

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received DEC 6 1984

date entered JAN 3 1985

1. Name

historic Baird House

and or common (same)

2. Location

street & number 38 Shays Street N/A not for publication

city, town Amherst, N/A vicinity of

state Massachusetts code 025 county Hampshire code 015

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture	☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial	☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational	☒ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment	☐ religious
☐ object	N/A in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government	☐ scientific
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial	☐ transportation
		☐ no	☐ military	☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Theodore and Frances J. Baird

street & number 38 Shays Street

city, town Amherst N/A vicinity of state Massachusetts

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number 33 King Street

city, town Northampton state Massachusetts

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of the Historic and Prehistoric Assets of the Commonwealth has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate 1974 # 753 federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town 80 Boylston Street, Boston state Massachusetts

7. Description

Baird House, Amherst, Massachusetts

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Baird House is a low, one-story structure with a rectangular plan. Behind the house is located a small storage shed. The house is sited at the rear of a deep, wooded, rectangular lot on Shays Street, approximately one mile south of Amherst Center. The surroundings are rural and characterized by a series of small drumlins skirting the floodplain of the Connecticut River, approximately three miles west of the nominated property. To the south rise the steeper hills of the Holyoke Range.

The Baird House, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and constructed in 1940, follows Wright's "Usonian" precepts: paramount to the design is the close interrelationship of the interior and exterior of the house to its landscape. Said Wright, "A Usonian house is always hungry for ground, lives by it, becoming an integral feature of it." As such, the Baird House is a low-lying, horizontal structure, composed of a series of long walls interrupted by bands of floor-to-ceiling windows.

The house rests on a shallow "concrete mat" foundation, laid directly on the ground. The walls are of red brick laid in stretcher bond and wide boards of Florida cypress with horizontal grooves. The wall planes are broken with banks or vertical, single-pane casement windows, extending from the foundation to the roofline. The roof, which is flat and of metal (replacing an earlier tar and gravel roof), extends out over the wall plane to form a deep overhanging eave around the house. Two rectangular chimneys, one large and one small, project above the roof. The only exterior ornamentations are the grooves of the cypress sheathing and a band of narrow, lapped fascia boards defining a cornice at the roofline.

The house is oriented to the south with the principal rooms (study, living room, and bedrooms) ranged along the facade. The walls are punctuated with large areas of glass designed to take advantage of solar heating. The south elevation is composed of fourteen narrow bays with a three-bay recessed ell at the east end. The eight westernmost bays comprise a two-bay-wide study (or "sanctum," as Wright termed it) with paired floor-to-ceiling casements; a brick bay (spaced to contain, on the interior, a piano) topped, at shoulder height, with banded windows; and a bank of four paired full-length casements within a five-bay-wide living room wall of glass. The study and living room areas are linked with an apron terrace with trellises that extends the width of both rooms.

Recessed slightly behind and east of the living room area is a six-bay-wide bedroom wing containing two bedrooms, one of two bays' width with a bank of three floor-to-ceiling casements, and the other of four bays' width with two pairs of floor-to-ceiling casements set within a glazed corner wall. The bedroom wing is sheathed with cypress. Recessed still further is a small bedroom designed as an apartment for Professor Baird's mother and enclosed within a shoulder-high brick wall that projects beyond the ell to form a porch.

The rear (or north) elevation, with cypress sheathing, is unbroken by windows and contains, on the interior, service and storage space. A small square projection at the center of the house contains the heating system. The flat roof extends beyond the house at the northwest corner to form a carport space. Linked to the north elevation, via a cypress fence, is a small, rectangular, flat-roofed storage shed with overhanging eaves, a bank of full-length casement windows, and grooved cypress sheathing.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received

date entered

JAN 3 1995

Continuation sheet

Baird House

Item number

7

Page

1

The narrow west elevation, of only four bays' width, contains the entry, located off the gravel driveway and carport, and the end walls and windows of the study.

The interior of the Baird House contains, at the west end, an open-plan living and dining area separated from the study by a central fireplace. Beyond this open area, off a narrow hall turning east-west, are the kitchen, bedrooms, bath, and storage area. At the end of the hall is the "apartment" for Professor Baird's mother.

The interior is characterized by cypress and brick finishes. As most features are built in, there is little freestanding furniture. The dining table is a wooden peninsula with Wright-made chairs. The fireplace in the living room features a raised hearth, with open floor space beneath. Built-in shelving, tables, and wardrobes are standard; doorknobs are at shoulder height. The floor, which is of concrete, scribed into large rectangles and painted dark red, contains the heating pipes for the house. Hence, there are no floor coverings in the house. There have been no alterations, either to the interior or to the exterior, with the exception of the replacement of the original roof.

Archaeologically, the property has some potential for prehistoric sites. The property is located on the southwest facing slope of a drumlin above the Fort River. Two sites (19-HS-107 and 19-HS-108) are located within one half mile. Historic archaeological potential appears limited to earlier structure (and associated features) which may have been built on the property prior to 1940.

Adjoining the house lot is a long, trapezoidal wood lot of approximately four and a half acres. The Bairds use the wood lot for cutting wood to heat their house.

8. Significance

Baird House, Amherst, Massachusetts

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

Specific dates 1940

Builder/Architect Frank Lloyd Wright

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Baird House, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and constructed in 1940, is an intact and classic example of Wright's Usonian architecture. Built of red brick and horizontally grooved cypress, and with a flat, deeply overhanging roof, the Baird House typifies the precepts of Wright's Usonian design in its dominant horizontal massing, rectilinear plan, simplicity of construction and materials, and closely integrated relationship to its setting. One of only a handful of Wright-designed houses in New England, the Baird House is the sole example of the modern master's work in Massachusetts. The house is unaltered and is still lived in by its original owners.

Although the Baird House is less than 50 years old, it is of exceptional importance in Massachusetts for its Usonian design and as the only example of Frank Lloyd Wright's work in the state. As such, the Baird House meets Criteria C (on the state level) and Exception G of the National Register of Historic Places.

Frank Lloyd Wright first propounded his theories of Usonian design in the late 1930s. The Usonian house, as Wright envisioned it, was a simple, efficient house of high-quality design that would use standardized construction and mass-produced, inexpensive materials so as to make it affordable to the average workingman. Wright saw the Usonian house as a "democratic" dwelling and hoped that Usonian communities would serve as an alternative to poorly constructed and planned mass housing.

In form, the Usonian house derives from Wright's Prairie Houses of the early 20th century. Wright stated that the Usonian house "began as a campaign against the senseless complications most domestic life met at that period when a respectable house was a series of compartments within boxes."

Typical features of the Usonian house, as exemplified by the Baird House, are its simple, rectangular floor plan and low-lying, horizontal massing. The materials used in the house's construction were inexpensive and easily obtained: concrete, cypress and brick. The color of the materials--red brick, red cypress and concrete painted dark red--complements the New England landscape. Treatment of the construction materials (brick laid in stretcher bond and horizontally grooved sheathing) is simple but emphasizes the building's horizontal massing. The roof is flat, with a deep, projecting overhang to carry water away from the house and to shield interiors from sun. The house's flat roof, with its deep projection, is reminiscent of Wright's Prairie Houses.

Though the construction techniques employed at the house were simple, local contractors, inexperienced with such work, failed to produce a suitable bid. Because of this, William Wesley Peters, Wright's son-in-law and an important architect in his own right (Peters was the founder of Taliesin Associated Architects, Wright's successor firm), took the contract. The walls of the house were assembled in New Jersey and finished on the site.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 6½

Quadrangle name Mount Holyoke

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	8	7	0	4	4	4	0	4	6	9	1	4	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

1	8	7	0	4	3	7	0	4	6	9	1	3	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

1	8	7	0	4	3	1	0	4	6	9	1	3	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

1	8	7	0	4	2	8	0	4	6	9	1	4	1	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

1	8	7	0	4	3	2	0	4	6	9	1	4	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
N/A			

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sarah Zimmerman, Director of Preservation Planning, with Ruth Owen Jones
Chairman, Amherst Historical Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date October 1984

street & number 80 Boylston Street

telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston,

state Massachusetts

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Valerie A. Talmage

title State Historic Preservation Officer, Executive
Director

date November 16, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

12/27/84
(listed 1-3-85)
at end of commentary
period

date

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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date entered

JAN 3 1985

Continuation sheet

Baird House

Item number

8

Page

1

The Bairds' interest in building their house was aroused by reading Frank Lloyd Wright's Autobiography. The Bairds were particularly attracted to Wright's concept of the integration of interior and exterior spaces and so sent the architect the specifications and a plan of their lot along with some details about their way of living. Wright responded in due course with a set of plans. Although at first the Bairds encountered ridicule and hostility from other Amherst residents, with the passage of time, the house has been accepted by the community. Architecturally, the Baird House is a cohesive design that neatly integrates the needs of the clients. Professor Baird, an English professor at nearby Amherst College, and his wife have no children but did need space for Professor Baird's mother and for their dog. The mother's "apartment," at the eastern end of the house, includes such amenities as a fireplace and small, enclosed porch. General living space is located at the opposite end of the house, providing privacy for Mrs. Baird's apartment. The Bairds' dog was accommodated in his own dog yard, a fenced area off the rear of the house that connects the main house with the storage shed. It has been claimed that the Baird House is the best example of Frank Lloyd Wright's work in New England.

With the dog yard, storage shed, and terraces at the front of the house, the Baird House comprises a unified complex in close harmony with its setting. South-facing orientation and an extensively glazed south-facing facade take advantage of passive solar concepts, an innovation for the period. Another innovation is the orientation of the entrance at the rear of the house adjacent to the driveway and carport.

With a construction date of 1940, the house dates from the early years of what is known as the second great period of Wright's career, covering the years between 1935 and his death in 1959. Wright himself never saw the site prior to the house's construction but did later and gave it his approval. It is said that one of Wright's motivations in taking the Bairds' contract was that he wished to have a house in Massachusetts, a state in which he had designed no other properties and in an area (New England) where his work had had little impact.

The current owners are concerned about the future of the house and are considering placing a preservation restriction on the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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date entered

JAN 3 1985

Continuation sheet

Baird House

Item number

9 & 10

Page 1

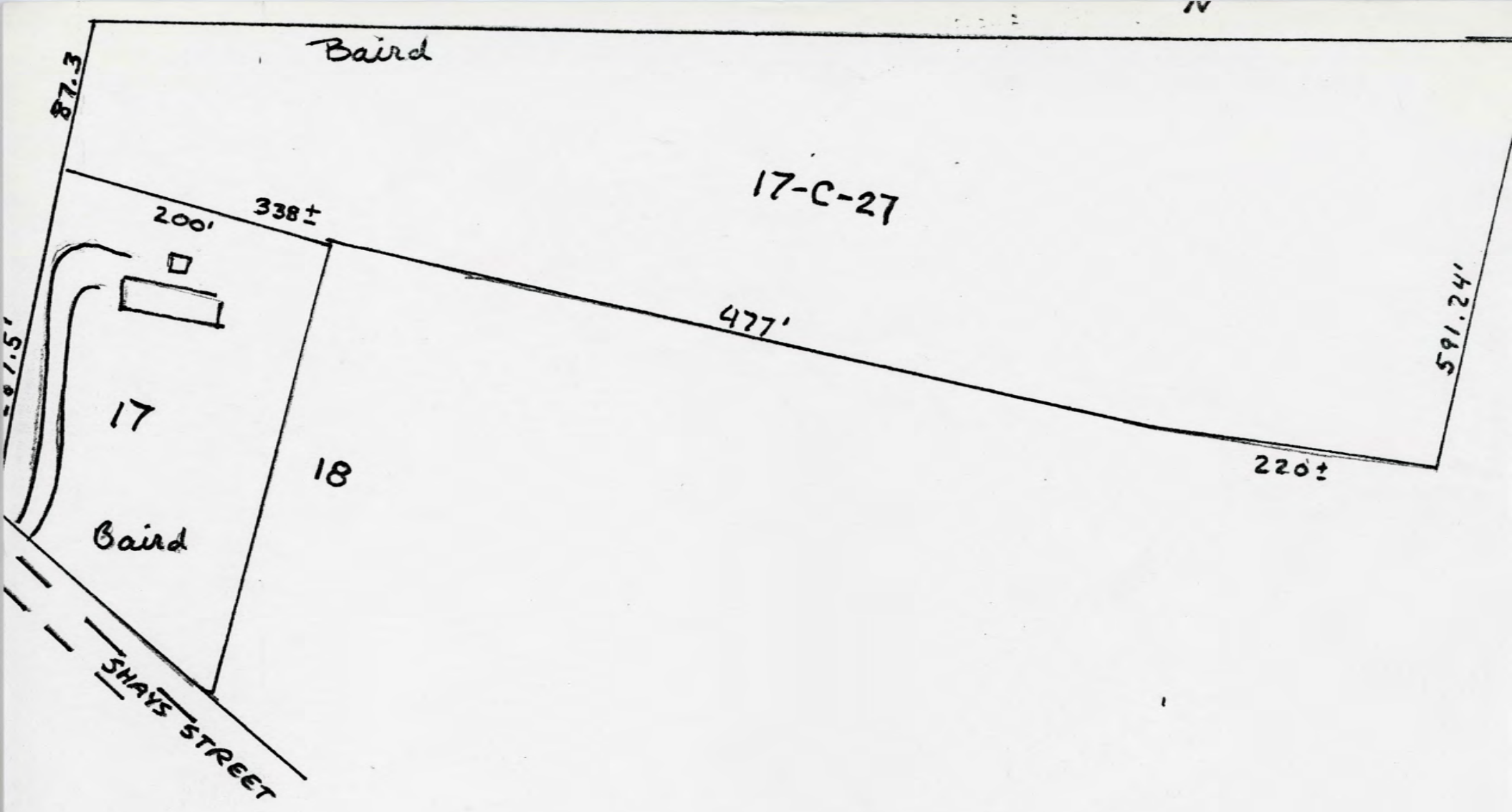
Futogawa Yukio, Frank Lloyd Wright #10 (Tokyo, 1976).
Hitchcock, Henry-Russell, In the Nature of Materials, 1887-1941: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright (New York, 1942).
Norton, Paul, A Guide to Amherst Architecture (Amherst, 1975).
Wright, Frank Lloyd, An Autobiography (New York, 1932).
When Democracy Builds (Chicago 1945).
"The Usonian House" Architectural Forum (January 1948).

10. Verbal boundary description and justification

Town of Amherst Assessor's Map
map 20A Parcel 17 land and buildings
map 17C Parcel 27 land

Parcel 17 fronts on the south on Shays Street about 240'

The nominated property includes two lots on Shays Street, one the Baird house lot and the other the Baird wood lot, being the two parcels associated with the construction and residency of the Theodore Baird House. The boundaries are as indicated on the accompanying map titled "Town of Amherst Assessor's Map" and dated 1969 and as shown by the heavy black line.



200

Town of Amherst
Assessor's Map, 1969
Scale: 1" = 100'

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Substantive Review

Baird House
Hampshire County
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. DEC 6 1984
Fed. Reg. Date 2/4/86
Date Due: 1-3-85 / 1-20-85
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 1-3-85
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

- ☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☒ NR decision

Reviewer's comments: Built in 1940, the Baird house is one of F.L. Wright's
Usonian houses and exemplifies the characteristics of the type
and the master's work in general. It is
exceptionally significant as the only
work of the master in Massachusetts and one
of the few in New England.

Recom./Criteria Accept
Reviewer Spencer
Discipline Arch. Historian
Date 12/24/84
☒ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership Public Acquisition	Status Accessible	Present Use
----------	---------------------------------	----------------------	-------------

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ moved date _____
☐ fair	☐ unexposed	
	☐ unaltered	
	☐ altered	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. Significance

Period Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet

Reviewer's Comments:

Baird House, Amherst, MA

The Baird House is a well-known example of Wright's work, being the only example of the master's work in Massachusetts and one of the few in New England (I became acquainted with it and its significance while studying at the nearby university). It is an excellent, intact example of the Usonian House designed by Wright to serve the needs of middle-class housing while integrating the architect's principles of natural harmony, open space, and intersecting planes in architecture. The Baird House features the simple rectangular floorplan, low overhanging roofline, natural materials of cedar, horizontal massing, and efficiency of interior space that is characteristic of Usonian Houses. It also possesses features such as the bands of floor-to-ceiling casement windows, interior cypress paneling, raised hearth, concrete floors, and custom-designed and built-in furniture and shelving that further reflect Wright's ideas for a fully integrated and organic living space. The house is located on a 6 1/2 acre wooded lot, maintaining its all-important relationship with its setting and the natural environment.

Other comparable examples of Wright's Usonian houses listed in the National Register include the Pope-Leighey House, Fairfax County, Virginia (National Trust property).

Linda McClelland

Linda McClelland, Architectural Historian
National Register Branch, Division of Interagency Resources

December 24, 1984



Baird House
38 Shays St.
Amherst, Mass.

photo by John H. Martin
neg held by Martin

1 of 4

photo by John H. Martin



Baird

Baird House
38 Shays Street
Amherst, Mass.

south east

photo by John H. Martin
neg held by Martin
#2 of 4
from east south east

photo by John H. Martin



Baird House
38 Shays Street
Amherst, Mass.

photo by John H. Martin
neg held by Martin
3 of 4
from east

photo by John H. Martin



Baird House
38 Shays Street
Amherst, Mass.

photo by John H. Martin
neg held by Martin
#4 of 4
storage shed from east

storage shed from east

photo by John H. Martin

AMERST, MA
Baird House
38 Shays Street

UTM References:
A. 18/704440/4691400
B. 18/704370/4691380
C. 18/704310/4691380
D. 18/704280/4691380
E. 18/704280/4691410
F. 18/704320/4691460



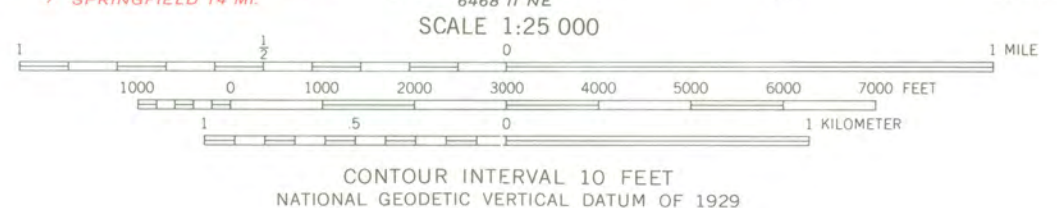
Feet	Meters
1	3048
2	6096
3	9144
4	12192
5	15240
6	18288
7	21336
8	24384
9	27432
10	30480

To convert feet to meters
multiply by 3.048

To convert meters to feet
multiply by 3.2808



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1935. Revised 1964
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 18
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1976 and other source data. This information
not field checked. Map edited 1979

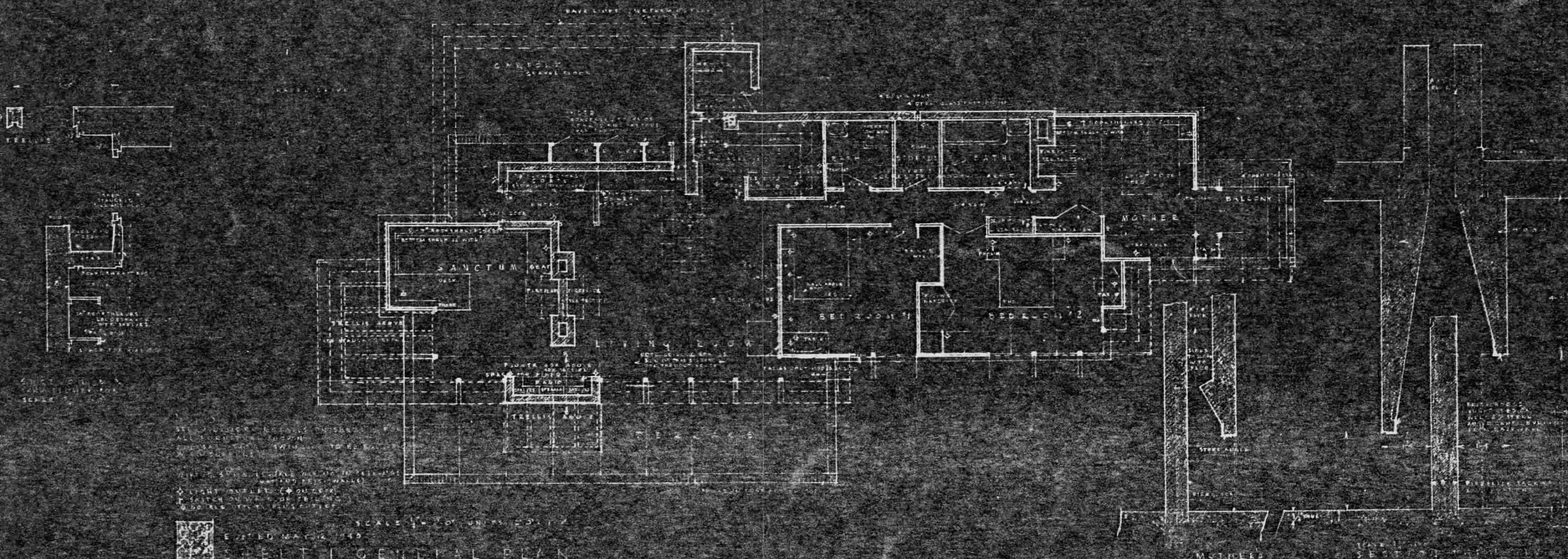


ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty Road Light Road
Medium-duty Road Unimproved dirt
Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

MT. HOLYOKE, MASS.
N4215-W7230/7.5
1964
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6468 I SE-SERIES V814

HOUSE FOR MR. & MRS. THEODORE BAIRD
 AMERST, MA
 SHEET 1, GENERAL PLAN, MAY 12, 1940
 FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, ARCHITECT
 (Original owned by Mr. & Mrs. Baird)



HOUSE FOR MR. & MRS. THEODORE BAIRD, AMHERST, MA
 FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, ARCHITECT

Town of



AMHERST *Massachusetts*

RECEIVED

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

NOV 12 1984

November 9, 1984

MASS. HIST. COMM.

Ms. Valerie A. Talmage
Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, Ma. 02108

Dear Ms. Talmage:

The Board of Selectmen strongly supports the Historical Commission's application for placing the Baird House, Shays Street on the National Register for Historic Places.

This particular dwelling is the only house in Massachusetts designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. It has a lovely view of the Holyoke Range and the owners wish to preserve the architecture of the dwelling.

We would appreciate your support of this application.

Sincerely,

Barbara K. Griffith
Chairwoman

BKG:my

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Revised (6-84)

ROUTING SLIP

(Indicate routing order by number - strike out office when cleared)

ORG. CODE	OFFICE TITLE	ORG. CODE	OFFICE TITLE
001	DIRECTOR	470	ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCES
	ASST. TO THE DIRECTOR	475	Air and Water Quality Division
	ASST. TO THE DIRECTOR (Tourism)	480	Energy, Mining & Minerals Division
	ASST. TO THE DIRECTOR (Urban Affairs)	485	Biological Resources Division*
002	DEPUTY DIRECTOR	498	Special Science Projects Division*
	ASST. TO THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR	500	ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK OPERATIONS
003	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE	501	Environmental Sanitation Officer*
010	BUREAU EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICER	610	Engineering & Safety Services Division*
022	SPECIAL ASST. POLICY DEVELOPMENT	650	Visitor Services Division
040	OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS	680	Concessions Division*
170	LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS	760	ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
180	Legislation	762	Environmental Compliance Division
190	Congressional Liaison	763	Park Planning & Special Studies Division
200	ASST. DIRECTOR, PERSONNEL & ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	765	Recreation Resources Assistance Division*
230	Administrative Services Division*	767	Land Resources Division*
240	Personnel Division	770	Cooperative Activities Division*
260	WASO Personnel Branch	773	International Affairs Branch*
280	Training Division*	775	Recreation Grants Division*
	Albright Training Center		
	Mather Training Center		
300	ASST. DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL & DATA SYSTEMS		FIELD OFFICES
310	Finance Division*		Air & Water Quality Division (Denver)
330	Budget Division		Energy, Mining & Minerals Div. (Denver)
350	Information & Data Systems Division*	1100	Harpers Ferry Center (HFC)
400	ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES	1200	Rocky Mountain Region (RMR)
410	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	1600	North Atlantic Region (NAR)
413	Interagency Resources Division*	2000	Denver Service Center (DSC)
418	History Division*	3000	National Capital Region (NCR)
420	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCE ASSISTANCE	4000	Mid-Atlantic Region (MAR)
422	Park Historic Architecture Division*	5000	Southeast Region (SER)
424	Preservation Assistance Division*	6000	Midwest Region (MWR)
429	HABS/HAER Division*	7000	Southwest Region (SWR)
430	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, ARCHEOLOGY	8000	Western Region (WR)
434	Anthropology Division*	9000	Pacific Northwest Region (PNWR)
436	Archeological Assistance Division*	9700	Alaska Region (AR)
			CENTRAL FILES
			MAIL ROOM

REMARKS:

Less than 50 year old hominidism.
Return to 413 after action

SIGNATURE

Carol Shuck

DATE

12-24-84