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

OMB No. 1024-0018

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

14716

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: Dr. Burdette and Myrna Gainsforth House

Other names/site number: NeHBS #KH00-096

2. Location

Street & number: 1300 East A Street — Not for publication [ ]

City or town: Ogallala — Vicinity [ ]

State: Nebraska Code: NE County: Keith Code: 101 Zip code: 69153

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: 10/21/02

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

[X] entered in the National Register. — Edson H. Beall 12/5/02
[ ] 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): _____

Signature of Keeper — Date of Action

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
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		Buildings
		Sites
2		Structures
		Objects
4		Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

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.)

OTHER

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete
Walls Redstone
Roof Ceramic Tile
Other

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

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.

_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.

___ **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:

___ **A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

___ **B** Removed from its original location.

___ **C** A birthplace or a grave.

___ **D** A cemetery.

___ **E** A reconstructed building, object, or structure.

___ **F** A commemorative property.

___ **G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1949-1950

Significant Dates
1949 – bomb shelter constructed
1950 – house construction completed

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Dr. Burdette L. Gainsforth – architect (amateur)
Harold Friedman, Lyle Blakeney, Gordon West - builders

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
___ Previously listed in the National Register
___ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark
___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #_____.

Primary location for additional data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local Government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	271781	4557317	3.			
2.				4.			

[ ] 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 continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jill M. Ebers
organization Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office date July 17, 2002
street & number 1420 P Street telephone (402) 471-4773
city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68501-2554

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 location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

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/title Herbert and Charlotte Ruser
street & number 1300 East A Street telephone (308) 284-6905
city or town Ogallala state Nebraska zip code 69153

Narrative Description:

The Dr. Burdette and Myrna Gainsforth House is located on the crest of a hill on the northern border of Ogallala, Nebraska. Ogallala is a city of five thousand citizens, located in Nebraska's western plains, 330 miles from Omaha along Interstate 80. The house is located adjacent to U.S. Highway 26, but the highway is not visible from the property, lying roughly thirty feet below the hill on which the house is located. The house has a view of pasture land on two sides, on the east and the west, so while the house lies within Ogallala's city limits, it feels like it is situated in a distinctly rural setting. In fact, the Gainsforth house has only one other house within its viewshed, just south from its own position on the top of the hill. A subdivision is located to the south of the Gainsforth house, but only the nearest house is visible. The house has a private drive, which is reached by driving through the small subdivision of later ranch houses. To the north, Dr. Gainsforth planted a large number of trees, which protects the house from some of the extremes of weather on Nebraska's plains. The property consists of two buildings, the house and the garage, and two structures, including the tunnel from the garage to the house and the bomb shelter. The period of significance for the Gainsforth property spans 1949 and 1950, the years that encompassed the construction of the garage, tunnel and bomb shelter in 1949 and the remainder of the house in 1950.

This ranch style residence is a V-shaped, one story structure with a green ceramic tile hipped and gabled roof. There is a small stuccoed second-story projection on the roof that faces the back patio. It has an octagonal window facing north, and terminates at the chimney. While it looks like an oddly shaped dormer, it actually houses a combination heat pump and three-ton capacity air conditioning system. The projection originally housed only a four-foot fan, which was used to bring fresh air into the house through vents strategically placed around the perimeter of the house, which is still almost the only way to allow fresh air into the house. Around 1970, the air conditioner and heat pump were added. The hipped portions of the roof on either arm of the V shape terminate in a gable near the chimney. The living room, then, has its own roof that is several feet lower than the other portions of the roof. The end gables are faced with vertically aligned logs, which were left in the round and cut in half, with the flat portions attached to the gabled surface. This treatment gives the gable a rustic, beveled appearance, and was mimicked in the exterior walls of a small sunroom addition on the back patio. The roof itself is low-pitched with wide overhanging eaves. In keeping with the ranch style, its low and wide roof is meant to make the house visually submissive to the landscape around it.

The house has a concrete foundation and Colorado redstone veneer. The entire patio is made of large flat pieces of redstone, laid in round terraces of several levels. A stone water fountain sits near the front entrance. On the north side of the house, the back patio is also largely made of redstone set in concrete. The back patio was designed with entertaining in mind, with an L-shaped redstone barbeque, fueled by natural gas, that is said to be able to cook fourteen steaks at once, as well as an upper level further from the flames for keeping food warm. Nearby, there is also an underground smoker. Though it most closely resembles a cistern with an iron lid, the charcoal residue and grill for holding meat make it clear that its purpose had little to do with water. A "porch" swing is set into cement nearby.

The façade contains an off-center entrance with steps leading up to the door, as well as a handicap ramp of redstone. The door is flanked on the right by a curved wall of glass block under the wide overhang of the roof. There are liberal amounts of glass block used throughout the house, including an identical curved wall on the opposite side of the "V" and located in the bathroom, as well as a horizontal strip of them located under the kitchen window. There are also small sections of glass block on the interior of the V shape, located in the half bath and the stairwell. The majority of the windows are fixed picture windows, excluding windows in the kitchen and the sunroom, which are either double hung or

casement windows. Functioning windows were limited to places where fresh air might be desired: in the kitchen to help air out cooking aromas and the sunroom, which is designed to be neither strictly "inside" nor "outside". The rest of the windows were fixed, to best take advantage of the state of the art air conditioning system that was mounted on the roof. A large arced chimney is found at the bottom of the V shape. The southern portion of the chimney is rounded, while the northern side is flat.

Upon entering the house by the front door, one finds oneself in a small front vestibule with a coat closet on the left and on the right a frosted window into the dining room. The dining room has a pass-through mahogany buffet on the northeast wall of the room, which allows for the service of food directly from the kitchen, without having to walk through the swinging door. The buffet was designed and built by Dr. Gainsforth himself. The buffet has a rotary silverware drawer, which provides access to the silver from both the kitchen and the dining room. Sliding glass doors are located on the top of the buffet, which allowed china to be accessed from either room, and allowed natural light from the kitchen into the dining room. Wood and glass doors on the bottom also provided for more china storage. The dining room also has a built-in bookshelf.

Through the swinging door, one finds and all-purpose utility kitchen, with an electric range, refrigerator, deep freeze, Bendix clothes washer and dryer and commercial Mangle iron which operated on rollers. Dr. Gainsforth built all the cabinetry himself. His wife, Myrna, is said to be rather petite in stature, so he designed the counters to be lower in height than is standard for her convenience. He also built in a little cabinet that housed a small foot-sized step in order for her to reach the taller cabinets above.

The living room is located to the right of the front door, in the bottom of the V shape. The living room ceiling has a pull-down set of stairs, which lead to the electric furnace and air conditioning system above. The fireplace is located at the very bottom of the V shape, and is faced with more redstone veneer. The living room has two large fixed picture windows. They are made of reflective one-way glass in order to better practice birdwatching, another of Dr. and Mrs. Gainsforth's hobbies. There are additional built-in bookshelves in the living room.

The hallway to the bedrooms and master bath contains a large mahogany built-in linen closet. It opens to reveal space for storing tablecloths and bedding, but also a large hanging space for storing draperies. Again, Dr. Gainsforth did the woodworking, including the handcarved door pulls. The master bath has a shower and a bathtub, and the curved wall of glass block. The master bedroom is located at the end of the hall. It was formerly two smaller bedrooms, but has since had one wall removed in order to make one larger room. There are two large closets, and Dr. Gainsforth, amateur inventor and electrician, rigged the lights in the closets to come on whenever the door was opened.

Two sets of stairs lead to the basement: one set of stairs is located just off the kitchen and another is found in the livingroom. Doors at each set of stairs close off the basement from the upstairs. At the bottom of both sets of stairs is the rumpus room. It is finished completely in knotty pine, with built-in cabinets around the perimeter, counters and a bar. Behind the bar is a combination bar-pantry and darkroom, one of two darkrooms in the house. A fireplace is found on the south corner, directly underneath the living room fireplace. Two other bedrooms are located under the upstairs bedrooms. These bedrooms were designed for the children, and included built-in elements that were just their size. One bedroom had a wall of cabinets and a vanity with a mirror built into the wall. The room also had a built-in curved bookshelf. For the other, Dr. Gainsforth built an elevated bed of knotty pine. One end of the bed held the steps for climbing into bed, as well as a modest closet. Underneath the bed was a pull-out cabinet that was used to store toys and games, but could be pushed back under the bed when it was not needed. The room also has an oven timer built into the wall, an interesting attempt at time management of some sort.

At the opposite end of the basement under the kitchen, Dr. Gainsforth built himself a hobby room. It was originally a lab and a manufacturing area for his various hobbies. The room has built-in workbenches and shelves. It also holds one of Dr. Gainsforth's inventions, a spring-loaded electrical outlet, which required the user to put the plug in halfway, twist, and push the plug in the rest of the way. This area also houses the furnace room, which is one of two furnaces in the house. The furnace room also held the second of two darkrooms. Both Dr. and Mrs. Gainsforth enjoyed photography, but apparently felt it was important to maintain separate work spaces.

Just off the hobby room, Dr. Gainsforth designed a tunnel, which would come to serve two purposes. The tunnel led to the garage, located roughly sixty feet east of the house. The tunnel also housed a bomb shelter of Dr. Gainsforth's own design. The tunnel itself is sixty feet long and five feet wide. It has a ceiling that is made of curved concrete one inch thick, with at least a foot of dirt above. The tunnel and the bomb shelter both have vents for fresh air. The bomb shelter is perhaps ten feet by eight feet wide. The shelter's ceiling is eighteen-inch thick concrete, and is covered with even more dirt. The shelter originally had running water from a well just outside the garage, and a sink and a toilet. There were shelves for storage of food and supplies, and several chairs. Once inside, one would lock themselves in behind a steel door. In the event that the tunnel would collapse on both ends, there were escape hatches that could be jacked out in order to escape the shelter. The bomb shelter is currently being used as a pantry, after the addition of several new sets of shelves. Just inside the bomb shelter and above the lintel over the door, Dr. Gainsforth etched the date 1949 into the concrete.

The contributing garage is located at the end of the tunnel. The original portion of the garage is banked into the side of the hill below the house. This structure was built before the house and was used as a residence for a short time by the Gainsforth family while the house was under construction. The car would have been parked underneath, and an apartment was built upstairs. The building is wood frame and stucco, with double swinging doors. One solitary double hung window is located on the east side of the garage. After the family moved in to the main house, it was used as a garage for smaller vehicles and for storage. In 1999, an addition was built attached to the existing garage. It is now a tandem garage, two cars deep and wide. The addition was constructed of corrugated metal siding. The garage has functioning shutters for both the fixed picture window and the door. The lower portion of the garage has been altered slightly to enclose one car-length of the lower garage, creating a craft room for the current owner. The garage addition sits below the house on the far side of the garage, and is not visible from the house.

A pump room is located on the west side of the garage, and it houses all three of the property's water supplies. The house is hooked up to the city water supply, but also has its own well with a 1950 gearhead and electric motor-driven pump. Later, an electric submersible pump was also added. The property has four 100-gallon pressure tanks, allowing the property to maintain a large supply of fresh water. The underground well room has elaborate water piping and electric service, all designed by Dr. Gainsforth.

The only other modern alteration is a new sunroom, added in 2000. The sunroom measures twenty by thirteen feet, and is woodframe with half logs providing the exterior finish, painted white, mimicking the end gables at the front of the house. The sunroom encompasses a set of stone steps that once led out of the house and onto the patio. It has a plate glass door to the patio and a stained glass window. Interior wood panels were set diagonal on the lower portions of one of the walls, with double hung windows above. The other wall is mainly made up of floor to ceiling windows and a door. There are three skylights built into the ceiling of a shed roof. The room allows for a great deal of natural sunlight, and allows one the pleasure of sitting indoors while appreciating nature without having to be out in nature. Though the sunroom represents an addition that was not originally part of Dr. Gainsforth's plan for the house, it is in keeping with his design for the dwelling and is compatible with elements found elsewhere in his design. It also adheres to the ranch style's ideal of

bringing nature directly into the house through an area of transition. It is, therefore, a compatible addition to the house, and is not intrusive to the house's design.

The property includes a number of minor objects, such as lawn art, that have been added to the site well after its period of significance. There is also a large thirty-foot steel windmill tower is located north of the garage. Dr. Gainsforth used it as a point to position his Citizen Band Radio equipment.

The two acres upon which the house and garage sit is elaborately landscaped with many mature trees and bushes. Dr. Gainsforth also enjoyed horticulture, and landscaped the area himself. He is said to have planted seventy large pine trees, as well as some Russian olive, elm, birch, locust, cottonwood, spruce, willow, maple, ash, cherry, plum and cedar trees, all of which would have made a nice environment for a variety of birds, allowing him the pleasure of indulging in another hobby, birdwatching. He surrounded the house in foliage as well, some pine and cedar, as well as shrubbery, including spirea, lilac, hackberry, honeysuckle, grapes, roses, climbing vines, barberry and holly.

The Dr. Burdette and Myrna Gainsforth house is a lovely example of a 1950s ranch style house, with an extensive one-story layout, a low-pitched roof and wide overhanging eaves. It has two patios, front and back, for outdoor entertaining and the enjoyment of nature. Its low silhouette and natural building materials blend into the landscape. Although there have been several alterations to the property over the past few years, overall, the integrity of the Gainsforth house remains very intact. The property includes two buildings, the house and the garage, as well as two structures, including the tunnel between the house and the garage and the bomb shelter.

After World War II, ranch style houses emerged as the most preeminent residential building style in America. As the first new residential building style following the austerity of the Great Depression of the 1930s and wartime rationing of the early 1940s, ranch houses represented consumerism and a blossoming post-war economy. A commentator on changes in housing stated in 1956, "To the Average Family...the changes in housing over the last three decades would add up to something like this: thirty years ago they somehow had to fit themselves into the house, now the house is planned to fit them."[1] Dr. Burdette L. Gainsforth's house is a typical, and yet unique, example of an early 1950s ranch style residence. Although the layout for the house was Gainsforth's own design and was drawn in order to suit his family's needs perfectly, the design of the house adheres to the ideals of the ranch style as well.

In order to understand the impact of ranch style houses on American architecture, one must first explore the ways in which the style was a departure from the housing styles that immediately predate it. Very little residential housing construction took place during the lean years of the Great Depression of the 1930s or during the war years of the early 1940s due to the need to conserve building materials for use in the war effort. Between approximately 1905 and the late 1920s, the dominant building style for residential houses was the bungalow. Though bungalows varied widely in their design details, the inspiration for the bungalow, and later for the ranch as well, was remotely derived from the prairie style houses of Frank Lloyd Wright.[2] Both styles had low pitched roofs and wide overhanging heaves, ideally making the house blend into the landscape around it. Bungalows and ranch houses were supposed to appear to be submissive to nature.

The bungalow as a new concept in architecture contrasted the ideals of the typical Victorian home; it was simple, informal and efficient. The bungalow represented the ideals of the Progressive era, which emphasized modernity, efficiency and cleanliness. A new spate of "experts" touted the values of a well-run and organized kitchen, as well as the newest methods of childrearing and home decoration in order to achieve the highest levels of neatness and healthfulness in Progressive families. These ideals were made manifest in the bungalow itself.

Bungalows were modern, and had simple, informal rooms that were designed to use the space well. Efficiency experts, architects and social reformers developed a general concept of design of the ideal bungalow. Bungalows should have low-pitched roofs, often connected in an unbroken line to a spacious full-width porch. The front porch was an important feature of the bungalow, as it tied the house directly into the world of nature.[3] Wide overhanging eaves were intended to shade the windows and keep the house cool. The bungalow was built of rough, natural materials that visually blended the house into the natural contours and textures of its site. On the interior, the layout of the rooms was intended to be simple and efficient, with rooms completely fulfilling the purposes for which they were intended. There were no wasted spaces in the bungalow. Little furniture was needed, because the designs often included built-in elements that served as storage. The modest, compact rooms of the bungalow interior reflected the attitudes of the middle class toward home and family, and how they had changed from the ideals of the Victorian era. Children were no longer meant to be hidden away in nurseries with servants. Children were supposed to roam the household, playing where they wished, inside and outside, under the close supervision of an attentive mother.[4]

In several ways, the ideals of the bungalow and the ranch house were extremely similar, even though these ideals were interpreted architecturally in extremely different ways. While the ranch house also exhibited a low-pitched roof and wide overhanging eaves in order to visually blend with the landscape, the ranch house typically abandoned the front porch as its transitional space with nature. The ranch house included a patio space, which is where the 1950s household brought

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[1] Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home: 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 216.
[2] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.), 240.
[3] Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home: 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 173.
[4] Clark, 181.

indoor living outside. Since the ranch house is designed to be one floor, built in a sprawling design that emphasized spaciousness, the broad patio laying flush to the ground created a transitional space. The patio was meant to create a sense of continuity or flow between the indoors and outdoors. Dr. Gainsforth's house accomplishes this with two patios. The front patio is terraced, with comfortable spaces for seating under the spreading arms of a locust tree, with a lovely view of rolling hills of pastureland to the west. The back patio was the one that was truly intended for entertainment. There is a swing permanently sent into the concrete of the patio, as well as a stone barbeque and smoker for cooking outside. The back patio is protected from the northern winds and weather by a stand of pine trees, and guides the eye to the pastureland east of the house.

Ranch houses also tended to favor a stylized version of nature. The ranch house ideal was not necessarily an appreciation of all that nature had to offer; it valued a unity between home and a tamed nature that was manipulated by the homeowner. The low silhouette of the ranch house led to the use of miniature trees, such as Russian olives, which Dr. Gainsforth used extensively in his landscaping. Miniature trees tended to not overwhelm the architecture. Ranch houses also typically sat on large lots, with expansive grounds of perfectly manicured lawns. Dr. Gainsforth complied with the ideal in this as well, siting his house on two acres of perfectly maintained lawn. Dr. Gainsforth was an amateur horticulturist, and planned the landscaping around his home himself. He planted seventy large pine trees, as well as Russian olive, elm, birch, locust, cottonwood, spruce, willow, maple, ash, cherry, plum and cedar trees, all of which would have made a nice environment for a variety of birds, allowing him the pleasure of indulging in birdwatching. He surrounded the house in foliage as well, some pine and cedar, as well as shrubbery, including spirea, lilac, hackberry, honeysuckle, grapes, roses, climbing vines, barberry and holly. The ranch style house also incorporated nature into the house through the extensive use of picture windows, which allowed the outdoors to become your decoration. The Gainsforths particularly enjoyed birdwatching, and installed one-way glass windows in the living room in order to draw the birds in more closely.

In the bungalow, interior rooms were small, close together and well organized in order to emphasize efficiency in the family. While the Victorian ideal that predated the bungalow espoused a separation between public and private spaces in a house, the bungalow gave each room a distinct purpose and threw wide the doors. The ranch house again divided the house into three zones of activity: the housework center, the area for living activities, and the private areas for bedrooms and baths. The Gainsforth house demonstrates this trend perfectly. The V-shape of the house lends itself very well to three quadrants of activity. The kitchen housed the equipment for running the household, including refrigerator, deep freeze, electric range, Bendix washer and dryer, and a commercial Mangle roller iron. The living room and dining room, with the rumpus room directly below, allowed space for family activities to take place. When the children were busy playing loudly in the rumpus room, the doors to the downstairs could be shut to keep other living spaces quiet. The bedrooms, or private zone, were located on the western arm of the V.

While in the bungalow, rooms were designed for a specific purpose, the ranch style stressed open spaces that could be used for various purposes, according to the activities and desires of the family. *Sunset* Magazine once stated that the ranch house was not so much a style as an "approach to living."[5] In partial fulfillment of that goal, Gainsforth designed, and built himself, many built-in elements that would eliminate the need for extra storage furniture and would keep the floor plans open and free of hindrances to any activity. One of the bedrooms in the basement includes an elevated bed made of knotty pine, that also housed a small closet in one end, and a dresser or toy chest which could be stowed underneath, tidily keeping the floor space free for childish activity. New experts in childrearing, such as Dr. Spock, advocated large open spaces for the free play of children, all under the supervision of the mother. These rooms, and wide-open spaces in the yard, were amply available in the Gainsforth house.

[5] Clark, 211.

Dr. Gainsforth's ranch house differed from the average ranch style house in one way in particular. While Dr. Gainsforth went to the effort to design his house according to the specific desires of his family, most ranch style houses were built using standard plans and forms. The spaces within the ranch house were variable, since they were based on the ideal of changeable, multi-purpose rooms, but the basic designs were often quite common. Many of the ranch houses were built in new subdivisions and were often built on speculation by one builder, and as a result looked much like the house next door or one block away. Dr. Gainsforth's house is an original design with elements that his family, with their own particular hobbies, found essential.

The ranch style house highlighted a new image of 1950s family life. The new family life ideal was a comfortable existence, which stressed the joys of consumption and new post-war prosperity. Consumption and prosperity were made tangible in the sprawling designs of ranch houses built on large expansive lots. But the 1950s and 1960s were also years of unprecedented fear and apprehension following the dramatic conclusion of World War II with the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945. The dawning of the atomic age, and the proof of the vicious effectiveness of this new weapon, sullied the unsteady peace that followed the war. Edward R. Murrow, an American radio reporter commented at the time, "Seldom if ever has a war ended leaving the victors with such a sense of uncertainty and fear, with such a realization that the future is obscure and that survival is not assured."[6] The Cold War began as World War II ended, when President Harry S. Truman determined that the United States and Great Britain should be the sole guardians of the secret of atomic power. For the next several years, the bomb was used as a diplomatic tool and an ace in the hole, resulting in great tension between remaining superpowers, most notably the U.S.S.R., a former ally of the United States who was left out of the atomic loop. American hegemony over the bomb ended in 1949, with the Soviet detonation of its own nuclear weapon, and it quickly became clear that the weapon that had once symbolized American power was out in the open and could be detonated over American soil at any time with little warning.

The resulting paranoia caused a small flurry of underground shelter construction, and the bomb shelter became a popular home improvement project. President John F. Kennedy caused another flood of bomb shelter construction in 1961, when, in a letter to the American public published in LIFE magazine, he announced that nuclear war was a distinct possibility in the near future and urged Americans to prepare to save their families as best they could.[7]

> *The security of our country and the peace of the world are the objectives of our policy. But in these dangerous days when both these objectives are threatened we must prepare for all eventualities. The ability to survive coupled with the will to do so therefore are essential to our country.*[8]

Between 1949 and 1962, the Cold War's most tension-ridden years, approximately 200,000 bomb shelters were constructed in the United States.[9] Dr. Gainsforth was among the first to seek to protect his family from the horrors of nuclear war.

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[6] "The Atomic Age: From Fission to Fallout," *Cold War Experience: The Bomb.* http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/experience/the.bomb/history.science. Viewed 25 July 2002.

[7] "Preparing for Doomsday: A Year Before Cuban Crisis, JFK Urged Protection from Fallout," *Cold War Experience: The Bomb.* http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/experience/the.bomb/jfk.essay/. Viewed 25 July 2002.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Bruce Watson, "Fallout Shelters: Fossils of the Atomic Age." Smithsonian (April 1994): 47.

Dr. Gainsforth designed and built the bomb shelter himself in 1949, and made certain that it was going to be sufficient for his family's needs. He built it underground, and made it accessible only from the tunnel between the house and the garage, though there were some places in the wall that could be punched out for escape in case both ends of the tunnel should collapse. Bomb shelter proponents at the time warned that a bomb shelter should be constructed in secret, with an entrance that was hidden from view and a heavy metal door that could be locked from the inside. Most feared that in a time of crisis, neighbors would come looking for a safe haven and swamp the proverbial lifeboat. It is not certain that Dr. Gainsforth followed this line of reasoning, but the bomb shelter was built in a hidden location. Civil Defense pamphlets recommended that a bomb shelter contain canned food for at least a week, and bottled water supplies for at least two weeks. Dr. Gainsforth stocked his shelter with food, and included some creature comforts, including indoor plumbing with water from the well nearby. The effects of radiation on food, water supplies, and a person's health were still largely unknown. It was unclear to most people how far radioactive contamination would spread, and he no doubt felt his underground water supply would remain clean.

The Burdette L. Gainsforth House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C for its architectural significance. The Gainsforth house is an excellent example of a ranch style house that perfectly represents the decade in which the house was built and the ideals that produced the design. Ranch houses were to have a low profile on the landscape, with a low-pitched roof and wide overhanging eaves. They were supposed to melt into the landscape and be of the landscape, accomplished by using natural materials and surrounded with horticultural landscaping. The interior was to be divided into zones of activity: an area for housework, an area for recreation, and a private area for sleep and quiet time. Within these zones, the spaces were to be flexible, adaptable areas that were relatively free of obstructing furniture due to an abundance of built-in elements that fulfilled a family's storage needs. The ranch house was intended to have spaces that adapted to the needs of the family, not require the family to adapt to ready-made spaces. The Gainsforth house reflects all these design ideals, all based on Dr. Gainsforth's own designs for his house. The Gainsforth house represents the 1950s ideal for family living, but it also reflects the pervasive fears of the new atomic age. Dr. Gainsforth further provided for his family a space that he hoped would save his family in the event of a nuclear war, a fear that at times during the 1950s and early 1960s was not without justification. The Gainsforth house is an ideal relic of the bipolar decade of the 1950s, with both an emphasis on family and a fear of the worst possible outcome of the Cold War.

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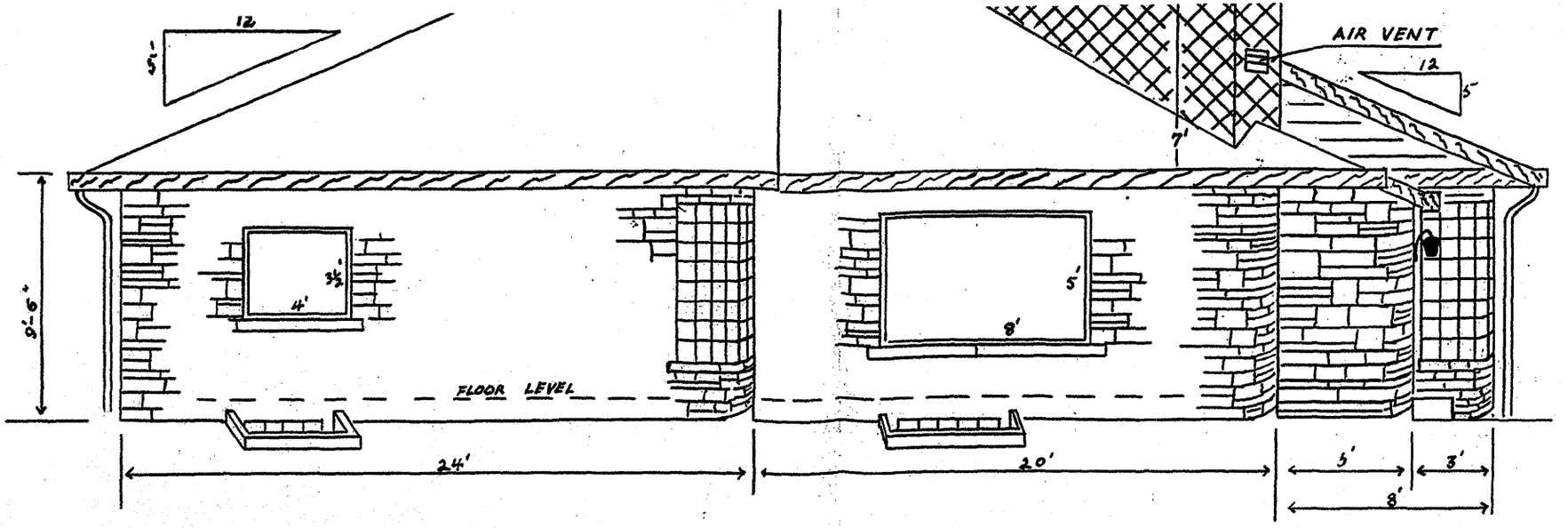
Verbal Boundary Description:

A tract of land situated and being in the SE ¼ of Section 31, Township 14 North, Range 38 West of the 6th P.M., in Keith County, Nebraska, more specifically described by metes and bounds as follows: commencing at a point on the east line of the right-of-way of Highway No. 26, 751 feet north of the south line of said SE ¼ of said section; thence running in an easterly direction on a line parallel with the south line of said quarter section a distance of 24 rods; thence running in a northerly direction on a line parallel with the west line of said quarter section, a distance of 14 rods; thence running in a westerly direction on a line parallel with the south line of said quarter section to a point on the east line of said right-of-way 14 rods north of the point of beginning; thence running south along said east ling of said right-of-way a distance of 14 rods to the point of beginning, excepting there from that tract condemned by the state of Nebraska for highway purposes as shown in return of appraisers recorded April 11, 1975 in Book 34, Page 221 of the miscellaneous records of Keith County, Nebraska.

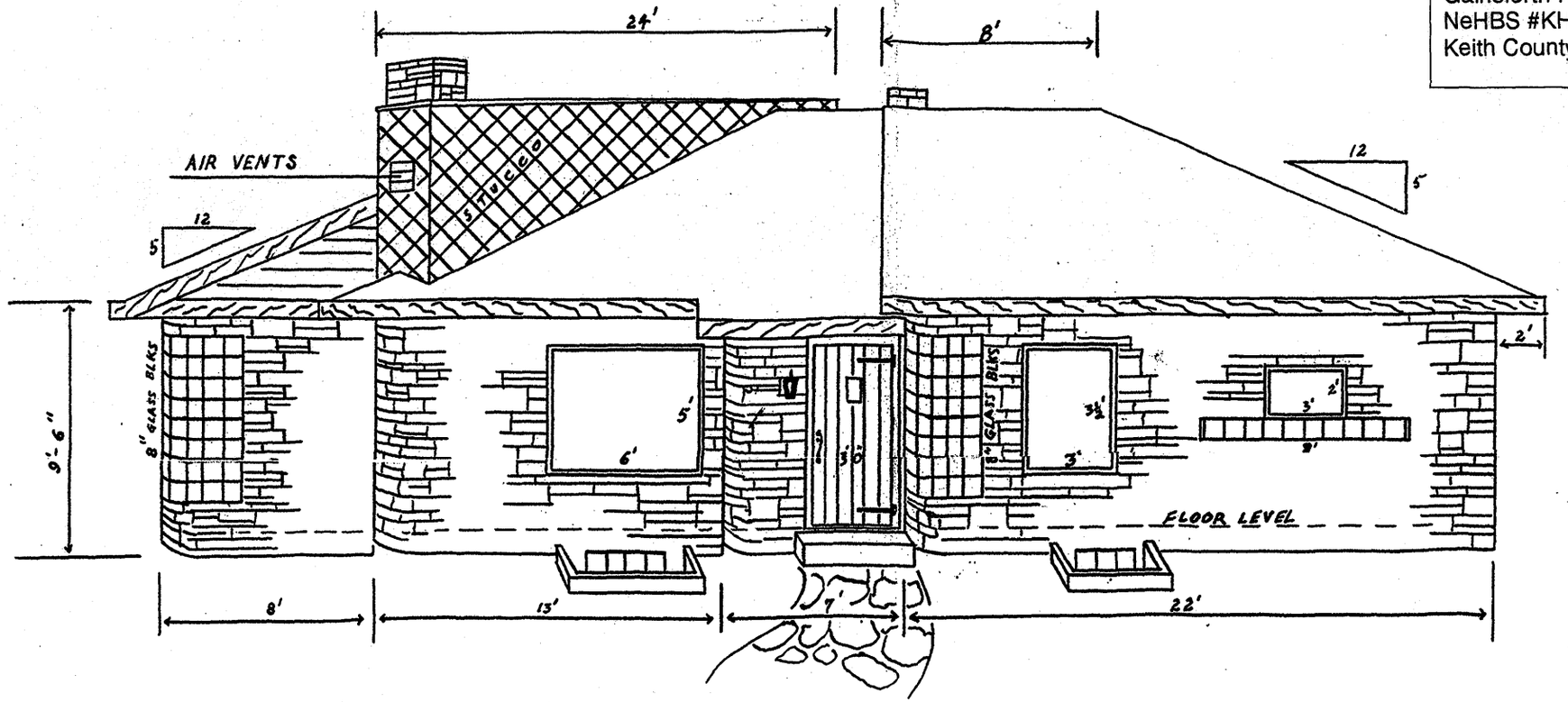
Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the Gainsforth House includes the house, the garage and the tunnel running between them, along with the attached bomb shelter and the two acres of land associated with the property. The landscape around this property contributes to the historical significance and integrity of the property as a planned landscape, and shall be included within the boundaries of the property.



SOUT.
SCALE
B. L. G.
OGALL.

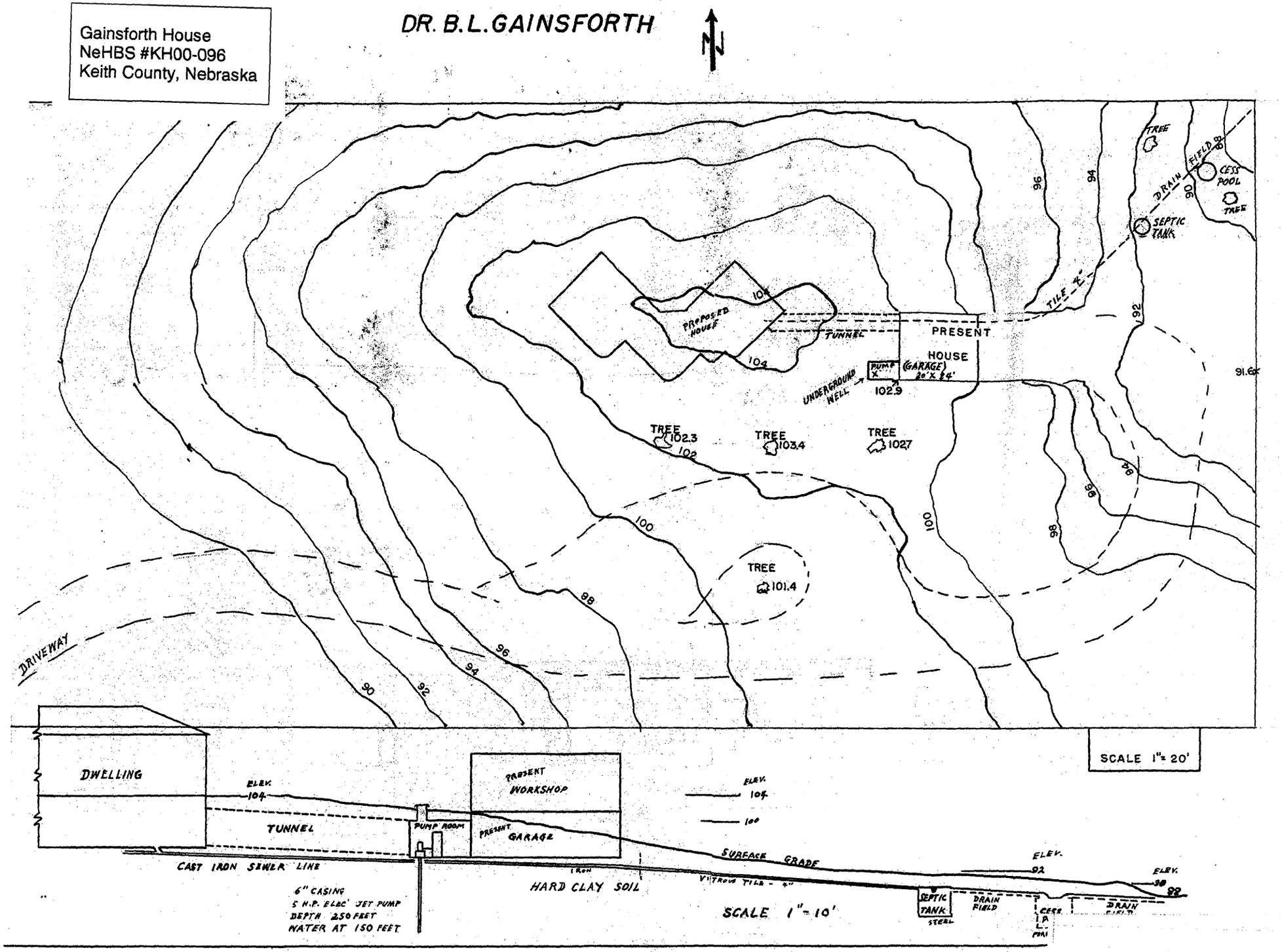
Gainsforth House
NeHBS #KH00-096
Keith County, Nebraska

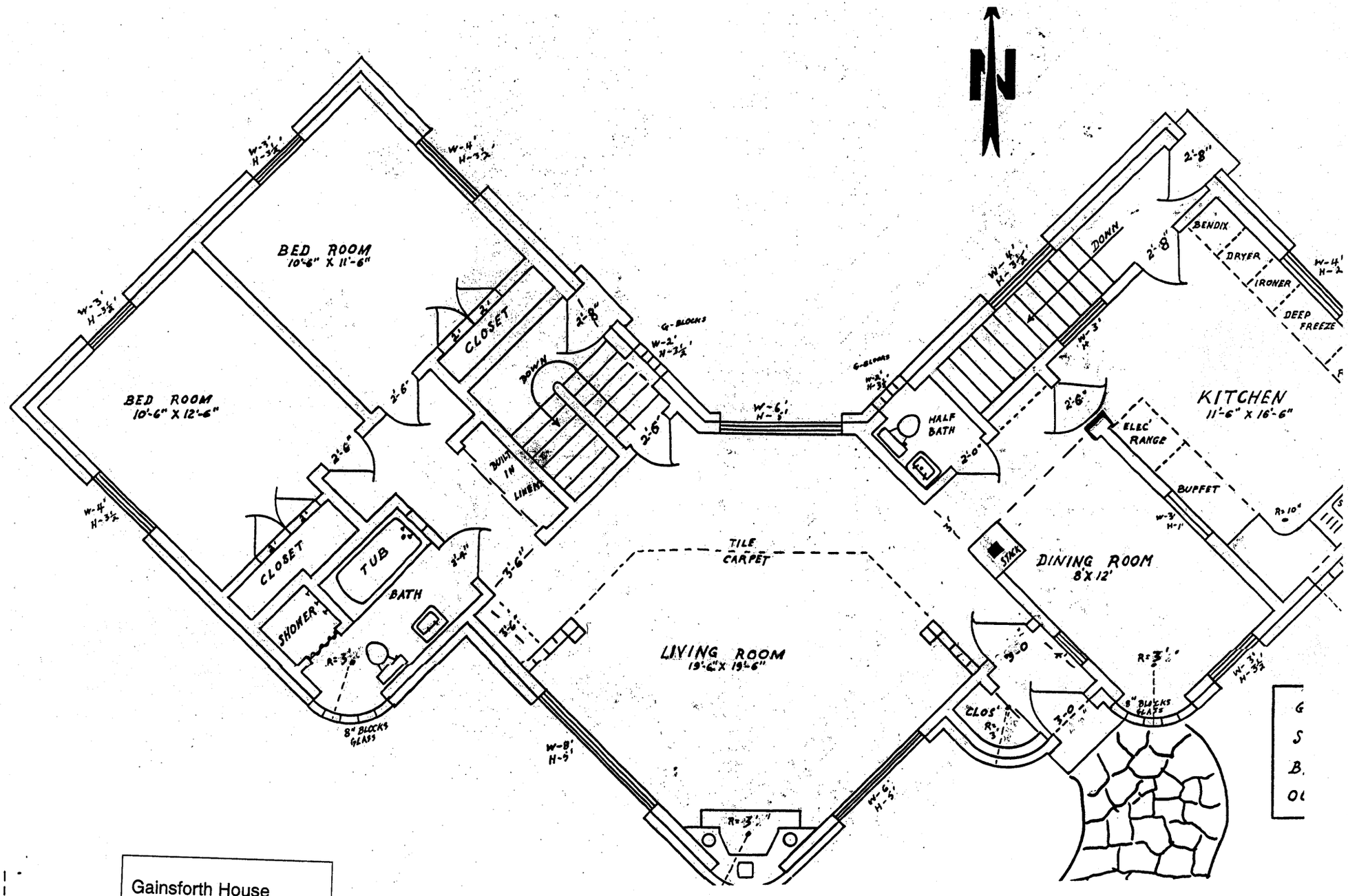


SOUTHEAST
SCALE ¼"=
B. L. GAINSFO.

Gainsforth House
NeHBS #KH00-096
Keith County, Nebraska

DR. B.L. GAINSFORTH





Gainsforth House
NeHBS #KH00-096
Keith County, Nebraska