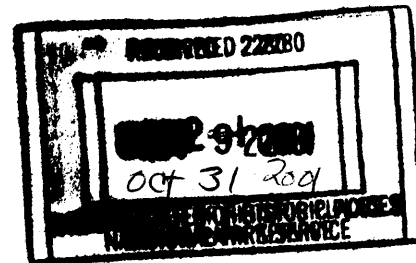


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

1325



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Jones, Robert Lawton, House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 1916 East 47<sup>th</sup> Street

city or town Tulsa

state Oklahoma code OK

county Oklahoma

Tulsa?

not for publication N/A

vicinity N/A

code 143 zip code 74105

Jones, Robert Lawton, House  
Tulsa County, Oklahoma

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 X statewide \_\_\_ locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bob Daubler  
Signature of certifying official

10-19-01  
Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO  
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 commenting or other official      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register Carol D. Sheer 12-13-01  
\_\_\_ 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

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style, Miesian

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>CONCRETE</u>
roof	<u>SYNTHETIC</u>
walls	<u>WOOD</u>
	<u>GLASS</u>
other	_____

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

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8. Statement of Significance

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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 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

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

Period of Significance

1959  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

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Significant Dates \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder Jones, Robert Lawton, Architect  
Reeds, A.C., Builder

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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 of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Tulsa Foundation For Architecture

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property Less than 1

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	233220	3998310	3	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	4	—	—	—

N/A 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.)

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Jan Jennings, Associate Professor

organization Cornell University date June 1, 2001

street & number 237 Renwick Drive telephone 607-272-3816

city or town Ithica state NY zip code 14850

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Additional Documentation

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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)

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Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Robert Lawton Jones, FAIA

street & number 1916 East 47 Street telephone 918-742-7021

city or town Tulsa state OK zip code 74105

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Jones, Robert Lawton, House  
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## DESCRIPTION

### SUMMARY

The Jones House, Oklahoma's only Mies van der Rohe influenced International style house, is situated on a one acre, heavily wooded, and relatively level urban site in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The property is located at 1916 East 47<sup>th</sup> Street in south Tulsa. It is part of Bolewood, 200 acres predominantly developed between 1945 and 1970 with estate zoning. The house is on one acre of an original two acre site. Larger properties form the neighborhood to the north and adjacent subdivisions with half-acre lots were developed later. The property consists of a single-story, flat-roofed, 2800 square foot house and a partially walled carport which are connected visually by a stone wall along the side of the entry approach. The structures sit lightly on the land, respectful of its natural environment in a pecan grove. The house used innovative energy conservation for 1959, including a well water cooling system, large roof overhangs, and a continuous ventilation slot provided under the metal roof. The Miesian influence upon the Jones House is reflected in structural expression, spatial concepts, and use of materials. Both the house and carport use exposed steel frame that is fully expressed, with an identical structural module; exterior walls are of either glass or wood. Interior planning extended the precepts of the International style regarding spatial organization, interior finishes and details.

### DESCRIPTION

#### context

The Jones house is positioned almost centrally on the 128' x 300' lot, set some 150 feet back from 47<sup>th</sup> Street, allowing for a long approach through a wooded space. The house and a free-standing carport are separated by thirty feet and are linked visually by a five foot high limestone wall and entry walk. The stone wall implies enclosure by guiding movement between carport and front entry court. The back of the lot provides ample space for a large outdoor play area, as well as a garden. The house and the carport are covered by flat roofs that reduce the vertical height of the buildings in the midst of the woods.

#### structure

The Jones House expresses structural clarity internally and externally. An enclosing skin and partitions are separately defined, leaving no doubt as to what is structural and what is not. Jones based the exposed steel structure of all building elements on an eight-foot by twenty-four foot module. Columns are four inch wide flanges welded to twelve inch I-beams and covered by a 1 ½ inch metal deck with rigid insulation and a synthetic roof. Diagonal bracing is employed for lateral stability. Reinforced concrete piers are carried to a depth of six feet, assuring consistent bearings in both freezing and drought conditions. The concrete slab and grade beams are over earth fill. Neither interior or exterior walls are load bearing, meaning that every interior and exterior wall can be removed because of the independent steel structure. The steel structure offers protection from lightning, falling tree limbs, and high winds.



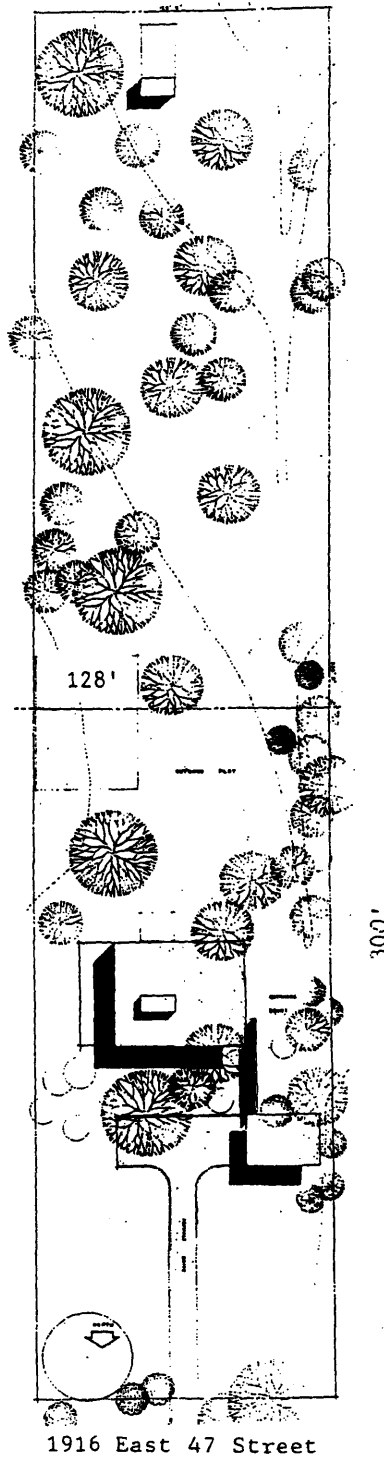
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site plan



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**energy efficiency**

On the south side, Jones recessed the house under an overhanging roof to keep the summer sun from penetrating deeply into the house. In addition to shading the sun from window walls, this environmental element also provides a usable outdoor space, a 12' x 18' bricked patio. Coupled with the protected southern exposure, a continuous ventilation slot provided under the metal roof deck for the full length of the north and south walls, results in a ten to twelve degree summer temperature drop. An air-handling unit provides heating and cooling; continuous flow that is tempered by coils from a hot water boiler or fifty-seven degree well water.

**inside-outside relationship**

The distinction between the inside and the outside on the house's southern facade is elastic. Only the transitional space of the brick patio mediates the regularity of the house and the irregularity of the planting scheme on the site. The full height southern window wall also has no interior corners, offering multiple views to the family's immediate yard and the distant view of the pecan grove.

**exterior materials, finishes, & colors**

Exterior walls are predominantly either stained redwood vertical siding or glass, floor to ceiling with sliding doors in natural anodized aluminum frames. The exterior is largely monochromatic. The steel was originally painted white; the panels above and below the bedroom windows are a lighter grey, and all vertical wood siding is charcoal. The two hinged exterior doors of solid core wood are painted blue.

**interior planning, materials, finishes & furnishings**

The interior, organized on a grid, is composed of the communal spaces of the family (living, dining, kitchen, library-game room) and the private spaces (bedrooms, bathrooms). The generously sized 30' x 19' living and dining space is completely open, merging spatial definition, and making a counterpoint to the more tightly defined private spaces. The public zone is separated from the private by a 31' x 5' core of utility spaces containing two bathrooms, the mechanical system, laundry and storage. The private spaces include five bedrooms: a 16' x 11' master bedroom, and four 8' x 11' bedrooms. The southern wall of the 9' x 14' kitchen has a full height window from floor to ceiling; beyond it, one of the diagonal braces between the steel columns delineates the spatial view. All of the interior doors are full height, extending openings to the ceiling in order to emphasize a continuous flow of space.

The materials, finishes and furnishings reflect Modernist precepts in terms of their industrial character and careful detailing. Interior partitions and ceilings are gypsum board. All floors are quarry tile, except in the bathrooms which are finished in ceramic tile. Interior millwork and doors are walnut. Artificial illumination is both incandescent and

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warm fluorescent. The house is furnished with *objets type* of Modern furniture.<sup>1</sup> Oriental rugs and nineteenth century folk art are exhibited throughout the house.

**alterations**

The Jones family has lived in the house continuously since its completion in 1959. In 1966, Jones completed the second phase of the original plan, adding two rooms (510 square feet) to the east side of the house. Another large bedroom was added to the bedroom wing and a television room adjacent to the living room. The addition retained the original east wall that contained an exterior door and window wall and created a defined courtyard space between the rooms. In 1990, Jones added a free-standing fireplace to the living and dining space. Although the steel columns had been painted white, after years of paint build-up, the columns would no longer take paint. In 1990, Jones sandblasted the steel and left it natural – a light grey. His decision not to repaint white had to do with environmental sensitivity. When the house was built in 1959, the crispness of the white looked appropriate in such a pristine, natural setting. Through the years, however, a neighborhood had built up with variant colors; the grey columns allowed the house to sink into its natural surroundings. Other than Jones' planned addition to the house, little has occurred to detract from its integrity. The house has been impeccably maintained. The carport and connecting wall are in excellent condition and retain the appearance they had when first constructed. The exterior materials and finishes are original to the house.

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<sup>1</sup> Le Corbusier designed the structure and form of a building, for example, the Pavillion de l'Esprit de Nouveau (1925), and furnished it from standard products, *objets type*, from massed-produced products on the market and "in stock." See supplement: Inventory of Furniture Original to the Jones House, c. 1959. A free-standing storage system designed by Jones is on the west wall of the library.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

Although the Jones house merits distinction because of its association with Robert Lawton Jones, the Jones House itself would be considered a building regardless of its designer. Jones did not submit the house for awards, but within four years of its completion, the Jones House received unsolicited publication in one national and two European journals. The publication of the Jones House in 1960 introduced Oklahoma architecture and landscape to European architects. With the exception of the Bavinger House by Bruce Goff, no other Oklahoma residence constructed in the last fifty years has received such recognition. The Jones House was an International Style precursor in Oklahoma, helping to set a standard for excellence in Modern Architecture for the state.

Jones, an Oklahoma Native, spent eight years (from 1946 to 1954) in Chicago and Germany studying post-war Modernist architecture. Returning home, he interpreted the lessons he learned at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) with Mies van der Rohe, a European Modernist, and drew upon his training in the best Chicago architectural offices. Jones is the only Oklahoma architect to have ever studied with Mies. For his private house, Jones interpreted the architectural vocabulary of the International Style to the landscape and climate of Oklahoma, designing and building the only Mies-influenced International Style house in the state. The Jones House became a prototype for three decades of buildings designed under his direction for the firm Murray Jones Murray.<sup>2</sup> The Jones House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, as a significant example of the International Style, influenced by Mies van der Rohe, and designed by Robert Lawton Jones, a master architect.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATION G

Although the Robert Lawton Jones House is less than fifty years old and Jones, the designer, is still living, the property nevertheless qualifies for the National Register of Historic places because of its exceptional architectural significance and for its association with Jones, the architect who introduced the Miesian style to Oklahoma. As the first major work designed by Jones for Murray Jones Murray, the house holds great potential for further understanding of Jones' work. Jones, at seventy-six years of age, retired completely from professional practice of any kind; in August, 1997, he let his architectural registration expire. Jones also retired from teaching. And due to health concerns, accepts no consultation projects. Murray Jones Murray, the firm which he founded, dissolved on December 31, 1999.

The Jones House has received attention and awards from architectural critics and organizations at the local and national level since its completion in 1959. It stands out as the finest, purest example of Miesian International Style domestic architecture in the state. The documents and working drawings for the Jones House have been placed with the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture archives.

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<sup>2</sup> The construction documents for the Jones house were prepared by Murray Jones Murray following Jones' detailed design and under his direction. A.C. Reeds was the general contractor; Jones supervised the actual construction.

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SIGNIFICANCE OF ROBERT LAWTON JONES, F.A.I.A.

Robert Lawton Jones became a pivotal architectural figure in the state of Oklahoma. His Miesian-inspired buildings are now commonly regarded as part of the core of the state's architectural heritage.

Jones was born on May 12, 1925, in McAlester, Oklahoma, to Lawton Henry Jones and Josephine Troy Jones. Both his maternal and paternal grandparents had migrated to Oklahoma prior to statehood. Jones left Oklahoma to work and study in Chicago because he felt that it was "the most exciting city in architecture."<sup>3</sup> While he studied architecture at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, Jones worked at prestigious Chicago firms such as Holibird, Root and Burgee (1947) and Perkins and Will (1948). In 1949, he earned a bachelor of Architecture from the University of Notre Dame, and returned to work full time in the Perkins and Will office until 1951. In May, 1950, Jones became a registered architect in Illinois (certificate #3589).<sup>4</sup>

A year later, in 1951, Jones began graduate study at the Illinois Institute of technology (IIT) where he studied with Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), the leading and most influential exponent of the glass and steel architecture of the twentieth century International Style. Mies was director of the Bauhaus School of Design in Germany, a major center of twentieth century architectural modernism, from 1930 until it disbanded in 1933. He moved to the United States in 1937, where, as director of architecture (1938-1958) at IIT, he trained a new generation of American architects. Mies' style was characterized by its severe simplicity and the refinement of its exposed structural elements. Although not the first architect to work in this mode, he carried rationalism and functionalism to their ultimate stage of development. His famous dictum 'less is more' crystallized the basic philosophy of mid-twentieth century architecture. Rigidly geometrical and devoid of ornamentation, his buildings depended for their effect on subtlety of proportion, elegance of materials, and precision of details.<sup>5</sup>

In 1953, Jones earned a Master of Science degree in Regional and City Planning from IIT, but most importantly, he had been profoundly influenced by Mies and the International Style, the American interpretation of Modernism. Immediately after graduate study, from September 1953 to July 1954, Jones extended his architectural education, studying at the Institute of Technology in Karlsruhe (the oldest technical university in Germany) on a Fulbright grant. In Germany, he worked in the office of Professor Egon Eierman, one of Germany's foremost post-World War II architects and a strong advocate of Mies' philosophy.<sup>6</sup> No other Oklahoma architect, then or since, has had such close professional relationships with the pioneers of the International Style.

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<sup>3</sup> Jan Jennings, telephone conversation with Robert Lawton Jones, 12 January, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> His "practical experience before entering practice as a principal" (from June 1947 to December 1954) was cited in the NCARB (National Council of Architectural Registration Boards) Form for Junior Classification dated December 1954.

<sup>5</sup> See supplement: Description of Graduate Study with Mies van der Rohe with Robert Lawton Jones.

<sup>6</sup> Eierman held the principal chair of architecture at the Institute of Technology, Karlsruhe. Although he was a generation younger than Mies, the influence of the elder upon Eierman is clear. See Eierman's new German Embassy in Washington, D. C. (1965), the German

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In 1954, Jones returned to Oklahoma, becoming the 429<sup>th</sup> architect to be registered in the state since 1927.<sup>7</sup> The job that drew him home was as project manager and principal designer for the original Civic Center Master Plan for Tulsa, a project that received international recognition. The eminent historian, Sigfried Gideon, in Architektur und Gemeinschaft, cited the project by Jones, Sasaki and Novak as one of twenty-two "most significant examples of community consciousness in planning during the last one hundred years." Gideon's list included central park, New York by Frederick Law Olmstead; projects by Le Corbusier; the new town of Radburn, New Jersey by Henry Wright and Clarence Stein; the Neighborhood Unit concept by Clarence Perry; the reconstruction plan for Berlin by Walter Gropius; and Broadacre City by Frank Lloyd Wright. Although Gideon sometimes named more than one project per year, the Tulsa Civic Center was the sole entry for 1955.<sup>8</sup>

In 1957, Jones partnered with Oklahoma brothers David George Murray and Lee Cloyd Murray to form Murray Jones Murray (MJM), a distinguished Tulsa firm whose work spanned thirty-two years. After a year of practice, Jones convinced his partners to establish goals for their firm. When they convened to compare notes, the Murray brothers were astounded that Jones' five-year goal was to establish MJM as the most respected firm in Oklahoma. When asked how he would measure that success, Jones stated that it would be true when the directors of Oklahoma's two schools of architecture stated it publicly. Before the fifth year ended, MJM had met Jones' ambitious goal, as Murlin Hodgell of the University of Oklahoma and Cuthbert F. Salmon of Oklahoma State University characterized MJM as the leading firm in the state.<sup>9</sup>

Murray Jones Murray ranked in good company when, in July 1960, Arts and Architecture published six innovative house designs. Jones' "House in an Orchard," the building nominated here, stood alongside projects by Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer (1902-1981), another leading twentieth century exponent of the International Style.<sup>10</sup> Architectural Forum recognized Murray Jones Murray in the August 1961 issue as part of a "new generation ... who will shape American architecture and American building in the 1960s."<sup>11</sup> Later that year, the Swiss Bauen und Wohnen published the Jones House, giving space to thirteen exterior and interior photographs, a site plan, a space plan, three section drawings, and a floor plan illustrating air conditioning ducts under the floor.<sup>12</sup>

Jones' peers recognized his lifetime achievements in 1970 with Fellow status in the American Institute of Architects. Fellowship in the AIA is awarded for outstanding contributions to the advancement of the architectural profession. Jones was only the fourth Tulsa architect to receive such a coveted lifetime honor and he was the second youngest member of the College of fellows, a group of only 957 in the 23,300 member national organization. The College of

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Pavilion at the Brussels World Fair (1958), Olivetti Headquarters, Frankfurt (1968), Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, Berlin (1965, and numerous other buildings.

<sup>7</sup> Jones' NCARB Certificate (Dec. 1954): 2296

<sup>8</sup> Sigfried Gideon, Architektur und Gemeinschaft (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1956), 128-129.

<sup>9</sup> Jan Jennings, telephone conversation with Robert Lawton Jones, 12 January 2001.

<sup>10</sup> "House in an Orchard," Arts and Architecture (July 1969) 19, 20.

<sup>11</sup> "New Talent for the Sixties," Architectural Forum (August 1961), 69.

<sup>12</sup> Bauen und Wohnen, vol. 15 (January 1961), 2-7.

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Fellows was established by the AIA in 1857 to recognize those who have made significant national contributions to the profession and society. Admission is based upon excellence in one of several categories – design. Service to the public and the Institute, education, literature, historic preservation or the science of construction. There have been 26 Oklahoma architects elevated to the College of fellows, the earliest being in 1931. Jones was the eighth, the honor taking place in 1970, and the first to be nominated for his design work.<sup>13</sup>

Although MJM never employed more than fifty-two at one time, during the firm's tenure, slightly more than 250 designers were mentored by Jones. Today, there are twenty-one firms in Tulsa whose principals or officers were once employed at MJM; former MJM employees are also principals or officers in forms in Oklahoma City, St. Louis, little Rock, Tampa, San Francisco, Kansas City, and Denver. Between 1964 and 1991, the firm had been acclaimed in 112 honors and publications, including nineteen awards from the American Institute of Architects. (see supplement for list)

In addition to directing design at MJM, Jones influenced the architectural profession through his lectures and teaching activities. In 1984, he began a teaching career as a full Professor with the University of Oklahoma's College of Architecture, and in 1986 he was appointed Director of the Architecture Division, a post he kept through 1988. In 1988, Jones established the university of Oklahoma's graduate program of Urban Design in Tulsa, serving as its Director until 1995. In 1993, he won the College of Architecture's Award for Teaching Excellence.

After nearly fifty years of practice, Jones retired in August 1997, allowing his registration to expire. As Director of Design and Planning for MJM, Jones used his house as a prototype for the firm's three-decade practice, helping to establish the International Style in Oklahoma.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JONES HOUSE

In 1952, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, the leading historian of modern architecture at that time, chose the buildings for the exhibition *Built in USA: Post-War Architecture*. The criterion of selection that Hitchcock employed was "quality and significance of the moment." This distinction included buildings of quality that were also pertinent for their significance in the story of architecture. The Jones House meets these criteria on a statewide level in Oklahoma. It is both a house of quality and a house that introduced the Miesian-influenced international Style to the state of Oklahoma. Its architect, Robert Lawton Jones, was well trained in Modernism. In the 1952 exhibition, Arthur Drexler stated that the methods of organizing space in post-war American architecture were largely derived from the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier.<sup>14</sup> The design of the Jones House in 1959 interprets the precepts of the International Style, especially those of Mies with whom Jones studied. It makes an adaptation to the Oklahoma landscape and climate, and, unlike the International Style or the Bay Area California Case Study Houses, it also made an adaptation to a large-sized family. As a prototype, the Jones House established a direction for MJM's practice. The

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<sup>13</sup> News release from Webb Advertising, Tulsa Oklahoma (3 May 1970) and letter from Robert L. Jones to Jim Gabbert, Architectural Historian, Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, 18 June 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Drexler, "Post-War Architecture," *Built in USA: Post-War Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art and Simon & Schuster, 1952), 20.

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concern for structure, a spatial continuum, and the nature of materials became a constant theme, creating a climate for regional acceptance of the International Style.

**period context / mid-century Modern**

Some historians characterize the period in which the Jones House was designed as Mid-Century Modern. Most authorities agree that it began in 1938 when Mies van der Rohe became head of the Illinois Institute of Technology and ended in 1966 with Marcel Breuer's Whitney Museum. During the decade of the 1950s when Jones designed and built his home in Tulsa, Eero Saarinen designed the Tulip Chair (1956), Mies' Seagram Building was completed (1958), and the Guggenheim Museum opened (1959).<sup>15</sup> Mid-Century Modern, as a category of time, obviously encompasses a broad range of period houses. The Jones House, however, belongs to a particular stylistic movement, the International Style.

**stylistic context / the International Style**

In 1931, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), an institution then only two years old and devoted primarily to the presentation of the work of painters, planned its first architectural exhibition. The MOMA director asked Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock to organize the event which took place in 1932. The work of Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Gropius, and, by contrast, that of Wright, occupied the principal place in the exhibition. Concurrently with the exhibition, Hitchcock and Johnson prepared The International Style: Architecture Since 1922. "The separate structures comprising sixty dwellings proved to be astonishing in their clean, unarticulated, shimmering white rectilinear facades, flat roofs, and ship's railing balconies. The various strains of architectural theorizing had apparently merged into the reality of a single International Style – the name by which modern architecture as a whole later came to be known." The distinguishing aesthetic principles of the International Style as laid down by the authors are three: emphasis upon volume – space enclosed by thin planes or surfaces and opposed to the suggestion of mass and solidity; regularity as opposed to symmetry or other kinds of obvious balance; and, lastly, dependence upon the intrinsic elegance of materials, technical perfection, and fine proportions, as opposed to applied ornament.<sup>16</sup> The historic impact of the MOMA exhibit made the new Modernism, the International Style, universally recognized.<sup>17</sup>

**the state of Oklahoma architecture in the mid-twentieth century**

From the late 1920s until the late 1940s, the primary architectural impulse for architect-designed buildings in Tulsa fell within the parameters of the Art Deco style. Between the years 1935 and 1940, nine Streamline Art Deco (or Art

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<sup>15</sup> Veronique Vienne, "Modern Miracle," Metropolis (March 2001), 145.

<sup>16</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, The International Style: Architecture Since 1922 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, [c. 1932]) viii, 13; and Franz Schulze, Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1985) 135, 183.

<sup>17</sup> See supplement for an Historical Summary of the International Style by R.L. Jones. See also: Harmon, Robert B., The International Style in American Architecture: A Brief Style Guide, (Monticello, Ill: Vance Bibliographies, 1983) and Vance, Mary A., Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Selected Journal Articles Published 1970-1986, (Monticello, Ill: Vance Bibliographies, 1987).



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Moderne) upper middle class houses were built entirely of reinforced concrete, indicating "much more than a normal commitment on Tulsa's part to the imagery of the future."<sup>18</sup> Between the period from 1940 to 1965, only twenty-five houses from Oklahoma were published in nationally distributed architectural trade magazines. Bruce Goff's organic houses dominated the 1962 entries, and all the homes lacked the aesthetic and technical intentions of the International Style.<sup>19</sup> As in all other states, traditional period styles for single family homes dominated. When Jones returned from his studies in Chicago and Germany, he brought with him the new Modernism of the International Style.<sup>20</sup> the next thirty years of Oklahoma architecture that was recognized nationally came from Jones' firm. From 1964 to 1991, MJM's number of publications and honors from the AIA remains unequaled in Oklahoma.

**location & siting**

The Jones House received national and international recognition for its preservation of an unspoiled landscape. Los Angeles photographer Julius Shulman first brought the Jones House to the attention of John Entenza of the Los Angeles based journal, Arts and Architecture.<sup>21</sup> In July 1960, Arts and Architecture cited the Jones House for its skillful contextual fit in a wooded site, its respect for the natural environment, and its new features regarding innovative energy conservation.<sup>22</sup> Its location on two acres of flat land in the midst of a pecan grove captured the attention of the Swiss Bauen und Wohnen, who also titled its article "House in an Orchard." The Hamburg journal, Schone Wohnen, was intrigued by the house's contextual setting: "in U.S.A., in the state of Oklahoma, in the middle of a walnut grove [sic], in the midst of the city of Tulsa."<sup>23</sup>

**siting / energy conservation**

Well before the energy crisis of the 1970s, Jones' design objectives included energy conservation in the use of non-renewable materials in a closed ecosystem. The Jones House captured critical acclaim for its "pioneering concern with energy conservation" and innovative solutions to lower the heat of Oklahoma summers.<sup>24</sup> Although Mies' Farnsworth House consisted of three horizontal planes (a terrace, a floor, a roof), Jones omitted the terrace, setting the slab on grade to reduce summer temperatures. Bauen und Wohnen reported that although air conditioning, in particular, was necessary in the Oklahoma climate, Jones avoided the expense by pumping cold water from a deep well through the coils of an air handler.<sup>25</sup> Arts and Architecture commended Jones' design of a continuous ventilation slot under the steel roof deck for the full length of the north and south wall, reducing summer temperatures ten to twelve degrees. Jones' belief in energy conservation kept him from designing a completely open glass house; the bedroom windows are

<sup>18</sup> David Gebhard, "Introduction," Tulsa Art Deco, (Tulsa: Junior League of Tulsa, 1980), 25.

<sup>19</sup> See Supplement: Oklahoma Houses Indexed in The Architectural Index from 1950-1965 and the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals from 1940-1960.

<sup>20</sup> See Supplement: Principles and Themes of the Jones House by R.L. Jones.

<sup>21</sup> As editor and publisher, Entenza had sponsored the 1949 Case Study House program in Arts and Architecture; later he became Executive Director of the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, architecture's most prestigious research sponsor.

<sup>22</sup> "House in an Orchard," Arts and Architecture, 20.

<sup>23</sup> Schoner Wohnen (September 1963)

<sup>24</sup> Brochure, American Institute of Architects Eastern Oklahoma House Tour (October 1963).

<sup>25</sup> Bauen und Wohnen, 7.

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small and much of the east and west wall system is opaque. In October 1963, the Jones House was opened to the American Institute of Architects Eastern Oklahoma House Tour. The AIA credited Jones with other passive energy measures, such as an ideal house orientation and a large roof overhang that shaded the southern window wall on the south side.<sup>26</sup>

**landscape**

The Jones House which sits so lightly on its site that it becomes delicate, also interested critics. In 1961, the Zurich journal, Bauen und Wohnen published an extensive ten page critical analysis with photographs and technical drawings. The paper concluded that it was "simply an architecture without any pretensions, a self-effacing architecture. The setting is so natural and the buildings so modest that there is scarcely any contrast between landscape and architecture. This plainly does not mean that there is no longer any contrast of any kind; nor is there a question of 'adaptation'."<sup>27</sup>

**materials and details**

In September, 1961, Schoner Wohnen published photographs of the Jones House, concluding that its "very sensitive and appropriate expression of today's technology in architecture, a new aesthetic."<sup>28</sup> Jones made "extensive use of industrial materials and building techniques" – factory produced window and door units, steel framing, and roof decking.<sup>29</sup> He filled the floor to ceiling metal frames with transparent plate glass and borrowed an X cable motif for diagonal bracing from the Charles Eames Case Study House (1949, Santa Monica, CA). As in the Farnsworth House, the structural steel frame was painted white. At the same time, Jones acknowledged his native state and a wooded site with redwood vertical siding and walnut doors and woodwork. The Eastern Chapter of the Oklahoma AIA spoke of this relationship as "an expression of modern industrial technology with fine detailing, quality floor materials, and walnut millwork."<sup>30</sup>

**family home**

The Jones House makes an interesting amalgam of Mies' universal space adapted to the needs of a family, and a big multi-voiced family at that. Bob Jones and Lynn Scott Jones raised seven children in the 2800 square foot home. Jones designed a small house because it was easier to run. The size made an impression with Schoner Wohnen who titled their critique "Room for a Large Family: For in the Land of Unlimited Opportunity Too, Servants are Scarce."<sup>31</sup>

The International Style valued continuity of space, thus avoiding interior partitions as much as possible. In the Farnsworth House, the utility core stops short of the ceiling, emphasizing its character as a single room containing a

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<sup>26</sup> AIA Eastern Oklahoma House Tour brochure.

<sup>27</sup> Bauen und Wohnen, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Schoner Wohnen, n.p.

<sup>29</sup> "House in an Orchard," Arts and Architecture, 20.

<sup>30</sup> AIA Eastern Oklahoma House Tour brochure.

<sup>31</sup> Schone Wohnen, n.p.

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box (a space within a space). Jones kept to the Miesian principal of merging living and dining spaces, but his large family necessitated more spatial definition. He grouped two bathrooms, a laundry, the mechanical system, and storage along a central spine, separating the public spaces of living and dining from private spaces. Schoner Wohnen valued Jones' attention to day and night zones, spaces where parents and children could be alone in their rooms, offering the family "plenty of room to be together or alone."<sup>32</sup>

**timelessness**

At a conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1999, the Southwest Regional Office featured the Jones House as an example of buildings of the recent past that deserved recognition.<sup>33</sup> In November, 2000, the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture presented a citation to the architect in recognition of the Jones House. "It has endured one of the greatest challenges in design, the test of time. It is a modern classic of historical significance and exceptional importance to the International Style's development in Oklahoma."<sup>34</sup>

**conclusion**

The Robert Lawton Jones House, designed by Jones and constructed in 1959, marked the first appearance of Miesian influenced International Style residential architecture in Oklahoma. It became the prototype for the long and highly acclaimed career of Jones and his design firm, Murray Jones Murray. The Jones House is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places for its significance in architectural design, being the first and truest International Style house in the state and for its influence on the career of Robert Lawton Jones, FAIA, a master architect. Although less than fifty years of age, the Jones House has demonstrated exceptional significance throughout its span of existence. It has been the subject of critique and recognition for 42 years. The designer of the Jones House, Robert Lawton Jones, is still living but has given up his practice and licenses. Due to failing eyesight, he will never again be able to practice his craft. Jones has demonstrated through his years of design and teaching service, that he is one of Oklahoma's most recognized, acclaimed, and influential architects. The Robert Lawton Jones House represents the important first step in his long and storied career.

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<sup>32</sup> Schoner Wohnen, n.p.

<sup>33</sup> Jeff Tully, "The Recent Past," presented at Annual Staff Conference, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington D.C. (October 11, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Letter of Citation to Robert Lawton Jones from Herb Fritz, Chairman, Tulsa Foundation for Architecture (November 20, 2000).

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The westerly 128 feet of the southeast quarter of the northwest quarter of the southeast quarter (SE/4 NW/4 SE/4) of Section Thirty (30), Township Nineteen (19) North, Range Thirteen (13) East of the Indian Base Line and Meridian, Tulsa County, State of Oklahoma, less and except the following four tracts: The south 175 feet of the west 113 feet of the SE/4 of the NW/4 of the SE/4 and also the south 12.5 feet of the east 15 feet of the west 128 feet of the SE/4 of the NW/4 of the SE/4 all in Section 30, T19N, R13E.; the north 135 feet of the south 310 feet of the west 128 feet of the SE/4, NW/4, SE/4 and also the north 162.5 feet of the south 175 feet of the east 15 feet of the west 128 feet of the SE/4. NE/4, SE/4, all in Section 30, T19N, R13 E, Tulsa County, State of Oklahoma.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property represents the existing lot and environs historically associated with the Robert Lawton Jones House.

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**Supplemental Materials**

- A) List of articles of Oklahoma houses indexed in the Architectural Index from 1950-1965 and in the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals from 1940-1960.
- B) Professional recognition of the firm Murray Jones Murray, including awards, honors, exhibitions, and publications.
- C) Architectural drawings of the Jones House.
- D) Inventory of furniture original to Jones House.
- E) Principles and themes of the Jones House by Robert Lawton Jones.
- F) Historical summary of the International Style by Robert Lawton Jones.
- G) Description of graduate study under Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe by Robert Lawton Jones.

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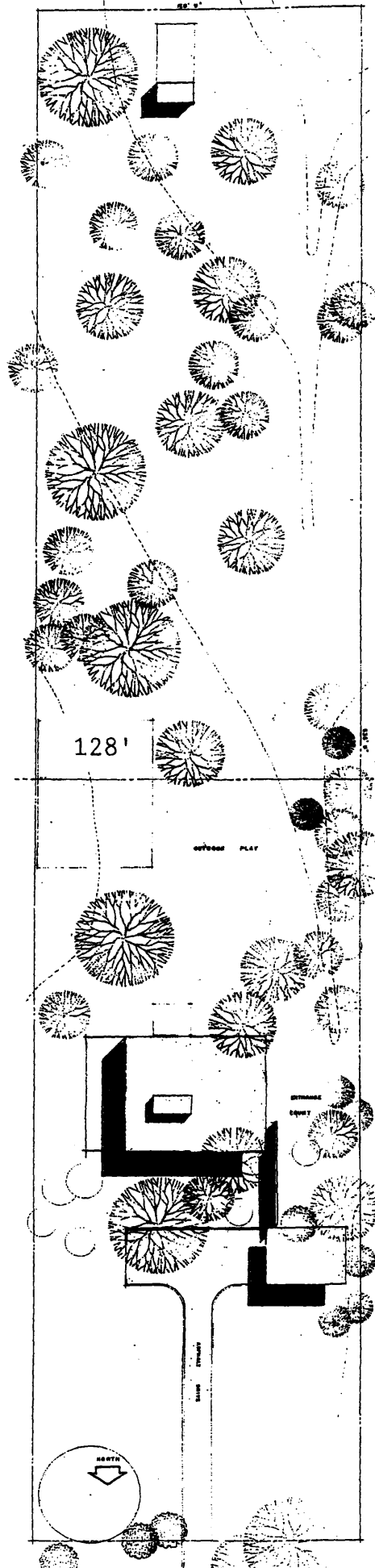
**Jones House Nomination**

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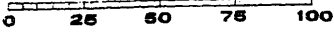
**supplement**

ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS OF THE JONES HOUSE:  
SITE PLANT; SPACE PLAN (ORIGINAL, 1959); SPACE PLAN SHOWING  
THE 1966 ADDITION; WALL SECTIONS (NORTH, EAST AND WEST,  
SOUTH)

45. Placement Map

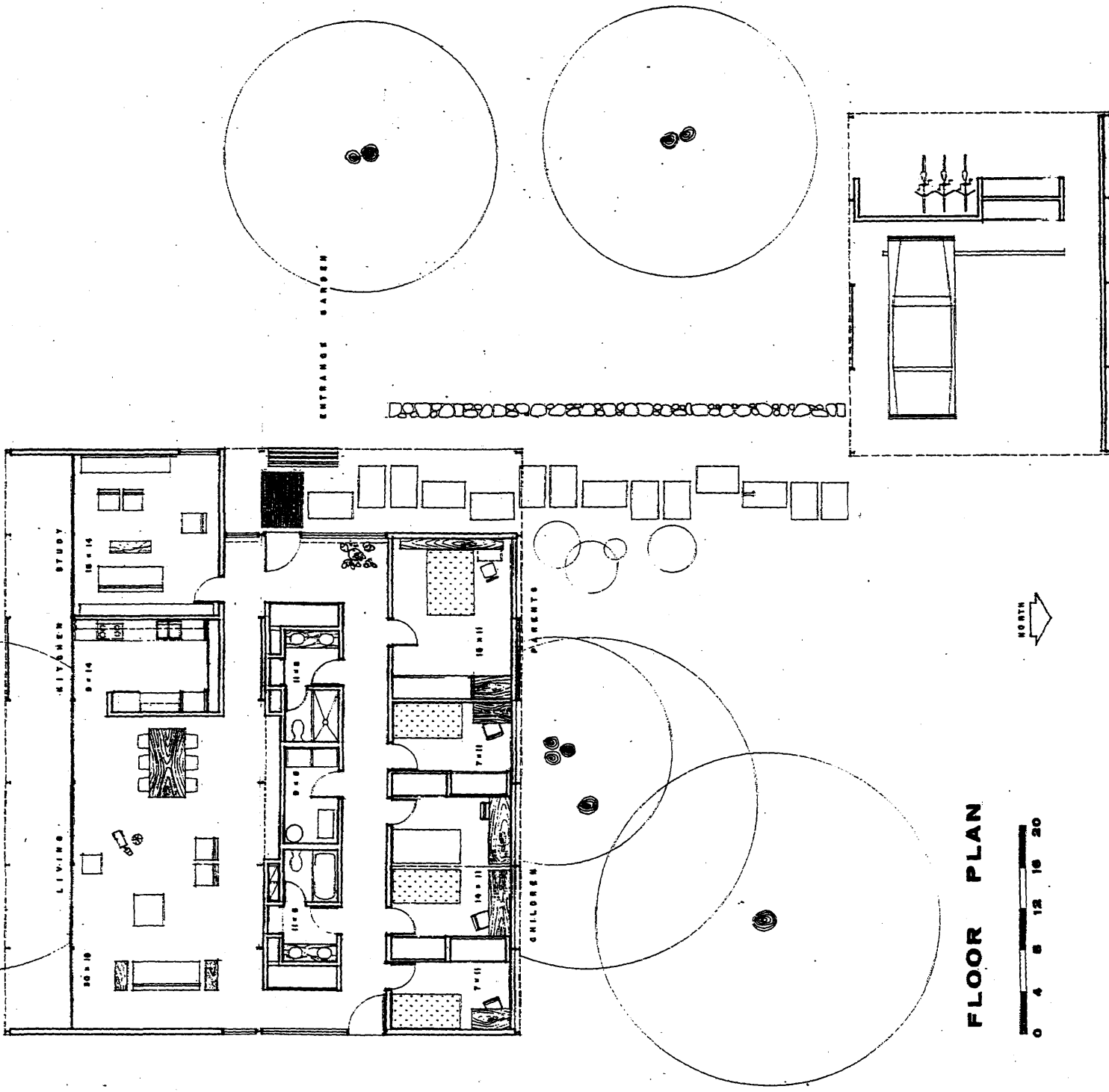


**SITE PLAN**



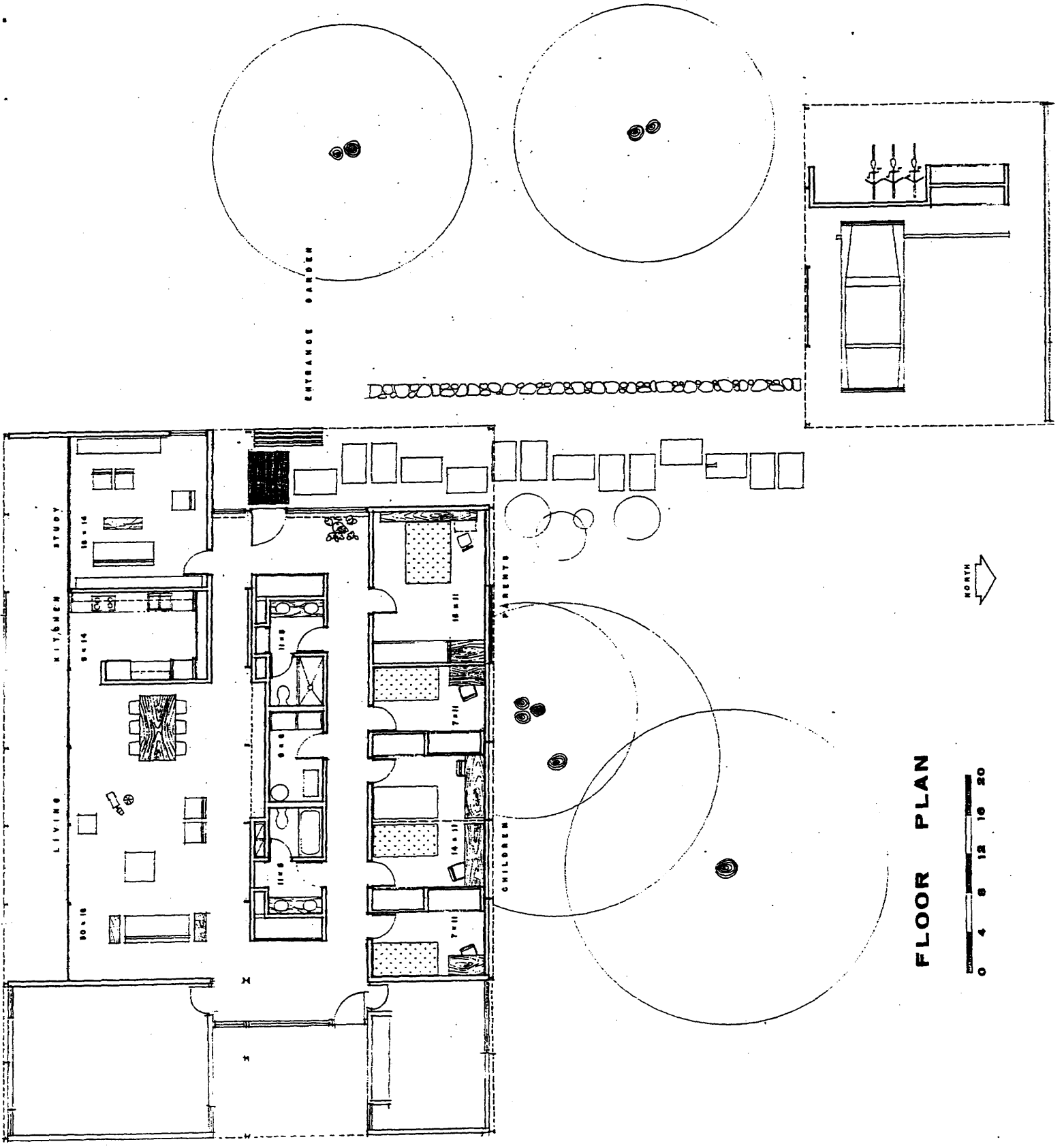
1916 East 47 Street





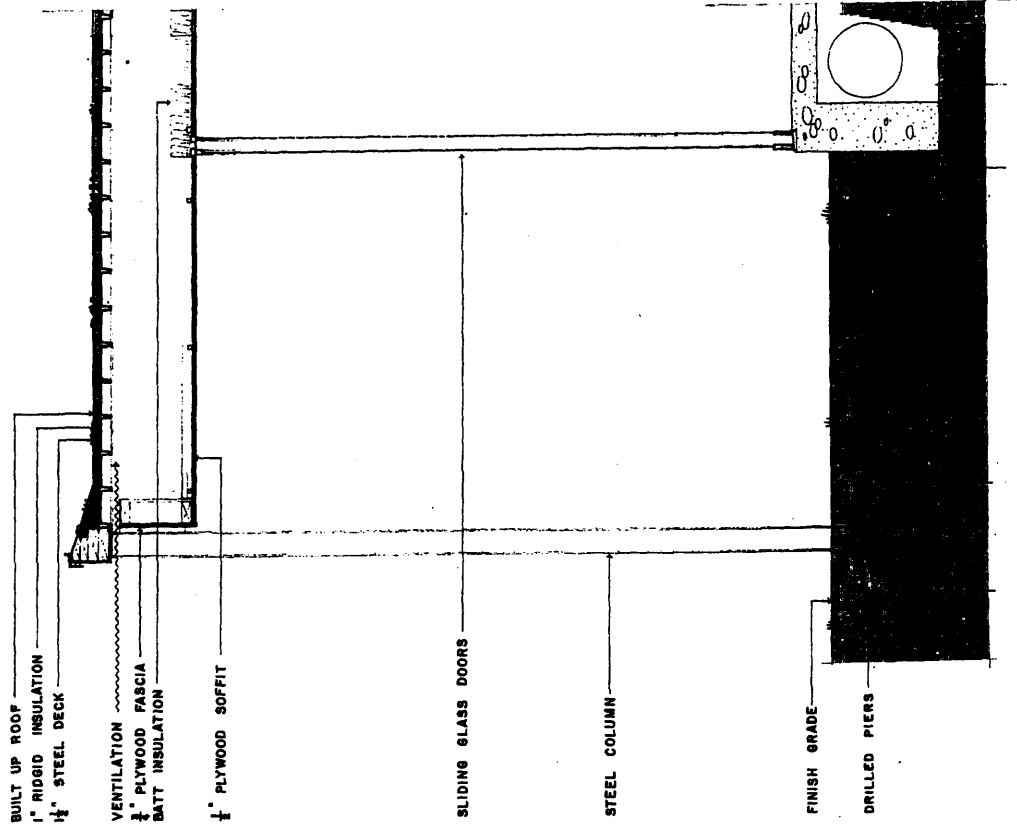
**FLOOR PLAN**



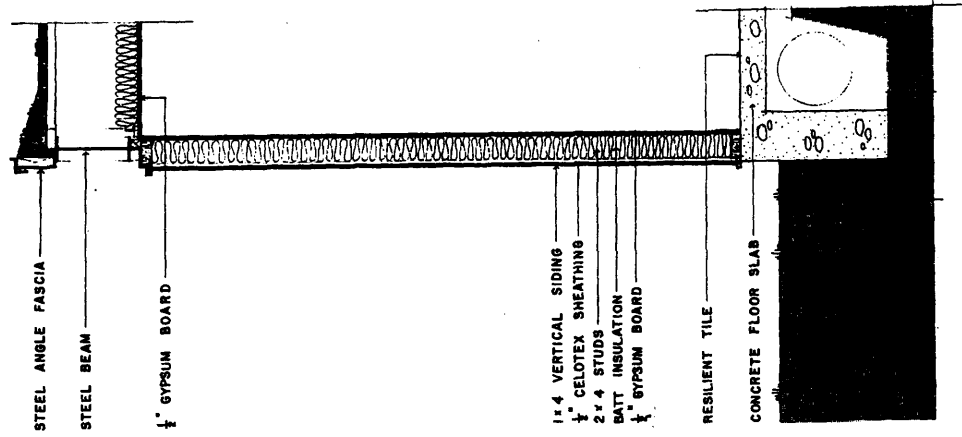


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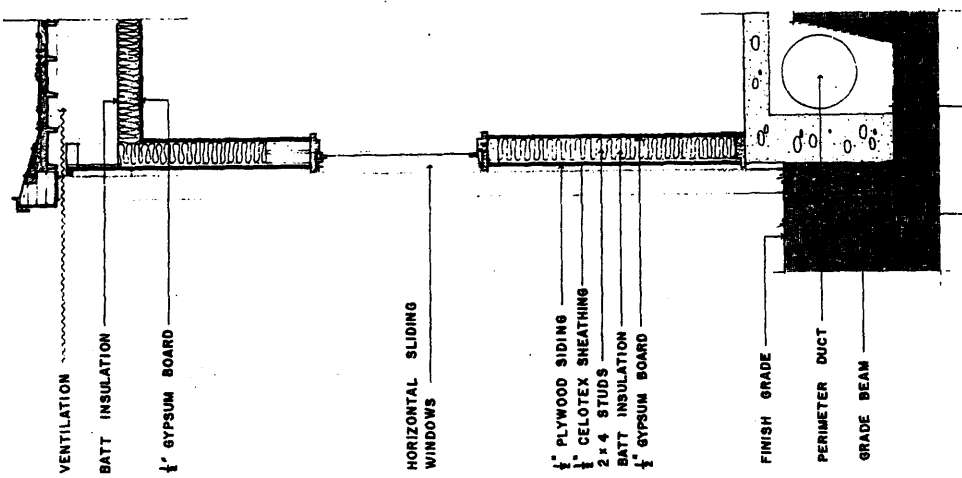




SOUTH



EAST & WEST



NORTH

W A L L S E C T I O N S