

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



190

# 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. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Curtis-Grace House

other names/site number Curtis, Roy and Leona, House; Grace, Richard and Connie, House

### 2. Location

street & number 2175 Tecumseh Park Lane

N/A	not for publication
N/A	vicinity

city or town West Lafayette

state Indiana code IN county Tippecanoe code 157 zip code 47906

### 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  local

James A. Allen Deputy SHPO 2/16/2012  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Indiana DNR Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 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):

For Edson H. Beall 4.10.12  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only one box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

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.)

MODERN MOVEMENT  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE  
 walls: STONE: Limestone  
 WOOD  
 roof: SYNTHETICS: Rubber  
 other: GLASS  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

The Curtis-Grace house is located at 2175 Tecumseh Park Lane in the Wabash Shores addition to the city of West Lafayette, Indiana. The Modern style house was designed in 1957, and construction was completed in 1958. The house fronts onto Tecumseh Park Lane, a shady cul-de-sac with thirteen houses, deep lawns, and many white oak and hickory trees. Most of the houses are sited on one of the large ravines which flow to the nearby Wabash River. Resources include the house (one contributing building) and its building lot (a designed landscape; one contributing site).

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### Narrative Description

The house features strongly rectangular forms in the architectural style known as Post and Beam Modern. The house is two stories in height, but it appears primarily as a one-story on the primary façade which faces east. The lower level/story is exposed on the west façade which is walk-out. A broad, low-pitched, offset gable front roof (1:12) overhangs the front façade 36 inches and the rear façade 18 inches. The original built-up tar paper roof has been replaced with a rubber membrane roof.

Exterior (footprint) dimensions are approximately 82 feet by 23 feet. The foundation is poured concrete with low concrete block walls which are expressed noticeably at the south end of the house. Upper walls are constructed of clear heart vertical board tongue and groove redwood that is stained dark brown, natural stone and plate glass. Stone and wood construction anchors thirteen massive redwood beams, each approximately 27 feet long by 15 inches high by 3 ½ inches wide, which support both the roof and the exterior walls. The upper-

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level back wall of the house features seven large plate glass windows between posts and beams that are set on 7 foot centers. The windows vary in height from 7 feet to 11 feet and create a window wall approximately 42 feet wide, which faces a natural ravine.

The exterior primary façade faces east toward Tecumseh Park Lane. A massive stone chimney wall serves as the exterior focal point. The wall was constructed by hand from Kankakee rubble stone quarried in Bourbonnais, Illinois. A Kankakee rubble stone chimney cap is prominent on the front roofline. The front of the property also includes a shady lawn and a pleasing landscape of evergreens, hickory trees, flowering shrubs, groundcover and shrubbery gravel (photo #1). The landscape plan for the house was prepared by Robert J. Smith, architect of the house. Since the landscape and siting of the house add to its sense of time and place, these elements are counted as a contributing site. Though matured considerably, a good degree of Smith's intent can still be seen in the landscape design. Siting of the house is among the most important elements. Smith called for minimal re-grading and retained some trees, especially in the ravine area to the rear of the lot. The house is nestled into its lot. Basic landscape zones are still evident. The oval front lawn shown on the original site plan survives; the arrowhead-shaped shrub and walk area north of the front door and the vehicular drive remain as intended. The island of mulched landscaping surrounding the house evidently was never installed with mulch as stated on the plans, but, the concept was executed with shrubbery gravel, which remains in place.

A curving asphalt driveway flanked on the south by a concrete walk leads from the street to the carport located at the north end of the front façade. A second concrete sidewalk curves from the midpoint of the driveway southwest to the front entrance, which is nominally at the midpoint of the front façade.

The front entrance consists of redwood stairs and deck juxtaposed against the Kankakee rubble stone chimney wall (photo #001). The solid wood entry door is flanked on the south by a fixed side light. A trapezoidal clerestory window is located above the entry. The entry door and wood surround is painted "tangerine," which is appropriate to the period of the house and which complements the Kankakee rubble stone and dark brown siding of the house.

There is one fixed single-light window with a smaller crank-out awning window below and a small trapezoidal clerestory window above located to the north of the front entrance between the chimney wall and the carport. The wall to the south of the front entrance is solid redwood and concrete block.

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The south facade of the house is two-story redwood and concrete block with two single-light out-swing casement windows aligned vertically in the bedrooms on the upper and lower levels (photo #002).

The two-story west façade consists of redwood, concrete block and a variety of windows (photos #003 and 004). In the south end of the upper level there is a fixed single-light window with a small crank-out awning window directly below it in the upper bedroom. At the mid-point of the upper level are two fixed single-light windows, each approximately 11 feet high by 6 feet 6 inches wide, in plate glass with two small crank-out awning windows centered below. These windows provide light to the plant study located in the main stairwell. There are five additional fixed single-light windows across the west side of the living room and dining area. These are set on 7 foot centers (posts and beams) and range in height from 7 feet to 8 feet 6 inches. Four of the five plate glass windows have a small crank-out awning window centered below them for ventilation. The north wall of the dining area consists of a fixed single-light window, approximately 8 feet by 8 feet, which overlooks the screened porch and carport interior. A fixed single-light transom is located over the side door to the screened porch.

In the south end of the lower level of the west façade is a fixed single-light window with a small crank-out awning window centered below it. This window provides light and ventilation to the lower bedroom. At the midpoint of the lower level there is an exterior doorway which is flanked to the south by a fixed side light and to the north by a large fixed single-light window approximately 7 feet high by 6 feet 6 inches wide. These latter windows provide light to the family room. A concrete walk and steps lead north from the lower level exterior doorway to the screened porch on the upper level.

A crank-out hopper window is located in a window well at the base of the south wall of the carport. The carport is designed with four closets along the north wall for tools, lawn and garden supplies.

The north facade of the carport is one-story solid redwood vertical board siding (photo #005).

### Interior

The interior plan of the Curtis-Grace House is designed to be freely flowing with a strong connection to the outdoors. One can see through the entire upper level—from the master bedroom at the south end to the screened porch and carport at the north. Post and beam design maximizes transparency with large plate glass

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windows across the west façade. This window wall brings the changing beauty of the outdoors into the interior space with every new season.

A significant feature of the upper level is the combination of exposed redwood beams and natural fiber mat on the ceiling (ceiling visible in photo #006). Ceiling and wall fixtures throughout the house are George Nelson bubble lamps in various styles. The interior color palette consists of warm earth tones against walls painted ivory. Interior walls are made of 16 inch wide plasterboard set horizontally over conventional wood framing. The walls are finished in textured plaster; a 4 inch band of smooth plaster emulates baseboards.

The front door leads to a small entry area with the living room, dining area and kitchen to the north; the upper-level bedroom, bathroom and storage area to the south; and the central stairwell to the west.

Living room, dining area and kitchen. A massive Kankakee rubble stone fireplace wall dominates the east wall of the living room. This is an interior continuation of the exterior chimney wall (photo #007). The fireplace features a natural slate hearth and an elevated firebox. The fireplace contains the original Donley Heatsaver with natural convection heating. Four rubble stone, louvered ventilation openings for the convection system flank the fireplace.

The north wall of the living room features a Smith-designed, handmade built-in buffet with sliding Philippine mahogany doors (photo #006). Above the buffet are Smith-designed, handmade redwood cabinets. Philippine mahogany doors of the cabinets have spring latches and piano hinges. Decorative leather straps drop from an overhead redwood beam and give the illusion that the cabinets are suspended. The door pulls on the buffet and upper cabinets are handmade leather tabs.

The cathedral ceiling peaks between the living room and the dining area.

The dining area is located at the north end of the living room. A large fixed single-light window separates the dining area from the screened porch. A solid wood side door opens to the screened porch; this door has a transom.

Opening off the dining area to the east is the galley kitchen (photo #010). Compact and efficient, the kitchen features Smith-designed, handmade Philippine mahogany cabinetry. Two lower cabinets were made with

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canted drawer fronts which give the appearance of louvers, a signature detail in many of Smith's designs. A unique spice cabinet is built into the south wall. Quartz countertops which match the dimensions of the original "battleship linoleum" counters have been added. The kitchen flooring is period linoleum.

The screened porch is located to the north of the dining area; it extends to the west of the rear façade by approximately 5 feet. The porch extends on three sides in order to provide optimal ravine views.

An expansive window wall encloses the west side of the living room and open dining area to the north. The window wall contains a 27 inch knee wall of tongue-and-groove redwood with crank-out awning windows beneath the plate glass windows. The house retains original fiberglass roll-up shades beneath the plate glass windows.

On the south side of the living room is a full-height coat closet which separates the living room from the central stairwell. Sliding doors are Philippine mahogany. A 36 inch knee wall extends from the coat closet to the west window wall; this provides an open view from the living room to the stair landing and upper bedroom to the south.

Upper-level bedroom, bathroom and storage area. To the south, off the front entry area, the master bedroom, bathroom and storage area are accessed through a swinging door.

A full bathroom is located off the hallway between the front entrance and the master bedroom. The bathroom has an exposed redwood beam and skylight in the ceiling. The built-in vanity is original with Philippine mahogany sliding doors; a new Corian top, washbowl, backsplash and drawer front have been added. The bathroom retains the original bathtub and ceramic tile surround above the bathtub.

The focal point of the upper-level bedroom is the large half-wall opening which provides direct views of the entire first floor to the carport. A fixed single-light window with a small crank-out awning window centered below is located at the south end of the west wall. An out-swing casement window is located at the east end of the south wall. The natural mat ceiling in the upper bedroom is carried down the south wall to reinforce the natural feeling of the space (photo #011).

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The east wall of the bedroom and hallway has been dedicated to extensive closet space. Located on an exterior wall, these closets both insulate and modulate extreme winter and summer temperatures. Closets feature Philippine mahogany sliding doors.

Central stairwell to lower level. Descending from the front entry area to the west is a central stairwell to the lower level of the house (photo #009). The focal point of this stairwell is a large room-sized landing half-way between the upper and lower levels. The immediate view is of a large, suspended, two-tiered redwood and steel planter (photo #008). Enclosing the west side of the landing are two massive plate glass windows. A Smith-designed, handmade handrail and newel posts are made of redwood, and the supporting carriage is made of oak. Tall Smith-designed, handmade bookshelves are built into the south and east walls of the landing; the upper portion of the bookshelves serves as a half-wall divider between the landing and the master bedroom (visible in right center of photo #007). The redwood planter, bookshelves and ravine view allude to the unique function of this oversize landing as a plant study.

The lower-level bedroom, full bathroom and storage closets are to the south of the stairwell. These rooms are very similar to the upper bedroom and bathroom. The only significant difference is that the lower-level bathroom does not have an exposed redwood beam or a skylight. Extensive storage closets on the outside east wall are partially below grade and provide insulation from extreme outside temperature changes.

To the north is a large family room. The family room has an exterior door to the ravine; this door is flanked with two plate glass windows to maximize ravine views. The walls are paneled in tongue-and-groove hickory, and oak cabinetry is built into the south wall. Redwood accents are found throughout the family room. The acoustical ceiling tile has recessed lighting.

The furnace/storage room is accessed through a door in the north wall of the family room. The furnace/storage room lies directly below the kitchen and dining area on the upper level.

The Curtis-Grace House retains a high level of integrity, especially the original design, construction, materials, workmanship and ravine setting.



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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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1958

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Smith, Robert J.

Turner, Robert L.

**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 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.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The Curtis-Grace house was built in 1958; this year falls around the peak of the post-World War II MODERN movement in American architecture.

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**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

None.

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Curtis-Grace House, completed in 1958, is significant under Criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places. The house displays iconic features of the Modern architectural movement which culminated in the 1950s and 1960s. In general, the house reflects the influence of architectural principles characteristic of Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe and Joseph Eichler. The house is among the most intact and fully realized examples of the work of architect Robert J. Smith. Born in Indiana, but practicing for most of his career in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, Smith created a body of work in West Lafayette that is distinctive for its pure Mid-Century Modern style.

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

The Curtis-Grace House is significant as one of a handful of purely Modern style houses in West Lafayette. In general, the house combines broad influences from leading architects, whose ideas came to the forefront in the United States following the Second World War.

Frank Lloyd Wright's American masterpiece, Fallingwater, utilized new building materials—steel, concrete, stone and glass—with interior space in intimate harmony with forest, streams and rocks. This 1935-39 design

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solidified Wright's principle of organic architecture: an inseparable, symbiotic relationship between interior space and the natural outdoors. West Lafayette has an example of Wright's later works, the Christian House (National Register, 1992). Built in 1956 and located about a mile southwest of the Curtis-Grace House, the Christian House is a Usonian design.

In the 1920s Mies van der Rohe observed that reflections in glass were far more interesting than ordinary light and shadows. Mies created Farnsworth House in 1946-50 with virtually transparent walls of glass. His brief maxim *Less is More* sums up an approach which led to minimalism. This principle had a profound effect on residential architecture in postwar America.

Joseph Eichler's "signature" was post and beam construction. In the early 1950s Eichler's California houses turned their backs to the street and focused their attention on private backyards. Like Wright and Mies, Eichler used open floor plans, high ceilings, exposed beams and glass façades, especially floor-to-ceiling window walls. These provided seamless views between indoor and outdoor living spaces. Architect Robert J. Smith obviously adsorbed the post and beam concept during his studies and collaborations with other architects. He used the post and beam system for several of his West Lafayette designs.

Cliff May was famous for his adaptation of historic rural cattle farm houses in California. May designed Ranch house style homes beginning in the 1930s, but, remained active well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He designed a Ranch style house in West Lafayette in the mid-1950s, located not too far from the Curtis-Grace House.

Wright, Mies and Eichler are never-ending sources of inspiration for the years ahead. Subsequent generations of architects will continue to use well established design principles to create their own residential houses of the future.

In the 1950s a young man, Robert J. Smith—a designer, an artist, a landscape architect, an architect, a Professor of Architecture at the University of Illinois—began to design modern houses. Smith's style favored strongly horizontal, rectangular forms. His genius lay in the creation of freely-flowing interior space joined to wooded ravines and hillsides by large plate glass window walls. Hills, trees, wildflowers, rocks and their attendant colors and shadows were the decorative elements in his designs. Clearly, Smith admired the vision of Wright, Mies, Eichler and many other contemporary architects.

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An adopted Hoosier, Robert J. Smith spent most of his early years in New Haven, Indiana. He attended Indiana University from 1929 to 1931 and later completed his Bachelor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Michigan in 1934. He was employed by the National Park Service, State of Indiana from 1934 to 1940, working on landscape projects at the Indiana Dunes, Shakamak and Spring Mill State Parks. He returned to the University of Illinois in 1940 to study architecture, but his studies were interrupted by his service as a camouflage designer for the War Department.

He completed his B.S. in Architecture with High Honors at the University of Illinois in 1947. He joined the Architecture faculty and rose through the ranks to Professor of Architecture in 1954. During this time he worked with Robert M. Little in Miami, Florida. One of Smith's earliest collaborations was the Merrick Building at the University of Miami, where he completed both the architectural and landscape designs.

During the early 1950s Robert J. Smith also worked briefly with Charles Goodman Associates in Washington, D.C. Goodman was the modernist architect who created Hollin Hills in northern Virginia. Smith and Goodman were joined by other young architects: David Condon, Eason Cross and Charles Dettor. Together, they experimented with low-pitched roofs, posts and beams, plate glass windows and large fireplaces. These features were gaining a stronghold in modern residential design across America.

#### West Lafayette, Indiana

West Lafayette experienced rapid growth in the years following World War II. The presence of Purdue University and returning veterans under the GI Bill created a demand for additional faculty and staff. The result was a sharp increase in residential construction over the next twenty years, including local designs by such noted architects as Frank Lloyd Wright, Cliff May and Evans Woollen. Much of the new construction included traditional ranches and period-revival houses. However, there also were an impressive number of architect-designed modern houses built in the city.

In 1953 Professor George P. Salen and his wife, Dolores, purchased the first residential building lot from the Purdue Research Foundation in a new subdivision called "Happy Hollow Heights." Dolores searched for a "modern architect" in central Indiana and, finding none, she wrote to the University of Illinois in Urbana,

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Illinois. Professor Robert J. Smith replied and arranged to visit the Salens in West Lafayette in 1954. Smith was elated to find the Salen's magnificent building site: a lot with an abrupt cliff and a 400-foot-deep ravine!

After a few visits Smith returned with an artistic composition of space, scale, light, texture and color that was uniquely mid-century American Modern. Detailed plans followed immediately. Smith's early training as a landscape architect helped to site the house on their unique lot, and construction was complete in 1955.

Professor Smith's academic credentials and his fresh approach to modern design drew attention from the entire Purdue community. Of approximately sixty commissions over twenty-five years, Smith designed and completed twenty residences in West Lafayette, Indiana. The Salen House was his first (1955), and the Helmkamp House was his last (1972). The Curtis-Grace house was designed in 1957 and completed in 1958. The unifying feature of Smith's commissions in West Lafayette was the challenge of siting his designs on ravines and hillsides, even on the highest promontory in West Lafayette. Almost all of Smith's designs were sited on property which dropped off or rose dramatically from front-to-back or side-to-side.

The design of the Curtis-Grace House embraces the distinctive architecture of the 1950s and possesses high artistic value. Built on a natural ravine, the house features a glass window wall across the back façade. This window wall follows both Mies' penchant for glass and Wright's concept of a symbiotic relationship between indoor and outdoor space. Modern building materials of the 1950s—redwood, natural stone, glass and concrete—were used for the exterior façades. Inside, massive redwood beams, natural stone and natural fiber mat ceilings complement the post and beam construction. The massive exterior stone chimney wall and matching interior stone fireplace wall unite the outdoors with indoor living.

Freely-flowing interior space is unique. The upper bedroom interior view looks across a center stairwell landing to the living room and dining area, and beyond to the screened porch and carport. Every room (except bathrooms) has expansive, natural ravine views. The interior is accented with Smith-designed, handmade built-ins—cabinets, buffet, planter, bookshelves, staircase and banister—in natural redwood and Philippine mahogany.

Smith was a believer in the "green" revolution of his day. For the Curtis-Grace House he was environmentally conscious to minimize the amount of dirt to be moved and trees to be disturbed to lay the foundation. Smith

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sited so that the rear window wall of the house was canted approximately twenty degrees to the south. He designed for passive solar heating in the winter months. He placed the carport at the north end of the house to buffer harsh temperatures and cold winds. Smith also designed interior closets to be located on exterior walls to protect against large temperature variations in both winter and summer. The Donley Heatsaver in the living room fireplace recycles already heated air by natural convection.

All of these architectural features, taken as a whole, represent Smith's artistic and progressive architectural design for modern living in the 1950s.

Historical significance of the house has been recognized by numerous organizations: Wabash Valley Trust for Historic Preservation (WVTHP) Sycamore Plaque (2006) for "architectural, historical and culturally significant structures"; two feature articles in *Indiana Landmarks (IL) Indiana Preservationist* (2007, 2009); featured house in the IL/WVTHP Mid-Century Modern Home Tour: *Back to the Future* (2009); recognition to Dick and Connie Grace for "outstanding and continuing contributions to the history, architecture and quality of life of the Wabash Valley, WVTHP Johanna Downie Memorial Preservation Award (2009). In 2010 the Curtis-Grace house was selected by the City of West Lafayette for use in one of four videos, "Tour de West Lafayette." Three Robert Smith houses along with designs by Frank Lloyd Wright and Evans Woollen are featured in the Mid-Century Modern video.

Smith joined the architecture faculty at the University of Illinois in 1948; after twenty-seven years of a distinguished career in teaching and architectural practice, he retired as Professor of Architecture Emeritus in 1975. Robert J. Smith died on June 13, 1977 at his own "Smith-designed" house in Urbana, Illinois.

The history of ownership of the Curtis-Grace House is as follows: Roy and Leona Curtis (1958-1972); Helen Williamson (1972-1978); Michael Machtay (1978-1980); Richard and Connie Grace (1980-current). All prior owners are deceased. Dick and Connie Grace purchased the house from the Machtay estate in March 1980. The house was in very poor condition due to general neglect for eight years after the Curtises moved away. The Graces have spent thirty years committed to undertaking necessary repairs, upgrades and maintenance which continues today.

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Documents maintained by the current owners include copies of Robert J. Smith's original blueprints, August 12, 1957; Smith's Specifications, August 12, 1957; Smith's Addendum to the Specifications, September 24, 1957; Application for Building Permit and Improvement Location Permit, September 30, 1957. Further, the current owners have collected significant biographical material about Robert J. Smith, primarily from the University of Illinois Urbana and the city of Urbana, Illinois.

Robert J. Smith's original design and artistic interpretation of the Curtis-Grace House are significant under Criterion C as true, distinctive expressions of Modernism. Of special importance, the level of historic integrity of the Curtis-Grace House is among the highest of Smith's commissions in West Lafayette. The original design is unaltered, and an impressive amount of original building material remains intact. Smith's portfolio of twenty residences in West Lafayette clearly demonstrates his firm grasp of Modern design.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

Native Americans were the first to discover the beauty of the Wabash River Valley. Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet, established an Indian confederation which led to the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. Within five years Indiana became a state. The City of Lafayette was platted in 1825 on the east side of the Wabash River, where the terrain was relatively flat. The villages that would become West Lafayette were platted on the west side of the river, beginning in 1836. Settlers in both communities hoped to benefit from trade along the Wabash River. The planning and construction of the Wabash & Erie Canal in the 1830s brought land speculation and a sharp increase in economic activity to Lafayette. The canal was complete and open from Lafayette to Toledo, Ohio by 1843. Lafayette gained momentum during the canal years, reaching a population of 6,129 in 1850. But the town grew at much more rapid rate after the arrival of railroads in the early 1850s. By 1870, Lafayette had 13,506 residents. Industries located in Lafayette and expanded the economy beyond processing and shipping of agricultural products. The Monon Railroad opened a large repair shop in Lafayette in the 1890s; it was one of many industries that located in town in the following decades. Lafayette settled into an economic niche, combining its advantages of county seat status, regional rail hub connecting to Chicago, farm market town, and regional manufacturing center.

Settlers in West Lafayette wanted to capitalize on the successes of their neighboring city across the Wabash River. But first plat of would-be West Lafayette, laid out in 1836, proved to be too prone to flooding. Plats filed

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by Jesse Lutz in 1855 (Kingston) and by Eastern investors in 1860 (Chauncey) were atop the bluff, further west and out of the flood plain. Eventually, Kingston and Chauncey merged, and officially, in 1888, its citizens chose the name West Lafayette for the town. In the meantime, the most dramatic event in the history of the community had already occurred. The Indiana General Assembly granted the right to develop Indiana's land grant university to a group of Tippecanoe County businessmen, lead by John Purdue, in 1869. The current site in West Lafayette (then called Chauncey) was chosen and the university opened its doors in 1874. Granted the terms of the Morrill Act, under which land grant colleges were developed, Purdue would develop with an emphasis on scientific research, agricultural innovation, and engineering. From a population of 717 in the 1880s, by 1900, West Lafayette grew to include 2,302 citizens and Purdue University reached an enrollment of around 1,000. The town developed a close relationship with Purdue; most that did not work, teach, or attend there derived income by operating small businesses that catered to the university.

Housing areas of West Lafayette remained on the relatively level plain above the Wabash during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, contained within the orthogonal grid started by Lutz and the Chauncey investors before the Civil War. Finally, with most of this land within walking distance of the Purdue campus filled with housing, developers reached for the hilly, ravine-crossed terrain further north. By this time, planners, realtors, and homeowners were accustomed to picturesque suburbs, where uneven grades might actually be desirable and would enhance the naturalistic feeling of the design. In 1924, Robert and Charles Shook, along with Milton Simmons, filed the Hills and Dales plat. Nichol, Scholer and Hoffman, architects, designed Hill and Dales with meandering streets, taking advantage of the hills and grade changes. Hills and Dales Historic District was added to the National Register in 2002. The fact that housing types span from 1911 to the 1950s in Hills and Dales shows that the area and West Lafayette itself developed gradually during the Depression years.

With the end of World War II, West Lafayette expanded rapidly and Purdue's enrollment soared. From 1940 to 1950, the population of West Lafayette nearly doubled, jumping from 6,270 to 11, 873. Residential development increased to meet the demands of the expanding population and growing university. The most desirable residential lands in the post-war years were north, northeast and northwest of Hills and Dales, including the Happy Hollow area.



Curtis-Grace House

Name of Property

Tippecanoe County, IN

County and State

Large hills and ravines characterize much of post-war West Lafayette, including Happy Hollow, which is located near the Wabash River. The Curtis-Grace House is located on one of these large ravines; this modern house adds to the rich, ongoing architectural history of Indiana.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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Curtis-Grace House  
Name of Property

Tippecanoe County, IN  
County and State

2009): C1, 3.

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Wright, Frank Lloyd. *Frank Lloyd Wright, An Autobiography*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- 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): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.53

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Curtis-Grace House  
Name of Property

Tippecanoe County, IN  
County and State

1 16 507848 4477421  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

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

The boundary description of the Curtis-Grace House is as follows:

Lot numbered one hundred fifty-five (155) in Re-Revised Plat of Wabash Shores Addition, Parts Four (4) and Five (5) to the City of West Lafayette, Indiana.

Located in Wabash Township, Tippecanoe County, Indiana.

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

The boundary is justified because the property commonly known as 2175 Tecumseh Park Lane or the Curtis-Grace House lies completely within the boundaries of Lot 155 in the Re-Revised Plat of Wabash Shores Addition, Parts Four (4) and Five (5) to the City of West Lafayette, Indiana.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Richard E. and Connie F. Grace

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date September 12, 2010

street & number 2175 Tecumseh Park Lane telephone (765) 463 - 5271

city or town West Lafayette state IN zip code 47906

e-mail dandcgrace@aol.com

---

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Curtis-Grace House

Name of Property

Tippecanoe County, IN

County and State

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

The following is a log of photographs taken at the Curtis-Grace House:

Curtis-Grace House

Tippecanoe County, Indiana

Richard E. Grace

April 22, 2010

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology

East (front) façade, camera facing west

IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0001

Curtis-Grace House

Tippecanoe County, Indiana

Richard E. Grace

April 13, 2010

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology

South façade, camera facing north

IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0002

Curtis-Grace House

Tippecanoe County, Indiana

Richard E. Grace

April 13, 2010

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology

West (rear) façade, camera facing northeast

IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0003

Curtis-Grace House

Tippecanoe County, Indiana

Richard E. Grace

April 13, 2010

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology

West (rear) façade, camera facing southeast

IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0004

Curtis-Grace House  
Name of Property

Tippecanoe County, IN  
County and State

Curtis-Grace House  
Tippecanoe County, Indiana  
Richard E. Grace  
April 13, 2010  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology  
North façade, camera facing south  
IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0005

Curtis-Grace House  
Tippecanoe County, Indiana  
Gary Chilluffo  
March 31, 2009  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology  
Living room, camera facing north  
IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0006

Curtis-Grace House  
Tippecanoe County, Indiana  
Gary Chilluffo  
March 31, 2009  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology  
Living room, camera facing south  
IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0007

Curtis-Grace House  
Tippecanoe County, Indiana  
Richard E. Grace  
July 15, 2010  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology  
Planter (staircase landing), camera facing west  
IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0008

Curtis-Grace House  
Tippecanoe County, Indiana  
Richard E. Grace  
July 15, 2010

Curtis-Grace House  
Name of Property

Tippecanoe County, IN  
County and State

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology

Banister (staircase), camera facing east  
IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0009

Curtis-Grace House  
Tippecanoe County, Indiana  
Richard E. Grace  
July 15, 2010

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology

Kitchen, camera facing east  
IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0010

Curtis-Grace House  
Tippecanoe County, Indiana  
Richard E. Grace  
July 15, 2010

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology

Upper-level bedroom, camera facing west  
IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0011

Curtis-Grace House  
Tippecanoe County, Indiana  
Richard E. Grace  
April 13, 2010

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology

Living room and dining area from upper bedroom, camera facing north  
IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0012

Curtis-Grace House  
Tippecanoe County, Indiana  
Richard E. Grace  
July 15, 2010

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology

Lower-level bedroom, camera facing west  
IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_0013

Curtis-Grace House  
Tippecanoe County, Indiana  
Richard E. Grace  
July 15, 2010

Curtis-Grace House  
Name of Property

Tippecanoe County, IN  
County and State

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and  
Archaeology

Lower-level family room, camera facing west

IN\_TippecanoeCounty\_Curtis-GraceHouse\_00014

**Property Owner:**

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

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

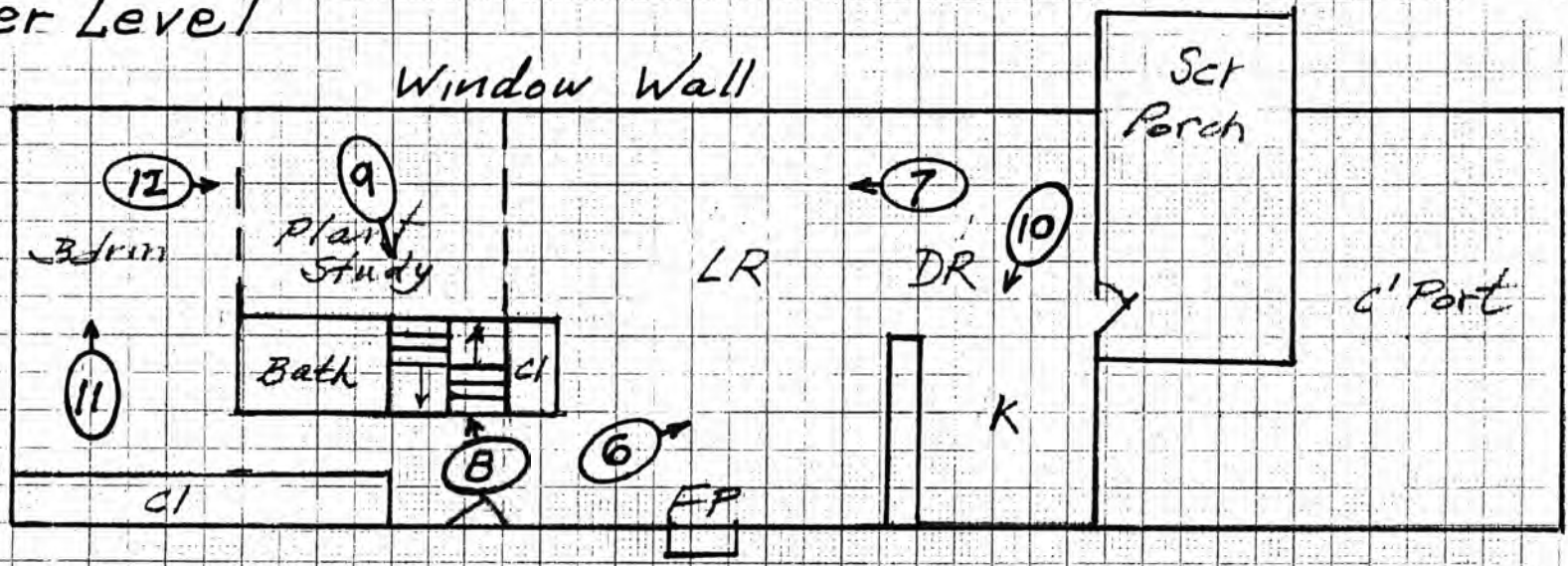
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**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.).

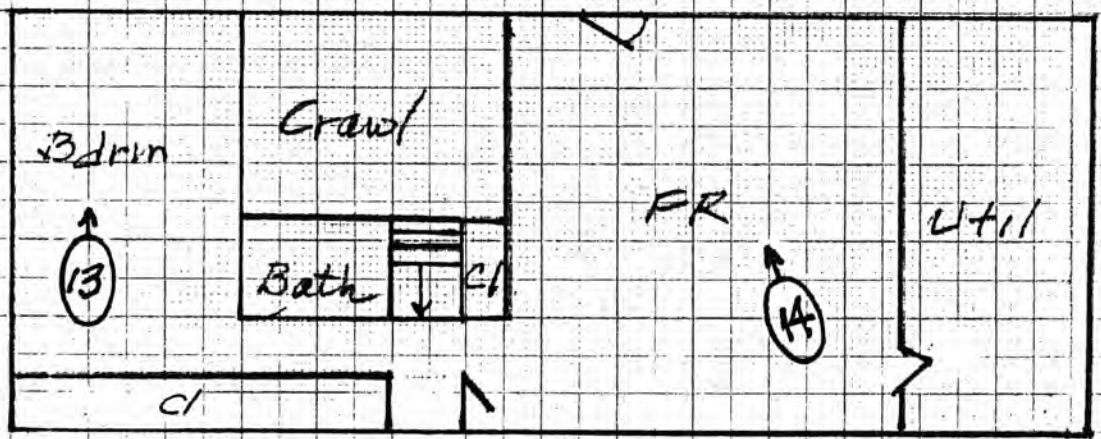
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

NORTH >>>>

### Upper Level

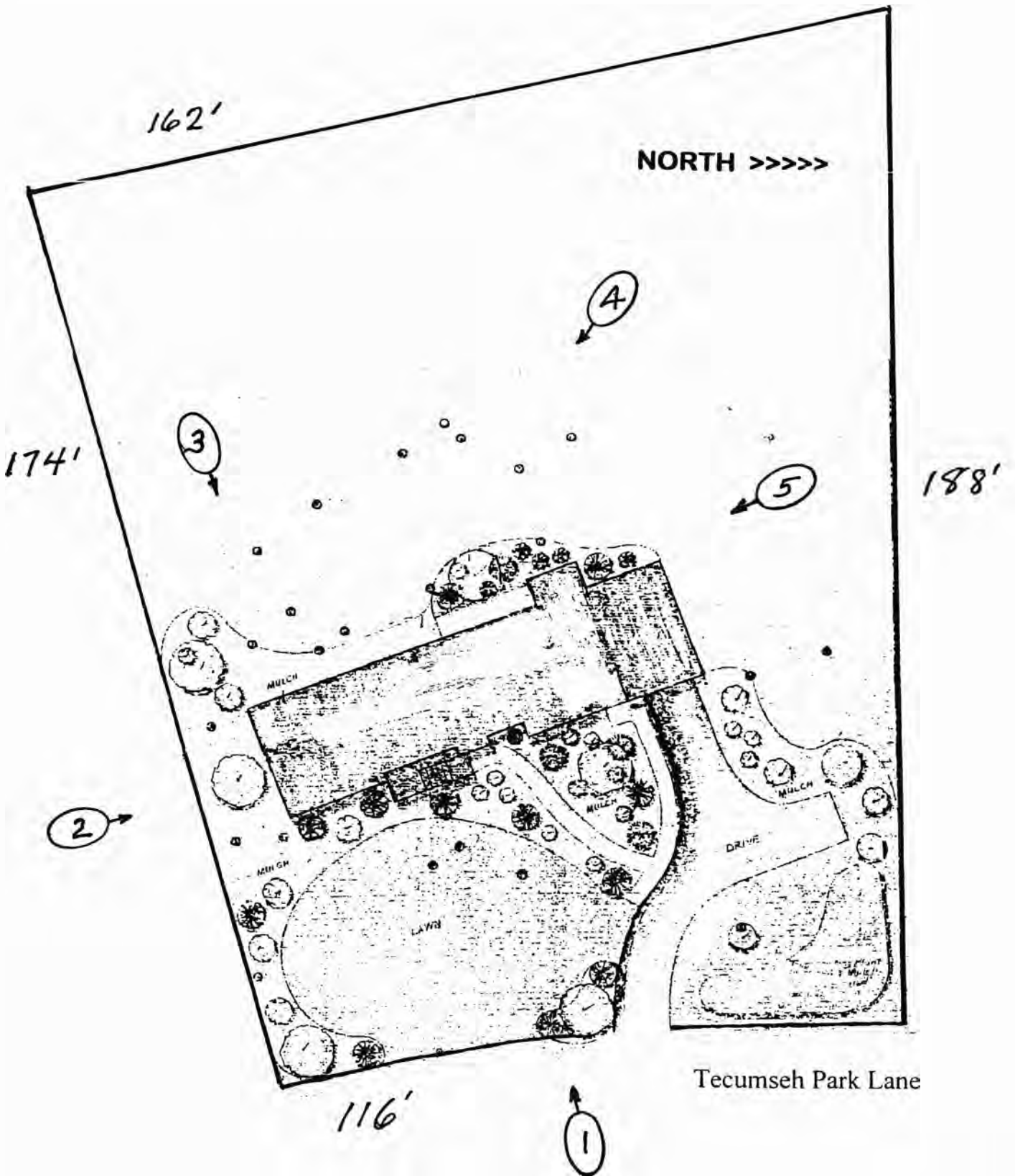


### Lower Level



**Curtis-Grace House**  
 National Register of Historic Places  
 Sketch Map--Interior  
 2175 Tecumseh Park Lane  
 Lot 155 Re-revised Plat Plan,  
 Wabash Shores Addition  
 Approx. 0.53 acres  
 City of West Lafayette, IN  
 Tippecanoe County





**Curtis-Grace House**

National Register of Historic Places Sketch Map

2175 Tecumseh Park Lane

Lot 155 Re-revised Plat Plan.

Wabash Shores Addition

Approx. 0.53 acres

City of West Lafayette, IN

Tippecanoe County

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Curtis--Grace House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: INDIANA, Tippecanoe

DATE RECEIVED: 2/24/12      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/19/12  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/03/12      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/11/12  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12000190

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    4.10.12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0001





Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0002



Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0003

Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0004





Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0005



Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0006





Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0007



Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0008



Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0009



Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0010



Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #001 1

Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0012



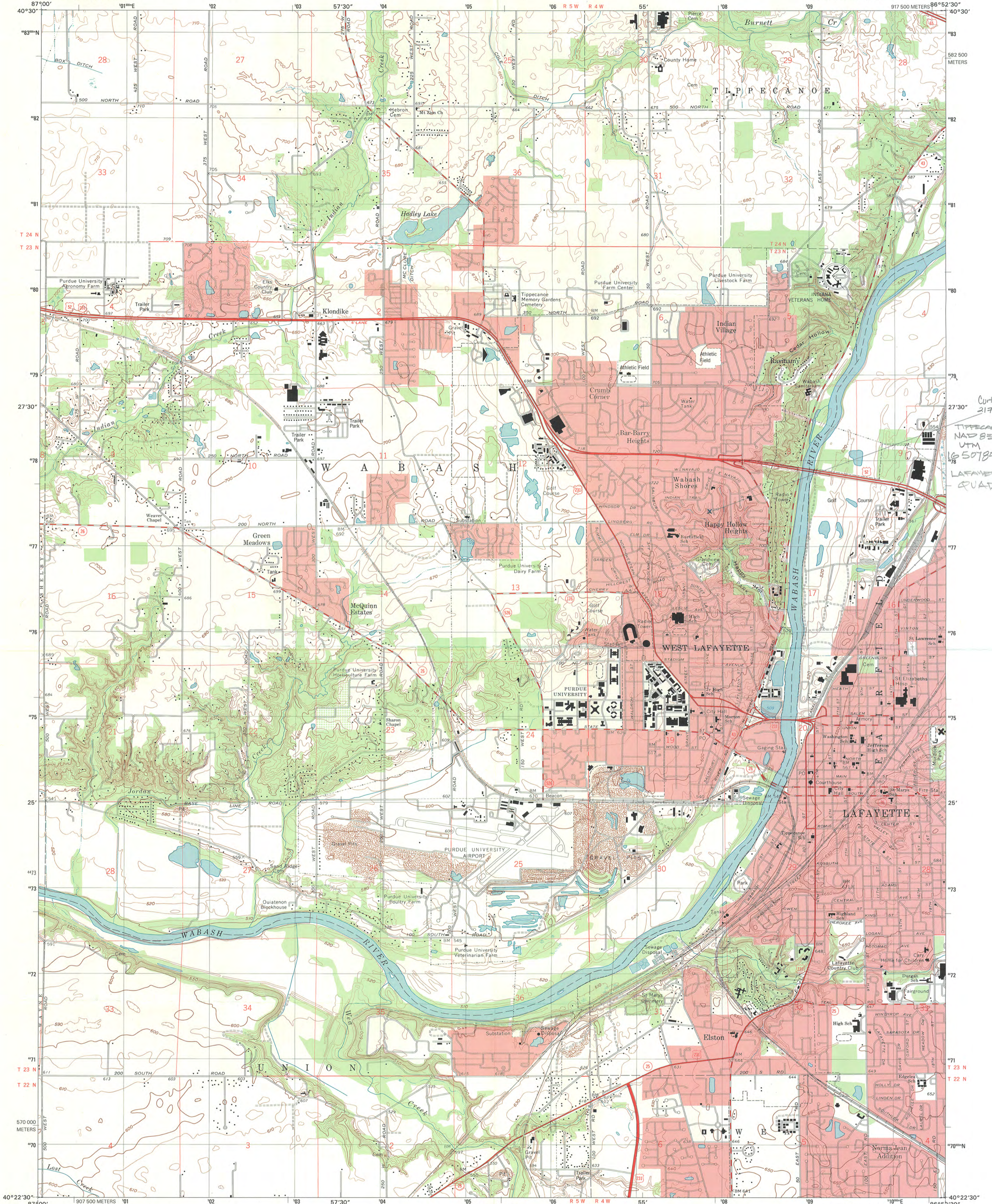


Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0013



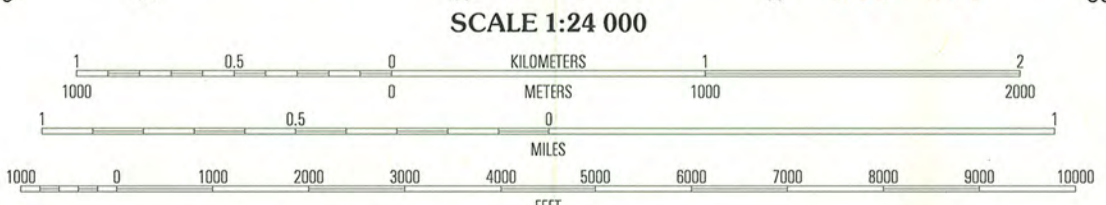
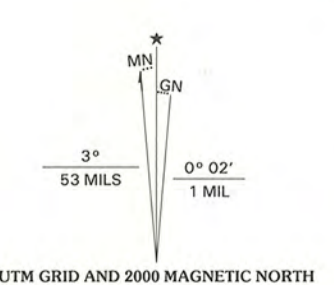
Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe Co., IN #0014





Curtis-Grace House  
2175 Tecumseh  
Park Lane  
TIPPECANOE CO., IN  
NAD 83 DATA S  
UTM  
16 507848 4777421  
LAFAYETTE WEST  
QUAD

Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
Topography compiled 1940. Planimetry derived from imagery  
taken 1998 and other sources. Public Land Survey System and  
survey control current as of 1961  
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and  
1 000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 16  
2 500-meter ticks: Indiana Coordinate System of 1983 (west zone)  
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed  
corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and  
NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from  
National Geodetic Survey NADCON software  
Landmark buildings verified 1961



SCALE 1:24 000  
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC DATUM OF 1929  
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048



ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Primary highway  
hard surface .....  
Secondary highway  
hard surface .....  
Light-duty road, hard or  
improved surface .....  
Unimproved road .....  
Interstate Route  
U.S. Route  
State Route

1	2	3	1 Round Grove
4	5	6	2 Brookston SW
6	7	8	3 Brookston
			4 Otterbein
			5 Lafayette East
			6 Wainpoint
			7 Romney
			8 Stockwell

LAFAYETTE WEST, IN  
1998  
NIMA 3664 IV NW-SERIES V851

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225  
AND INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



**Dr. and Mrs. Richard E. Grace**

**2175 Tecumseh Park Lane ♦ West Lafayette, IN 47906**

regrace@purdue.edu (765) 496-7384 (O) ♦ richardegrace@aol.com (765) 463-5271 (H)

December 28, 2011

Indiana Historic Preservation Review Board  
Indiana DNR—Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology  
402 W. Washington Street, Room W274  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

To the Indiana Historic Preservation Review Board:

Thank you for your review of our nomination of the Curtis-Grace House for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Our Post-and-Beam Modern epitomizes the distinctive architecture of the 1950s and possesses high artistic value.

Robert J. Smith, a Hoosier by birth and a Professor of Architecture at the University of Illinois Urbana, designed twenty modern houses in West Lafayette, Indiana between 1955 and 1972. He brought a uniquely fresh look to the developing suburbs. Our house was designed for a natural ravine setting in 1957, and construction was complete in 1958. Smith's artistic design of freely-flowing interior space, coupled by redwood, stone, concrete and plate glass to our wooded ravine, is exceptional. Smith also designed our massive stone fireplace wall, kitchen cabinetry, built-in buffet, half-wall in upper bedroom; stairwell and banister, bookcase wall and planter. These interior features were advanced for 1957-58 and remain highly contemporary today.

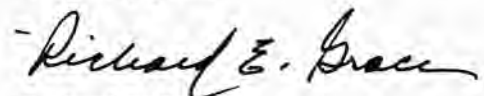
We have been faithful stewards of this remarkable property for 32 years. Our role has been to preserve the original integrity of the interior space, the exterior structure, and the ravine setting. Our commitment grows stronger every year.

We are indebted to Paul Diebold and Holly Tate, who gave much helpful advice about this nomination. Their careful attention to detail added depth to our narrative description.

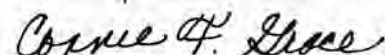
Please accept our apology for not being present at the February 15 meeting of the Review Board. We are at our winter residence on Longboat Key, FL. We have asked Tommy Kleckner of Indiana Landmarks to represent us at your meeting; he knows our house and grounds well.

We truly have enjoyed researching and preparing this nomination with help from DHPA. Thank you again for your personal interest in historic preservation and, in particular, for your critical review of this nomination.

Very truly yours,



Richard E. Grace



Connie F. Grace

# DNR

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology • 402 W. Washington Street, W274 • Indianapolis, IN 46204-2739  
Phone 317-232-1646 • Fax 317-232-0693 • dhpa@dnr.IN.gov • www.IN.gov/dnr/historic



February 20, 2012

Carol D. Shull  
Interim Keeper of the National Register  
National Park Service 2280  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, N.W.  
Washington D.C. 20005

Re: Curtis-Grace House, Tippecanoe County, Indiana.

Dear Ms. Shull,

Enclosed is a National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Curtis-Grace House Tippecanoe County, Indiana. The Indiana Historic Preservation Review Board reviewed the application and voted to recommend its approval for the National Register of Historic Places.

Please address any questions you or your staff may have about this nomination to my National Register staff, Paul Diebold, Frank Hurdis, or Holly Tate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert E. Carter, Jr.".

Robert E. Carter, Jr.  
State Historic Preservation Officer

REC:PCD:pcd

enclosure: nomination package