

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 31 1987

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Joseph & Minnie White House

and/or common Margaret Bourke-White Childhood Home

2. Location

street & number 243 Hazelwood Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Middlesex Borough vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Middlesex code 023

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Bruce & Marion McCreary

street & number 243 Hazelwood Avenue

city, town Middlesex vicinity of state New Jersey

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Middlesex County Hall of Records

street & number Middlesex County Courthouse

city, town New Brunswick state New Jersey 08846

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Middlesex County Cultural Resources
Inventory Update

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date July 1985 federal state county local

depository for survey records Middlesex County Cultural & Heritage Commission

city, town Georges Road, North Brunswick state New Jersey

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The White house in Middlesex is a stuccoed, two-story structure, built in two sections about 1905. The main block of the house, covered by a hipped roof with extended kicked eaves, is roughly square in plan, with a projecting center bay containing an off-center recessed entry porch. To the rear, the center bay is recessed into the mass of the house on the first floor to create a sheltered porch. Above it is a sleeping porch with a continuous run of screened windows for summertime comfort. This portion of the house has a full second floor lighted by gable-roofed dormers containing grouped casement windows. There are also eyebrow windows under the eaves, providing light to corner storage spaces off the bedrooms.

A large addition was made to the main house very early, perhaps even before construction of the main unit was completed. Nevertheless, it is evidently an afterthought, for the basement under this portion is enclosed by a separate foundation, and the thickness of walls indicates that the original exterior wall has now become an interior partition. The addition contains a spacious kitchen, lighted from two sides by banded windows. The gable roof of the kitchen wing is higher than the main block of the house, with a prominent cross gable permitting windows around three sides of the master bedroom on the second floor.

Both the addition and rear elevation of the house use exposed timbers to add color and geometric pattern to the stucco walls. The rear porch is framed under a broad gable, which contains a bold truss at the apex, the house's only reflection of the still-popular brackets and stickwork of the latter 19th century. The textured stucco of the house is identical on both parts of the building, and it has not been painted or extensively repaired.

The addition is far more light-filled than the main house, although large windows with multi-paned top sash over single pane lower sash predominate throughout. They are used singly or in groups of two and three. Small banded windows, set high up in the wall, typical of Craftsman interiors, are found in this house in the dining room and upstairs bedrooms. The front door is flanked by geometrically patterned stained glass sidelights, and stained glass is used in the upper quarter of interior doors in the principal rooms.

Inside the house, the exposed woodwork, much of it oak and chestnut, retains its original finish. The living room is dominated by a boulderstone fireplace with dark masonry joints. A built-in wooden seat beside the fireplace, and built-in bookshelves, cabinets, and drawers (see photographs) are all characteristic of designs published by Stickley. Beveled-edge wooden beams below the ceiling's full height create a frieze effect, and plain wooden posts divide the entry from the living room. The living room is the most ornate room in the house, and most identifiable as the product of the Craftsman movement.

The true masterpiece of design in the house, however, is in the master bedroom. There, a fireplace dominates the end wall, which was custom made for the house by the Rookwood Pottery. It uses forest green faience tile to form the

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fireplace surround, mantle shelf and console supports, and outline a triptych above. The overmantle is slightly recessed, and within the low-arched panels is depicted an imaginary castle and its wooded kingdom. The castle design is also in tile, executed in mat glazes, according to a Rookwood advertisement which featured the design. The glazed tile hearth extends into the brick lining of this very usable fireplace.

There are also fireplaces connected to this same chimney stack below; one a simple corner fireplace with a plain tile surround in the dining room, and the other a glazed brick fireplace in the kitchen, meant only as a surround and chimney system for a projecting cook stove.

Many of the original details of the house survive. Craftsman style light fixtures remain in the front entry, in the hall, flanking the massive living room fireplace, and in the dining room. They are simple, geometric forms executed in iron. The hardwood floors have a border laid parallel with the walls and sometimes stained, in a fashion recommended by Stickley, although initiated with the Shingle Style.

Behind the house is a single-car garage, stuccoed like the house. Its paired sliding doors are reminiscent of the stables so recently replaced by automobile garages in 1905. The pyramidal roof and square shape became standard for suburban garages constructed before World War II.

The Joseph White House is a comfortable residence, thoughtfully built with all the amenities for suburban life in a democratic household. There are no servants rooms, but it does have a well-organized and pleasant kitchen in which the woman of the house could work. There is no large attic to catch generations of debris, but built-in closets and shelves provide small, accessible storage spaces. There are no formal, unused rooms; rather, there is a large and inviting living room for the enjoyment of guests and family alike. There is no front porch, as found in so many houses of the period, only a small entry portico. But there is a spacious and private back porch, near to the kitchen for outdoor dining. Mr. White, with or without the direct help of Mr. Stickley, produced a house that helped define the new lifestyles of the 20th century, and nurtured one of the great women of that century.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) photo journalism
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

Specific dates 1905 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

This stuccoed suburban house is an early and excellent example of American domestic architecture influenced by Gustav Stickley and the American Arts and Crafts Movement. It is also of interest as the childhood home of Margaret Bourke-White, one of the finest photojournalists of the first half of the 20th century. The house was built for her parents, supposedly to designs of her father, Joseph White. While growing up there, Margaret's interest in both photography and machines was nurtured by her father, himself an avid amateur photographer and professional engineer and inventor. She was one of the first women to achieve financial success as a photographer, and certainly one of the best-known photojournalists of the century.

Margaret Bourke-White (she added her mother's maiden name as an adult) began her career as a photographer of industrial subjects. It was Margaret Bourke-White's photograph of the Fort Peck Dam that was chosen by Henry Luce as the cover of the first issue of Life magazine in November 1936. But as her career developed and her interests broadened, Margaret Bourke-White became one of the great chroniclers of the 20th century. It was Margaret Bourke-White who gave Americans their first look at Stalin's Soviet Union in the 1930's, the only foreigner permitted to photograph the country since the 1917 Revolution. Her photographs, coupled with Erskine Caldwell's text, resulted in the book You Have Seen Their Faces, about the American South during the Depression and the plight of its sharecroppers. She covered World War II from bombing planes, and her images of Buchenwald at its liberation are now part of our collective memory of the concentration camps. Bourke-White's photograph of Gandhi with his spinning wheel has become the image most of the Western world has of the pacifist leader. She covered the fall of the British in India, and the acceleration of the Korean "conflict" into war. Her last pictures were more private images, documenting her progressive deterioration from Parkinson's disease, which finally led to her death in 1971.

Margaret White was born in 1904 in the Bronx, the second daughter of Joseph White, an engineer and inventor, and Minnie Bourke. Very shortly after, the family moved to Middlesex, New Jersey, to be closer to the factory where Joseph did most of his work. The Whites were progressive in outlook and interested in self-improvement through education. It seems that they designed their own home, although it is clearly based upon the ideas of Gustav Stickley and other designers of the American Arts and Crafts movement.

Joseph White had as much of a philosophical idea about his house as a practical one; in one letter to his future wife, he referred to their "perfect mental and moral home" (Bourke-White Biography, p. 8) a sentiment not unlike that

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of Stickley who wrote in the introduction of his book, Craftsman Homes, "...right living and clear thinking cannot find abiding place except among those whose lives bring them back close to Nature's ways, ...[in] homes which realize a personal standard of comfort and beauty...". The search for simplicity in architecture, coupled with a call for personal enrichment through education and honest work is a persistent theme in Stickley's writing, and one which seemed to appeal to the self-taught inventor, Joseph White.

Stickley's magazine The Craftsman was published from 1901-1916, putting the 1905 construction of the White's house in the early years of the magazine's popularity. No exact prototype or pattern has been found for the house, although numerous details do have precedent in Stickley's publications. The floorplan of the house corresponds to a design published in The Craftsman in February 1907, which was described at the time as being in the shape of a Greek cross. Several of Stickley's designs incorporate deeply recessed porches, and identify them as outdoor dining areas. In the biography of Margaret Bourke-White, a reference is made to "the big back porch that served the family as a dining room in the warm months" (p. 8). Such is its obvious utility for this purpose that it retains that use today.

The White house was constructed of concrete block covered with coarse textured stucco, a method and material proposed by Stickley in several of his domestic designs through the years. Two examples published in The Craftsman, in 1905 and 1907 respectively, show the strong parallels between Stickley's work and the White house, but again there is no published material which indicates that the White house was created directly from Stickley designs. This supports the assertion in Bourke-White's biography that Joseph White designed his own home, perhaps by combining the features he liked best from designs published by Stickley.

The interior of the White house reflects Stickley's work even more closely. The living room is dominated by a large fireplace of split boulders, of a type shown in many illustrations in The Craftsman. The massive fireplace is balanced by a number of low built-in bookcases, above which large windows allow light to flood the room. Stickley wrote, "The question of built-in fittings is one that I feel is an essential part of the Craftsman idea in architecture." In the White house living room, the end wall is almost a direct duplicate of an interior sketch published in The Craftsman in July 1909.

In her autobiography, Margaret Bourke-White referred to her childhood home only in passing, and inaccurately located at that. She wrote, "We lived during

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my childhood in a small New Jersey town, Bound Brook, and near us were lovely woods and the low hilly ranges dignified by the name of the Watchung Mountains" (Portrait of Myself, p. 13). Although the house on Hazelwood Avenue is close to the border of Bound Brook, it is now in the Borough of Middlesex. However, prior to the incorporation of Middlesex Borough in 1913, the neighborhood was sometimes referred to as East Bound Brook.

No other house in the neighborhood of gently curving, tree-shaded streets is as architecturally innovative as the White house; it is surrounded by comfortable houses from the turn of the century in the Colonial Revival style, or Foursquares traditionally detailed. Always a bit different from her peers both by intellect and upbringing, Margaret wrote in her autobiography of a rather lonely childhood, a social outcast in cotton stockings forbidden to play with children who read comics. As if to compensate, in adulthood she courted fame, and reveled in her national popularity. But as an adult she found pride in her upbringing, for she carefully created her public persona by capitalizing on being "different" and "daring".

Margaret Bourke-White and Gustav Stickley never met, as far as is known, and indeed, Margaret may not have known of his indirect influence. But the two shared an attitude about striving to better things, which both have left as a legacy. "I believe that the keynote of life is work, and that upon the honesty of work depends all that is worthy and lasting in art and life," wrote Gustav Stickley, in the introduction to More Craftsman Houses, 1912.

Margaret Bourke-White expressed a similar thought in her own diaries, quoted in her biography. "In the end it is only the work that counts."

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Addendum

Margaret Bourke-White was a peripatetic figure, traveling around the world for her photography assignments. Her early career in Cleveland leaves no known building or office associated with her. When she moved to New York in the 1930's, she rented office space in the Empire State Building; space which has been rented and altered many times since her tenancy. Her only permanent home as an adult was a house in Darien, Connecticut, which she purchased with her husband Erskine Caldwell in 1938. After their divorce in 1941, she retained the house, although she rented it for many years, particularly while on assignment during World War II, and in the late 1940's and '50's while she did her famous work in India and Korea. After coming down with Parkinson's disease, Bourke-White lived at the house until her death in a Stamford, Connecticut hospital in 1972.

The house in Darien was designed by the local architect Edward Wallace, and constructed by Roderick Lester in 1936. He was also the first occupant of the house. Lester then sold the house to Bourke-White and Caldwell in 1938. The house was featured in The American Home in 1937 (see attached). It is a modest colonial revival-influenced Cape Cod dwelling, without remarkable architectural interest. It has remained in private hands since Bourke-White's death, and has been altered, particularly on the interior, by later owners. There is no interest on the part of the present owner or the local historical society to nominate the house to the National Register at this time, although a neighbor who remembers Miss Bourke-White fondly hopes to convince the town to rename the road in her honor.

While a pleasant small house, the Darien home does not have the architectural interest of Margaret Bourke-White's childhood house in Middlesex, New Jersey. Therefore, of all surviving structures directly associated with Margaret Bourke-White, the childhood home is the only one which is individually eligible for the National Register. It meets the criteria of the National Register as follows:

The Margaret Bourke-White house "possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; and embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction."

Janet Foster
April 7, 1988