NPS Form 10-900 1024-0018 (Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property
historic name Wehner, Roland and Marilyn, House
other names/site number
2. Location
street & number 3112 Highway 1 NE not for publication N/A vicinity _X state lowa code _IA county Johnson code _103 _ zip code 52240
3. State/Federal Agency Certification
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this _X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _X _ meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally _ statewide _X _ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.) Signature of certifying official Date
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
additional comments.)
Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency and bureau
A Neglect Back Constitution Constitution
I, hereby certify that this property is: entered in the National Register See continuation sheet. determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet. determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register other (explain):

Wehner, Roland and Marilyn, Name of Property	House	Johnson County, Iowa County and State
5. Classification		,
5. Classification		
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply) _X_ private public-local public-State public-Federal	Category of Property (Check only one box) X building(s) district site structure object	Number of Resources within Property Contributing Noncontributing buildings sites structures objects Total
Name of related multiple (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a	property listing multiple property listing.)	Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
N/A		
6. Function or Use		
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions) DOMESTIC/single dwelling		Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions) DOMESTIC/single dwelling
7. Description		
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions) MODERN MOVEMENT: Wrig OTHER: Usonian		Materials (Enter categories from instructions foundation CONCRETE METAL SYNTHETIC
		walls STONE/Limestone WOOD other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

O Obstance of Classification	
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)	Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions) ARCHITECTURE
A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.	ARCHITECTURE
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.	
X 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.	Period of Significance 1959 1964
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.) Property is:	Significant Dates1959
A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.	1964
B removed from its original location.	Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
C a birthplace or a grave.	N/A
D a cemetery.	
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure	Cultural Affiliation N/A
F a commemorative property.	
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.	Architect/Builder Wehner, Roland Charles
Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)	
9. Major Bibliographical References	
Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or n	nore continuation sheets.)
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested Ot	y Location of Additional Data State Historic Preservation Office her State agency deral agency cal government University her
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # Name (Iowa C	of repository: <u>State Historical Society of Iowa</u>

Wehner, Roland and Marilyn, House	Johnson County, Iowa
Name of Property	County and State
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of Property 2.33 acres	
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)	
Zone Easting Northing 1 15 6262246 4618463 2 4618463	See continuation sheet.
Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a	continuation sheet.)
Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a contin	nuation sheet.)
11. Form Prepared By	
POSTIL 15 SECTION AND ADMINISTRATION AND ADMINISTRA	
name/title Jan Olive Full/Historian & Architectural Historian	
organization_Tallgrass Historians L.C.	date November 2012
street & number 2460 S. Riverside Drive	telephone 319.354.6722
city or town lowa City state	IA zip code <u>52246</u>
Additional Documentation	
Submit the following items with the completed form:	
Continuation Sheets	
Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's log A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acceptable.	
Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.	
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)	
Property Owner	
(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.) name Roland C. and Marilyn D. Wehner	
street & number 3112 Highway 1 NE	telephone 319.351.1691
city or town lowa City st	

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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7. Description

Summary Paragraph

Constructed in two stages in 1959 and 1964, the Roland and Marilyn Wehner House is located on the wooded hillside of a 2.33 acre parcel lying along the east side of IA Hwy 1, about five miles north of downtown Iowa City, in Johnson County, Iowa. Highway 1, running past the Wehner House, is one of the oldest roads in the state, having been laid out in 1839 from Dubuque on the Mississippi River to Iowa City and, ultimately, to the Missouri border. The portion of this federal "military road" from lowa City northeast to Dubuque was initially marked by plowing a single furrow between these two towns. Called "Dillon's Furrow" after the man who plowed it, the road between Dubuque and Iowa City became known as "Dubuque Road" by 1904, and was designated Highway 261 by 1936. Following the construction of Interstate 80 across northern Johnson County in 1963, Hwy 261 was renumbered to its current designation of Iowa Highway 1. Today the highway is a busy thoroughfare linking the Iowa City university and business communities with the picturesque residential developments and neighborhoods around Solon and Lake Macbride, some eight miles to the north. Traffic increases every year and much of the road north of Wehner House has been improved with widened shoulders and center turn lanes. Commercial development also is inching north of Interstate 80 along Hwy 1 bringing more jobs to northern Iowa City and more commuters to Hwy 1. Wehner House sits about half way up the hill that rises from the Rapid Creek floodplain near the Interstate to the south.² The floodplain remains essentially row crop land and cattle pasture between I-80 and Wehner House, though there are developers' "for sale" signs posted along the fence lines, suggesting the historic land use and patterns here are changing. Across the highway from Wehner House, a side road to the west is seeing new houses under construction, while the land immediately adjacent to Wehner House on both the north and south is lightly developed with a few residences dating to the 1960s and 1970s that occupy equally large acreages. The historic and most public view of Wehner House is typically afforded to the northbound motorist who looks down through the mature oaks and hickories to the right (east) to catch a quick glimpse of the home's hexagonal central pavilion, carport, and bedroom wing. The long asphalt driveway to the house is easy to miss as it begins well south of the property and curves down to the building to create a private and exclusive feeling. Wehner House has an asymmetrical footprint consisting of three main parts that "pinwheel" off a central axis (where, by design, the interior staircase is located). Its open carport is one wing that points to the northwest, the two-level living pavilion and its cantilevered deck point to the east, and the long one-story bedroom wing extends to the southwest. Roofs on the carport and bedroom wing are flat, but the slightly higher roof over the living pavilion is clad in seamed panels of Terne metal. Called a "Bermuda" roof, this arrangement of stair-step panels creates, according to architect Roland Wehner, a "strong pattern" for those viewing the house from the highway above. Walls are clad in both pale yellow, native Anamosa limestone and California redwood siding. A robust limestone chimney stack protrudes from the northern side of the living pavilion, while windows are largely reserved for the south and east sides of the building for the sake of privacy. Overhanging eaves are wide and sheltering on the east sides of the house and a large deck extends out from the upper pavilion floor to shelter a stone patio underneath. The exterior and the interior of the house, as well as its landscaping, are pristinely intact and preserved as built in all but a few minor cases. Integrity is, therefore, excellent. Significant years are defined as the years of construction for the two stages of the plan.

¹ For information on the military road, aka Dillon's Furrow, see "The Army Engineers as Road Builders in Territorial Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History* 47 (January 1949) 1: 20-21; for the 1904 road designation see the "Topographical Map of Johnson County," printed as the frontispiece to Gerald Mansheim, *Iowa City: An Illustrated History* (Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Company, 1989).

² Rapid Creek also wraps around the bottom of the hill to the southeast of Wehner House.

³ Frank Lloyd Wright used Bermuda style metal roofs for the same reason; see for example the Hagen House in Chalkhill, PA (photo available at http://www.savewright.org/wright_chat/viewtopic.php?p=48398&sid=d216418b1cff837133f06aabf428e9cb). Wehner admits to being influenced by Wright in the use of Bermuda roofs.

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The Design Module – The Basic Concept behind the Plan and Setting

The architect's own words best describe the concept behind the floor plan. According to Roland C. Wehner, AIA Emeritus:

The house was designed using repetitive modules of equilateral triangles, each side 48" in length. The four-foot module works well with the standard dimensions of constructions materials, such as plywood panels and gypsum board sheets. The module is also useful in positioning structural elements such as wall studs and roof joists, which were placed at 24" on center for the house. With an equilateral triangle module, six modules combine to form a hexagon; several hexagons combine to produce a honeycomb. Resulting spaces seem larger, flow easily and seem more open than normally achieved with more conventional forms. Modular planning tends to encourage a special orderliness and simplicity. The results of modular planning can sometimes be characterized as logical, efficient, cohesive, straightforward, unified, and even elegant."

Additionally, the overarching goals vis-à-vis the house's placement on the site focused on the highway's close presence to one side and the woodland setting on the other sides. Mr. Wehner continued: "The plan has been configured in such a way as to minimize exposure to the highway, maximize privacy and to allow all rooms to have windows opening to the south and east exposure and those superior views. Any room or space not having a window is provided natural light by means of skylights. The few windows facing the highway are carefully and strategically placed."

However, because of its asymmetrical plan based on equilateral triangles and its rural location, the building defies traditional elevation descriptions grounded in cardinal directions. Narrative descriptions that follow, therefore, will be primarily based on the building unit or wing with some references to directional orientation. The plans and photographs in Additional Documentation are essential to understanding this narrative text.

Materials Generally

Architect Wehner's explanation of the exterior finish materials indicates that the "stone used throughout the house is Anamosa limestone obtained from the Weber quarry in Stone City, Iowa. The stone is buff colored with split-faced texture and sawed bed joints in course heights of 2½ inches, 5 inches, and 7 3/4 inches. The stone has been laid in continuous courses using dark tan mortar and raked joints. The continuous coursing pattern was selected rather than random or ashlar pattern to create stronger horizontal lines more appropriate with the character of the house. The same stone was used for retaining walls [and] edging. The wood siding is California redwood with re-sawn face in a reverse board and batten pattern, installed vertically to contrast with the strong horizontal lines of other elements of the house....The sloping roof area over the living room is covered with "tern" metal in the "Bermuda" style, painted chocolate to compliment the color of naturally weathered redwood. Exposed steel for carport beams and at the balcony and the wood windows are also painted chocolate."

Exterior-West Approach and Carport

The curved asphalt drive descents down the hill to the house and leads to a parking area and the carport. Nearby to the right (east) of the carport is the building's front entrance. The carport is open on both the front and back (roughly, north and south sides), with space for two vehicles under its flat roof. The structure was initially covered by a tar and gravel roofing material, which has been now replaced by a single-ply rubber membrane. The roof is connected to the house at one end and extends to the northwest to rest on a stone structure that serves as a garden tool "shed" with two sets of double doors that open west toward the highway. The function of this structure is hidden from those approaching the house on the drive by a stone wall that extends toward the drive. The backside of the open carport terminates in a low stone wall that extends a foot above the concrete carport floor and which serves as a transition to the lower grade of the planting beds beyond the house. Sheltered under the

⁴ Roland C. Wehner, "The Design Module," and other writings quoted herein (unpublished t.s., 2012). Collection of Jan Olive Full.

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right-hand rear (north) of the carport roof at the house end are stairs that lead to the north yard and down to an entrance into the basement utility room. Also under the carport roof is a secondary entrance leading into the mudroom of the house.

Exterior - Entrance and Bedroom Wing

The primary entrance is at the same grade level as the drive and carport. The doorway area is sheltered by an extension of the carport roof that attaches to the living pavilion at a point slightly higher than the nearby bedroom wing roof. Full height stone walls surround the front door and sidelight and clad this entire area of the house at the east end of the carport. The front door and storm door are modern replacements. To the right (south) of the front door is the long bedroom wing, which is covered for most of its windowless highway side (west) by California redwood siding applied vertically. The exposed part of the foundation is faced with stone. Overhangs here are narrow but at the south end of the bedroom wing, where the surface material changes to stone and the building's footprint shrinks to accommodate the master bath inside, the roof fascia continues on the same line resulting in a wider overhang. "[T]he overhang [here] is punctured with a latticework to create shadow interest" according to the architect. Rooftop skylights illuminate the windowless interior hallway of the bedroom wing.

The bedroom wing's Pella casement windows are confined to the east side where they run the wing's entire length and wrap around the corner at the south end (to illuminate the master bedroom within). Redwood siding surrounds the windows, set above the recessed stone foundation wall. The roof overhang here is broad in order to shelter the windows and the flagstone walkway under it.

Exterior - Living Pavilion

The highway (west) side of the living pavilion abuts the entry level (which contains the two doorways previously mentioned) and is clad in stone. The opposite (east) side looks out over a sloping, wooded lawn of native hardwoods, naturalized woodland flowers, and hosta beds. Beyond the Wehner property the land continues to fall toward the marshland created by the course of Rapid Creek. New residential developments are barely visible through the trees beyond this marshland. The building's living pavilion projects toward this bucolic scene like the prow of a ship. Dominated by large expanses of patio doors, casement windows, and corner windows, the building on this side is defined by the angular lines of the hexagon shape and by the projecting apex of the second level deck. The fenestration is visually contained by strong vertical stone piers that extend from the ground level to the roof. Redwood siding is used around and under the windows between the stone piers. The largest expanse of stone is used on the north side of the pavilion where there are no windows and no redwood siding. The pattern of stonework and skills of the mason are clearly defined at this location.

Interior

The architect defines the interior spaces as divided into five levels, flowing around the central stairway with its airy, open risers—the "heart and soul" of the design. "Three separate flights of stairs wrap around a single equilateral triangle module. Clerestory windows high on the west side illuminate the stairway module. Each of the four stair landings defines a discrete level of the house." The *entry level* consists of the carport, the entry area inside the front door, a mudroom/bath/storage room module. The *upper level* is five steps up from the entry level and includes the living room and a small study. The bedroom wing is considered the *intermediate level* and is accessed from the front entry by stepping down five steps and turning right. This wing was part of the original design but construction was delayed until the Wehners began a family. The long hallway is illuminated by skylights and has one side (the highway or west side) lined with storage closets. Bath and bedroom doors open

^{5 &}quot;The bedroom wing extends to the right (southward) side of the entry, with its flat roof set at a level approximately three feet below the carport roof level. The flat roof portion of the living room level rises above the carport room another three feet." Roland Wehner, review notes, October 22, 2012.

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on the opposite side of the hallway, first into a bathroom, then into the two children's bedrooms. The door to the master bedroom, with its master bath at the very end of the wing, is found at the end of the hallway. The *lower level* is reached from the stairway at the intermediate level. Here again, the flight down to the lower level has five steps and opens to the large area under the living room, used as the family room and kitchen. This lower level is the same size as the living room above it and, like that room, incorporates the exposed load-bearing north stone wall as a decorative visual feature. The family room also has a fireplace vented out the massive stone chimney. The elongated hexagon containing the kitchen is separated from the dining area in the family room by hanging open shelving with a counter top and cabinet below. The *basement level* is reached from the family level by a flight of three steps. The small basement room is just large enough for the furnace, water heater, workbench, and laundry facilities. The flooring at this level under the stairway column is laid with Anamosa limestone "flagstones."

Wood used throughout the house's interior is a mix of red oak, redwood car siding, and mahogany. Doors, trim, light coves, and cabinets are of this Philippine mahogany. Ceilings in the living and family rooms are not the conventional flat gypsum board, which generally clad the ceilings and walls of the house. The ceiling in the living room is vaulted to a height of 11 feet at the center and a mahogany light cove was installed where the 7-foot perimeter ceiling transitions to the vaulted ceiling. Below this room, in the lower level family room, the ceiling is exposed concrete T-beams with lightweight concrete filler panels.

Flooring is a mix also; the original hexagon-shaped vinyl tiles remain in the entry level, the lower level, and a bathroom in the bedroom wing. Hardwood flooring is found in the living room, bedroom wing hallway, and all bedrooms, some of which replaced the original carpet and vinyl tile. Newer ceramic tile has been installed in the master bath.

Integrity

The integrity of Wehner House has been meticulously maintained by its architect owner who, together with his wife and children, were the only occupants to have ever lived in the home. Only minor maintenance-oriented changes have been made to the exterior:

- (1) location: the building is in its original location;
- (2) design: the footprint, form, plan, and spatial arrangement of the building are intact;
- (3) setting: the character of the setting has only changed by the growth of trees on the property and the creation of naturalized woodland flower and hosta beds around the house, all of which enhance the setting in expected ways;
- (4) materials: exterior materials remain unchanged except for door replacements;
- (5) workmanship: features that especially show the workmanship involved in the building include the stone masonry and the open, geometrically complicated stairway;
- (6) feeling: the house very clearly expresses the mid-twentieth century popularity of the new approach to residential architecture inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian houses;
- (7) association: the association of the architectural style to that style's importance to the development of twentieth century architecture is intact.

With the exception of floor treatments, which have been changed to ceramic or hardwood flooring in some rooms, the interior is essentially as intact as the exterior.

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8. Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

Constructed in 1959, with a bedroom wing built in 1964, the Roland and Marilyn Wehner House is locally significant and individually eligible under Criterion C as a master's work that reflects the deep influence of Frank Lloyd Wright at midcentury and Wright's principles of modular, affordable, and organic design. Designed by and for the architect himself, the residence was Roland C. Wehner's first opportunity to plan and execute a Wrightian design after his graduation from architectural school and upon joining the firm of an older, established Iowa City architect. Throughout his 42-year career, Wehner successfully repeated the modular design principles he used in Wehner House in future commissions in the numerous schools, churches, and other buildings in and around eastern Iowa. Wehner House also embodies the distinctive characteristics of a Usonian residence, with its attention to site placement within a natural landscape, use of indigenous building materials, and elimination of conventional spaces seen by Wright as unnecessary or undesirable. Additional Usonian tenets exhibited in Wehner House include a concern for the indwellers' privacy, the ability to bring the house into harmony with nature through the use of exterior patios, decks and walkways, and windows and doors that carefully frame selected exterior views. Also, a spare, geometrically precise, central "pinwheel" staircase around which Wehner House is organized, and the carefully laid pattern of the Anamosa limestone used throughout the house reflect elements having high artistic value. Wehner House's periods of significance, 1959 and 1964, reflect the two construction periods of the building.

Frank Lloyd Wright and his Principles for Usonian Residences

Some Wright scholars describe the architect's extremely long career as actually two careers. The Prairie School house emerged during his first, which ended in the early to mid-1920s; the Usonian house during the second, which began around 1932. In between, Wright experienced a turbulent personal life and the loss of commissions and clients. "In many architectural circles [by the late 1920s] Wright was regarded as already dead or so old that his talents must be exhausted." In the midst of the Great Depression of the 1930s, however, Wright was able to reinvigorate his professional career through major commissions such as Fallingwater (Edgar Kaufman residence), a masterpiece constructed atop a stream in the woods of Pennsylvania, and the Johnson Wax Administration Building in Racine, Wisconsin, both of which were designed in 1936. The next year, 1937, Wright introduced his first Usonian houses: a linear single-story building in Madison, Wisconsin (the first Herbert Jacobs House) and the Honeycomb House (Paul Hanna House) in Palo Alto, California. Honeycomb House was Wright's first plan based on interlocking hexagons joined to resemble a honeycomb. The influence of both of these houses can be seen in Wehner House, constructed two decades later.³

Wright had a long interest in designing affordable housing for the average family and sought various ways to achieve it. Early in the twentieth century his designs were published in popular and accessible women's magazines like the *Ladies' Home Journal.*⁴ Around World War I, Wright experimented with a system of ready-cut lumber in his designs through a method

¹ See, for example, Ernest Horn (1968) and Helen Lemme (1969) elementary schools in Iowa City; the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints church building (1965) in Moline, Illinois; and Saint Patrick's Rectory and Parish Hall (1970) in Marengo, Iowa.

² Thomas A. Heinz, *The Vision of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Edison, N.J.: Chartwell Books, Inc., 2006), 35, 37. H. Allen Brooks suggested there were three periods to Wright's career, the last one beginning in 1936 and roughly aligning with what is described above as Wright's second career. "Frank Lloyd Wright," in *Master Builders* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1985), 119-121. In truth, Wright's career probably defies such segmentation. He appears to have navigated easily between physical forms and cultural influences, drawing from an eclectic and creative palette, from his first individual commissions at the turn of the twentieth century to his death in 1959.

³ Wehner House is based on equilateral triangles, the foundation of a hexagon. A hexagon is simply six triangles combined like pie slices.

⁴ H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and his Midwest Contemporaries* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976; first published in 1972), 58.

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known as the American Ready-Cut System. Wright and Arthur Richards, the system's inventor from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, were reaching for the efficiencies, and thus the reduced costs, that Henry Ford and his assembly line had proved possible. By the late 1930s, Wright had drafted his first acknowledged Usonian design, an outgrowth of his utopist Broadacre City, a proposed planned community made possible by the automobile. The Usonian house, according to one historian, introduced "new developments in the building of inexpensive structures, particularly pre-cast concrete...and favored flat roofs and a blurring of the division between the inside and outside worlds through the use of large areas of plate glass. More flexibility was introduced into the interiors with the addition of movable screens instead of fixed room walls." The moveable screens certainly reflected Wright's time in Japan working on the Imperial Hotel (1916) in Tokyo and his underlying goals of opening interiors by merging functions such as living and dining rooms, and eliminating spaces he deemed undesirable or unnecessary like basements and walled garages. From Wright's introduction of the first Usonian residence with Jacobs House No. 1 in 1937 until his death in 1959, Wright promoted his Usonian code and saw dozens of them completed around the country.

Despite his determination to produce affordable houses, Wright's Usonians were often quite expensive and far beyond the average family, especially those constructed after World War II. In good Wright fashion, they also often mixed design elements from one commission to the next making classification difficult. Typically, Wright's Usonians featured flat roofs, open living areas, abundant use of brick, wood and other natural materials, and were set on concrete slabs which incorporated radiant heat beneath. Other Usonians were compositions in interlocking concrete blocks. One oft-quoted Wright historian grouped Usonians into five types based on plan or footprint: (1) the Polliwog or tadpole design, which was the most frequent plan employed; (2) the Diagonal, which is a polliwog with diagonal features incorporated into the plan; (3) the In-line, a single block Usonian with a compressed plan and smaller footprint; (4) the Hexagonal, based on a hexagonal grid; and (4) the Raised Usonian, a plan utilizing masonry piers that was typically employed on hillsides or riverbanks. Wright himself described the elements of his Usonian plan as rooted in the Prairie houses of his first career. In 1953, he wrote that his model Usonian, then on exhibit at the future site of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City, "is characteristic of the so-called 'Prairie House' of sixty years ago with its modern, human scale, its open-place and flowing space, its corner windows and sense of indoors and outdoors."

A year after this Guggenheim Usonian exhibit and the widespread publicity it generated, Wright published *The Natural House* and a significant amount of the book was dedicated to explaining in words, floor plans, and photos what he meant by "Usonian House" and how others might achieve one. In contrast to his natural house, Wright criticized the "plain flat surface[s]" characteristic of then popular "internationalist" and "modernistic" architecture, suggesting this type of architecture was "no less ornamental than [the] egg and dart" of classical architecture. These "istic" modes of architecture were, Wright said, "merely a new superficial aesthetic." Wright wanted architecture to be natural, organically connected to its site, and horizontally expressive. To achieve these principles, he extensively opined on the details of the natural house. Advocating a type of "board and batten" wall system that effectively created horizontal lines on the exterior, Wright also favored casement windows over double-hung sashes; a carports over garages; and had a long list of things that could be eliminated, including visible roofs,

⁵ Heinz, 29-30.

⁶ Heinz, 440.

⁷ See John Sergeant, Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses: The Case for Organic Architecture (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1976, reprinted 1984; reprint used), beginning at page 40 "Five Types of Usoninan House."

^{8 &}quot;A Long-Awaited Tribute: Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian House and Pavilion," pdf entitled "Usonian House, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1953," obtained at http://www.guggenheim.org on 10/29/2012. The website is a promotion for an exhibit running from July 27, 2012 until February 13, 2013.

⁹ Wright claimed that "Usonia" was Samuel Butler's name for the United States (Sergeant, 16). Butler was a 19th century novelist.

¹⁰ Frank Lloyd Wright, The Natural House (1954, reprinted New York: Mentor Books, 1963; reprint used), 57.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 76-77.

¹³ Ibid., 35.

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attics and old-fashioned basements, interior trim, radiators and light fixtures, painted surfaces; interior plaster, and gutters and downspouts. Seating and wall decorations could be built in, Wright suggested, thus reducing the need for traditional furniture and ornamentation. ¹⁵ Privacy for the dwelling's residents could be achieved by "turning [the house's] back on the street" and Wright held up Jacobson House No. 1 as an example of this technique. ¹⁶ A review of any of the numerous photograph books of Wright's Usonians reveal an abundant use of built-in storage cabinets in long hallways, clerestory windows to let light in while preserving privacy, and floor plans that are easily enlarged to meet growing family needs. ¹⁷ Many of these design elements are so widely repeated today that their Wrightian provenance has been largely lost and their ground breaking impact forgotten.

In addition to the Guggenheim model Usonian exhibit and Wright's own books, the ideas behind the Usonian House continued to be widely popularized throughout the 1950s by professional journals and popular monthly magazines like *Architectural Forum*, *House Beautiful*, and *House & Home*. When Wright died in 1959, *House and Garden* devoted an entire issue to his architecture. These publications were profoundly influential not only on homeowners, builders, and developers at midcentury, when the country was in the midst of the frenzy of suburban development, they also had a lasting impact on new and established architects alike. One of these new architects on the Iowa scene in the late 1950s was talented Roland Wehner.

Architect Roland C. Wehner and His Design¹⁸

Roland Charles Wehner was born November 28, 1931 on a tenant farm in the "bottom lands" of Hancock County in west-central Illinois, just across the Mississippi River from Keokuk, Iowa. As a teen in 1946, Roland moved with this family across and up the river to a farm near Oakville, in Louisa County, Iowa. Named valedictorian of his Oakville high school graduating class of 1949, Roland then headed to college at the Iowa State College (now University) in Ames where he enrolled in electrical engineering. However, he soon found he enjoyed drafting and drawing enough to change his major to architecture. Wehner became aware of Frank Lloyd Wright while studying architecture in Ames and grew to admire the master and his work, as well as that of other modernists whom Wright had distained, like Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Richard Neutra. Wehner was especially fascinated with Wright's use of modular design in the development of Usonian residences. On the control of Usonian residences.

Following graduation from ISU and a short stint working as a young architect in the Burlington, Iowa office of Dane David Morgan, Roland married Marilyn Ruth Duke in January, 1956. Two weeks later, the couple moved to Iowa City where Marilyn

- 14 Ibid., 73.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid., 74.
- 17 See for example, Thomas A. Heinz's *The Vision of Frank Lloyd Wright* (2006) and William Allin Storrer's *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright: A Complete Catalog* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995). The number of publications on Frank Lloyd Wright are too numerous to try to list, but these two volumes have hundreds of photographs and, like a field guide, short paragraphs of text on each building.
- 18 Sources for this section are primarily a taped oral history interview of Roland C. Wehner conducted on October 11, 2012 by the author and Mary Bennett of the State Historical Society of Iowa, and a collection of personal recollections compiled by Mr. Wehner, copies of which are in the author's possession.
- 19 Roland C. Wehner, "Inspiration and Influence," unpubl. t.s., 10/11/2012.
- According to John Sergeant, "Wright frequently described the hexagon as being more natural to human movement than the square. When employed in planning a building, it gives a honeycomb grid constructed of 60 degrees 60-degree triangles. These may be visualized as hexagon clusters, diamond modules, or as a triagrid. Walls following the resulting 60- to 120-degree angles feel entirely different from those arranged on a rectilinear grid, and spaces achieve more nearly the 'breaking of the box' and continuity that Wright had in mind....Understanding this concept is especially difficult for many European architects whose training emphasized that plans could be appreciated quite independently of the building as an experience. To an architect with such a background, the plan of the Hanna house suggests perversity and absolutely unsatisfactory spaces, when in fact it possesses a three-dimensional discipline related to its planning grid" (Sergeant, 32).

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resumed university studies to become a teacher and Roland began working for the only architect in town, Henry L. Fisk (1901-1962). A heavy smoker with an irascible personality, Fisk practiced in Iowa City before World War II and worked for the Navy Department's Bureau of Yards and Docks in Washington, D.C. during the war. In 1946, Fisk reopened his Iowa City architecture office, where he specialized in residential designs. Ten years later, he assigned to his new employee, Roland Wehner, the task of sorting through stacks of architectural magazines and journals dating back to 1939, including issues of *House & Home, House Beautiful, Architectural Record*, and *Architectural Forum*. Among the publications Roland found particularly influential in the future design of his own home were a December, 1952 issue of *Architectural Forum* that featured Wright's Unitarian Church in Madison, Wisconsin, which the Wehners later visited in 1958; a November, 1955 issue of *House Beautiful* that featured Frank Lloyd Wright and his advice on the character of the building site, the material selection for a home, and the "storage hallway;" and, finally, an August 1958 issue of *House & Home* that featured three new residences by Wright.

Roland and Marilyn immediately began to look for a suitable building site for a new home. In the meantime, they purchased a mobile home and lived in a mobile home park called Forest View at the northern edges of Iowa City. Home of the University of Iowa, the town at this time was experiencing accelerated growth as the baby boom generation grew and new suburban developments were springing up to accommodate these expanding families. The Wehners, however, wanted a natural setting for the residence Roland was planning. By the summer of their first year in town, they had found an "appealing wooded hillside along highway 261 about five miles northeast of Iowa City" and set out to purchase it. By April, 1957, the Wehners had acquired just over two wooded acres alongside Highway 261, were building a graveled drive down to the site, and had made arrangements to have a septic system installed, electrical service brought to the site, and a well dug. They then had their mobile home moved from Forest View to the new building site in June, 1957.²⁴ By the time Roland had his plans drawn and construction could begin in 1959, they already had lived on the site for more than a year. According to the architect, "with a limited budget and no family started, it seemed practical to consider building the house in phases" so just the main living pavilion and carport were to be built first, with the bedroom wing to follow later.²⁵

Design elements were drawn from their experience living on the site and "experiencing the four seasons." According to the architect, these included the following:

- "(1) all major windows should face south and east to take advantage of the best views, morning light, and [to] maximize privacy by turning our back to the highway traffic;
- (2) generous amounts of glass to allow the outside in;
- (3) use [of] natural stone and wood to minimize maintenance;
- (4) conform to and take maximum advantage of the slope of the site;
- (5) incorporate some of [Frank Lloyd] Wright's philosophy and design principles."²⁶

Wehner also "saw an opportunity to explore the benefits of designing with a repetitive module" and settled on an equilateral triangle module. Two of these joined at the base creates a diamond; six of them arranged pie fashion creates a hexagon. Wright

²¹ Wehner interview; Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 63.

The education wing of the church, in particular, has design elements that served as inspiration for Wehner House. During the same Wisconsin trip in 1958, the Wehners visited Taliesin at Spring Green, and the Johnson Wax Tower in Racine. Inspiration and Influence.

²³ Wehner, "Inspiration and Influence."

In 1957, the route would have taken the mobile home primarily over rural highways. Just a couple years later, however, construction of Interstate 80 across Johnson County may have complicated such an easy move. I-80 opened in Johnson County in 1963 and its east/west route bisected the north/south alignment of Hwy 261 (now Hwy 1).

²⁵ Roland C. Wehner, "A Brief Chronology," unpubl. t.s., 2011.

²⁶ Ibid.

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would have approved.

Usonians in Iowa

Frank Lloyd Wright himself designed seven Usonian residences built in Iowa. These were planned and constructed toward the end of or after World War II, between 1945 and 1960. They are "generally larger and less austere" than Wright's Usonians of the 1930s and are of the "polliwog" and "diagonal" plan variety, based on John Sergeant's previously mentioned classification system.²⁷ All but one are single story. "The Iowa Usonians are each slab-on-grade houses without basements. Their roofs are either flat or slightly pitched, with ceilings following the slope of the roof; there are no attics. There are also no garages; each of the Iowa Usonians has a covered, but open, carport."

The clients who built these house were "generally young, upper to middle-income professionals and business people with small children. Their building sites were generally located in the country or in new suburban housing developments typified by large, rambling lots and winding streets."

According to the authors of the National Register of Historic Places multiple property listing of these seven houses, the Wright Usonians in Iowa (and no doubt beyond) had a significant impact on contemporary residential architecture. "Beginning with the least direct but most farreaching influence, many historians agree that Wright-designed houses such as the Iowa Usonians generally anticipated and indirectly set the style for popular American post-war housing, specifically the ranch house and the ubiquitous 'contractor modern' house of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s...More importantly, the Usonian's influence in Iowa can be seen in higher quality adaptations of the Usonian style found scattered around the state....Wright's work of the late 40s and early 50s created a real excitement, and inspiration for [these architects'] own work."

No study exists of Wright-inspired, Usonian style residences in Iowa. Further, the methodology employed in architectural surveys and collection efforts of the State Historic Preservation Office [SHPO] generally has favored under reporting of Midcentury Modern houses, largely due to the shifting "50-year" rule of the National Register of Historic Places. The SHPO's database of historic architecture contains only four reported residences that strongly display Frank Lloyd Wright's influence and are classified as eligible for the National Register because of it. One is in central Iowa, in Ames, and was designed by the property owner, an artist and medical doctor. Another is north-central Iowa (Eldora) and has no architect named, nor good photographs available. A third "Wrightian/Usonian" house sat on a riverbank in Fort Dodge but recently was demolished after a severe flood. This one had no identified architect, but appeared to be a Polliwog type Usonian. The last one is in far western Iowa, in the tiny community of Hull, and was designed by Cleveland, Ohio, architect Carl H. Droppers (a college friend of the owner who was an attorney and state legislator). It is a "Raised" Usonian and sits on a slight hill. These four houses were built between 1949 and 1960 and represent the range of Wright influence, from an amateur's vernacular interpretation to trained architect designs. Wehner House fits comfortably into the latter category and may be one of the few Usonian-styled/Wright-inspired residences in Iowa drawn on the modular Hexagonal plan.³¹

²⁷ Chery Peterson and Ralph J. Christian, "Iowa Usonian Houses by Frank Lloyd Wright, 1945-1960" (National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1988), F.II-3. See also Richard Guy Wilson and Sidney K. Robinson, *The Prairie School in Iowa* (Iowa State University Press, 1977).

²⁸ Ibid., E-3.

²⁹ Ibid., F.III-6.

³⁰ Ibid., F.III-7.

³¹ The "Iowa Usonian Houses by Frank Lloyd Wright" MPD identified two other Iowa houses directly influenced by Wright, the Bryant Denniston House in Newton, which was designed by a Taliesin architect (John Howe) in 1958 and the Tom McNider [sic] House in Mason City designed by another Wright student, Curtis Besinger, in 1958, and a third with obvious influence in Marion, Iowa (Edmund Whiting House), Ibid., F.III-7. The current status of these three houses is unknown.

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Conclusion and the Future for Wehner House

Marilyn and Roland Wehner are now retired and plan to downsize their residential quarters and move into a smaller home in Iowa City. To that end, Wehner House was listed in 2011 with a realty firm that specializes in historic properties. A number of showings took place that generated an alarming number of comments about alterations that "would have to be made," such as enclosing the carport. With the present nationwide economic slump and in light of the comments, the Wehners took the house off the market. Eventually selling it is, however, inevitable.

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- Wilson, Richard Guy, and Sidney K. Robinson. The Prairie School in Iowa. Ames: Iowa State University, 1977.
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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The property consists of the residence that sits on an irregular 2.33 acre parcel of timbered land in the southwest corner of the northwest quarter of Section 30 (T80N, R30W). The lot lines basically form a trapezoid, with the two longest sides intersecting at the northeast corner, creating an angle of about 45 degrees. State Highway 1 borders the property on the west side, a timbered private residential parcel of more than an acre borders it on the north. Down the slope to the east, property is bordered by a large open wetland and beyond that by a new development. To the south, the property is bordered by another more open and grassy parcel of land currently owned by the same property owners as the nominated residence. A portion of the blacktop driveway to the residence crosses the adjacent southern parcel but is not included in the nomination.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is the legal description of the entire parcel historically associated with the Roland and Marilyn Wehner House.

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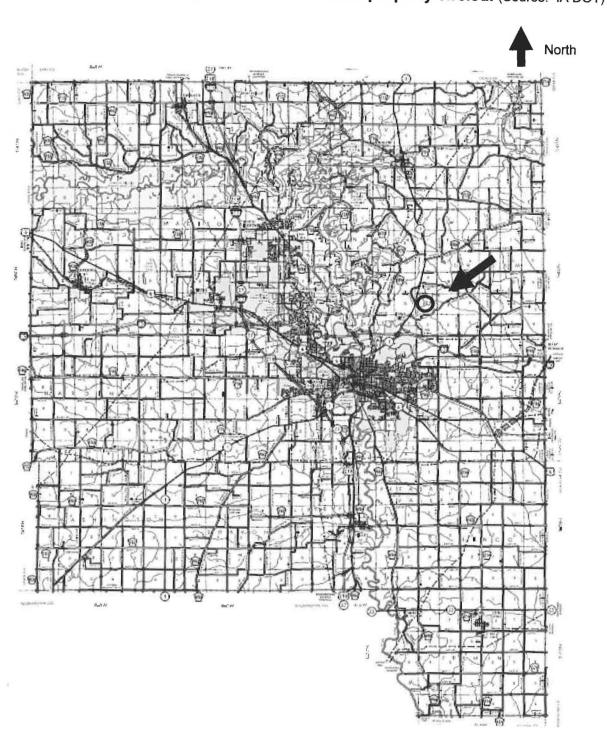
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Johnson County, lowa with the general location of the property circled. (Source: IA DOT)



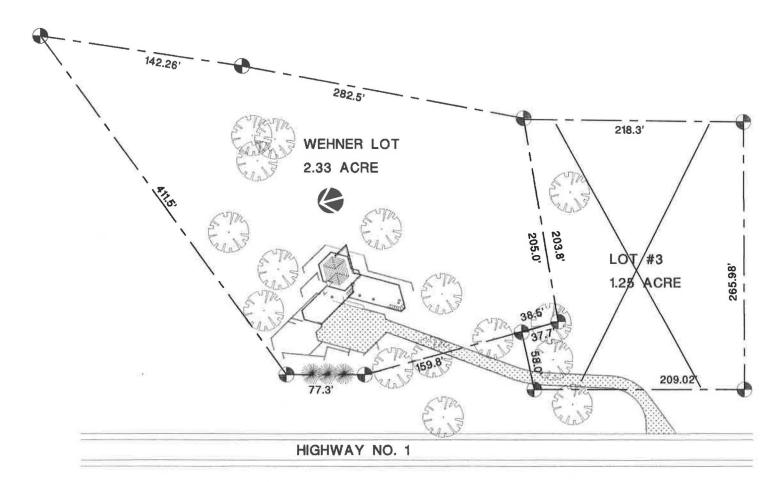
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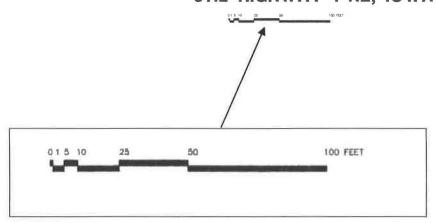
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Site Plan (all plans that follow are by Roland C. Wehner, AIA Emeritus, 2012) – Lot #3 is not a part of this nomination.



3112 HIGHWAY 1 NE, IOWA CITY, IA



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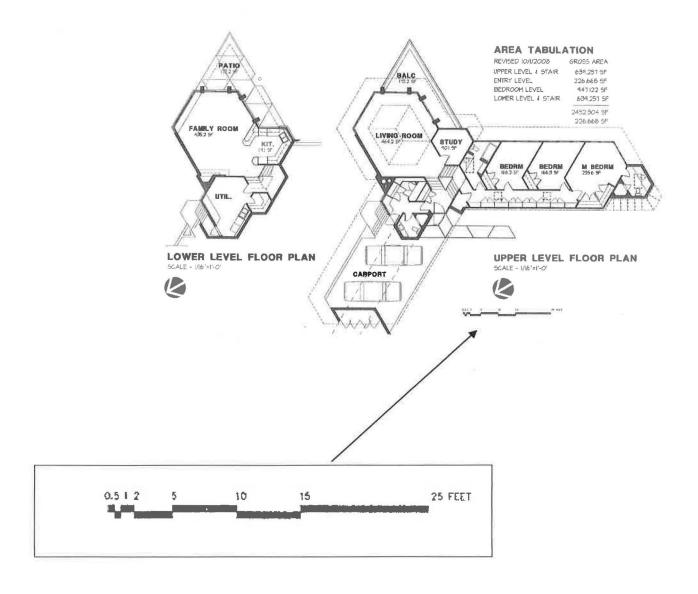
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Floor plans – Lower and Upper Levels together to show orientation

(all plans and sections that follow are by Roland C. Wehner, AIA Emeritus, 2012)



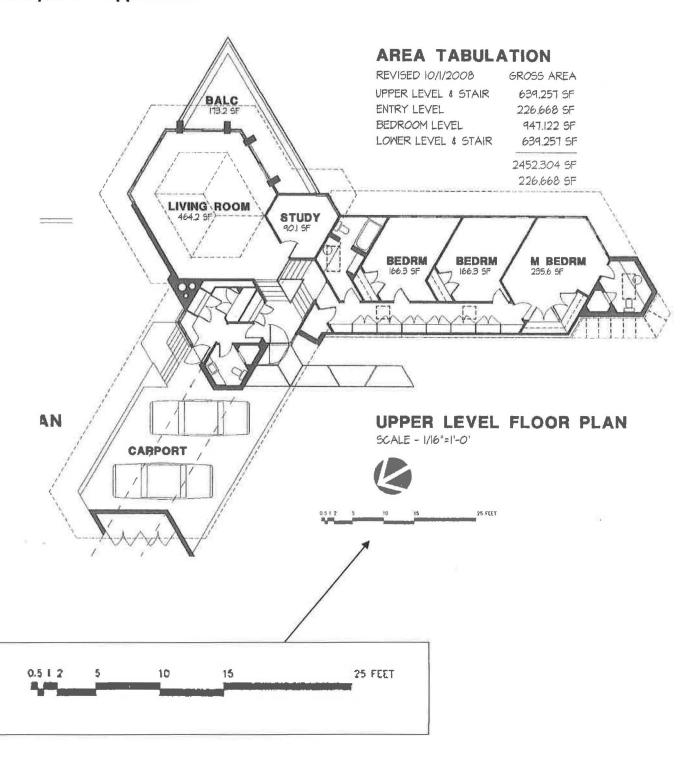
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Floor plans -- Upper Level



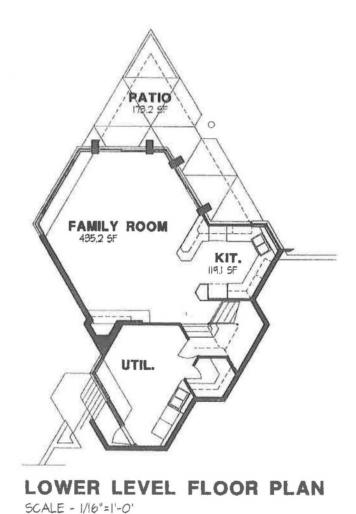
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Floor plans -- Lower Level





Note: The scale for this plan is the same as Upper Level floor plan on the original; however this detail plan has been enlarged more than the plan on the previous page, meaning neither the scale bar of the previous page nor the scale expressed on this page is still accurate for this page's drawing.

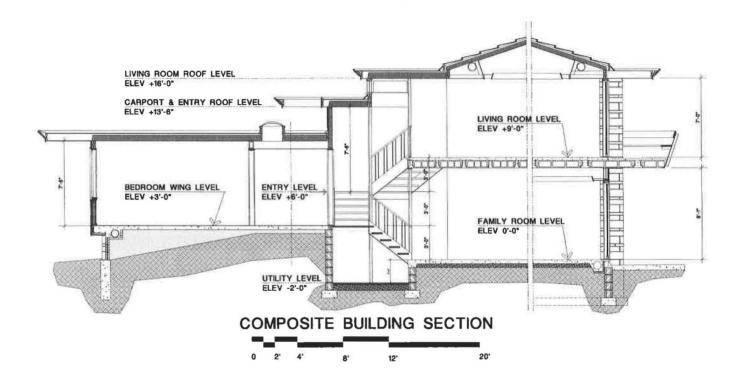
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Composite Cross Section (carport not shown)



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Additional Historic Photographs (prints not included herewith; all photos by Roland C, Wehner, AIA Emeritus and used with permission)

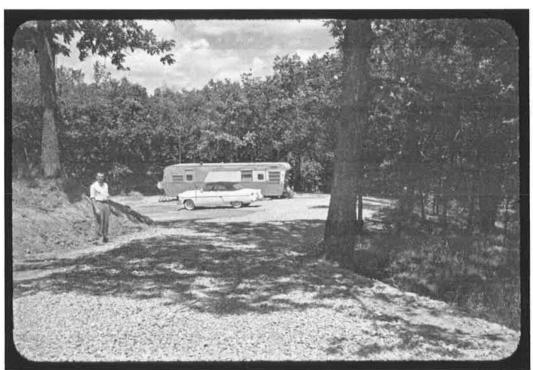


1956 photograph of the future site of Wehner House (to the right, downhill from the trees) with the shoulder and a bit of Hwy 261 (Hwy 1) on the left edge.

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Summer ,1957 photograph of the future site of Wehner House with Mr. Wehner standing alongside the newly built gravel drive.

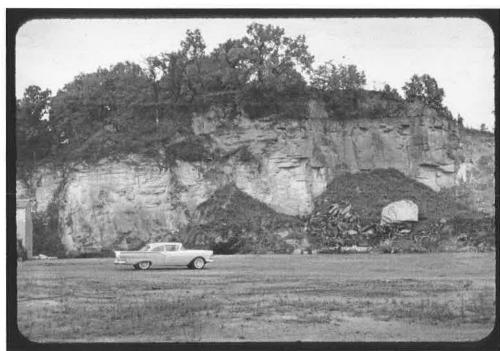


Mrs. Wehner looking down at the future site of Wehner House in an early spring1958.

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1958 photograph of the Weber quarry, Stone City, Iowa, source of the Wehner House limestone.



Summer, 1959 photo of the building site with concrete block foundation walls being laid up.

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Summer, 1959, from the highway shoulder looking down at the entry level floor under construction. This precast concrete floor covers the block foundation.



Summer, 1959, looking westerly at the stone walls and east side piers under construction. The workmen are standing on the lower level floor.

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Summer, 1959, photo of south side, looking north. Upper level floor is finished, north wall is well underway, as is the fireplace box and chimney.



Summer, 1959, looking east. Framing for upper level underway.

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Summer, 1959. Carport is underway and Bermuda metal roof is being installed



Summer, 1959. Bermuda roof and limestone chimney are complete, carport's tar and gravel roof underway.

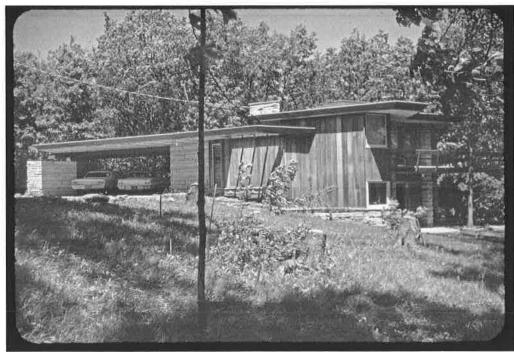
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Summer, 1961. The house is occupied, the lawn landscaped, but the bedroom wing is yet to be built.



Summer, 1964, looking north across the site of the bedroom wing about to be built.

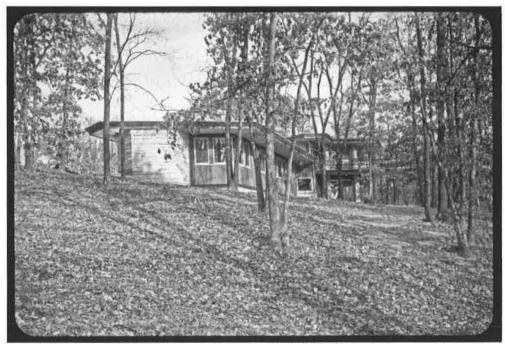
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Fall, 1964, looking north at the bedroom wing foundation walls under construction.



Fall, 1965, looking north at the completed bedroom wing.

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Fall, 1965, east side looking west. The living pavilion with its cantilevered deck is in the center; the carport to the right and the bedroom wing to the left.



Fall, 1965, looking easterly. This is the most common public view of the completed house.

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Fall, 1965, looking northeasterly.

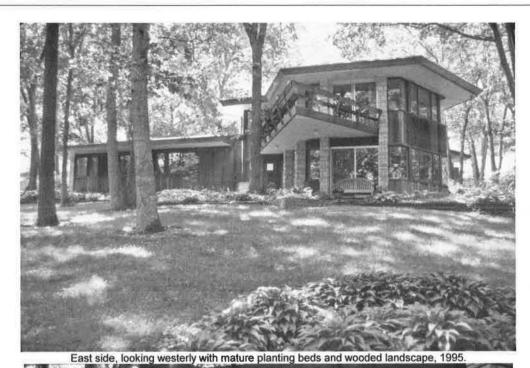


Summer, 1970, looking easterly.

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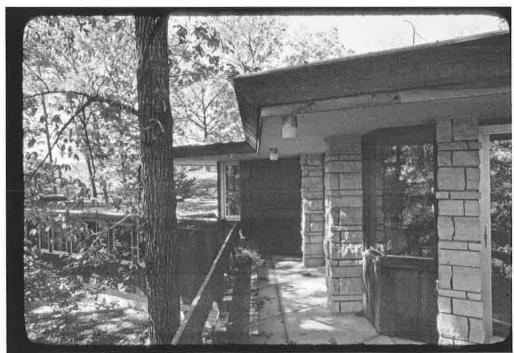


Detail of the east side patio under the deck, looking southerly, with mature planting beds and wooded landscape, 1995.

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Detail view of upper level exterior from deck, looking westerly. Bedroom wing is to the right. 1977 photograph.



Upper level living room, looking toward central staircase and front entry. 2011 photograph.

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Lower level dining area, looking south toward kitchen. Central staircase is to the right. 1974 photograph.



Lower level family room area. Note solid limestone wall at right is the north wall of the residence. Mid-1970s photograph.

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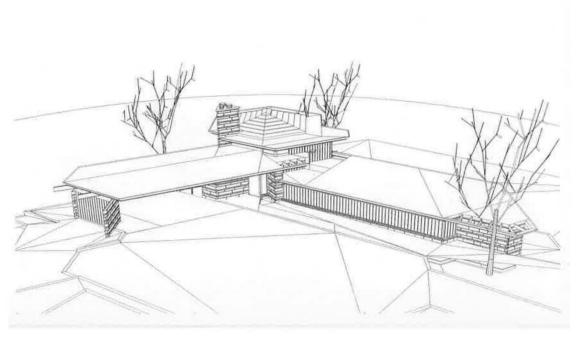
Central staircase with bedroom wing hall beyond. 2011 photograph.

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Sketch of Wehner House by Roland C. Wehner, 2012.



Sketch of Wehner House by Roland C. Wehner., 2012

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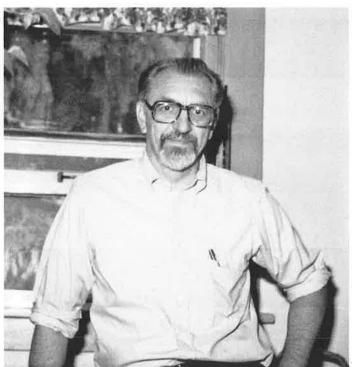
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Architectural school graduate, Roland C. Wehner, in 1954



Architect Wehner and daughter in 1962.



Wehner in 1981

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Black and White Printed Photograph Locations and Label Information (see key plan below)



Photograph Label Information (## 1, 2, 3, & 5, share the same information)

- 1. Roland and Marilyn Wehner House
- 2. Iowa City, Johnson County, IA
- 3. Roland Wehner
- 4. Various dates, 2011-2012
- 5. N/A (digital)
- 6.&7. Photograph #1: Common public view of entire house from highway, looking east
 - Photograph #2: Looking down driveway toward carport, facing northeast
 - Photograph #3: South end of bedroom wing and east-facing main house, looking northeast
 - Photograph #4: Bedroom wing and main house, looking northwest
 - Photograph #5: East elevation of main house, with bedroom wing on left, looking west
 - Photograph #6: Main house and carport, looking southwest
 - Photograph #7: End of carport wing with garden tool storage compartments, looking southeast
 - Photograph #8: Exterior detail view of house from balcony, looking west-southwest
 - Photograph #9: Interior view of upper level living room, looking west
 - Photograph #10: Interior view of upper level living room, looking east
 - Photograph #11: Interior view of lower level family room, looking east
 - Photograph #12: Interior view of lower level dining area and kitchen, looking southeast
 - Photograph #13: Interior "pinwheel" central staircase, looking southwest
 - Photograph #14: Interior of lower level family room, looking west-southwest
 - Photograph #15: Interior of bedroom wing hall with built-in storage closets, looking southwest
 - Photograph #16: Interior of master bedroom with angled windows, looking southeast

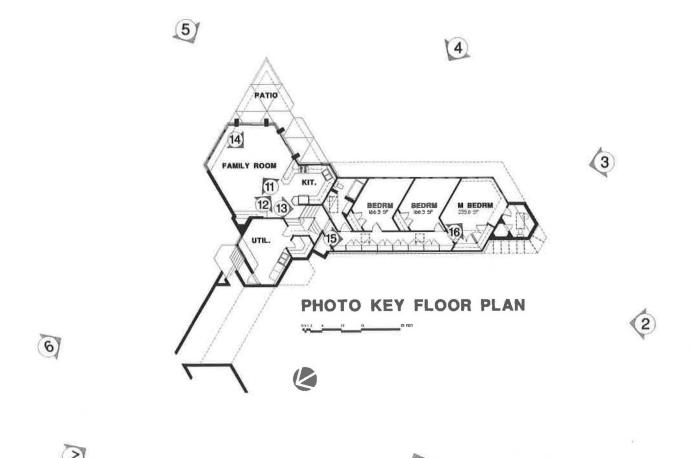
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Exterior Photos 1-7, Interior Lower Level Photos 11-14, and Bedroom Wing Photos 15-16.



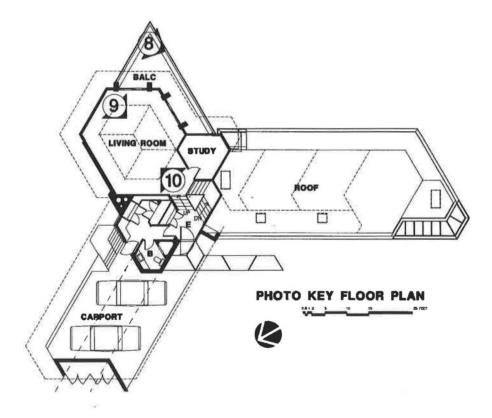
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Johnson County, Iowa county and state

Upper Level Photos 8-10.



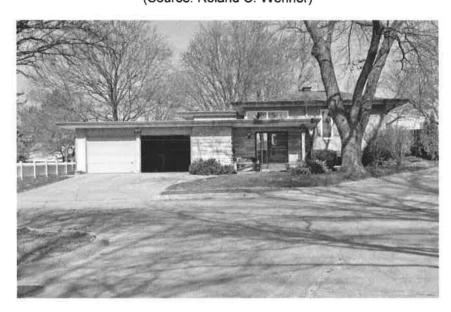
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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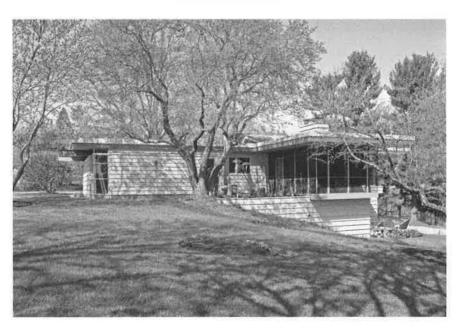
Wehner, Roland and Marilyn, House name of property

Johnson County, Iowa county and state

A few examples of buildings in the lowa City area designed by Roland C. Wehner (Source: Roland C. Wehner)



Waite Residence - Iowa City, Iowa
Flat roofs at several levels, clearstory windows,
articulated fascia



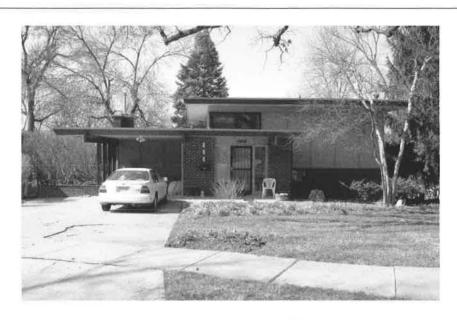
Spriestersbach Residence - River Heights, just north of Iowa City, Iowa
Flat roofs, carport, strong horizontals, rectangular
module, articulated fascia

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

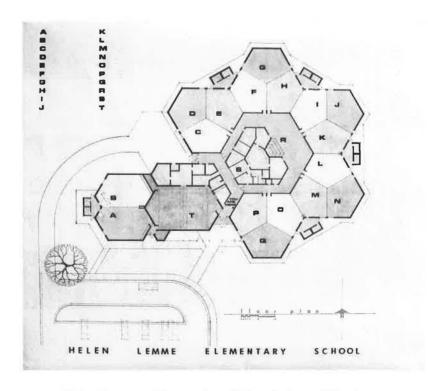
Section Additional Documentation Page 39

Wehner, Roland and Marilyn, House name of property

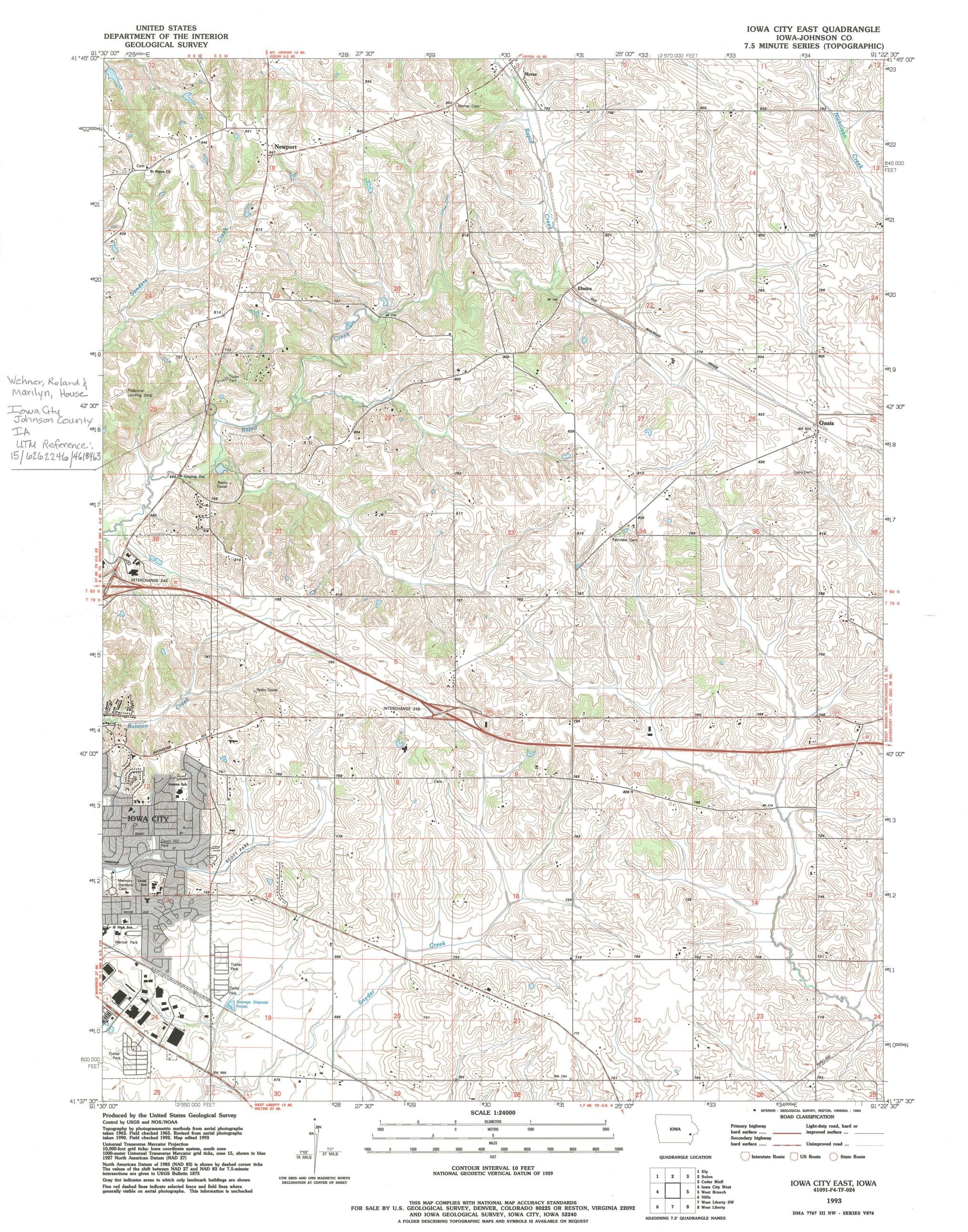
Johnson County, Iowa county and state



Doderer Residence - Iowa City, IowaFlat roofs, clearstory windows, articulated fascia



Helen Lemme Elementary School - Iowa City, Iowa Equilateral triangle planning module































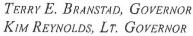




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION	
PROPERTY Wehner, Roland and MarNAME:	rilyn, House
MULTIPLE NAME:	
STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Johnson	
DATE RECEIVED: 7/26/13 DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/03/13 DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:	DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/16/13 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/11/13
REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000691	
REASONS FOR REVIEW:	
APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANGE OTHER: N PDIL: N PER REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR	IOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
COMMENT WAIVER: N	
ACCEPTRETURNREJ	ECT <u>9.9.13</u> DATE
ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:	
Entered in The National Register of Historic Places	
RECOM./CRITERIA	
REVIEWER	DISCIPLINE
TELEPHONE	DATE
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

MARY TIFFANY COWNIE, DIRECTOR



MATTHEW HARRIS ADMINISTRATOR

600 E. Locust Des Moines, Iowa 50319

T. (515) 281-5111 F. (515) 282-0502

CULTURAL AFFAIRS, ORG

July 17, 2013

Carol Shull, Chief National Park Service National Register of Historic Places 1201 Eye Street, N.W.-- 8th Floor Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

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

- John Deere Tractor Company C-2 Manufacturing Building, 360 Westfield, Waterloo, Black Hawk County
- Wehner, Roland and Marilyn, House, 3112 Highway 1 NE, Iowa City, Johnson County

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Foster Hill, Manager

Elizabeth Faster Hill

National Register and Tax Incentive Programs