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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 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: Gray, Thomas, House

Other names/site number: Site #PU10472

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: 25 River Valley Road

City or town: Little Rock State: Arkansas County: Pulaski

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

	<u>7-13-18</u>
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>Arkansas Historic Preservation Program</u>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
_____	
<b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

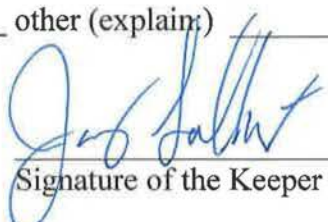
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**4. National Park Service Certification**

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) \_\_\_\_\_

  
Signature of the Keeper

9-18-2018  
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
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>2</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

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

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

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

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/Mid-Century Modern

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

Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE, ASPHALT, WOOD, GLASS

### 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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#### Summary Paragraph

The Thomas Gray House is located on a steeply-sloping site on River Valley Road in the River Ridge Manor subdivision of West Little Rock. The house was designed by Tom Gray and built by Gene Bracy, Inc., in 1963. The house is built on a continuous cast-concrete foundation and its walls are covered in fieldstone and vertical cedar siding. The house's windows consist of a mixture of fixed plate-glass windows and awning or casement sashes. The house is topped by a gable-on-hip roof covered in asphalt shingles. In addition to the house, the property contains a detached carport with brick and concrete driveway, also designed by Gray and built in 1963.

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#### Narrative Description

The Thomas Gray House, located at 25 River Valley Road in the River Ridge Manor subdivision of West Little Rock was built in 1963 and designed by noted Little Rock architect Thomas Gray as his family's personal home. The house is located on a steeply-sloped wooded site that overlooks a wooded ravine. Due to the site's slope, the house appears to be one story from the front and two stories from the rear.

The house is constructed on a continuous cast-concrete foundation and the walls are covered in fieldstone on the front and rear and vertical cedar siding on the sides. The house's windows, which are most prevalent on the rear and side façades, are a mixture of fixed, awning, and



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casement sashes. The rear of the property also has an extensive deck that is accessed by two sets of sliding glass doors. The house's gable-on-hip roof, which has wide eaves, is covered in asphalt shingles.

In addition to the house, the property also contains a carport and driveway, also designed by Gray. The open carport, located to the southwest of the house, is mostly open, except for a concrete-block storage room at the southern end. The carport is covered in a gable-on-hip roof that mimics the roof on the main house. The driveway is concrete, with a decorative geometric wood and brick band down the center.

### **MAIN HOUSE - Contributing**

#### ***Front, Southwest Façade***

The front façade of the Tom Gray House is symmetrical in arrangement with a recessed central entrance. The entrance, which has a double-door entry with louvered wood doors, is flanked on each side by a large rectangular plate-glass window. The recessed porch has a slate tile floor. The northwest and southeast sides of the recessed porch are fenestrated by an awning window below with a stationary window above. The rest of the front façade is devoid of fenestration and is covered in fieldstone. The façade is also sheltered by a wide eave with a shallow cornice "vertically crossed with narrow strips of wood."<sup>1</sup>

#### ***Side, Northwest Façade***

The majority of the northwest façade is sided with wood vertical-board siding. At either end of the façade is a recessed window that consists of a lower awning sash and a stationary upper sash. The lower part of the façade is the concrete-block foundation. Like the rest of the façades, the northwest façade is sheltered by a wide eave with a shallow cornice with vertical wood strips. The gable end of the roof has a triangular louvered vent.

#### ***Rear, Northeast Façade***

The majority of both floors of the northeast façade are sided with wood vertical-board siding. However, the ends of the façade are sided with fieldstone. The fenestration on both floors of the northeast façade is symmetrically arranged. On both floors, the center of the façade is fenestrated by a large plate-glass window flanked on each side by a set of sliding-glass doors. Proceeding outward from the center of the façade, each half is then fenestrated by a small, rectangular, single-pane casement window. Each end of the lower floor, at the edge of the fieldstone has a wood door with a plate-glass window with a large single-pane window next to it.

The northeast façade also has a two-story wood deck that was recently constructed to replace a previous smaller deck. Both levels of the deck have wood railings consisting of evenly-spaced vertical posts connected by five horizontal bands of wood. Each level of the deck is also supported by large wood posts. At the south end of the deck's lower level, a large plastic tubular spiral slide accesses a lower platform and the back yard.

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<sup>1</sup> Aldridge, Harriett. "A Region, a Site and a House Go Hand in Hand." *Arkansas Gazette*. 29 November 1964, pp. 15D-16D.

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***Side, Southeast Façade***

The majority of the southeast façade is sided with wood vertical-board siding. At the northeast end of the façade is a recessed window that consists of a lower awning sash and a stationary upper sash, while at the southwest end of the façade is a wood door with plate-glass windows that accesses the kitchen. The lower part of the façade is the concrete-block foundation. Like the rest of the façades, the southeast façade is sheltered by a wide eave with a shallow cornice with vertical wood strips. The gable end of the roof has a triangular louvered vent.

***Interior***

The house's main living areas are on the upper floor. The center of the house is dominated by the open entry and living room. The space also has the staircase that descends to the lower floor, and the space is oriented around a circular metal fireplace. Decorative composite panels on either side of the fireplace are also original to the house. The southern end of the house has a bedroom with bathroom and the kitchen and dining room. The other end of the house has two bedrooms, a bathroom and a den. The built-in furniture in the northern bedrooms is original and much of the flooring throughout the house, which is a mixture of slate tile, random-width hardwood floors and small rectangular tile in the northern bathroom, is also original.

The lower floor of the house now has a bedroom, family room with a wet bar, and storage and utility areas.

**CARPOR & DRIVEWAY - Contributing**

To the southwest of the house is an open carport that was also designed by Gray and built at the same time as the house. The carport is largely open and is supported on each side by three wood posts. The southern end of the carport has a concrete-block enclosure for storage. The enclosure has wood vertical-board siding on the north side and a pair of wood vertical-board siding doors. The roof structure of the carport mimics the roof of the main house with wide eaves and a shallow cornice with evenly-spaced vertical wood strips.

The house's steep driveway, which is mainly constructed out of concrete, has four panels of decorative brick pavement that is divided by redwood strips. The panels are located in the center of the driveway as it ascends the hill from the parking area to the street.

***Integrity***

Overall, the Tom Gray House has excellent integrity from the time of its construction and still very much reflects Gray's design. The biggest changes to the property include the replacement and expansion of the rear deck on the exterior and remodeling the kitchen and a bathroom on the interior, and also removing the wall between the kitchen and dining room in order to have a more open-concept layout. In addition to the house, the carport and driveway still reflect Gray's design and have not been altered since the time of their construction in the 1960s.

The setting around the Tom Gray House also reflects the setting at the time that the house was constructed. The houses around the Gray House are all located on generous lots and many other houses in the vicinity are also architect designed. Furthermore, the lot that the Tom Gray House is on retains the "inspiring view of rolling wooded hills" and "its own lovely stand of trees" that

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were advertised in the sales brochure for the River Ridge Manor Subdivision. Tom Gray would definitely recognize the house and those qualities that make it significant.

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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
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1963  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1963  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

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

**Cultural Affiliation**

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

**Architect/Builder**

Thomas Gray, Architect  
Gene Bracy, Inc., Builder  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**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 Tom Gray House, located at 25 River Valley Road in Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** with **local significance** for its importance as an example of the Mid-Century Modern style of architecture. Built in 1963, the Tom Gray House illustrates many characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern style. Referred to as the Contemporary style in McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* the Tom Gray House exhibits many of the characteristics of the style, including wide overhangs, contrasting wall materials and textures, and unusual window shapes and placements.

The Tom Gray House also illustrates many characteristics of the organic style of architecture. Some of the characteristics of organic architecture that it exhibits include a design that seems "to grow easily from its site and be shaped to harmonize with its surroundings," and a design that "bring[s] out the nature of the materials [and] let[s] their nature intimately" into the design. The Gray House's location on the side of a hill overlooking a wooded ravine allows it to nestle into the side of the hill and not dominate its site. Furthermore, Gray used natural materials such as fieldstone and wood, often in a rough and unfinished nature, so that the nature of the materials could easily be seen in the design for the property.

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

### **HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY**

Settlement in the Little Rock area began shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century. Although surveying land and offering it for sale did not begin until 1815, a few settlers were in the area prior to then. Edmund Hogan, for example, who was originally from Georgia and came to Arkansas via Missouri, was living on the north bank of the Arkansas River opposite Little Rock where he operated a ferry by 1812. Another distinguished early settler was Wright Daniel who settled at the base of Big Rock Mountain prior to 1814 and opened a gristmill in 1815. When the Arkansas Territory was created in 1819, the state's first capital was at Arkansas Post. However, it was not the best location since it often flooded and was far away from the majority of the territory's population. In 1820, a new centrally-located site for the capital was chosen on the south bank of the Arkansas River at Little Rock.<sup>2</sup>

Initial settlement and development in Little Rock was focused on the river. The original plat of Little Rock consisted of 88 square blocks stretching south from the river to what is now Eleventh Street. By the 1860s, however, the city began to expand beyond the original plat, notably with the platting of the Woodruff's and Masonic additions on the city's east side, the Wright's

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<sup>2</sup> Roy, F. Hampton, Sr., and Charles Witsell, Jr., with Cheryl Griffith Nichols. *How We Lived: Little Rock as an American City*. Little Rock: August House, 1984, pp. 12-14.

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Addition on the south side, and the Capitol Hill Addition on the west side. Apparently, building sites on the city's west side were popular. An announcement in the November 21, 1872, issue of the *Arkansas Gazette* stated that "This property consists of twenty-seven full and fractional blocks, overlooking the Cairo and Fulton railroad as it leaves the city. ... This is a fine property, and from its geographical position, will soon become a portion of the city. Upward of one hundred lots in the addition have already been disposed of, and are at this time being improved."<sup>3</sup>

The popularity of living on Little Rock's west side, which began in the late nineteenth century, has continued to the present day with the city continuing to expand further to the west. By the middle of the twentieth century, several new subdivisions were being developed along Arkansas Highway 10 approximately five miles west of downtown Little Rock, including River Ridge Manor, which was being developed by J. Wythe Walker. Their proximity to Highway 10 made them convenient to downtown Little Rock, but allowed them to have the wooded setting and peace and quiet of a suburban or country environment, qualities that were touted in the sales brochure. The brochure noted:

Each River Ridge Manor home site commands an inspiring view of rolling wooded hills – each has its own lovely stand of trees.

Most of these building sites have a front footage of 150 feet, and a few are larger. Only fine homes may be built here and property values should increase for many years to come.

Just twelve minutes from downtown Little Rock and with all city utilities. River Ridge Manor combines the best features of city and country living.

River Ridge Manor's streets and utilities will be paid for by the developer. It is inside the Little Rock city limits and the Little Rock School District.

To make this development even more attractive, a large and unusually picturesque section has been reserved for development as a park and recreation area for the residents and their families.

The personal note from J. Wythe Walker in the brochure further stated: "The home building sites in this secluded and lovely area are most desirable yet reasonable in price and I invite you to visit River Ridge Manor at your earliest convenience and see it for yourself. Whether you are planning to build now or in the future, or are interested in making an investment of unusual value, you will want to consider the possibilities of this development."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 19, 104.

<sup>4</sup> Sales brochure for River Ridge Manor. In the possession of Marty and Cary Smith, current owners of the Tom Gray House. c.1963.



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The River Ridge Manor Subdivision was divided into 43 lots along River Valley Road, Bradley Lane and the east side of River Ridge Road. A copy of the brochure in the possession of the current property owners has Lot #40 marked with "1<sup>st</sup>" and Lot #39 marked with "2<sup>nd</sup>" seeming to indicate that the Grays' first choice of a lot was Lot #40 and Lot #39 was their second choice.<sup>5</sup>

The Tom Gray House was designed by architect Tom Gray, who worked for the noted Little Rock architecture firm of Wittenberg, Delony, and Davidson. Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson was established in 1919 in downtown Little Rock by George Wittenberg and Lawson Delony under the name Wittenberg & Delony Architects. In their early years there was little capital to begin with, so Wittenberg taught mechanical drawing part time and coached football for Little Rock High School while Delony took charge of the office.<sup>6</sup>

During this time they built residential homes mostly, until the new Little Rock High School project. This school (now known as Little Rock Central High School) was the most expensive high school built in the United States at the time, and bolstered Wittenberg & Delony's acclaim. This allowed them to become more competitive with the established firms.<sup>7</sup>

By the mid-1930s, Wittenberg & Delony employed eight people. Wittenberg focused on marketing and administration, while Delony specialized in design, and newcomer Julian Davidson was in charge of producing working drawings. The firm was active during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal programs, and the firm worked diligently to acquire federal loans and grants for their clients from the federal agencies to build their projects. While most of their projects were residential, the firm was diversifying, taking on several college projects.<sup>8</sup>

It was also during the 1930s that Wittenberg, Delony, and Davidson began their relationship with Southern Arkansas University. The firm designed Cross and Nelson Halls for the university during the 1930s, and the firm "would plan every additional campus building for the next fifty years."<sup>9</sup>

When World War II began, most of the firm's employees had gone to war. With fewer employees and an increase in military work, those remaining were kept busy. Once the soldiers returned, Wittenberg & Delony decided to restructure their firm. Julian Davidson was made a full one-third partner and the firm became Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson, also known as WDD.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sales brochure for River Ridge Manor. In the possession of Marty and Cary Smith, current owners of the Tom Gray House. c.1963.

<sup>6</sup> Information on Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson from: <http://www.wddarchitects.com/profile/history>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Willis, James. *Southern Arkansas University: The Mulerider School's Centennial History, 1909-2009*. Magnolia, AR: SAU Foundation and Xlibris Corporation, 2009, p. 136.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

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As architecture became more complex and involved in the 1950s, the firm decided to specialize in design, drafting, planning, interior design, landscaping, and construction administration. In 1959 the firm incorporated and is now known as Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson, Inc.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1960s the firm grew significantly in terms of numbers of projects. School projects were the majority, such as those at Southern Arkansas University, followed by residential and commercial projects, but medical projects were making significant gains. The firm won significant design awards for the Empire Life Building, the Arkansas State Health Department Building, and the Arkansas State Hospital. George Wittenberg retired during this time, and his son, Gordon, took the same role as his father and specialized in securing and procuring clients. Tom Gray was also added into the firm's integral design team, and he was the lead architect for several of the firm's designs.<sup>12</sup>

Thomas Albert Gray was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on December 16, 1928, to Glenn Albert Gray and Dolores Snyder Gray Brown. Gray graduated from Broad Ripple High School in Indianapolis in 1947 and in 1953 he graduated with a bachelor of architecture degree from Cincinnati University in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he was also a member of SCARAB, a national honorary architectural fraternity.<sup>13</sup>

After graduating from Cincinnati University, Gray married Ruth Ann Deming, whom he met in high school and he also began a three-year stint as a jet fighter pilot in the Air Force. The Air Force brought Gray to Arkansas, and when he was discharged in 1957, he and Ruth Ann decided to stay here, since they were impressed with the mild climate and the state's friendly people. It was after he was discharged from the Air Force in 1957 that he started working for WDD.<sup>14</sup>

Gray began his career at WDD as a designer and quickly worked his way up through the firm, becoming chief of design and eventually becoming the firm's president in 1976. He was responsible for designing many of WDD's well-known buildings and several of his designs won regional, state, and national awards.<sup>15</sup> In his entry in the 1970 American Institute of Architects directory, he listed among his principal works the Little Rock Country Club, Pleasant Valley Country Club, Arkansas State Health Building, and Second Presbyterian Church, all in Little Rock.<sup>16</sup> His work with WDD eventually led to Gray being awarded the American Institute of Architect's lifelong honor, a Fellowship, which was awarded for his "notable contribution to the profession in the areas of design, service, and practice." Gray died at his home at 25 River

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Obituary for Thomas Albert Gray, 4 January 2015. Found at:  
<http://arkansasonline.com/obituaries/2015/jan/04/thomas-gray-2015-01-04/>.

<sup>14</sup> Obituary for Thomas Albert Gray, 4 January 2015. Found at:  
<http://arkansasonline.com/obituaries/2015/jan/04/thomas-gray-2015-01-04/>.

<sup>15</sup> Obituary for Thomas Albert Gray, 4 January 2015. Found at:  
<http://arkansasonline.com/obituaries/2015/jan/04/thomas-gray-2015-01-04/>.

<sup>16</sup> Gane, John F. ed. *American Architects Directory*. New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1970.

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Valley Road, which he had designed for himself and his wife in 1963, on December 21, 2014, only ten weeks after Ruth Ann's death.<sup>17</sup>

Gray started designing the house for his family in 1963 and the plans for the house were finished May 1, 1963. Construction of the house occurred later in 1963 and possibly into 1964. Gray hired Gene Bracy, Inc., to complete the house's construction while the landscaping was undertaken by Ted Willis and Sons. The decorating consultant for the house was Dorothy Ross Lawhon, a well-known local designer.<sup>18</sup>

Dorothy-Ross Lawhon was born in 1922, the only child of Judge and Mrs. Ross Luther Lawhon. Although she was born in San Antonio, Texas, "in the shadow of the Alamo," her parents moved to Little Rock while she was an infant. Lawhon's father felt that Arkansas was a "perfectly beautiful state with a great future" and he wanted to be involved. He ultimately was involved, serving seven terms as North Little Rock's mayor.<sup>19</sup>

After graduating from North Little Rock High School and Little Rock Junior College, Lawhon studied at Lindenwood College in St. Charles, Missouri, where she majored in history, and also took two years of law school to satisfy her father. However, history was not what field she went into, finally choosing interior design instead, since she felt that it was "more lasting, more meaningful, and I can give more of myself through this field."<sup>20</sup>

Lawhon eventually graduated from the New York School of Interior Design, and then her parents sent Dorothy-Ross to study in Florence, Italy, under Signora Alda de Flippe for two years. Lawhon's first job when she returned to the United States was in San Antonio as the executive head of the interior design and decorating contract departments of Frost Brothers and Joske's of Texas. At the same time she also became a member of the American Institute of American Designers, the American Society of International Designers, and the National Home Fashion League in New York.<sup>21</sup>

While in Texas, Lawhon was involved in some interesting and prominent projects. As she recalled in the early 1980s:

"I was furnished a plane and pilot to take me everywhere."  
She was given the assignment of decorating the Eddie Childs residence which occupied an entire block in Midland, Tex. Childs asked her then to decorate his oil offices and a commission came for the La Quinta Golf and Yacht Club in Corpus Christi.

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<sup>17</sup> Obituary for Thomas Albert Gray, 4 January 2015. Found at:  
<http://arkansasonline.com/obituaries/2015/jan/04/thomas-gray-2015-01-04/>.

<sup>18</sup> Aldridge, Harriett. "A Region, a Site and a House Go Hand in Hand." *Arkansas Gazette*. 29 November 1964, pp. 15D-16D.

<sup>19</sup> Woods, Betty. "Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning." *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 1C.

<sup>20</sup> Woods, Betty. "Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning." *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 1C-2C.

<sup>21</sup> Woods, Betty. "Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning." *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 2C.

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The young designer took on Fort Clark Ranch, the largest dude ranch in the world. The commission for its first restoration and interior design came from Root-Brown Construction Co. for the Bracketville, Tex., facility, and Dorothy-Ross found herself buying leather draperies, [and] flying to Mexico to order rugs.<sup>22</sup>

After marrying Edwin Ruthven Dyer II, and the birth of her only child, son Ross Luther Lawhon-Dyer, Dorothy-Ross returned to Little Rock for several years, before pursuing her career again, this time in New York. In New York, Lawhon was executive head of the interior design and contract department for W.A. Hathaway, the largest home furnishings business in New York. While working at W.A. Hathaway, Lawhon was chosen as one of the ten leading interior designers in New York and was featured in articles in the *New York World Telegram and Sun*. Her time in New York also involved her in a wide variety of projects, including the Scarsdale Golf Club in Hartsdale, New York, and a home in Saudi Arabia.<sup>23</sup>

In 1957, Lawhon's son was to start his formal education and Dorothy-Ross decided that she wanted to come home and be with "my best friends, my parents." As a result, Dorothy-Ross Lawhon Interiors, Inc., was founded. Again, the projects that Lawhon undertook in Arkansas were diverse, including colleges and banks, offices and residences, including the Tom Gray Hosue, as well as hospitals and country clubs.<sup>24</sup>

The Tom Gray House was finished by November 29, 1964, when it was featured in an article in the *Arkansas Gazette*. The article contains an extensive description of the house and its finishes and furnishings, although it does address in brief the house's style. The article states:

The home Mr. Gray designed for his family at 25 River Valley Road is testimony to his "feel" for this adopted state. Although there is no special styling indigenous to Arkansas (unless one counts some nostalgic renditions of Southern Colonial), contemporary designs with rustic overtones or undertones, especially by way of texture, seem to be particularly suited to the moods of the countryside and it is from this premise that Mr. Gray worked.<sup>25</sup>

This description fits in with the principles of Organic architecture, such as siting a house in order to blend into, and not dominate, its site. Also, the use of natural materials such as fieldstone and wood, often in a rough and unfinished nature, allowed the nature of the materials to easily be seen in the design of the property.

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<sup>22</sup> Woods, Betty. "Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning." *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 2C.

<sup>23</sup> Woods, Betty. "Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning." *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 2C.

<sup>24</sup> Woods, Betty. "Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning." *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 2C.

<sup>25</sup> Aldridge, Harriett. "A Region, a Site and a House Go Hand in Hand." *Arkansas Gazette*. 29 November 1964, pp. 15D-16D.

Gray, Thomas, House  
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Once the home was finished, it provided a flexible and gracious residence for Tom and his wife, Ruth Ann, and their two children, Amy and Steven. The house remained in the possession of the Gray Family until it was sold to the current owners, Marty and Cary Smith, on March 22, 2016.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY**

The design of the Tom Gray House is an excellent representation of the shift in residential design that was occurring across the country after World War II. The decorative pre-war revival styles, which were all the rage, were being pushed to the side by more functional and livable residential designs. Although some people after World War II still believed “that only shrunken colonial, Cape Cod ranches, or Cinderella homes properly represent the American way of life... a trend [had] now begun working the other way. ...[It was] slowly becoming apparent to people that architects working with builders can give them better, more thoughtful design for their money.”<sup>26</sup>

This post-World-War-II architecture moved away from an “over-decorative eclecticism to a less self-conscious expression.” Expression, rather, was manifest through window placement and design, placement of the home in the landscape, and also through interior space arrangement. Also, the Mid-Century Modern style greatly espoused the relationship between the indoors and the outdoors (which was partly expressed through the window placement and design).

The style and its design also put more emphasis on privacy. Privacy played a role in the design, both on the exterior – large amounts of glass more often appeared on the rear of the property, making it private from the street – as well as on the interior. “The interior, too, emphasizes privacy for the members of the family from each other. The children’s right to their noisy pursuits is recognized along with that of the parents *not* to hear Huckleberry Hound’s televised antics.”<sup>27</sup>

The Gray House clearly reflects the Organic Architecture design trends that were impacting residential architecture in the mid-century period after World War II. The house lacks the applied ornamentation that was so often used prior to World War II, and uses window placement and a variety of materials to give visual interest and ornamentation, and also to reflect its natural surroundings. As McAlester and McAlester point out with respect to some mid-century styles, the Gray House has “no decorative detailing.” Furthermore, it “lack[s] the stark white stucco wall surfaces, which are usually replaced by various combinations of wood, brick, or stone.”<sup>28</sup> Gray used natural materials such as fieldstone and wood, often in a rough and unfinished nature, so that the nature of the materials could easily be seen in the design for the property.

The design of the Gray House also reflects the increased relationship between the indoors and outdoors and the ideas of integrating a building into its surroundings, which were key components of Organic design. The design of the Gray House, with its multitude of windows and several sets of sliding-glass doors encouraged residents and visitors to interact with the house’s surroundings. The windows, along with the fieldstone walls on the front façade, also

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<sup>26</sup> Von Eckardt, Wolf. *Mid-Century Architecture in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> Von Eckardt, Wolf. *Mid-Century Architecture in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> McAlester, Virginia & Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984, p. 482.

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allow the house to disappear and blend in with the surroundings. The placement of the house on a hillside below street level, and nestled into the side of the hill, also emphasized privacy for the house's occupants from the street.

Since the Tom Gray House is an excellent example of the Mid-Century Modern style and a good example of Organic Architecture designed by architect Tom Gray for his own family, it is being nominated to the National Register with **local significance** under **Criterion C**.



Gray, Thomas, House  
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County and State

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Aldridge, Harriett. "A Region, a Site and a House Go Hand in Hand." *Arkansas Gazette*. 29 November 1964, pp. 15D-16D.

Gane, John F. ed. *American Architects Directory*. New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1970.

Information on Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson from:

<http://www.wddarchitects.com/profile/history>.

McAlester, Virginia & Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984.

Obituary for Thomas Albert Gray, 4 January 2015. Found at:  
<http://arkansasonline.com/obituaries/2015/jan/04/thomas-gray-2015-01-04/>.

Roy, F. Hampton, Sr., and Charles Witsell, Jr., with Cheryl Griffith Nichols. *How We Lived: Little Rock as an American City*. Little Rock: August House, 1984.

Sales brochure for River Ridge Manor. In the possession of Marty and Cary Smith, current owners of the Tom Gray House. c.1963.

Von Eckardt, Wolf. *Mid-Century Architecture in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961.

Willis, James. *Southern Arkansas University: The Mulerider School's Centennial History, 1909-2009*. Magnolia, AR: SAU Foundation and Xlibris Corporation, 2009.

Woods, Betty. "Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning." *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 1C-2C.

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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 # \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ 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):** PU10472

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than one acre.

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 556573 | Northing: 3844974 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |

Gray, Thomas, House  
Name of Property

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3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

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

Lot 40 of the River Ridge Manor Subdivision of the City of Little Rock. Parcel #43L0380004000.

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

This boundary contains all of the land historically associated with the property.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator  
organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
street & number: 1100 North Street  
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72201  
e-mail: ralph.wilcox@arkansas.gov  
telephone: (501) 324-9787  
date: April 6, 2018

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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.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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### 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

Name of Property: Thomas Gray House

City or Vicinity: Little Rock

County: Pulaski County

State: Arkansas

Photographer: Mason Toms

Date Photographed: January 19, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 21 . View of the southwest façade, driveway, and the carport, looking east from River Valley Road.
- 2 of 21 . View of the driveway, looking west towards River Valley Road.
- 3 of 21 . View of the southwest and southeast façades, looking north.
- 4 of 21 . View of the southeast façade, looking northwest.
- 5 of 21 . View of the northeast façade, looking west.
- 6 of 21 . View of the northeast façade, looking south.
- 7 of 21 . View of the northwest façade, looking southeast.
- 8 of 21 . View of the northwest and southwest façades, looking east.
- 9 of 21 . View of the southwest façade, looking east.
- 10 of 21 . View of the main entrance, looking northeast.

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- 11 of 21 . View of the carport, looking southeast.
- 12 of 21 . View of the carport, looking north.
- 13 of 21 . View of the entrance foyer, looking northwest.
- 14 of 21 . Detail of the recessed lighting in the entrance foyer and living room, looking north.
- 15 of 21 . Detail view of decorative panel in the living room, looking west.
- 16 of 21 . View of the original fireplace in the living room, looking south.
- 17 of 21 . View of the living room, looking east.
- 18 of 21 . View of the built-in furniture in the northwest bedroom, looking north.
- 19 of 21 . View of the built-in furniture in the northeast bedroom, looking west.
- 20 of 21 . View of the northwest bathroom with original tile floor, looking northeast.
- 21 of 21 . View of the stairs, looking southeast.

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**Figure 1:** Historic view of the living room, looking north. Photo c.1964.



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Name of Property

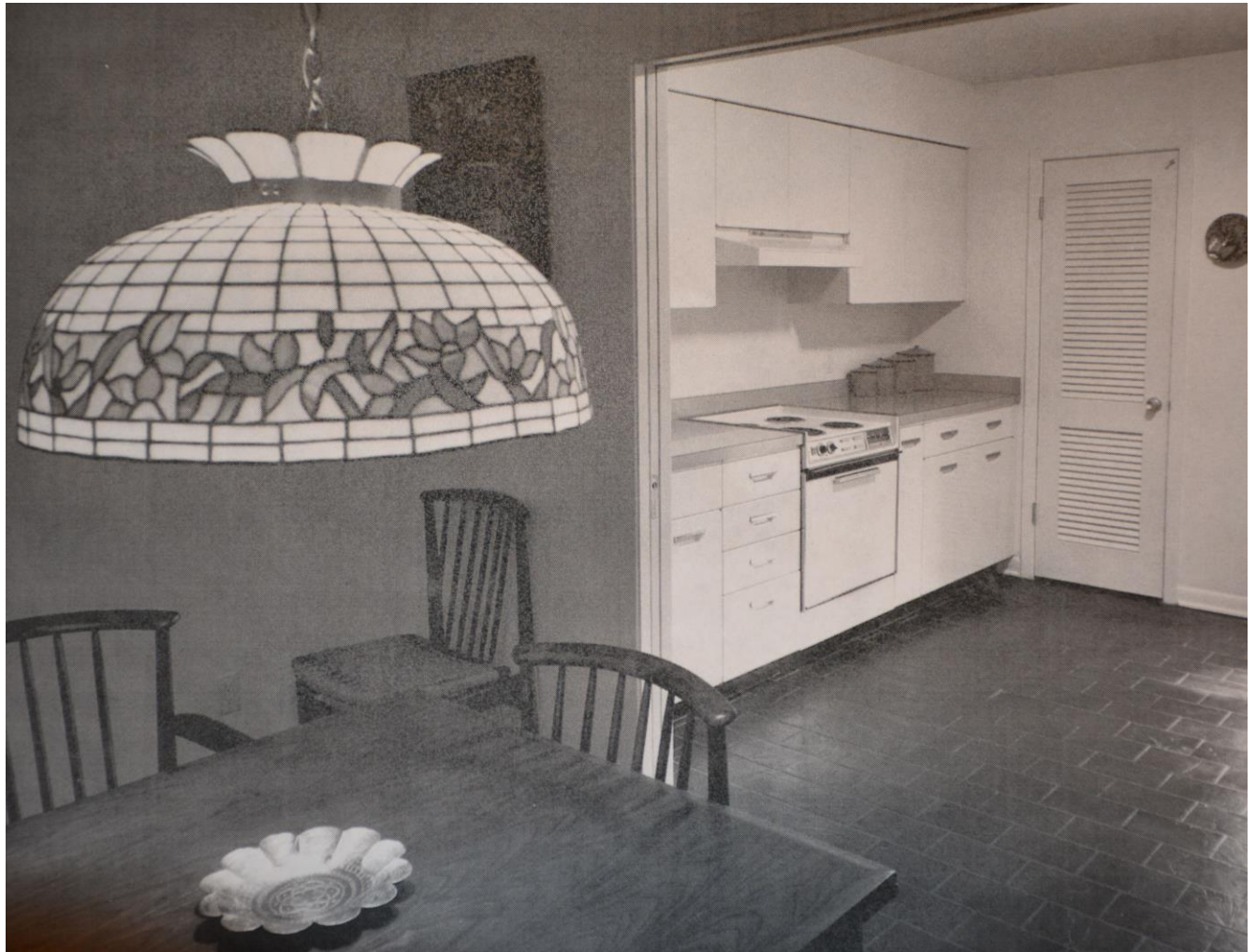
Pulaski County, Arkansas  
County and State



**Figure 2:** Historic view of the dining room and kitchen, looking south. Photo c.1964.

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**Figure 3:** Historic view of the dining room and kitchen, looking east. Photo c.1964.



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**Figure 4:** Historic view of the foyer, stairs, and fireplace, looking northwest. Photo c.1964.

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**Figure 5:** Historic view of the living room, looking west. Photo c.1964.

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Name of Property

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County and State

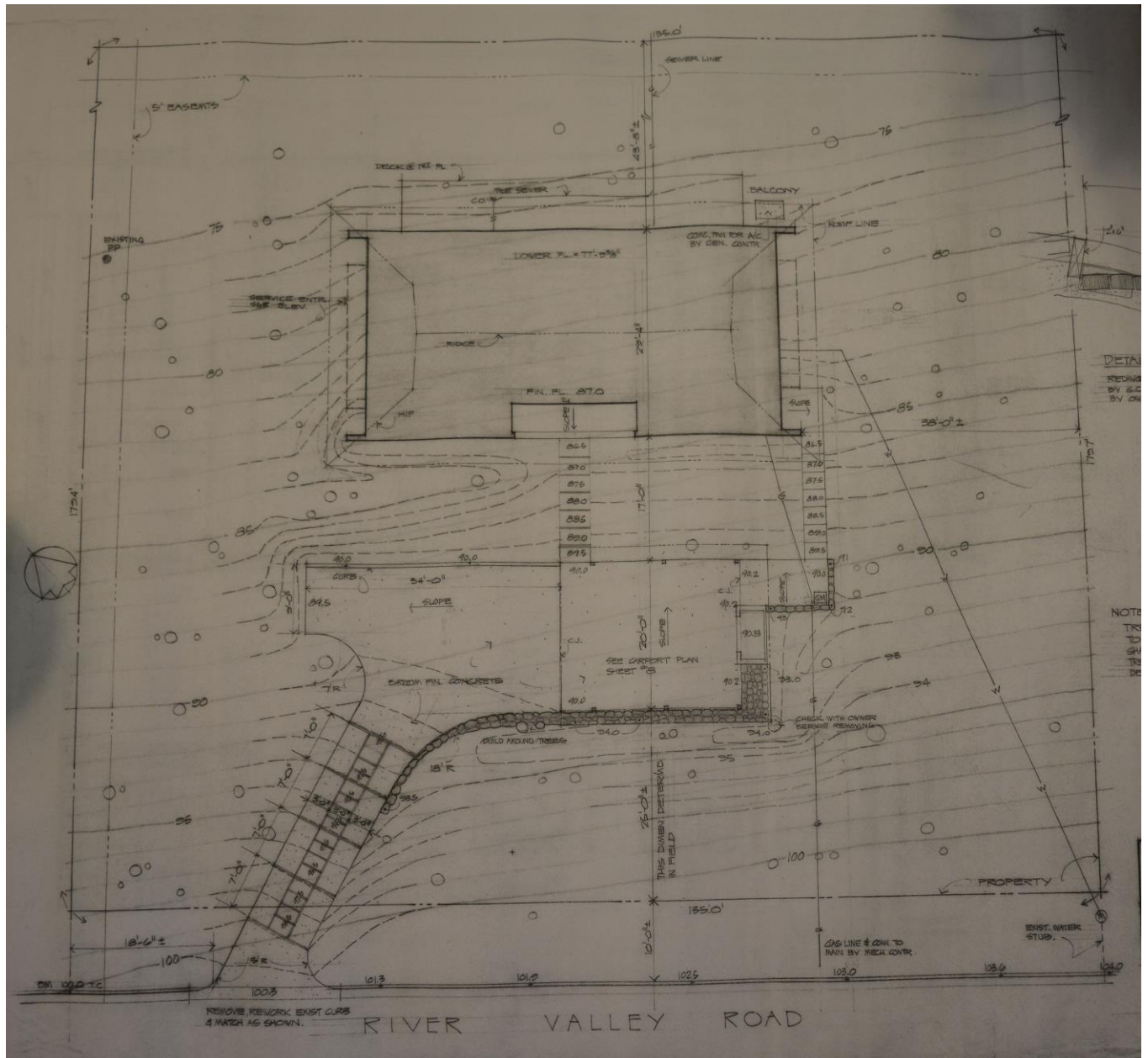


Figure 6: Site plan for the Thomas Gray House, 1963.



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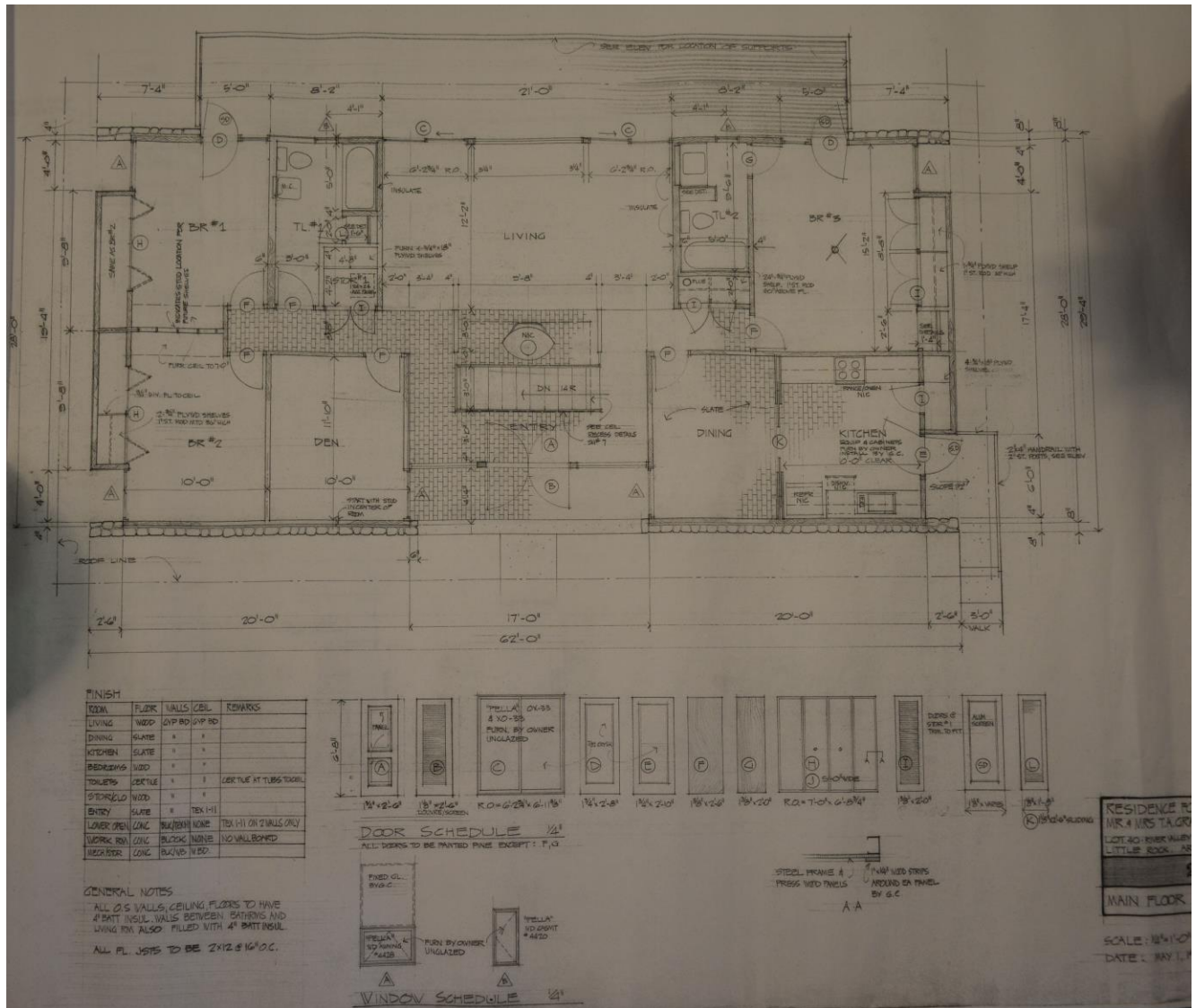


Figure 7: Main Floor plan of the Thomas Gray House, 1963.



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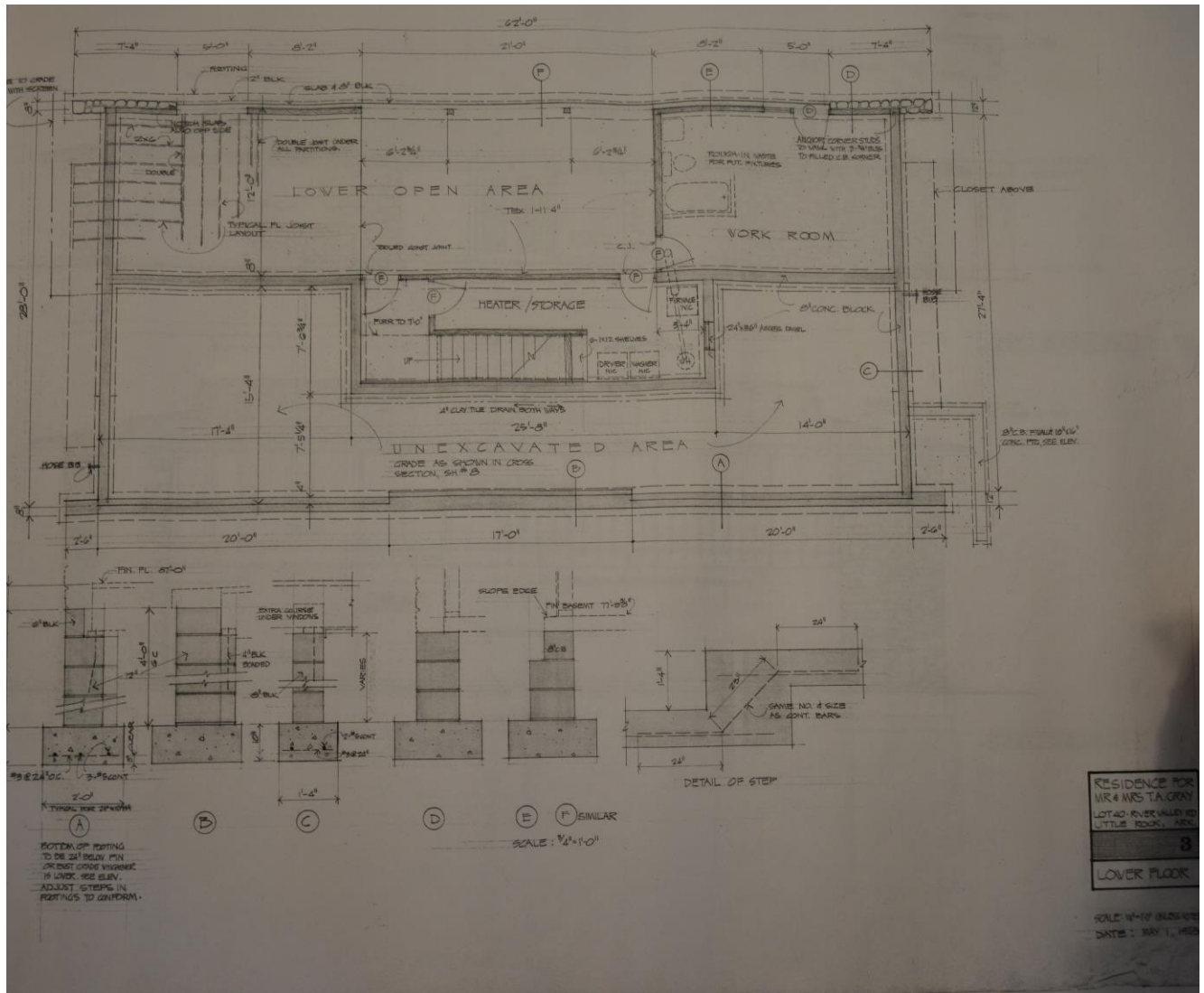


Figure 8: Lower Floor plan of the Thomas Gray House, 1963.

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County and State

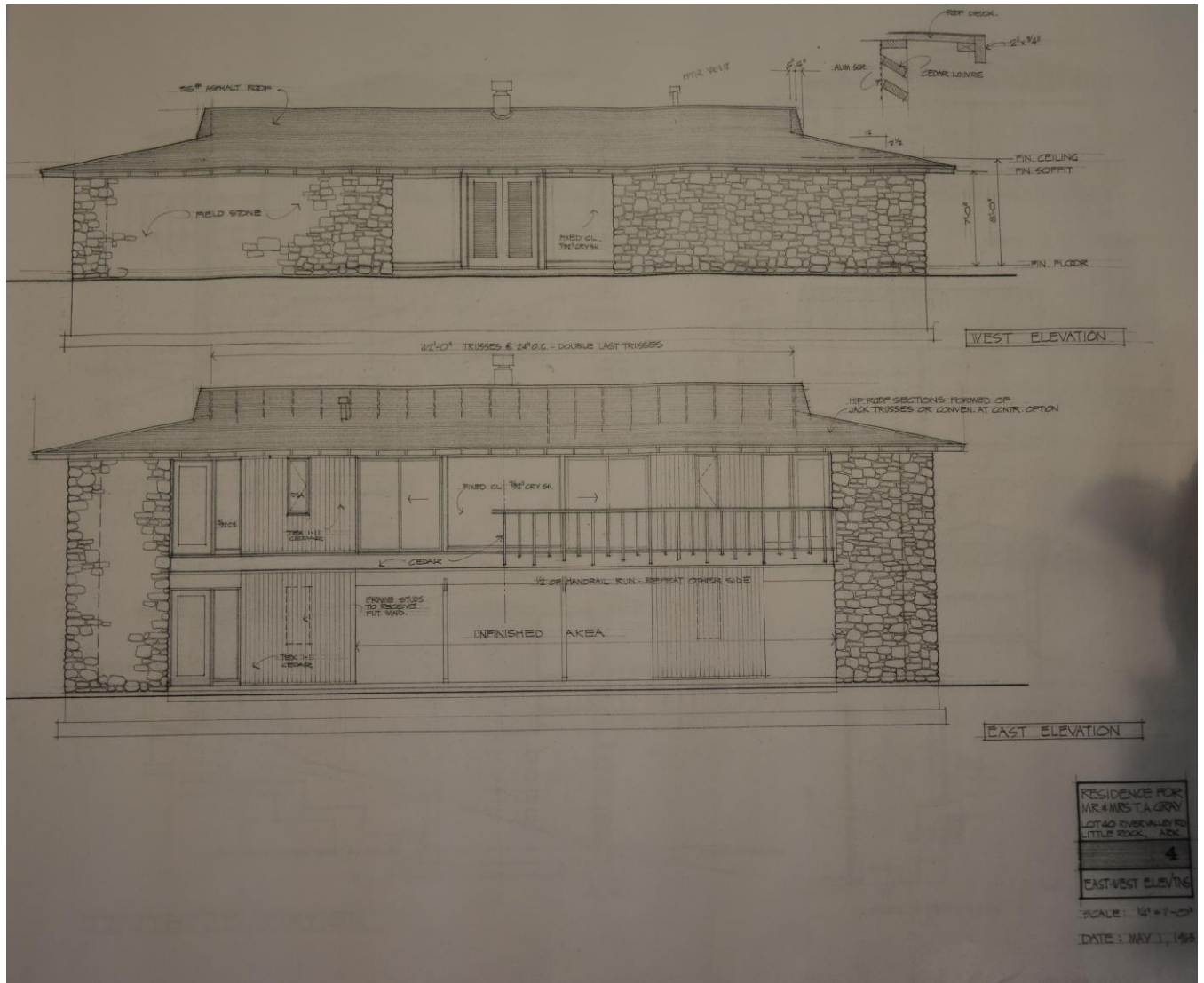


Figure 9: Front and Rear Elevations of the Thomas Gray House, 1963.

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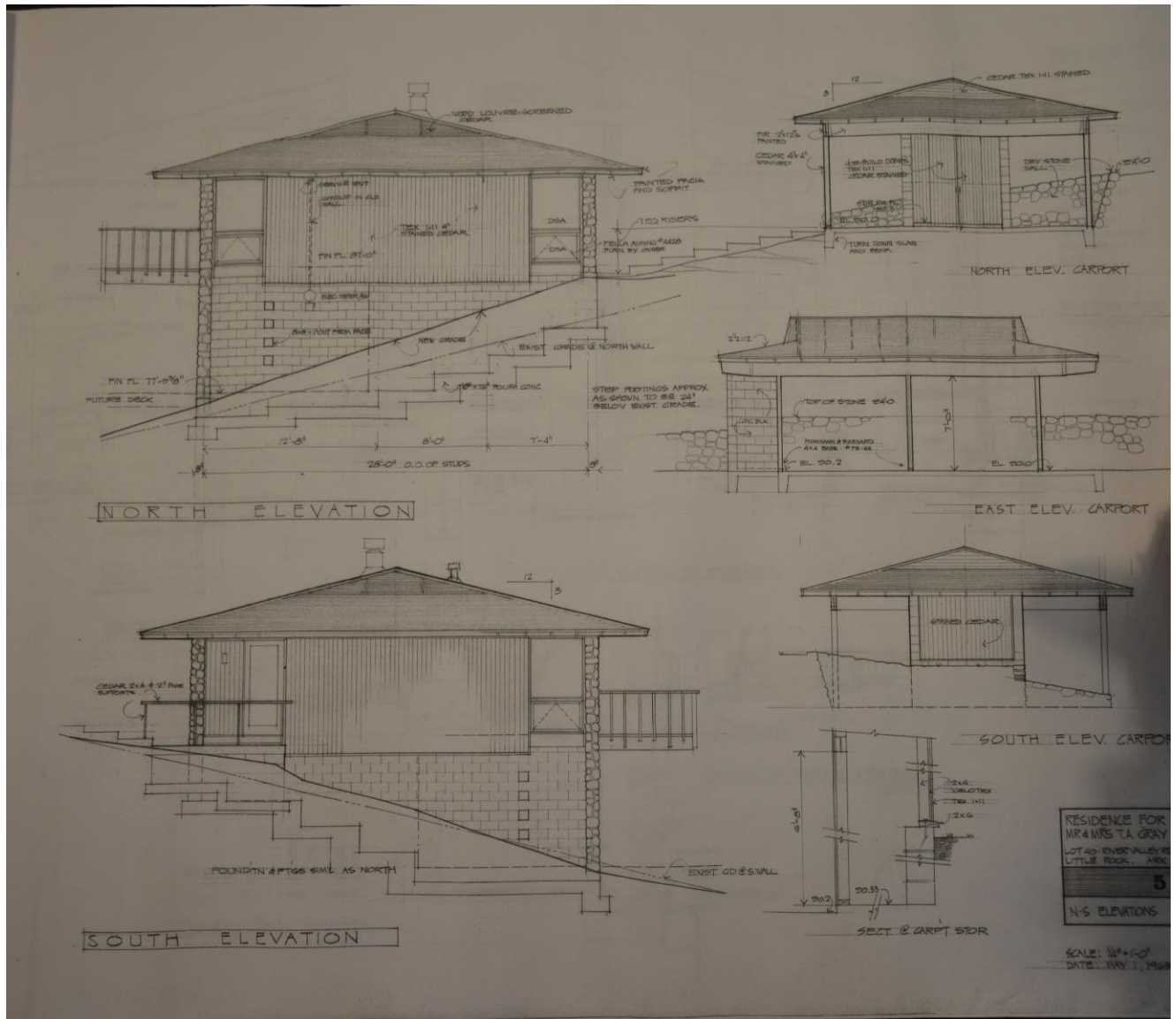


Figure 10: Side Elevations and Carport plan of the Thomas Gray House, 1963.

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County and State

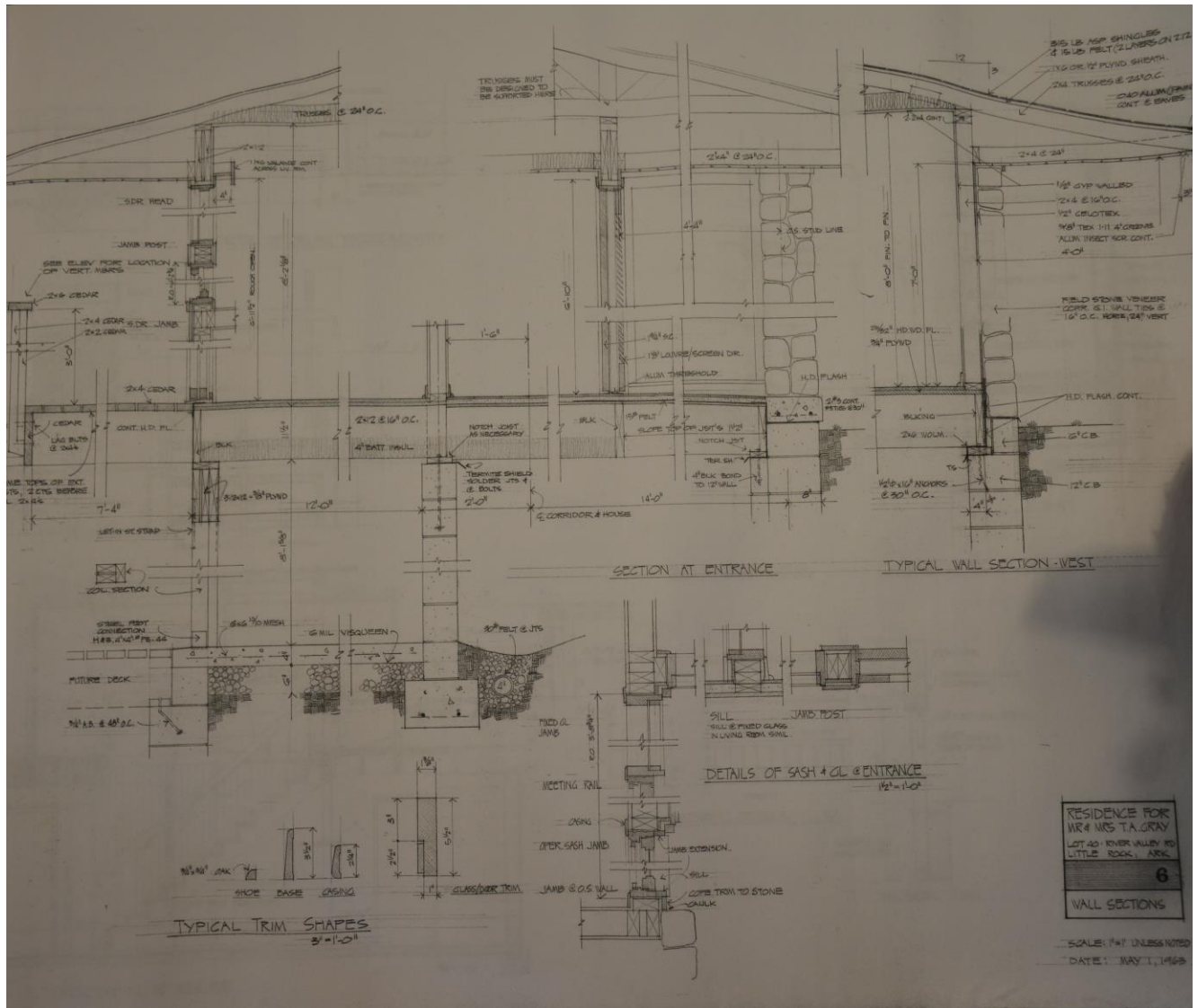


Figure 11: Section drawings of the Thomas Gray House, 1963.



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County and State

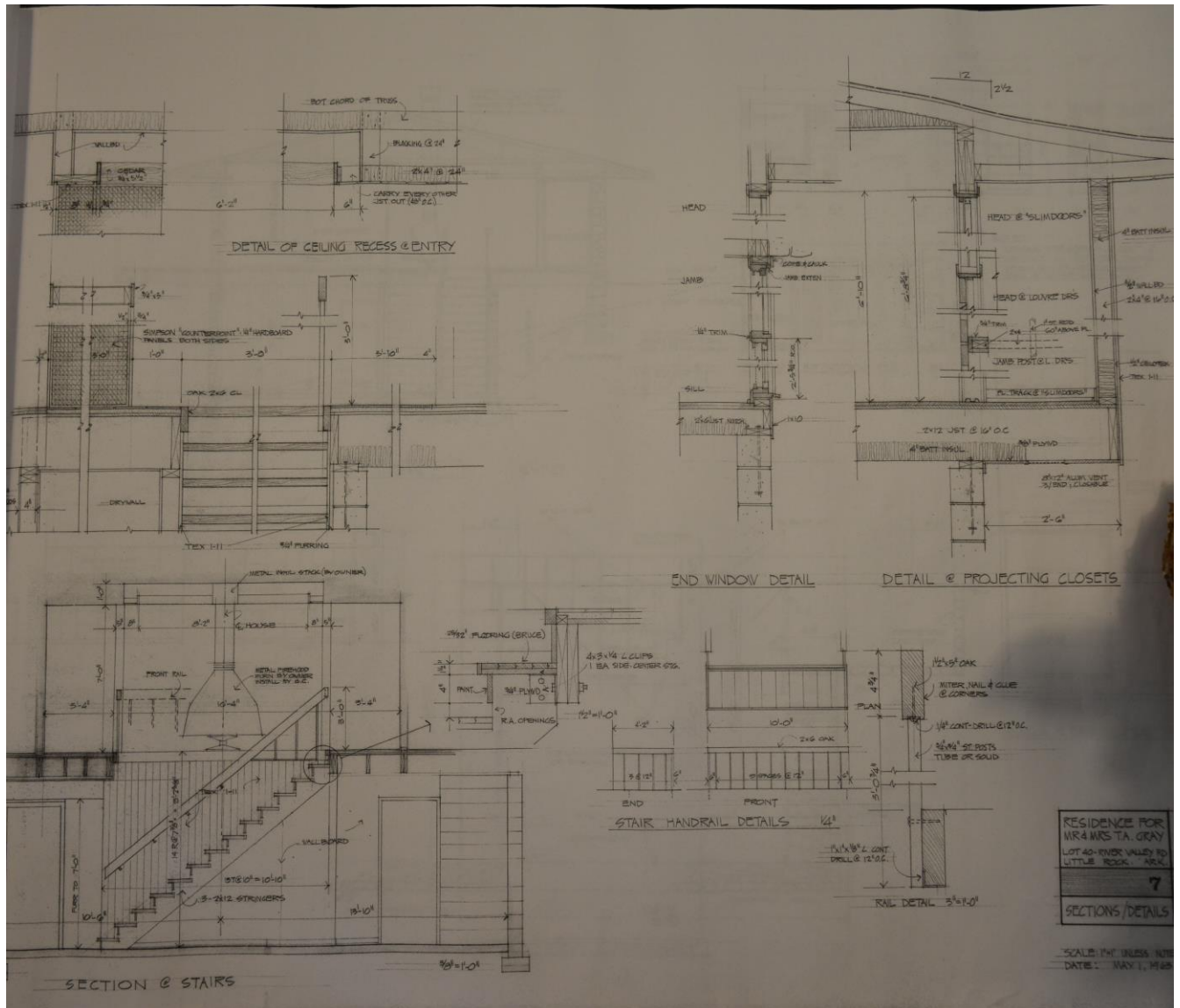


Figure 12: Section and Detail drawings of the Thomas Gray House, 1963.

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Pulaski County, Arkansas  
County and State

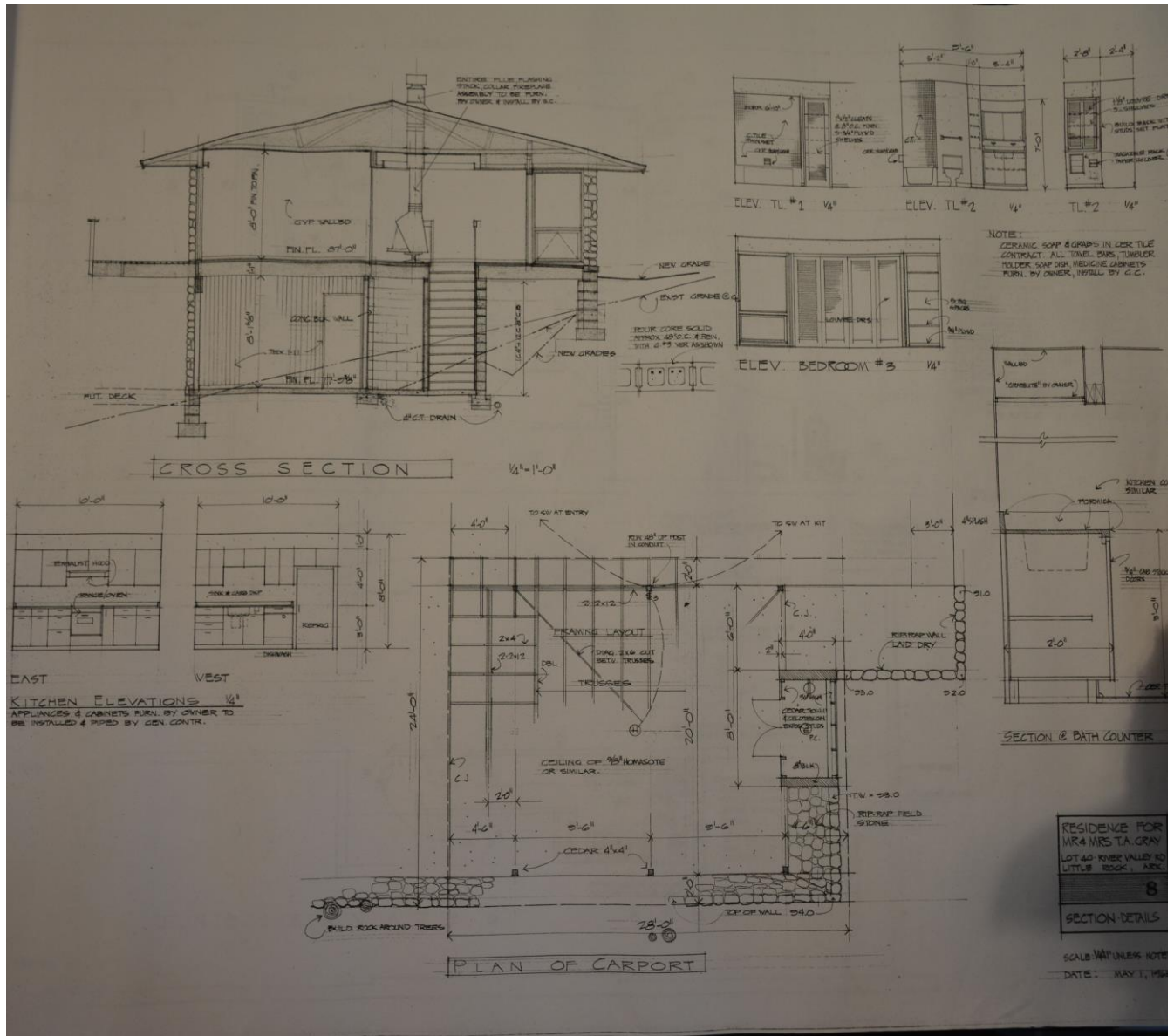


Figure 13: Section, Details, and Carport plans of the Thomas Gray House, 1963.

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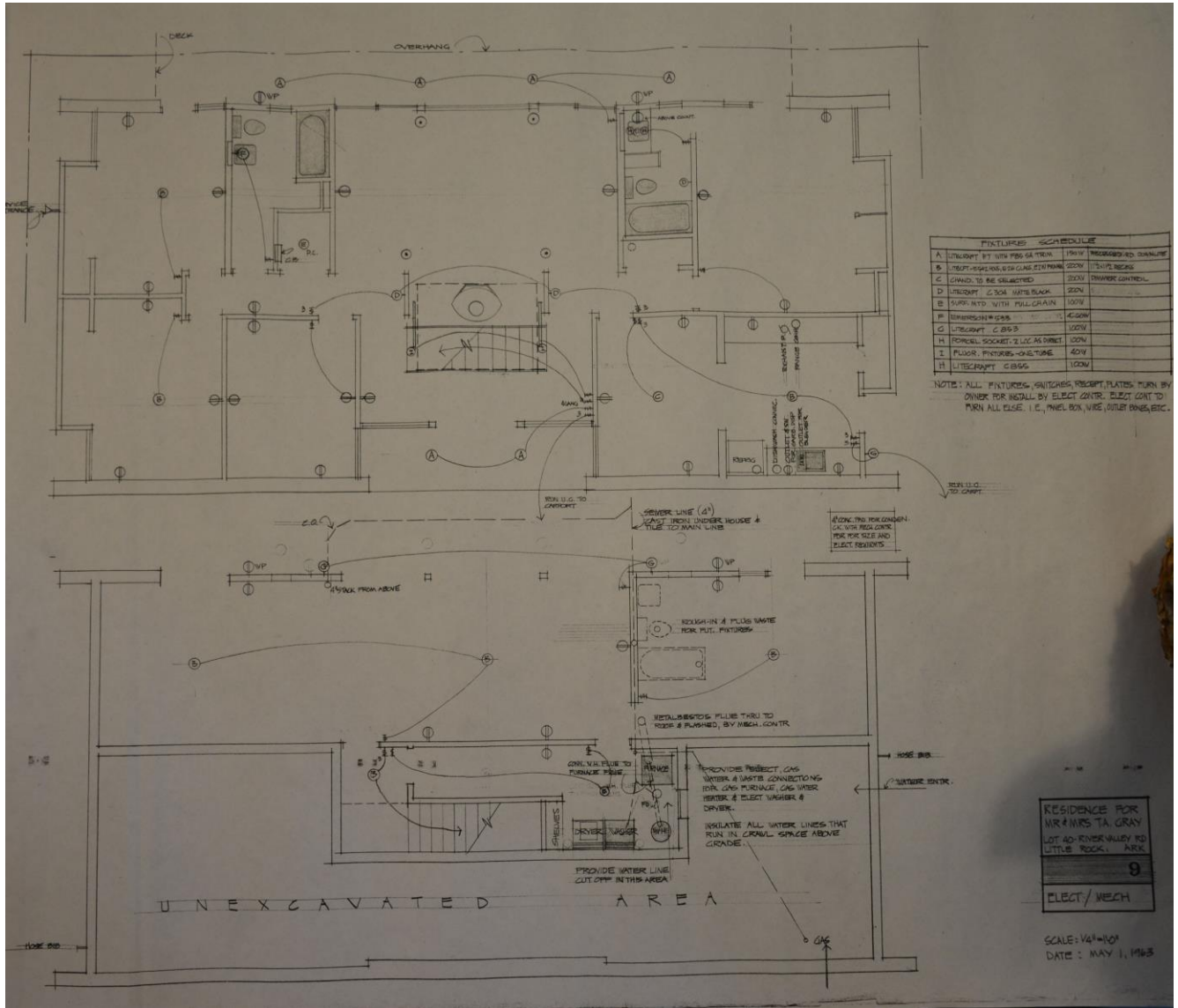


Figure 14: Electrical and Mechanical plan of the Thomas Gray House, 1963.

**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.





|-----192 feet-----|

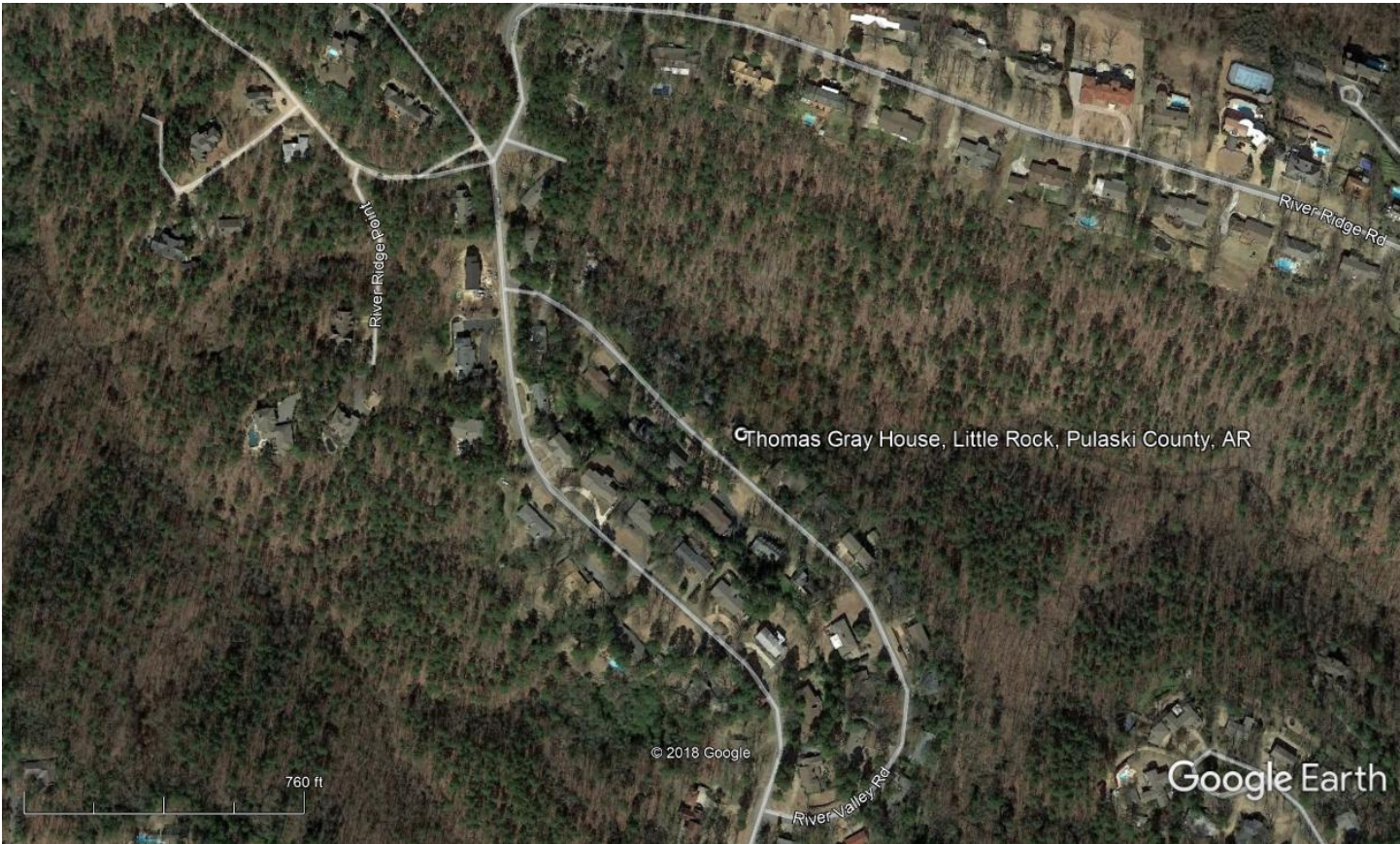
Thomas Gray House  
Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

15 556573E 3844974N



North





|-----760 feet-----|

Thomas Gray House  
Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

15 556573E 3844974N



North





















GENERAC

Ultega

Ultega





















SECURED BY  
**XFINITY**  
Home





















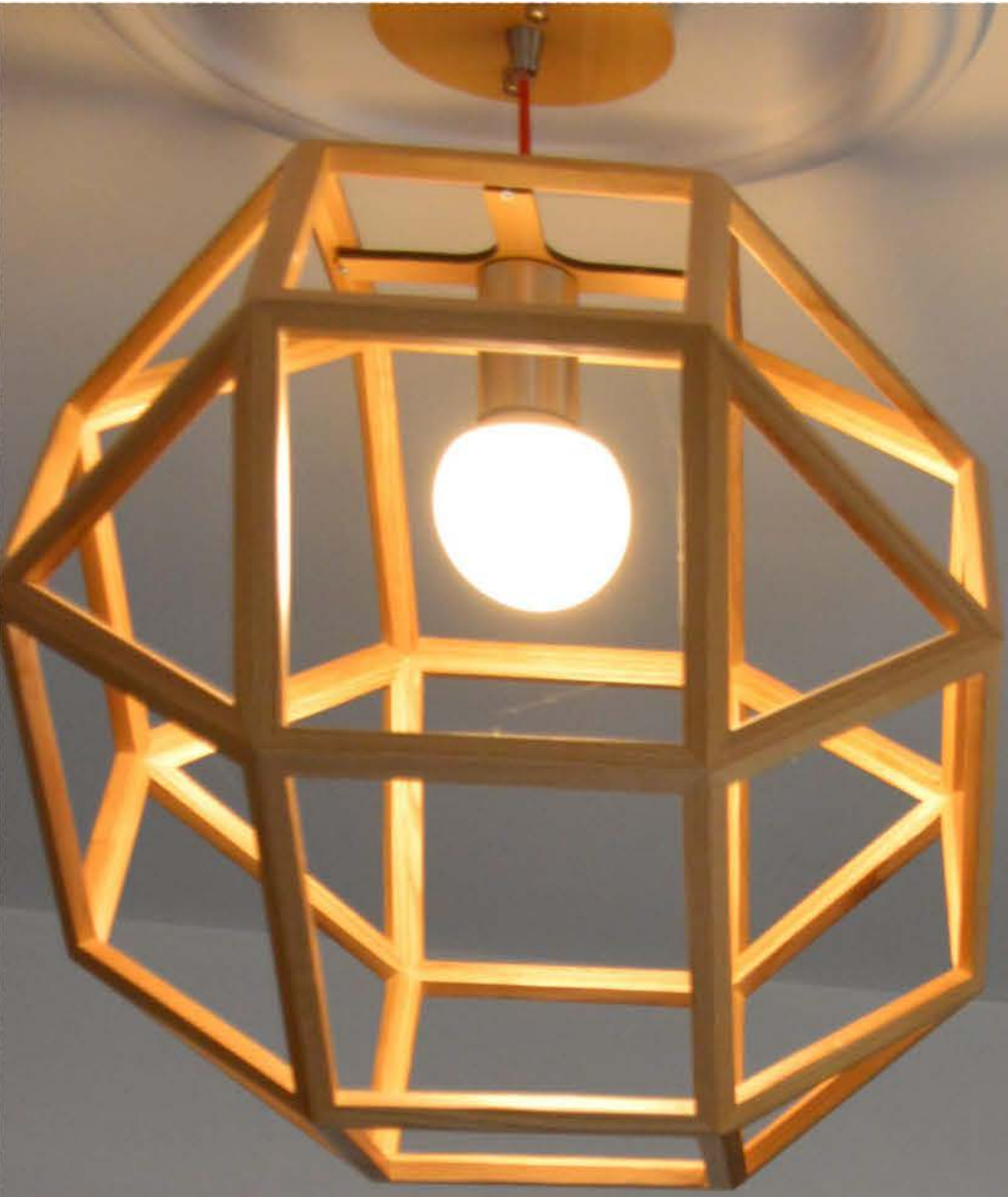


























UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 8/6/2018      Date of Pending List: 8/27/2018      Date of 16th Day: 9/11/2018      Date of 45th Day: 9/20/2018      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL            | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CLG  |   |

Accept       Return       Reject      9/18/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria:

Reviewer Jim Gabbert      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:      see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.





DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

723 West Markham Street  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201-1334  
Phone: (501) 371-4790 Fax:(501) 399-3435  
www.littlerock.gov

RECEIVED 2280  
AUG - 6 2018  
REGISTERED OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS

**CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION REVIEW**

**Name and Address of property:**

Thomas Gray House, 25 River Valley Road, Little Rock, AR 72227

**Name of Owner:**

Marty and Cary Smith

**Project Sponsor:**

Ralph Wilcox, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

**CLG Name:**

City of Little Rock, Arkansas

**Date of Public Hearing by CLG:**

July 9, 2018

**Applicable Criteria:**

Criterion A (Historic Events)

Criterion B (Important Person)


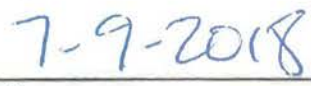
Criterion C (Architecture)

Criterion D (Archaeological)

The Little Rock Historic District Commission hereby recommends the above stated property for nomination.

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary/Staff

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



THE DEPARTMENT OF ARKANSAS  
**HERITAGE**

Asa Hutchinson  
*Governor*

Stacy Hurst  
*Director*

---

Arkansas Arts Council

Arkansas Natural  
Heritage Commission

Arkansas State Archives

Delta Cultural Center

Historic Arkansas Museum

Mosaic Templars  
Cultural Center

Old State House Museum

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August 1, 2018



Joy Beasley, Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street., NW  
Mail Stop 7228  
Washington D.C. 20240

RE: Thomas Gray House – Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

Dear Ms. Beasley:

We are enclosing for your review the above-referenced nomination. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Thomas Gray House to the National Register of Historic Places. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

If you need further information, please call Ralph S. Wilcox of my staff at (501) 324-9787. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Stacy Hurst  
State Historic Preservation Officer

SH:rsw

Enclosure



ARKANSAS HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION PROGRAM



1100 North Street  
Little Rock, AR 72201

(501) 324-9880  
fax: (501) 324-9184  
tdd: 711

e-mail:

[info@arkansaspreservation.org](mailto:info@arkansaspreservation.org)

website:

[www.arkansaspreservation.com](http://www.arkansaspreservation.com)

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