September 1965. My thanks to Dr. McCoy for sharing his notes of this conversation with me.

<sup>75</sup> J.H. Jeffers announced in *Construction News*, 39 (23 January 1915):16 that plans were underway for the house, and that bids would be taken about March 1, *Construction News* 39 (13 February):19. Broaten's naming as Jeffers's partner was announced in *Construction News* (27 March 1915):6. Attribution to Broaten is based on the fact that he continued to publish the Drake House as his own, even as he changed partnerships, as well as its similarity to other buildings by Broaten.

<sup>76</sup> This type of massing can be seen in Wright's Winslow House, River Forest, Illinois (1894), and in Mason City in the Ralph Lloyd-Jones House (1915) and even the colonial revival Charles Christian House c.1900.

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On the property on Rock Glen Place between the Harry Page House and the Arthur Rule House Griffin proposed an additional house. This design was not built and the site remained vacant for over forty-five years until the late 1950s when Tom MacNider commissioned Curtis Besinger to design a house for the narrow lot. While MacNider, son of Hanford MacNider (who had requested the addition of sunrooms on the Schneider House in 1927), was a second-generation resident of Rock Glen, Besinger was a member of the “second generation” of Frank Lloyd Wright’s studio, the Taliesin Fellowship. Except for a period during World War II, Besinger was a member of the Fellowship from 1939-55, when he left to work independently and teach at the University of Kansas. The house was commissioned by MacNider in 1959 and he is listed as the property owner for the first time in the 1960 city directory.

The MacNider House is the last house in Rock Crest/Rock Glen connected to the Prairie School Tradition. It is based on the concepts of Wright’s Usonian house. These concepts were developed by Wright after leaving his practice in Oak Park.<sup>77</sup> Wright was interested in creating a house that was more economical than his Prairie School houses, many of which tended to be for wealthy community leaders (similar to Griffin’s clients in Mason City, particularly the Blythes). Therefore the Usonian house is typically smaller than many of these Prairie School houses. Formally a key difference between the Usonian house and the Prairie School house is Wright’s use of modules instead of axes. While the classic Prairie School house, such as the Coonley House and the Robie House has a plan with a strong axial composition, the Usonian house is based on modules: squares, equilateral polygons such as triangles and hexagons, and circles. In the MacNider House both of these major Usonian concepts are manifested. Its relatively small size fits comfortably onto its narrow lot. Its plan is based on a 60 degree-angled module. Also, like many of the Usonian houses, its materials are simply finished. Its woodwork is protected by clear finishes, its concrete brick walls are left exposed on the interior, and its red-stained concrete floor is also left exposed.

The MacNider House carries the tradition of Midwestern Modernism into the second half of the twentieth century, making its inclusion in the Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District completely appropriate. As with the other houses on the Glen, Besinger places service spaces, the carport and the kitchen toward the public street. As one progresses through the house, its space opens to a single large room containing the dining area and living room; beyond this, glass doors open to a terrace overlooking the Glen, reaffirming the importance of this natural setting in the design of the house, just as was committed to in covenant signed by Melson, Holahan, Markley, and Blythe in the early part of the century. As noted by Sidney Robinson, Professor Emeritus of the University of Illinois and the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture:

[M]ost fittingly, a second generation Wright follower, Curtis Besinger, added a Usonian dwelling in 1959 to the old Rock Glen development in Mason City.... The Tom MacNider house [*sic*] is a hexagonal-grid house of wood and concrete whose presence between two Griffin houses demonstrates how principles of domestic design for the Midwest can remain vital even as they are interpreted to fit successive cultural styles. Its low, geometric clarity,

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<sup>77</sup> For a discussion of the development of the Usonian house see William Allin Storrer, “Transition from Prairie to Usonian,” in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion*, (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1993) 218.

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its simplicity of mass and complexity of detail are not superficially like its fifty year old neighbors for very many good reasons. But the ideal of a harmonious living pattern, both as an internal, social, spatial, and material expression and as an external relation to the prairie remains a compelling force.<sup>78</sup>

## **Historical context**

### **National and International Planning**

The development of Rock Crest/Rock Glen can be understood in the context of nineteenth-century urban ground and planning. In the mid-nineteenth century, in reaction to the rapid growth of cities in Europe and the United States, planners and developers began in earnest to find ways to improve the living environments of urban dwellers. Through urban design and city planning they sought remediation of the perceived ills of the city. This remediation came in several forms, including residential city squares, private streets, and city parks. The Garden Suburb and Garden City movements also proposed planning models of varying scales to improve urban life.<sup>79</sup> Just as Griffin would do in creating the sheltered natural environment of Rock Crest/Rock Glen, the planners and developers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries grappled with competing goals of privacy versus community and the preservation of green space within a growing urban environment. Therefore each of these forms of urban design bears a relationship to the design of Rock Crest/Rock Glen and an understanding of them is important for understanding the context of Griffin's work in Mason City.<sup>80</sup>

The urbanization of western society can be clearly seen in the growth of its cities. From 1851 to 1900 Greater London grew from 2,362,236 to 4,500,000 inhabitants. From 1850 to 1900 Chicago grew from just under 30,000 to 1,698,575 inhabitants. Mason City, founded in 1853, grew to 6,746 inhabitants in 1900, and nearly doubled in the next ten years, growing to 11,230 inhabitants.<sup>81</sup> While growth in Mason City was clearly not on the scale of London or Chicago, it occurred at a pace that created a contrast between the natural environment of the Rock Crest/

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<sup>78</sup> Wilson and Robinson, *The Prairie School in Iowa*, 37-38. Attribution of quotation to Robinson was done per a discussion with Sidney K. Robinson, 4 September 2015.

<sup>79</sup> For the Garden City/Garden Suburb movement see Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

<sup>80</sup> James Weirick has stated that the particular significance of Rock Crest/Rock Glen "resides not so much in its status as a planned garden suburb... than in the fundamental source of its imaginative power: the complex fusion of modern and anti-modern thought that distinguishes the lifework of the Griffins" (Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 149). It can be argued that this fusion of modern and anti-modern is a part of the Garden City and Garden Suburb Movements, both of which contain elements of the planned city (as symbol of modernity), and the rural (a symbol of the pre-industrial). The power with which the Griffins made this fusion is at the heart of the significance of Rock Crest/Rock Glen.

<sup>81</sup> London population for 1851 is taken from [www.victorianlondon.org/population/population.htm](http://www.victorianlondon.org/population/population.htm). London population for 1900 is taken from Ann Saunders, *The Art and Architecture of London* (London, Phaidon Press, 1988) 20. Chicago population for 1850 is taken from Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, *Chicago Growth of a Metropolis* (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1969) 30. Chicago population for 1900 is taken from James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, Janice L. Reiff, eds, *The Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 1011. Population for Mason City is taken from McCoy in Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 4.

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Rock Glen area and the residential neighborhoods around it. These surrounding neighborhoods were being developed along traditional patterns of urban growth, with rectilinear street patterns and regularized building lot sizes. The focus of Rock Crest/Rock Glen toward the natural features of its interior was a specific response to this surrounding growth.

As a planner Walter Burley Griffin was well aware of contemporary trends in his profession and applied them to his own work. As David Van Zanten has written, for Griffin, “architecture existed to improve society, and each practitioner should contribute what he could, borrowing freely from his predecessors. The basic principles upon which Griffin worked were clearly taken from Sullivan, George, Geddes, and others. It is their application in his designs which is significant and original.”<sup>82</sup> In his planning work these designs ranged from neighborhood subdivision layout to the planning of entire cities. Of these projects Rock Crest/Rock Glen is the only American project to have been completed in its essentials.

### Squares and Parks

The reservation of open space within a denser urban fabric has a long history in Western Europe. The earliest examples of this are in the form of royal preserves or gardens. Early examples of purpose-designed green spaces which had a more communal emphasis are residential developments surrounding open squares, designed not as public parks, but as speculative residential developments. A primary example of this model is the Place Royale (now the Place des Vosges), developed in Paris in 1605.<sup>83</sup> Here continuous ranges of townhouses surround an open, five-acre green space. Public streets separate the green space from the townhouses. In London Inigo Jones’s original Covent Garden was similar to the Place des Vosges.<sup>84</sup>

Variations on the Place des Vosges/Covent Garden model can also be seen in later London squares. These squares are inward looking and are clearly differentiated from surrounding urban development, but, like the Place des Vosges, adjacent residences are entered from public thoroughfares which separate the residences from the central parkland. The “backs” of the residences in these developments were still of secondary consideration. An important variation on this model was the Royal Crescent in Bath, England (1767-75).<sup>85</sup> Although the Crescent itself is made up of a series of elegant townhouses, the south side of the crescent is open to a view across gently sloping parkland. As Griffin would later do at Rock Crest/Rock Glen, Royal Crescent designer John Wood the Younger took full advantage of the development’s landscape setting as an important amenity for the residents. At Blaise Hamlet in Bristol John Nash created an enclave of small detached and semi-detached houses for the retired servants of the local land owner. While the self-conscious quaintness of the houses at Blaise Hamlet bears little similarity to the architecture of Rock Crest/Rock Glen, its scale and use of detached and semi-detached houses to screen a central green space from the surrounding area is similar to the Mason City development.

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<sup>82</sup> David Van Zanten, *Selected Designs* (Palos Park, Prairie School Press, 1970) 30.

<sup>83</sup> Hillary Ballon, *The Paris of Henri IV*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, The MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>84</sup> John Summerson, *Inigo Jones*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, Ltd, 1966).

<sup>85</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *The City of Bath*, (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1986).

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In the United States the “square” model could be found from an early date in eastern cities, particularly and prominently in the squares of Philadelphia and Savannah. These cities were planned from their inception to include regularly placed city blocks that were to be maintained as green spaces. In St. Louis the private street was developed to an unusual extent, with deed restrictions and protective covenants used to maintain stability. Like the squares of Europe, the primary elevations and entrances of buildings on these American streets and squares faced the public streets (or at least the common streets, as in St. Louis).

The developments described above were largely integrated into the urban fabric, even while their designers attempted to differentiate them from that fabric. In contrast to this, in both Europe and the United States the nineteenth century saw a movement to create large urban parks that were intended to be complete oases from the grind of urban life. In the United States, Frederick Law Olmsted was the best known advocate and designer of this sort of green space. Olmsted was the designer, along with his partner, Calvert Vaux, of New York’s Central Park. Among the sites Olmsted credited as major sources of inspiration for his ideas was Birkenhead Park (1843), across the Mersey from Liverpool.<sup>86</sup> Birkenhead Park was one of the earliest parks specifically created for public use. Funding for Birkenhead Park was augmented by selling surrounding lots for residences. Along with funding park construction, these residences had the added benefit of screening the park from the city around it. Again, the use of perimeter residential buildings to screen parkland is similar to the technique used by Griffin in Mason City to differentiate Rock Glen from the surrounding area.

Olmsted and Vaux’s parks were designed to include a number of different outdoor spatial experiences. Central Park contained meadows, lakes and a picturesque area of contrived wilderness called “The Ramble”. Olmsted’s goal in these spaces was to bring to the city dweller something of the experience he found at natural sites such as Niagara Falls and Yosemite Valley, two sites in whose preservation he was actively involved.<sup>87</sup> At Rock Crest/Rock Glen, Griffin was able to preserve the natural characteristics described in the development’s very name, to provide a variety of outdoor spatial experiences: in the Glen, along Willow Creek and on the Crest above the creek.

### Garden Suburbs and Garden Cities

In the second half of the nineteenth century population growth, combined with expanded modes of transportation allowed for the physical expansion of cities. Improved transportation allowed the middle and upper classes the choice to move away from the central city. Suburbs, both planned and unplanned were a result of this movement. Although Rock Crest/Rock Glen was not a suburb but an enclave surrounded by the development of Mason City, the trends relating to city and suburb design were part of the context in which Griffin’s work was created.

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<sup>86</sup>Frederick Law Olmsted, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*, Charles C. McLaughlin, ed. (Amherst, Library of American Landscape History, 2002).

<sup>87</sup> Laura Wood Roper, *FLO, a Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

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Among the best known of the early American planned suburbs are Llewellyn Park, in West Orange, New Jersey, and Riverside, Illinois.<sup>88</sup> Both have in common their proximity to major cities: New York and Chicago, respectively. Llewellyn Park was designed by architect Alexander Jackson Davis in 1853 for an upper-class population. Substantial houses were built on large wooded lots. Riverside, designed by Olmsted and Vaux in 1869, was one of the best-known suburb designs of this period. Its designers placed houses on generous lots and used a curvilinear street pattern to break up the monotony of the ubiquitous Chicago gridiron plan, giving the suburb an individuality that it still enjoys today.

These developments were followed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the Garden Suburb and the Garden City movements. These movements, while similarly named, had very different goals. The Garden Suburb movement created planned developments within the context of the expanding city. Early examples in Greater London, such as Bedford Park and Hampstead Garden Suburb, were strictly commuter suburbs that were integrated into the metropolitan area.

In contrast to the Garden Suburb, the Garden City was intended to be an independent, self-sustaining city.<sup>89</sup> It was to be some distance from other urban areas, to which it would be connected by rail. Greenbelts in the form of parks, agricultural land and undeveloped land would protect the Garden City's urban identity by separating it from other urban development. The Garden City's best known exponent was English reformer Ebenezer Howard, who promoted the model through his book *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, later re-titled and better known as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*.<sup>90</sup> The first of the Garden Cities built in England was Letchworth, designed by Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker. Letchworth became well known in both Europe and America and the Garden City idea became a touchstone for projects on both continents.

In 1902, Unwin published the pamphlet "Cottage Plans and Common Sense."<sup>91</sup> In it he illustrated a plan for a residential quadrangle. This quadrangle consisted of a rectangular block surrounded by row housing. The interior was a sheltered, one might say cloistered, outdoor space that was accessible only to the surrounding houses. As Unwin notes, "One larger space of ground is more effective than a number of small yards." Unwin's model in effect reversed the traditional concept of urban squares where the public street flowed between the open green square and the private residence, cutting off direct access between the two. Unwin removed the public from the green space. The public entrance to the housing faced the street on the exterior of the quadrangle, but the interior of the quadrangle was freed from public access, becoming exclusively recreational. The Sunnyside Gardens development in New York City is an American example of low-cost housing which uses quadrangles surrounded by row housing to create a private interior green space for its residents.

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<sup>88</sup> Robert A.M. Stern, David Fishman, Jacob Tilove, *Paradise Planned: The Garden City and the Modern City*, (New York, The Monticelli Press, 2013).

<sup>89</sup> Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, 86-135.

<sup>90</sup> Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, F.J. Osborn, ed. (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1965).

<sup>91</sup> Raymond Unwin "Cottage Plans and Common Sense", The Fabian Society, London, 1902.

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Among the best known examples of American Garden Cities are Forest Hills in Queens, New York, and Radburn, New Jersey. Although it was never completely built out, the plan of Radburn became well known for a specific planning type that took the Unwin quadrangle a step further. It minimized the importance of the street “front” of the house, in favor of emphasizing the opposite side of the house, which faces communal green space. At what would have traditionally been the “rear” of the house, “The central open space, with its serpentine pedestrian and bicycle paths... has an informal naturalness.”<sup>92</sup> As noted earlier, this relationship of the “rear” of the house to green space is similar to the relationship at Rock Crest/Rock Glen.

### Prairie School planning and landscape

Along with Griffin, other Prairie School architects addressed planning issues. In particular architects William Drummond and Frank Lloyd Wright produced planning projects and wrote on the subject. Griffin, Drummond, and Wright each grappled with the relationship of city and country, just as the Garden City movement did. Despite the fact that all three are considered Prairie School architects, their planning designs had notable differences, both formally and theoretically.

William Drummond put forth his ideas on planning in an address before the City Club of Chicago in 1913 on “The Railway Problem in Chicago” and in his entry to a competition sponsored by the City Club for a “Scheme of Development of a Quarter-Section of Land within the Limits of the City of Chicago”. The competition drew entrants not only from the Chicago area but also the eastern United States and from Europe. Frank Lloyd Wright submitted a “Non-competitive Plan”. In both “The Railway Problem of Chicago” and the competition for the development of a half-mile square quarter-section in Chicago, Drummond focused on a major urban design issue of the time, the integration of railroad lines into the urban fabric. For Drummond, the transportation issue was closely connected with the issue of green space in the city. Like the planners of the Garden City movement, he recognized the importance of green space in the life of urban dwellers. However the Garden City movement’s model advocated surrounding each city with a green belt, while Drummond proposed a much more intertwined relationship of city and country.<sup>93</sup>

The work of Frank Lloyd Wright takes Drummond’s idea for the intertwining of city and country to its furthest extreme. Wright’s most extensive planning project, Broadacre City, is a utopian vision of the world after a general redistribution of land. In Broadacre City Wright proposed the replacement of cities as they currently were understood with a diffuse pattern of habitation. City and country were to become one. He described this proposal in the tellingly titled book, *The Disappearing City*. Laying emphasis on the primacy of the individual and the individual family unit, Wright’s redistribution allocated land to a family based on the number of members in it. The land allowed for an intended physical separation between the families of Broadacre City. For Wright, the family house on its discrete acreage promoted a healthy independence among the

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<sup>92</sup> Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, 127.

<sup>93</sup> *The Railway Terminal Problem of Chicago* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press for the City Club of Chicago, 1913).

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“city’s” residents. The diffuse community network was connected by car, train and telephone, eliminating the traditional need for close physical proximity to one’s neighbor.

In Broadacre City the opportunities for the serendipitous meetings that could occur in the denser urban fabric of the Garden City were intentionally minimized. The scale of the Garden City was intended to promote the need for cooperation within the community.<sup>94</sup> This scale can be seen both at the level of the community as a whole and of the individual residential enclave. The Garden City retains the traditional scale of the small town, with closely located public and private buildings. The idea of cooperation is carried to a smaller scale, as seen in Unwin’s diagrammatic plan for a quadrangle block in “Cottage Plans and Common Sense,” where houses were moved to the perimeter of the block to allow for the communal benefit of open space in the center.

Determining the appropriate distance between neighbors is acted out in an early project of Wright’s known as the “Quadruple House”. This concept is based on four identical houses each placed in the corner of a single residential block. Variations of the concept were created by adjusting the distances between the houses. An example of this is the Charles E. Roberts Project of 1903. As Wright put it:

If greater privacy to the whole were desired the dwellings would move toward the street corners enclosing more ground for strictly private uses. The extreme of privacy would be secured by setting the outer walls of the houses (exactly) on the street corner training all the principle rooms to the inner grounds.”<sup>95</sup>

By contrast, in the monolithic “Suntop” houses in Ardmore, Pennsylvania of 1938, the houses abutted one another, sharing party walls. The difficulties of the Quadruple House are noted by Robert Twombly:

Its half-acre per house made little sense to real estate agents eager to reduce lot size in rapidly expanding suburbs. The upper middle class that could afford the arrangement, furthermore, did not look favorably on communal land ownership and virtually indistinguishable houses. Norris Kelly Smith perceptively observed that only those with strong bonds of kinship or business ties would even consider the idea.<sup>96</sup>

Through business and marriage the many of the residents who shaped Rock Crest/Rock Glen had the strong personal ties to which Kelly refers.

While the Prairie School planners’ work related to one another mainly on theoretical levels, such as the interconnection of city and country, design similarities among those considered Prairie School landscape architects were more explicit in regard to form and materials. Griffin’s role as a landscape architect ties him to fellow landscape architects Ossian Cole Simonds and Jens Jensen. In *The Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening*, one of the first important publications on Prairie School landscape design, horticulture writer Wilhelm Miller lists Griffin, after Simonds

<sup>94</sup> Fishman, Robert, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century*, (New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1977).

<sup>95</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright, *Drawings for a Living Architecture*, New York, Horizon Press for the Bear Run Foundation Inc. and the Edgar J. Kaufmann Charitable Foundation, 1959, 197.

<sup>96</sup> Robert Twombly *Frank Lloyd Wright, His Life and His Work* (New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1979) 223.

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and Jensen, as “a third landscape architect who has been greatly influenced by the Prairie.”

Miller wrote:

The prairie style of landscape gardening is an American mode of design based upon the practical needs of the middle-western people and characterized by preservation of typical western scenery, by restoration of local color, and by repetition of the horizontal line of land or sky which is the strongest feature of prairie scenery.<sup>97</sup>

As early as 1880 Simonds was transplanting species of native Illinois trees into Graceland Cemetery in Chicago. Jensen’s use of native plants came from a profound sense of stewardship for the natural environment of the Midwest. This sense of stewardship led Jensen to help organize the “Prairie Club” an organization that promoted walking tours to natural sites in and around Chicago. Among the leaders of tours given by this organization was Walter Burley Griffin.<sup>98</sup> Griffin’s own sensitivity to local landscape preservation can be seen in his integration of architecture into the natural environment of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen development.

### Griffin as Planner

Although Drummond and Wright’s urban planning projects of this period generally remained theoretical, Griffin’s work includes a number of urban and residential subdivision designs for designated sights.<sup>99</sup> Several of these sights included topographical features that made an impact on the proposed design. Because of Griffin’s particular focus on landscape architecture, his sensitivity to the specifics of these sites is appreciable.

Of Griffin’s numerous planning efforts, his most elaborate and publicized was his international competition-winning plan for Canberra, the new federal capital of Australia. Like Rock Crest/Rock Glen (although on a vastly larger scale), Griffin’s plan of Canberra was intimately related to the topography of its site.<sup>100</sup> Civic and cultural facilities were placed in relation to landscape features. The urban density of the Canberra plan is a traditional one in comparison with that of Broadacre City. While, like Broadacre, roadways in Canberra are clearly scaled for the automobile, the roads’ layout creates a hierarchy of relationships, something Wright intentionally avoided in his roadway grid of Broadacre City. Also, Canberra’s plan gave clear primacy to certain governmental and cultural institutions, again something Wright avoided.

Several other smaller planning efforts are clustered in the time between when the Griffins finished the drawings for the Canberra competition at the end of 1911 and when they moved to Australia in April 1914. At the scale of the residential subdivision, these projects included Rock Crest/Rock Glen, the Clark Subdivision in Grinnell, Iowa, the Ridge Quadrangles in Evanston,

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<sup>97</sup> Wilhelm Miller, *The Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening* (Urbana, University of Illinois, College of Agriculture, 1915) 3.

<sup>98</sup> Robert E. Grese, *Jens Jensen, Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens*, (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 121.

<sup>99</sup> Wright’s one early planning project that was partially constructed was Ravine Bluffs in Glencoe, Illinois. Wright would later plan the campus of Florida Southern College and the residential subdivisions Galesburg Country Homes and Parkwyn Village outside of Kalamazoo, Michigan. See William Allin Storrer, *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion*.

<sup>100</sup> See Jeff Trunbull, Peter Navaretti, eds., *The Griffins in Australia and India: The Complete Works and Projects of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin* (Melbourne, Miegunyah Press) 1998.

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Illinois, and Trier Center in Winnetka, Illinois. In Grinnell Griffin broke with the prevailing grid street layout to design a curvilinear street pattern following the natural contours of the twenty acre parcel of land.<sup>101</sup> In this street layout, Griffin's plan would have provided the developer with 66 lots compared with 57 lots in the original grid layout. Later, larger scale planning efforts follow the precedent of the Clark Subdivision, allowing the natural contours to determine layout. These include an unrealized plan from 1915 for Vanderhoof, British Columbia, and, importantly, Griffin's realized layout for the Castlecrag subdivision in Sydney, Australia. In the Ridge Quadrangles and the Trier Center developments in suburban Chicago, Griffin worked to maximize the amount of open space within the housing arrangements.<sup>102</sup> Ridge Quadrangles were to be a cooperative development of 200 housing units on three city blocks. The housing units were to be located closely together to create sheltered, communal green space in the center of each block. This project was a direct interpretation of the Unwin Quadrangle. Its similarity to the offset houses of Unwin's plan in *Nothing Gained by Overcrowding!* is clear. Griffin's knowledge of Unwin may have been direct, as Unwin spoke before the City Club of Chicago in May 1911.<sup>103</sup> At Trier Center detached houses were placed relatively close to the street, again to allow for large areas of green space between neighboring houses. The relationship between Trier Center and Wright's Quadruple House plan is of interest. Although his placement of houses in the Winnetka project was not a literal interpretation of Wright's project whose emphasis was on privacy between the houses, Griffin does locate the houses in very specific ways to maximize each house's relationship to the surrounding green space. As Griffin was a member of Wright's office at the time of the 1903 Roberts project, his awareness of Wright's Quadruple Houses concept is likely, and his direct involvement with the Roberts project is possible.<sup>104</sup>

Like Drummond and Wright, in March of 1913, Griffin participated in the competition for a "Scheme of Development of a Quarter-Section of Land within the Limits of the City of Chicago". Officially Griffin served in an "advisory" role to Edgar H. Lawrence, in the competition. The submission was probably begun by Griffin before leaving for Australia, and its renderings were done by Marion Mahony Griffin.<sup>105</sup> A notable feature of the Lawrence/Griffin plan was the complete surrounding of its perimeter by a continuous line of commercial buildings, interrupted only by streets entering the quarter-section. Immediately within this perimeter the density of building was switched to detached single-family houses. Only non-residential buildings that directly serve the residential were allowed within the perimeter. These included schools, churches and the YWCA and YMCA. With the use of enclosing perimeter commercial buildings, Lawrence and Griffin created a cloistered residential environment clearly differentiated from the surrounding urban areas.<sup>106</sup> In general concept this is very similar to the

<sup>101</sup> Paul Kruty, *Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin in Grinnell*, (Grinnell, Grinnell College, 2011) 13-14.

<sup>102</sup> *Western Architect*, Vol. 19, No. 8, (August 1913), 67-72

<sup>103</sup> Courtney Graham Donnell, *Prairie School Town Planning 1900-1915*, 23.

<sup>104</sup> Courtney Graham Donnell, *Prairie School Town Planning 1900-1915*, 64.

<sup>105</sup> Courtney Graham Donnell, *Prairie School Town Planning 1900-1915*, 99. According to Donnell, Lawrence "remains a mystery". Paul Kruty refers to Lawrence as Griffin's structural engineer, Kruty et al, *Rock Crest/Rock Glen*, 70.

<sup>106</sup> Of all the other entrants, only those plans by Boynton and Riddle and Riddle attempt to completely surrounding the development with perimeter high-density building in a degree that in any way approaches the Lawrence/Griffin plan.

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placement of the perimeter houses of Rock Glen, which shield the parkland of the Glen from surrounding residential neighborhoods of Mason City.

Griffin's awareness of the Garden City movement is confirmed in his design for the city of Mossmain, Montana. Mossmain was to be an entirely new community on a train line approximately thirteen miles southwest of Billings. The town's prospectus referred directly to the Garden City model: "The general plan of the Letchworth project with such modifications as changes in the local conditions demand has been adopted as the Yellowstone Garden City Plan."<sup>107</sup> Although this description underrated Griffin's creativity, the plan clearly had several of the major components of the Garden City model, including a connection to Billings by train, and definite separation by surrounding green space. Also, significantly, the plan includes a "factory district". This was an important component of the Garden City idea, which was promoted to allow the planned community to be an independent entity, not simply a suburb or bedroom community. Even Griffin's town center is placed on an axis perpendicular with the train line in a manner reminiscent of Letchworth.

### **Conclusion**

The Rock Crest/Rock Glen development in Mason City, Iowa is of national significance as:

- The only American planning project of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, each important Prairie School architects in their own right, to be carried out to a significant degree.
- The only constructed Prairie School planning project in America planned for a private community.
- The largest concentration of houses designed by early Prairie School architects for a specific site in America.
- An unusual example of a planned community for upper middle class professionals who, through the use of legal covenants sought to preserve a natural environment for communal use.
- The location of several examples of the Griffins' best architectural work, particularly the Melson and Blythe Houses.

The historic integrity of the resources of the district ranges from good to excellent and the open space of the Glen has been preserved as the secluded natural environment that Griffin intended. Though the project was not built completely to Griffin's plan, those portions which were built, the Glen and the spectacular Melson House on the Crest, give a full understanding of the Griffins' intentions for this project.

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<sup>107</sup> "Prospectus of the Yellowstone Garden City Holding Corporation." Billings, Montana, n.d.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acree of Property** 7.2

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 43.150561 | Longitude: -93.192544 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

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| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of East State Street and Rock Glen Place, the boundary runs east along State Street approximately 390 feet to ten feet beyond the right descending side of Willow Creek. Turning south the boundary runs approximately 280 feet along a line ten feet east of the right descending side of Willow Creek, at the top of the limestone bluffs, as shown in figs. 9 and 10. This includes a portion of the properties at 541 East State Street and 22 South Carolina Avenue. At the northern legal boundary of 28 North Carolina Avenue the boundary turns east and runs approximately 140 feet to the western curb of South Carolina. Turning south the boundary runs along the western curb of North Carolina for approximately 118 feet to a point in line with the major southern legal boundary of 28 South Carolina. Turning west the district boundary meets the southern boundary of 28 South Carolina, and runs approximately 160 feet along the southern boundary of 28 South Carolina to a point twenty feet east of the right descending side of Willow Creek, as shown in fig. 12. Turning southwest the boundary follows a line twenty feet inland from the right descending side of the creek for approximately 400 feet to the eastern legal boundary of 56 River Heights Drive as shown in figs. 12-14. This includes a portion of the properties at 110, 120, and 204 South Carolina Avenue and 86, 78, and 68 River Heights Drive. Turning south along the eastern legal boundary of 56 River Heights Drive, the boundary runs approximately 260 feet to the northern curb of River Heights Drive. Turning west the boundary runs approximately 138 feet along the northern curb of River Heights Drive to the western legal boundary of 56 River Heights Drive. Turning north-northwest the boundary runs

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Cerro Gordo, IA

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approximately 220 feet along the legal western boundary of 56 River Heights Drive to the south bank of Willow Creek. Turning north, the boundary runs approximately 415 feet north to the point on the southern curb of First Street S.E. where the legal boundary of 431 First Street S.E. meets the curb as shown in fig. 16. Turning east the boundary runs approximately 107 feet along the south curb of First Street S. E. to the corner of First Street S.E. and Rock Glen Place. Turning north the boundary runs 326 feet along the east curb of Rock Glen Place to the point of origin.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The north and west boundaries correspond to the original boundaries of Walter Burley Griffin's Rock Crest/Rock Glen development. This portion of the district includes the "Glen" of Rock Crest/Rock Glen. To the south and east the district boundaries include the bluff along river. The bluff was an integral part of Griffin's design and referred to in the first half of the name Rock Crest/Rock Glen. On the Crest the boundaries were drawn to include two properties, the Joshua Melson House and the Samuel Davis Drake House. The Melson House was one of the first houses built for the development and remains Griffin's American house which is most dramatically integrated with its site. The Drake House is included as an interpretation of Prairie School design contemporary with the other early Prairie School work in the district. Its design includes details which can also be found in Griffin's work in the district and was designed for a client who had originally contacted Griffin before he left the United States for Australia.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: John H. Waters  
organization: Architect and independent researcher  
street & number: 4250 N. Marine Drive, #306  
city or town: Chicago state: IL zip code: 606013  
e-mail john.h.waters@gmail.com  
telephone: 773.871.7226  
date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.  
See continuation sheets
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

See continuation sheets

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Fig. 2: State of Iowa, locating Cerro Gordo County.  
Formatted 27 July 2015.



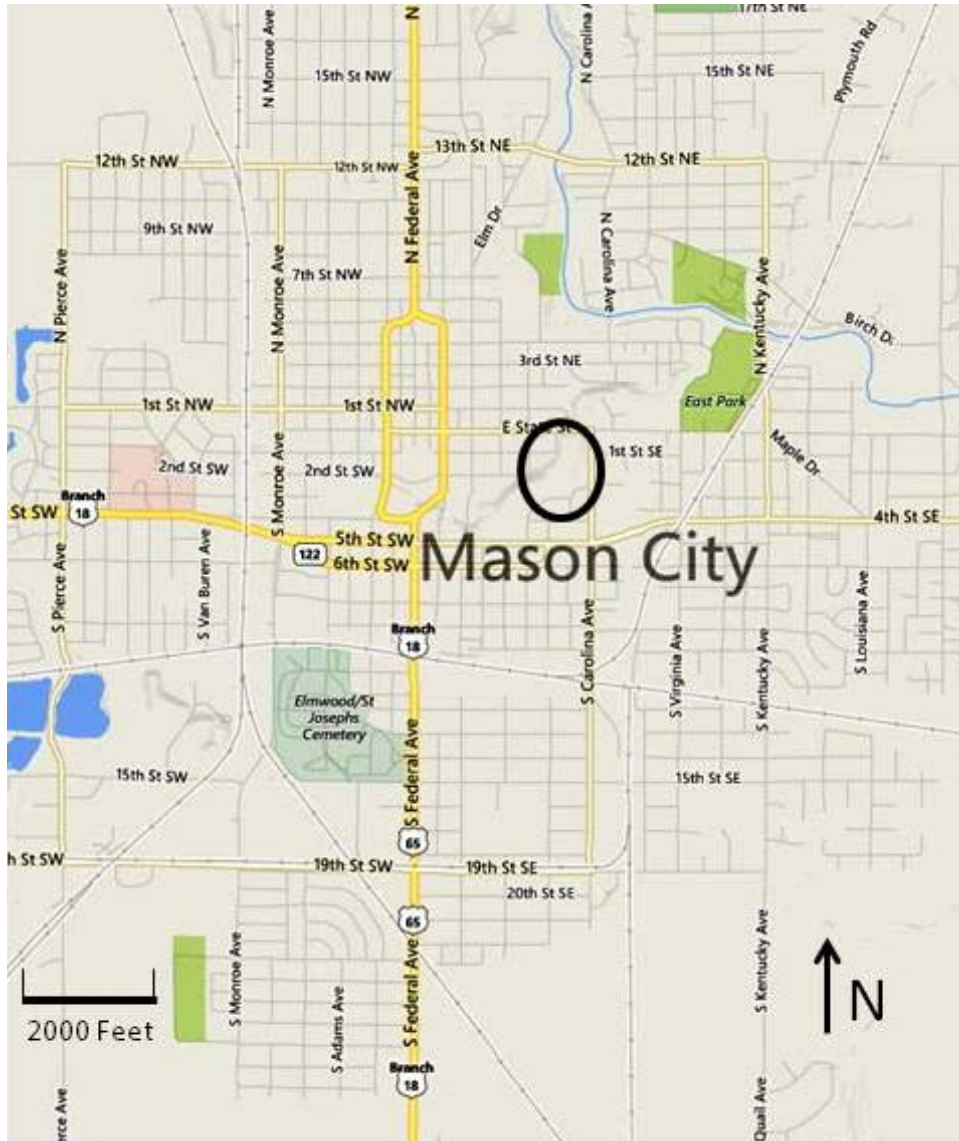
Fig. 3: Cerro Gordo County, locating Mason City.  
Base map, Bing Maps, retrieved 27 July 2015

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**Fig 4: Mason City, locating the Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District.**  
Base map, Bing Maps, retrieved 27 July 2015.

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Fig. 5: Aerial view of the Blythe property, 431 1<sup>st</sup> Street S.E., with topographic contours at two foot increments, showing the house to the west (left) and Willow Creek to the east. City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, 2006.

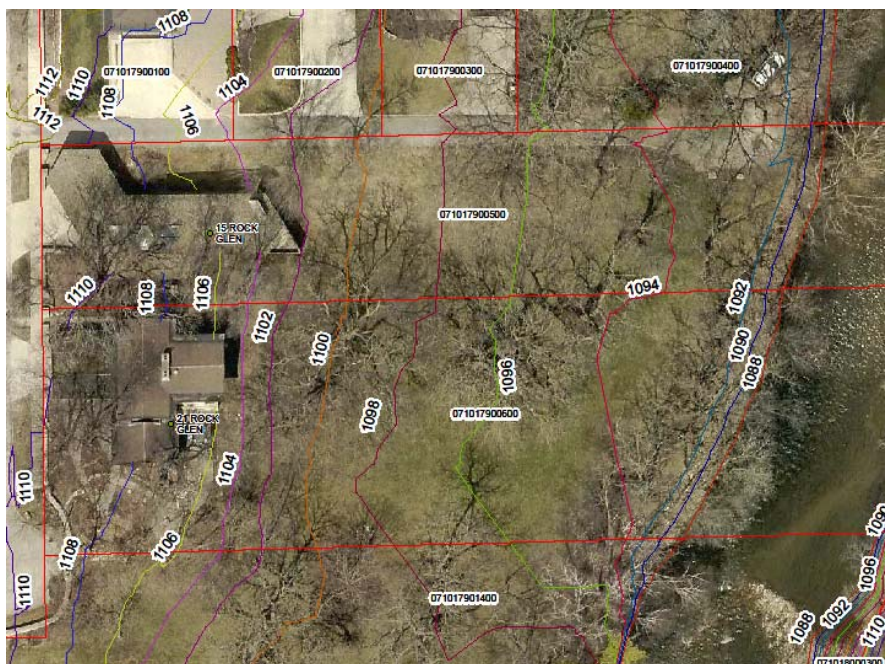


Fig. 6: Aerial view of the MacNider and Page properties, 15 and 21 Rock Glen Place, showing the houses to the west (left) and Willow Creek to the east, Page House center, MacNider House above. City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, 2006.

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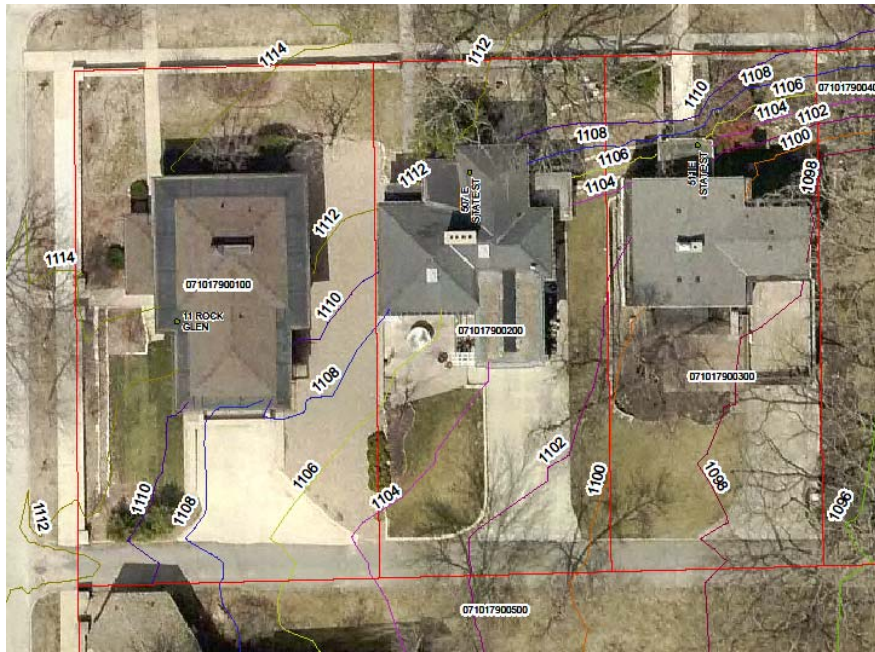


Fig. 7: Aerial view of the Rule, Franke, and Gilmore properties, 11 Rock Glen Place and 507 and 511 East State Street, showing the State Street sidewalk to the north. City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, 2006.



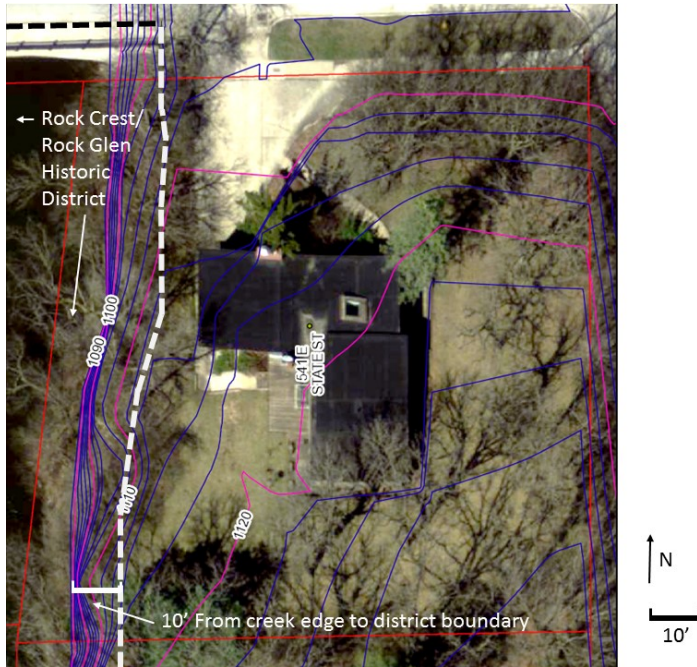
Fig. 8: Aerial view of the Schneider property, 525 East State Street, showing the State Street sidewalk to the north. City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, 2006.

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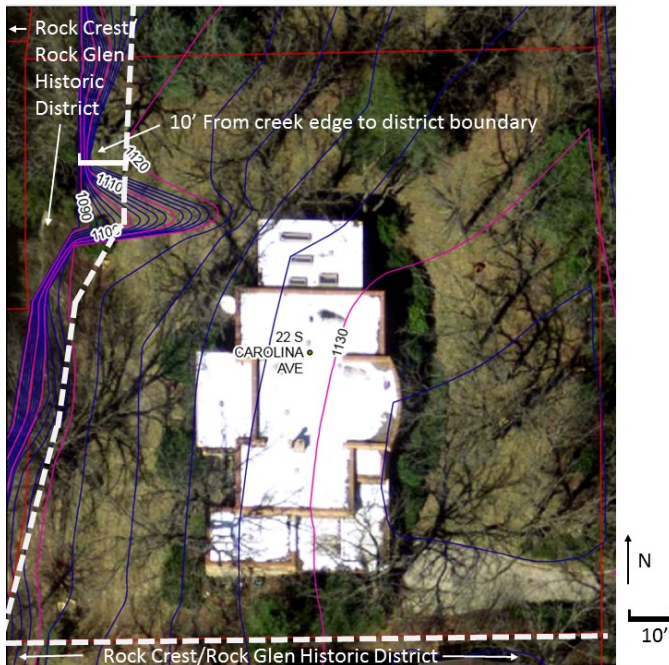
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**Fig. 9: Aerial view of 541 East State Street, clarifying partial property boundary line. Willow Creek is to the west (left) and South Carolina is to the east. Base map, City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, formatted 2015.**



**Fig. 10: Aerial view of the 22 South Carolina, clarifying partial property boundary line. Willow Creek is to the west (left) and South Carolina is to the east.**

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Base map, City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, formatted 2015.



Fig. 11: Aerial view of the Drake property, 28 South Carolina Avenue, showing Willow Creek to the west (left) and South Carolina to the east. City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, 2006.



Fig. 12: Aerial view of 110 and 120 South Carolina, clarifying partial property boundary line. Willow Creek is to the west (left) and South Carolina is to the east. Base map, City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, formatted 2015.

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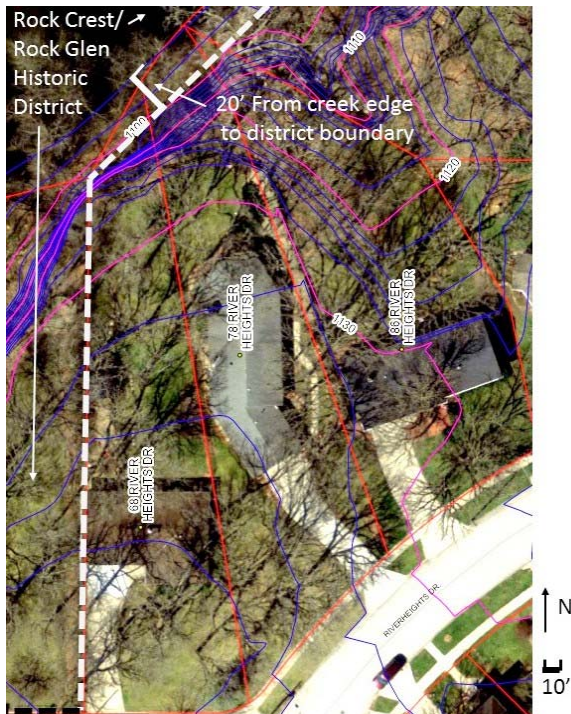
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**Fig. 13: Aerial view of 78 and 86 River Heights Drive, and 204 South Carolina, clarifying partial property boundary line. Willow Creek is to the northwest (upper left). Base map City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, formatted 2015.**



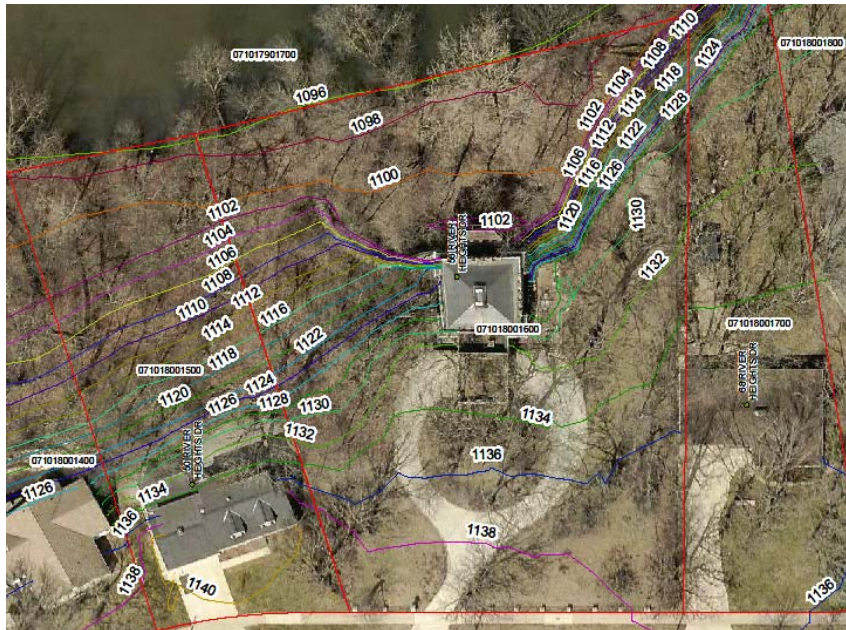
**Fig. 14: Aerial view of 68, 78, and 86 River Heights Drive, clarifying partial property boundary line. Willow Creek is to the northwest (upper left). Base map, City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, formatted 2015.**

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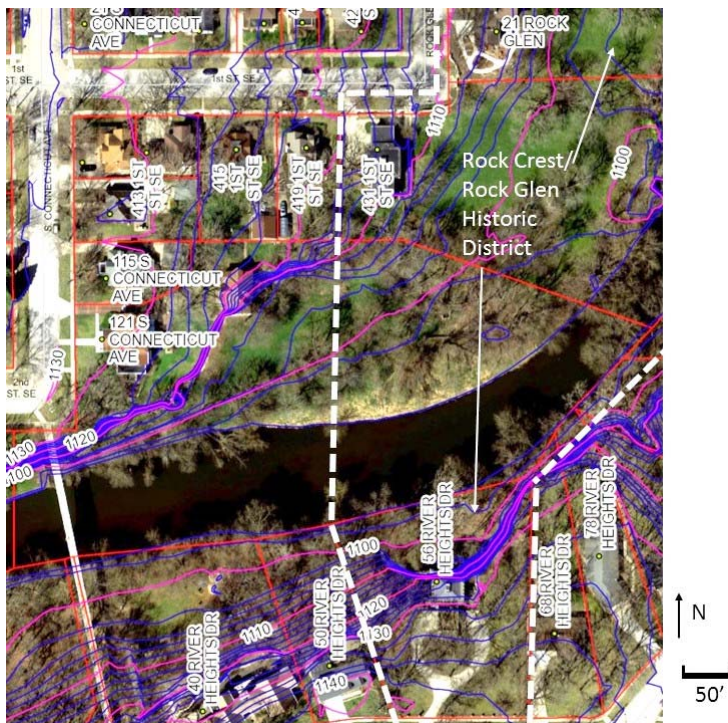
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**Fig. 15: Aerial view of the Melson property, 56 River Heights Drive, showing Willow Creek to the north (up) and the River Heights sidewalk to the south. City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, 2006.**



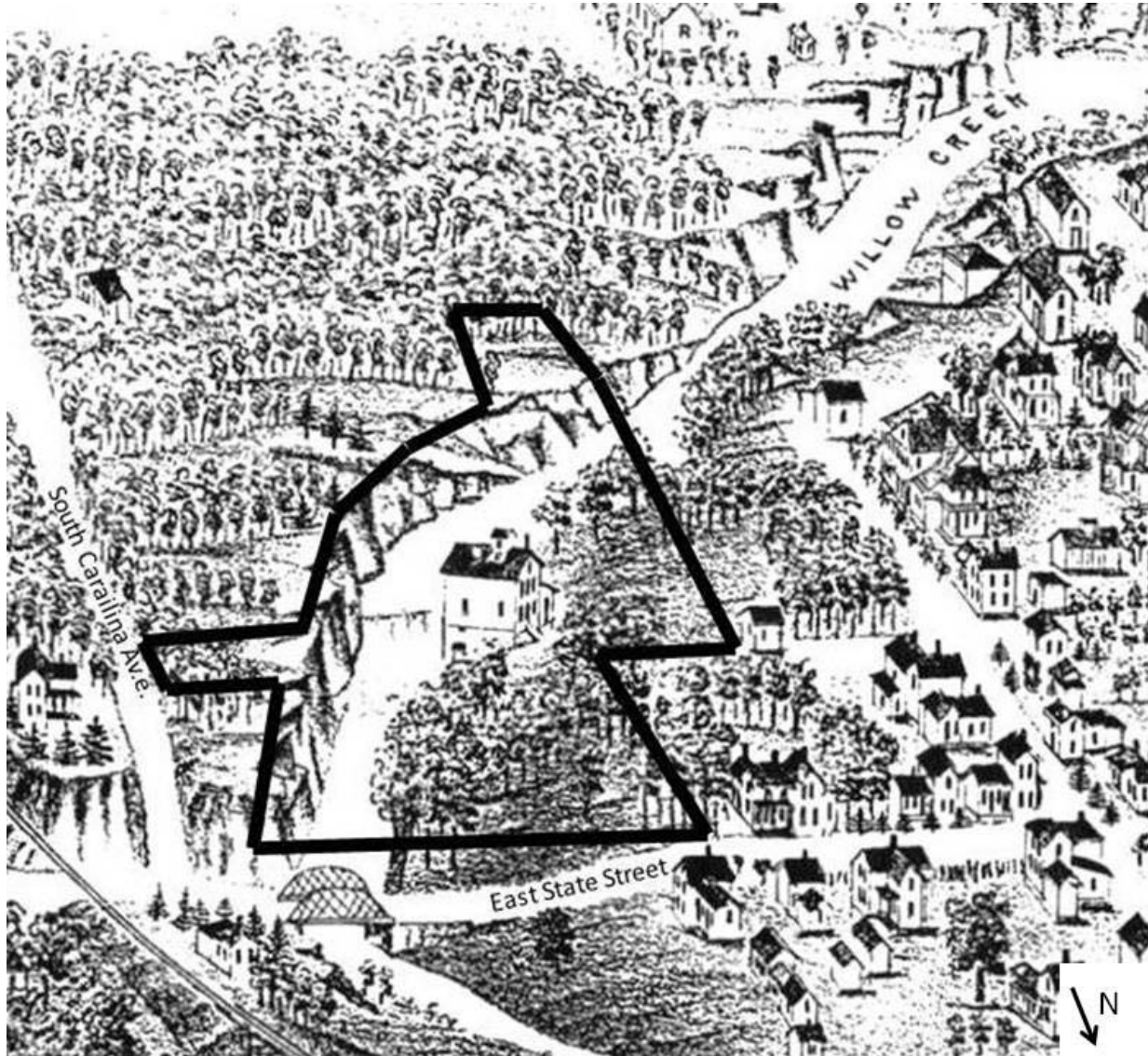
**Fig. 16: Aerial view of southern portion of Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District. Base map, City of Mason City, generated by LIDAR, formatted 2015.**

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**Fig. 17: 1884 View**

Detail of “Bird’s Eye View of Mason City, Iowa,” looking south, with overlay of approximate location of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District boundary. Published in 1884 by J.J. Stoner, Madison, Wisconsin, and lithographed by Beck and Pauli, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Base view in collection of Mason City Library.

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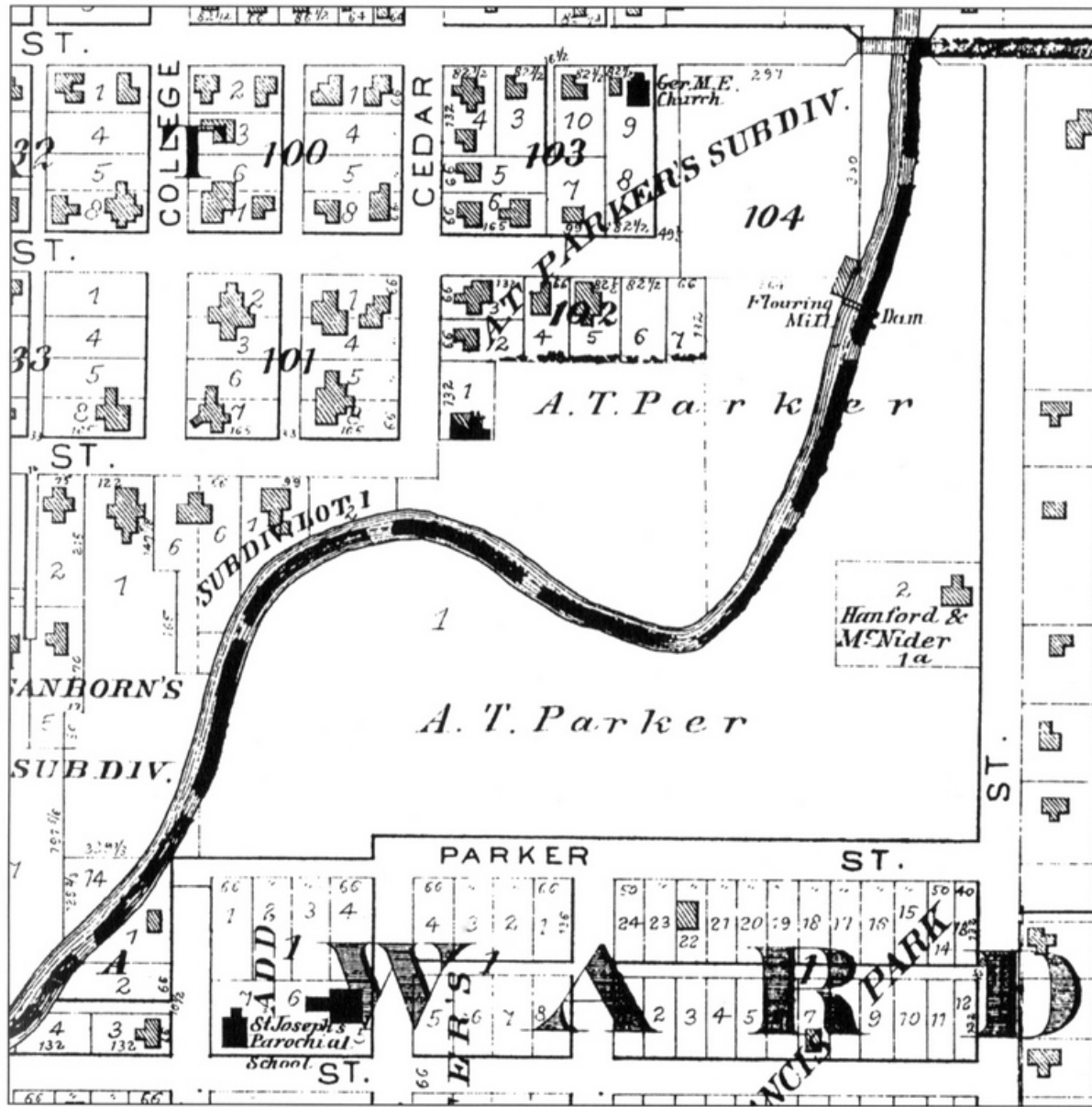


Fig 18: 1895 Plat Map  
Mason City Public Library

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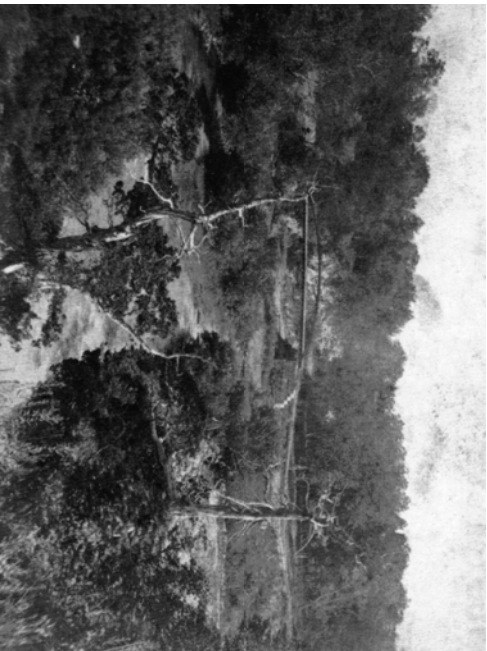
Fig. 19: 1912 Plat Map  
Mason City Public Library

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**Fig. 20: Willow Creek looking south across the State street bridge, 1870.**  
Mason City Public Library.



**Fig. 21: South side of State Street, east from Rock Glen Place. Date unknown, probably late 1910s.**  
Historic postcard, Paul Krutzy collection.



**Fig. 22: Similar view, 2015. Detail of IA\_Cerro Gordo\_Rock Crest-Rock Glen\_017.**

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**Fig 23: Houses on State Street, viewed from the south, before the construction of the second floor addition above the Rule House veranda, and of the MacNider House. Date Unknown, probably late 1910s, taken before the second floor addition above the Rule veranda. Historic Postcard, Paul Kruty collection.**



**Fig. 24: Similar view, 2015. Detail of IA\_Cerro Gordo\_Rock Crest-Rock Glen\_015.**

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**Fig. 25: Early view to northeast from Blythe House roof showing Page House, original planting island at street intersection, and landscape walls. Date unknown, probably late 1910s. Chicago History Museum**



**Fig. 26: Similar view, 2015. Detail of IA\_Cerro Gordo\_Rock Crest-Rock Glen\_007.**

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**Fig 27: Early view northwest from Rock Crest toward Blythe and Page Houses. Between 1914 and 1920.**

Chicago History Museum.



**Fig. 28: Early view of unidentified group gathered in Rock Glen, in front of Blythe House. Note early enclosure of Blythe House roof deck above veranda to left, c. 1930s.**

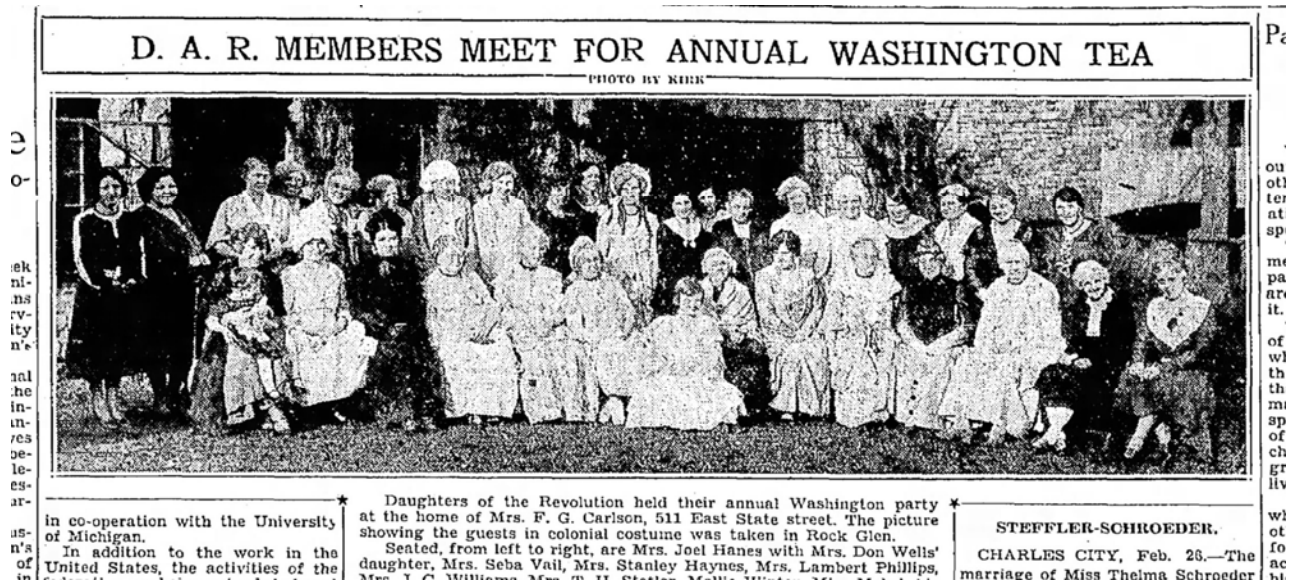
Fischbeck Collection, Mason City Library.

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**Fig. 29: Gathering of the Daughters of the American Revolution photographed in Rock Glen. This appears to be in front of the Gilmore House, with Schneider entry "bridge" to the right. Mason City Globe-Gazette, February, 26, 1931, page 9.**



**Fig. 30 Marion Mahony Griffin, plan, Rock Crest/Rock Glen, 1912-13**  
National Library of Australia, PIC Row 65/3/2 #PIC/9929/136

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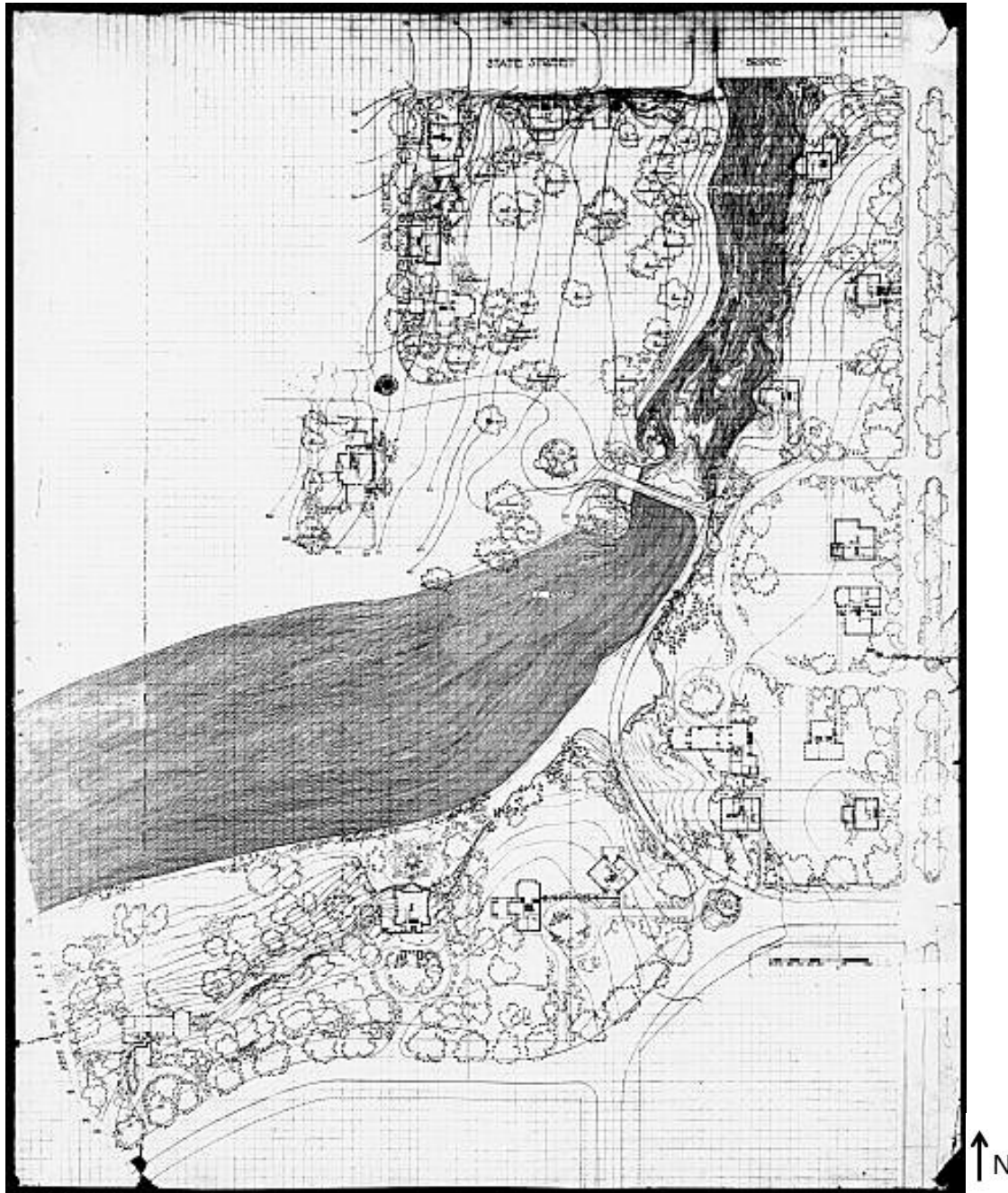


Fig. 31 Marion Mahony Griffin, plan, Rock Crest/Rock Glen, 1912-13  
National Library of Australia PIC/9929/218 LOC Drawer PIC/9929/218 Folder 7



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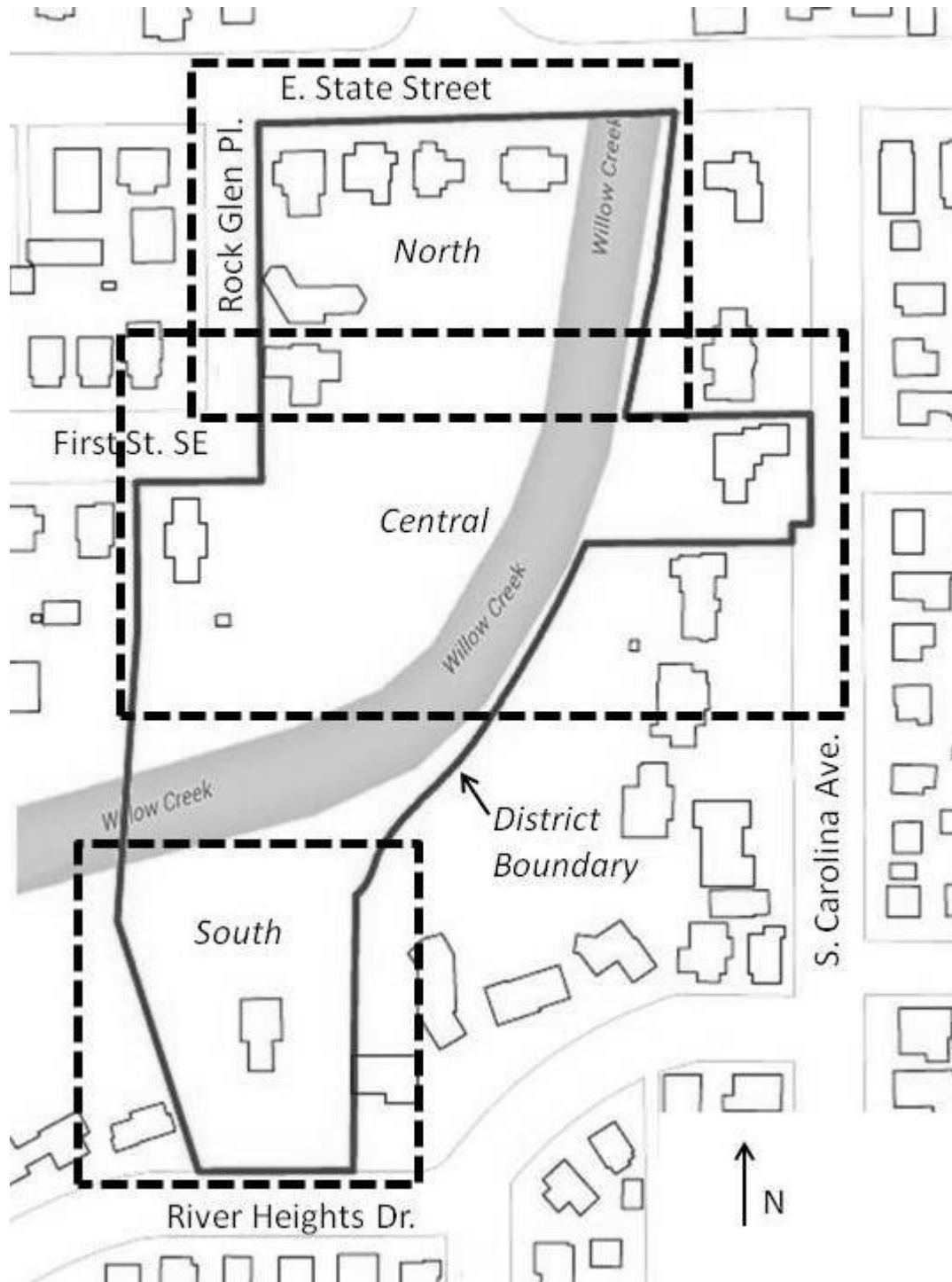


Fig. 33: Photograph location key plan, formatted 10 December 2014.

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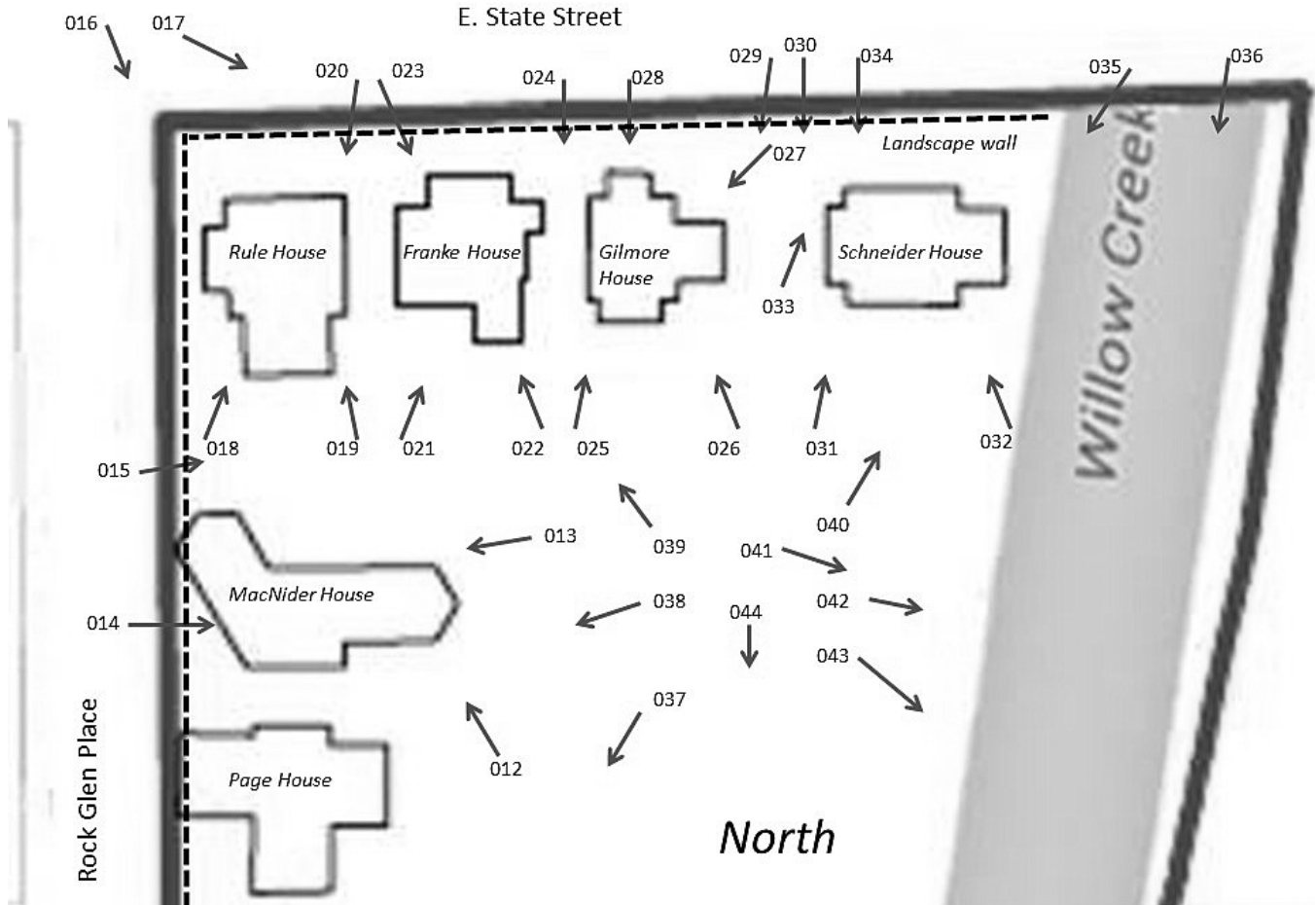


Fig. 34: Photograph locations, north section

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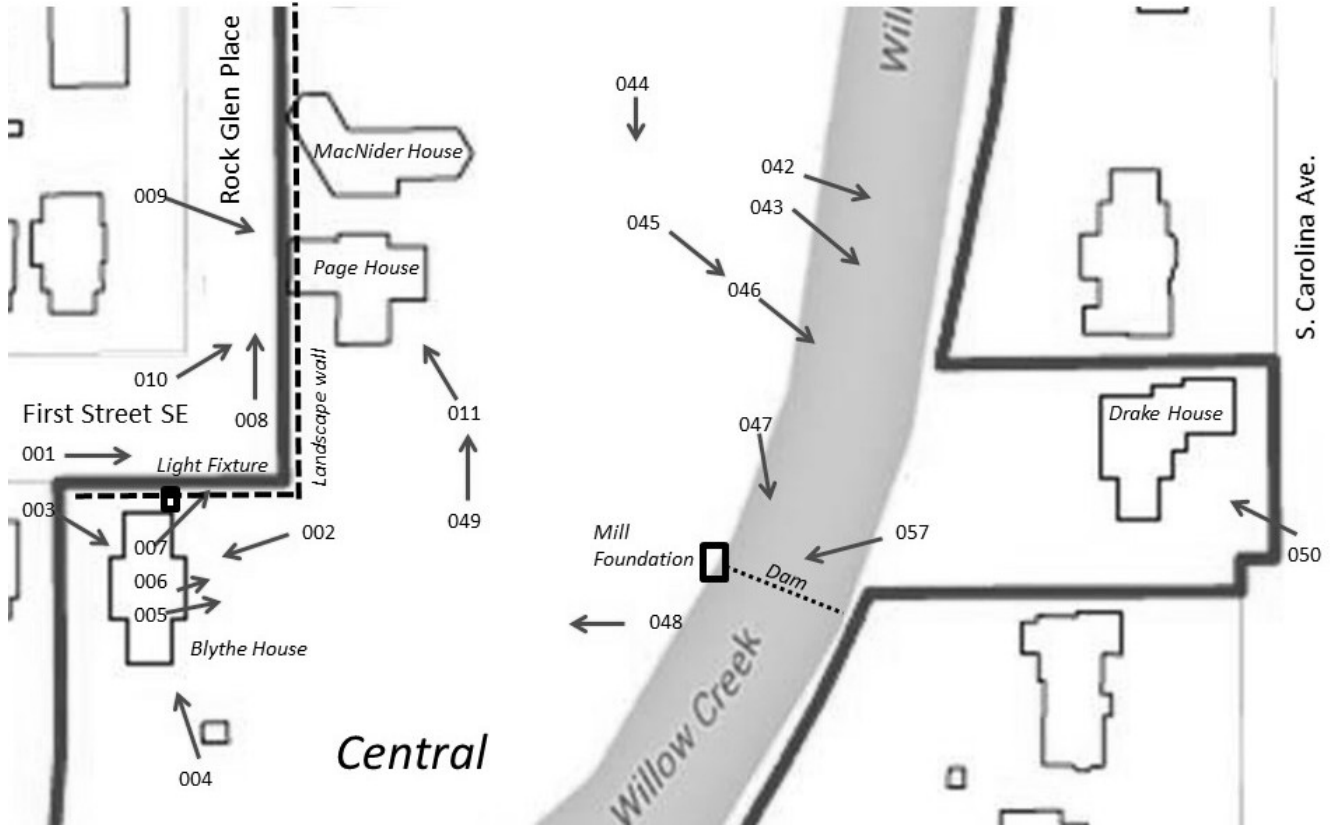


Fig. 35: Photograph locations, central section.

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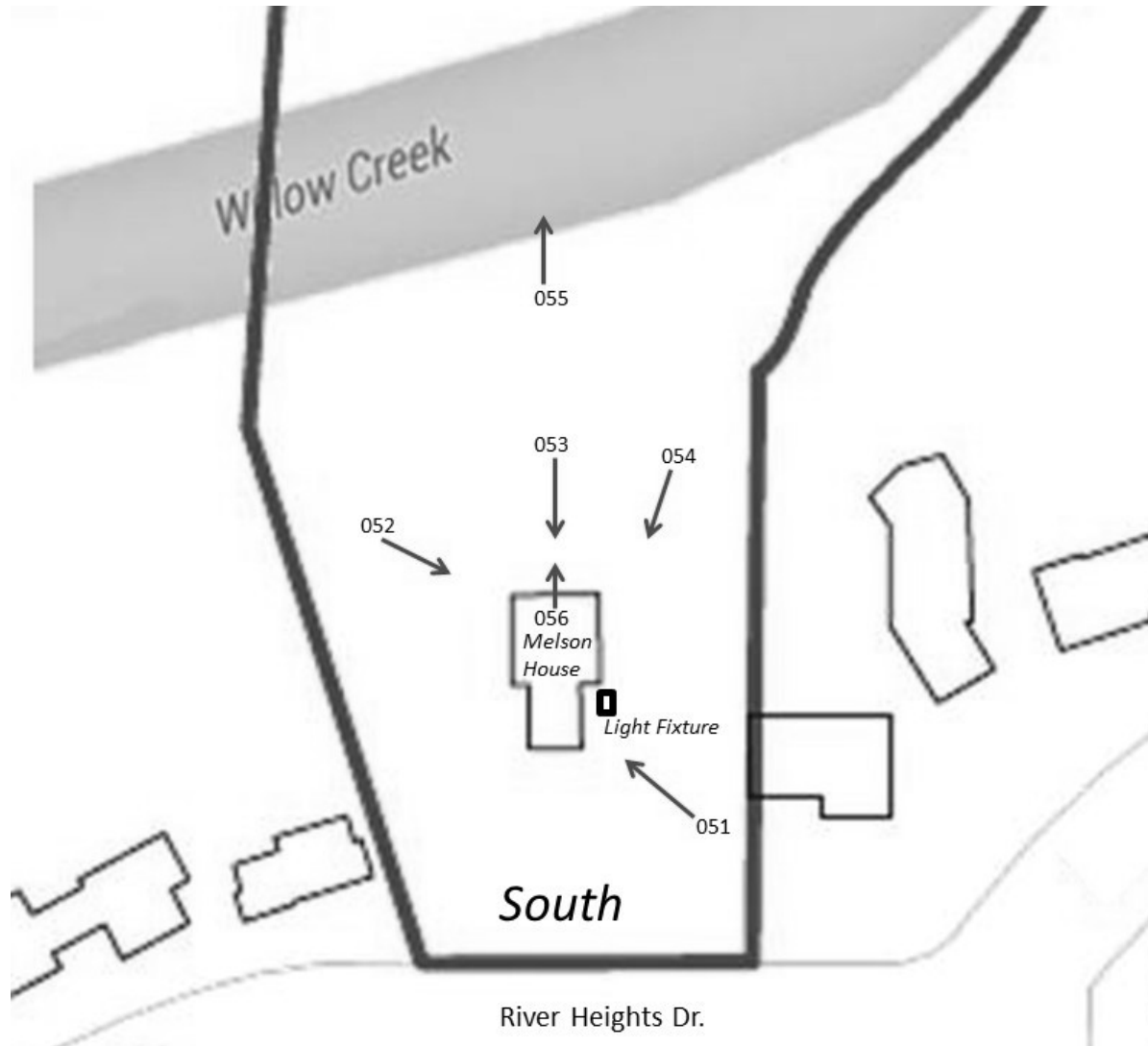


Fig. 36: Photograph locations, south section.

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**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District

City or Vicinity: Mason City

County: Cerro Gordo

State: Iowa

Photographer: John H. Waters

Date Photographed: 10 March 2015, for all except 57 of 57, which was taken 16 November 2015.

1 of 57: First Street SE sidewalk, showing Rock Glen landscaping wall and Blythe Light Fixture, camera facing east

2 of 57: Blythe House, camera facing southwest

3 of 57: Blythe House, camera facing southeast

4 of 57: Blythe House, camera facing northwest

5 of 57: View of Rock Glen from Blythe House living room, camera facing northeast

6 of 57: View of Rock Glen from Blythe House roof, camera facing northeast

7 of 57: View of Page House and Rock Glen from Blythe House roof, camera facing northeast

8 of 57: Rock Glen Place sidewalk showing Rock Glen landscaping wall, camera facing north

9 of 57: Page House, camera facing southeast

10 of 57: Page House, camera facing northeast

11 of 57: Page House, camera facing northwest

12 of 57: MacNider House, camera facing northwest

13 of 57: MacNider House, camera facing west

14 of 57: MacNider House, camera facing east

15 of 57: Rule, Franke, Gilmore, and Schneider Houses, camera facing northeast

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16 of 57: Intersection of E. State Street and Rock Glen Place, showing Rule House and Rock Glen landscaping wall, camera facing southeast

17 of 57: E. State Street, showing (from right) Rule, Franke, Gilmore, and Schneider Houses, and Rock Glen landscaping wall, camera facing southeast

18 of 57: Rule House, camera facing northeast

19 of 57: Rule House, camera facing northwest

20 of 57: Rule House, camera facing southwest

21 of 57: Franke House, camera facing northeast

22 of 57: Franke House, camera facing northwest

23 of 57: Franke House, camera facing southeast

24 of 57: View of Rock Glen between Gilmore and Franke Houses, camera facing south

25 of 57: Gilmore House, camera facing northeast

26 of 57: Gilmore House, camera facing northwest

27 of 57: Gilmore House, camera facing southwest

28 of 57: Gilmore House, camera facing south

29 of 57: View of Rock Glen and Page House between Schneider and Gilmore Houses, camera facing southwest

30 of 57: View of Rock Glen between Schneider and Gilmore Houses, camera facing south

31 of 57: Schneider House, camera facing northeast

32 of 57: Schneider House, camera facing northwest

33 of 57: Schneider House, showing entry stair and bridge, camera facing northeast

34 of 57: Schneider House, showing entry from State Street sidewalk, camera facing south

35 of 57: View of Willow Creek and Rock Glen from State Street Bridge, showing Schneider House on far right, camera facing southwest

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36 of 57: View of Willow Creek and Rock Glen from State Street Bridge, camera facing south

37 of 57: View of Rock Glen, showing Blythe and Page Houses, camera facing southwest

38 of 57: View of Rock Glen, showing Blythe, Page, and MacNider Houses, camera facing southwest

39 of 57: View of Rock Glen, showing Rule, Franke, and Gilmore Houses, camera facing northwest

40 of 57: View of Rock Glen, showing Schneider House, camera facing northeast

41 of 57: View from Rock Glen, showing limestone bluffs of Rock Crest, Drake House in upper center, camera facing southeast

42 of 57: View of limestone bluffs of Rock Crest, Willow Creek in foreground, Drake House in upper right, camera facing southeast

43 of 57: View of limestone bluffs of Rock Crest, Willow Creek in foreground, Drake House in upper center, camera facing southeast

44 of 57: View of Rock Glen, camera facing south

45 of 57: View of limestone bluffs of Rock Crest and Drake House, Willow Creek in foreground, camera facing southeast

46 of 57: Drake House, camera facing southeast

47 of 57: View of Rock Crest, Willow Creek in foreground, camera facing southeast

48 of 57: View of Rock Glen showing Blythe House, camera facing west

49 of 57: View of Rock Glen showing Page, Gilmore, and Schneider Houses, camera facing north

50 of 57: Drake House, camera facing northwest

51 of 57: Melson House and Melson Light Fixture, camera facing northwest

52 of 57: Melson House, showing stairway along limestone quarry wall, camera facing southeast

53 of 57: Melson House, camera facing south

54 of 57: Melson House, camera facing southwest

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55 of 57: View of Rock Glen from Melson Property, camera facing north.

56 of 57: View from Melson House first floor balcony, camera facing north

57 of 57: View of Mill site and dam, camera facing southwest

**Current Property Owners**

**Owner Name:** Robert and Bonnie McCoy  
**Property Name, Address:** Blythe House, 431 First Street S.E  
**Mailing Address:** 431 First Street S.E., Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Gary and Anne Schmit  
**Property Name, Address:** Page House, 21 Rock Glen Place  
**Mailing Address:** 21 Rock Glen Place, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Joyce Deike and Scott Smed  
**Property Name, Address:** MacNider House, 15 Rock Glen Place  
**Mailing Address:** 15 Rock Glen Place, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Norman and Priscilla Ray  
**Property Name/Address:** Rule House, 11 Rock Glen Place  
**Mailing Address:** 11 Rock Glen Place, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Erin Peterson and Eric Bookmeyer  
**Property Name/Address:** Franke House, 507 East State Street  
**Mailing Address:** 507 East State Street, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Jay and Karmen Shriver  
**Property Name/Address:** Gilmore House, 511 East State Street  
**Mailing Address:** 511 East State Street, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** First Citizens National Bank, Mr. DeLaine Freeseaman  
**Property Name/Address:** Schneider House, 525 East State Street  
**Mailing Address:** 2601 4<sup>th</sup> St. SW, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Gordon F. Mullin  
**Property Name/Address:** 541 E. State Street (property partially included)  
**Mailing Address:** 541 E. State Street, Mason City, Iowa, 50401

**Owner Name:** Steven S. Krogh

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**Property Name/Address:** 22 South Carolina Avenue (property partially included)  
**Mailing Address:** 22 South Carolina Avenue, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Richard Tompkins  
**Property Name/Address:** Drake House, 28 South Carolina  
**Mailing Address:** 28 South Carolina Avenue, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Kirk E. Johnson, Kathleen Graves  
**Property Name/Address:** 110 South Carolina Avenue (property partially included)  
**Mailing Address:** 302 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SW, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** James P.H. and Jean E. Shorten Marinos  
**Property Name/Address:** 120 South Carolina Avenue (property partially included)  
**Mailing Address:** 120 South Carolina Avenue, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Howard J. and Roberta M. Anderson  
**Property Name/Address:** 204 South Carolina Avenue (property partially included)  
**Mailing Address:** 204 South Carolina Avenue, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Thomas L. and Melissa A. Payne  
**Property Name/Address:** 86 River Heights Drive (property partially included)  
**Mailing Address:** 1503 Jade Court, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** John M. Barron, Rosalie M. Calhoun  
**Property Name/Address:** 78 River Heights Drive (property partially included)  
**Mailing Address:** 78 River Heights Drive, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Timothy S. and Pamela A. Coffey  
**Property Name/Address:** 68 River Heights Drive (property partially included)  
**Mailing Address:** 68 River Heights Drive, Mason City, Iowa 50401

**Owner Name:** Roger and Peggy Bang  
**Property Name/Address:** Melson House, 56 River Heights Drive  
**Mailing Address:** 56 River Heights Drive, Mason City, Iowa 50401

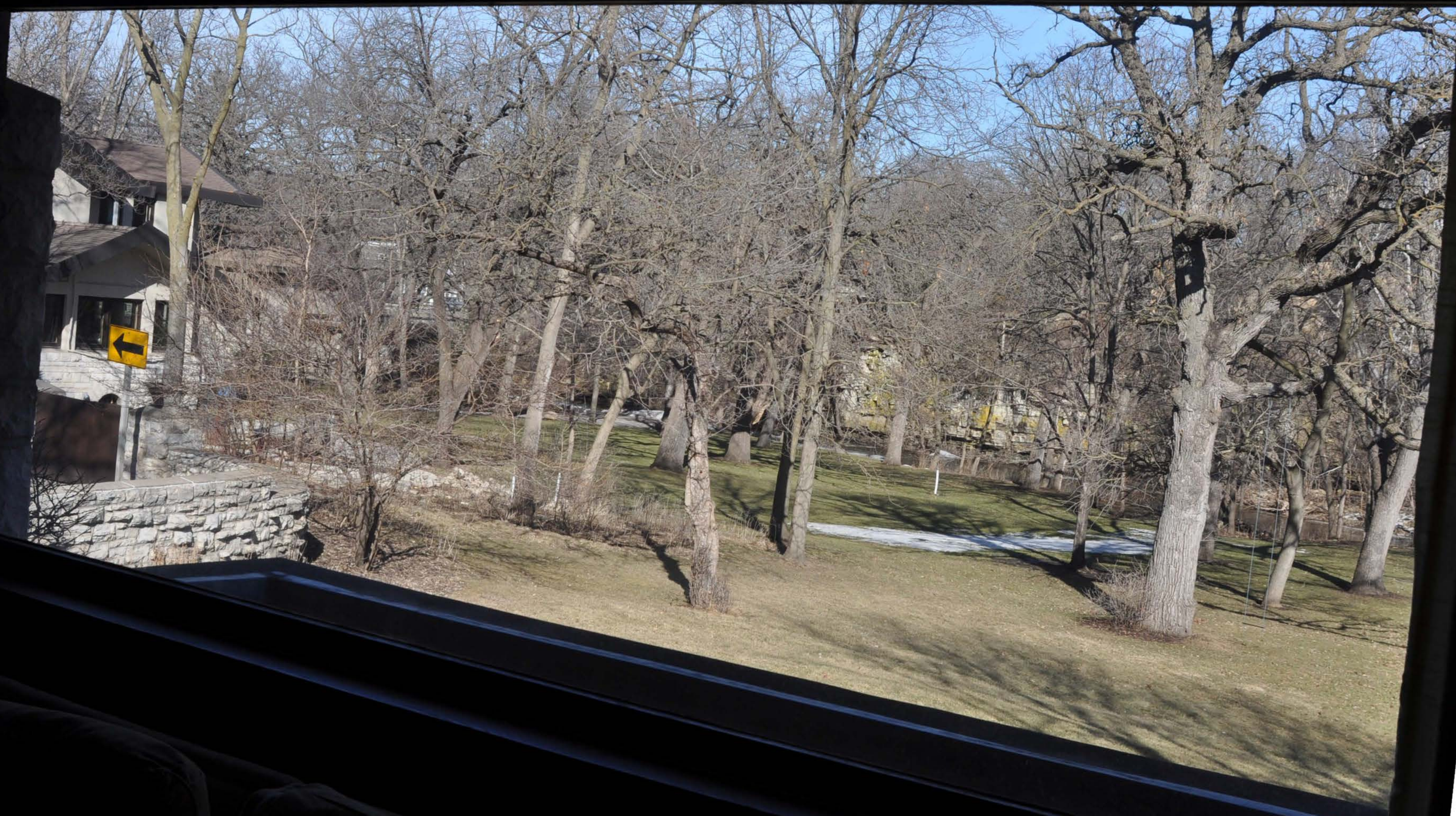
**Owner Name:** Rhonda Jayne Alden c/o Ron Masters  
**Property Name/Address:** 121 S. Connecticut (property partially included)  
**Mailing Address:** 121 S. Connecticut, Mason City, Iowa 50401

















NO  
PARKING  
THIS  
SIDE OF  
STREET



The house features a dark, gabled roof with wide eaves. A smaller gabled roof section covers the two-car garage. The roofline is accented with dark trim.

The upper level of the house has a row of six windows with dark frames and decorative geometric patterns. To the right, a window is visible above the garage entrance.

The garage has two large, dark-colored doors with a grid pattern of small windows. The doors are set within a recessed area of the house's facade.

Decorative stone pillars, constructed from stacked, rough-hewn stones, are positioned along the front of the property. There are four pillars visible, two on the left and two on the right of the driveway area.

A large, irregular pile of snow is situated in the foreground, partially obscuring the driveway and the base of the stone pillars. The snow appears to be melting, with some water visible on the pavement.



NO PARKING  
IN THIS  
ZONE AT  
ANY TIME









15





RACK GLEN  
E STATE STREET





NO  
PARKING  
WITHIN  
10 FEET  
OF  
CROSSING

































525

525















































UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Rock Crest - Rock Glen Historic District (Additional Documentation  
and Boundary Decrease)

NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Cerro Gordo

DATE RECEIVED: 3/11/2016  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 04/21/2016  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

DATE OF PENDING LIST: 04/06/2016  
DATE OF 45TH DAY: 04/26/2016

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000196

Appeal: N Data Problem: N Landscape: N Less than 50 Years: N  
Other: N PDIL: N Period: N Program Unapproved: N  
Request: N Sample: N SLR Draft: N National: N

Comment Waiver: N

ACCEPT \_\_\_\_\_ RETURN \_\_\_\_\_ REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS: *This district was listed in the National Register on 12/30/79.*

*This Additional Documentation includes an expanded Description and Statement of Significance for this previously listed historic district and decreases the boundary from the 12 acres that were listed in 1979 to the current 7.2 acres.*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept

REVIEWER Pattie Andrus Discipline Historian

DATE 4/26/2016

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS

# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MARY COWHIE, DIRECTOR  
CHRIS KRAMER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR  
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR

IOWA  
ARTS  
COUNCIL

PRODUCE  
MARKET

STATE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY OF IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM OF IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

STATE  
HISTORIC  
SITES

STATE HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
OFFICE OF IOWA

IOWA  
HISTORICAL  
ARCHIVES

March 7, 2016

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmarks  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Fl.  
Washington D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

The following National Register nomination(s) from Iowa are enclosed for your review and listing if acceptable.

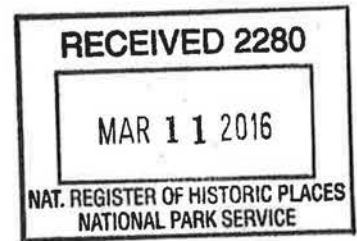
- Rock Crest/Rock Glen Historic District Amendment, 431 First Street S.E., 11, 15, 21 Rock Glen, 507, 511, 525, 541 East State Street, 22, 28, 110, 120, 204 South Carolina Avenue, 56, 68, 78, 86 River Heights Drive, 121 South Connecticut Avenue Mason City, Cerro Gordo County

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Foster Hill  
National Register Coordinator  
State Historical Society of Iowa



ACTION: NATIONAL REGISTER INFORMATION SYSTEM  
 Id 16000196 DR 03/11/2016 IA Cerro Gordo Rock Crest--Rock Glen Histori  
 01 More

Name Rock Crest--Rock Glen Historic District (Boundary Increase)  
 Address 431 First St., SE, 11, 15, 21 Rock Glen, 507, 511, 525, 541  
 E. State St., 22, 28, 110, 120, 204, South Carolina Ave. 56,  
 City Mason City Vicinity Restrict  
 State IOWA County Cerro Gordo  
 Status DATE RECEIVED/PENDING NOMINATION Date 03/11/2016  
 Day45 04/26/2016 Resource Type Acreage

Multiple

Contributing bldg	Site	Strc	Obj	Total
Noncontributing bldg	Site	Strc	Obj	Total
Park				

4/26/16

Control Unit: Please note that this action is for a Boundary Decrease (not increase) - in 1979 we listed 12 acres - this action decreases the boundary to 7.2 acres.

Please correct database. I corrected the E. R. Sheet.

This is also Additional Documentation (a revised Section 7 & 8).

Thanks  
 Patrick

NRIS  
 updated