

OMB NO. 1024-0018  
EXP: 10/31/84

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only  
received NOV 25 1983  
date entered

1. Name

historic (Mrs. Richard Polson) house

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number Route 2<sup>nd</sup> N of Spooner not for publication

city, town Spooner vic.  vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Wisconsin code 55 county Washburn code 129

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Dan Kling

street & number Route 2

city, town Spooner vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Wisconsin 54801

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Washburn County Courthouse

street & number 110 4th Avenue West

city, town Shell Lake state Wisconsin 54871

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

## 7. Description

Condition  
 excellent       deteriorated  
 good       ruins  
 fair       unexposed

Check one  
 unaltered  
 altered

Check one  
 original site  
 moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Facing south in a rural wooded area northeast of Spooner, Wisconsin the Mrs. Richard Polson house is a modest frame-constructed two-story wood and stucco bungalow residence designed by the Prairie School firm of Purcell and Elmslie. The exterior elevations of the compact rectangular-plan house, supported on a cement foundation, are dominated by a massive, well-proportioned asymmetrical gable roof with wide eaves and a single dormer projecting from the shorter south slope. The low profile and strongly emphasized horizontal quality is expressed by wide, brown-stained cypress clapboard siding that wraps the house from the baseboard to the height of the ground floor windows. Above this, a stucco frieze surrounds the house up to the height of the eaves on the ground floor, and to the top of the triangular second story. A one-story approximately square porch extends from the east facade. Tar shingles now cover the original wood shingles.

The original centrally-located chimney is intact. A modern redbrick chimney with matching mortar, relatively unobtrusive from the exterior, has been recently added at the rear of the house, projecting through the eave, replacing one of three windows, on the north wall. All remaining rectangular casement windows, compactly and asymmetrically arranged, complete with original Prairie style muntins and fixtures, are intact on the ground floor. The sunporch and former kitchen porch, originally screened, have been glazed with double sash windows. The upper floor ribbon fenestration consists of a band of six double sash windows placed toward the front of the triangular area, and small windows extending far to the rear. This arrangement, intact on the west entry facade, has been altered on the west facade by the present owners to include vertical glass doors which open to the sunporch roof.

Like other important Purcell and Elmslie residences, the entry has been given special attention in both fenestration and sawed wood details. The rotted and demolished original entry, consisting of a series of parallel ornamented boards above a clapboard low wall, has been sympathetically replaced by the present owners who used salvagable original materials as a guide. Ornamental sawed wood squares in the form of a stylized quatrefoil flower, have been accurately replaced at points along the facade. The kitchen entry is modified from an earlier flat tin roof to a small gabled roof. The entry at the former kitchen porch has been accurately restored by the present owners. The only other ornament is the wood strip molding accentuating the triangular stucco upper elevation on the east and west facades.

The rectangular plan of the house, like many of the firm's open plan houses of the teens, circulates around the central fireplace. The basement, with three window openings, includes a large laundry and storage area, a fruit room, ash pit and cisterns. The first floor contains a wide double-square living room reached by two steps up from the front entry. Nine windows, six of which wrap around the southwest corner, add light to this room, dominated by its wide red brick fireplace. The fireplace of red brick and matching mortar in the vertical joints, remains intact, except for an oak ogee mantle and narrow shelve added to the right side. Throughout the interior, the original green painted plaster walls and ceilings have been necessarily replaced with white painted drywall, due to careless electricians who heavily damaged the original plaster during rewiring. The owners carefully and accurately replaced the original oak mouldings, thus maintaining the interior's integrity throughout.

(continued)

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Continuation sheet MRS. RICHARD POLSON HOUSE Item number 7 Page 1

The original statuary bronze light fixtures, designed by Purcell and Elmslie, survive in the living and dining rooms. The original built-in cupboard between the dining room and kitchen survives intact as do all of the doors and fixtures, some with cathedral or syenite glass. All of the floors - white oak, birch or maple - remain. The kitchen floor, long ago covered with red and white linoleum, has been covered with red ceramic tile. All closets, the living room, dining room, sunporch and down-stairs bathroom remain in very good condition, despite alterations, which have been carried out with sensitivity to the interior's integrity. The kitchen, kitchen porch and owner's room have been altered at the rear of the house to meet the needs of the current owners. Thus, the wall separating the porch and owner's room has been removed to make a modern family room with a fieldstone fireplace. The fully-carpeted room has been panelled with tongue-and-groove pine wainscoting and the ceiling decorated with 4" square wood beams. The kitchen has been modernized, but all of the original cupboards and birch countertops have been included, thus maintaining the original kitchen's character. The upper floor originally included only a guest room, with preliminary plans for "future bath" and "future" closets noted on the plans. The present owners have modified this largely unfinished and undesignated space to provide sleeping quarters (three bedrooms) and a bathroom. Light fixtures have been re-installed and mouldings from the guest room have been saved. The house is set on a relatively high point of land orientated so that the sunporch and corner windows face out to woodland and fields. Part of a fieldstone terraced wall which once surrounded the house remains in place on the west side of the house. To the south and west, large ornamental trees and remains of a flower garden indicate former landscaping plans which united the house with its flat surrounding grounds. Although recently altered, the interior retains about 80% of its Prairie School integrity. The largely unaltered exterior elevations particularly the more prominent south and west facades, remain clearly within the Purcell and Elmslie tradition.

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1917 (1) **Builder/Architect** Purcell & Elmslie<sup>1</sup>

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Mrs. Richard Polson house, built in Spooner, Wisconsin in 1917, is architecturally significant as a rare Wisconsin residence of the important Prairie School architects, Purcell and Elmslie. A distinguished example of Purcell and Elmslie's small and inexpensive open-plan houses built after 1910, the Polson house summarizes the best of late Prairie School residential architecture.

#### Architecture

The Polson house represents a compact residential type based upon a flowing and open square or rectangular plan which Purcell and Elmslie perfected through a series of houses built throughout the teens. With roots ultimately resting in Frank Lloyd Wright's Ladies Home Journal project of 1905, the superbly designed Polson house is the culmination of years of subtle refinements in plan, elevation and ornamentation. Descending logically from precedents such as the Ward Beebe house (St. Paul, Minn., 1912), the Harvey S. Parker house (Minneapolis, Minn., 1912-13), and the C.T. Bachus house (Minneapolis, Minn., 1915), the Polson house incorporates the best features of an open plan defined by the arrangement of a wide living room, dining room and kitchen around the central fireplace. Unity of space, simplicity of materials, and intimacy between interior and exterior are chief characteristics of Prairie architecture that are retained in the Polson house by the open plan of overlapping rectangles, the strip molding, and the fenestration.

Particularly significant features of the Polson house include the lighting, the fenestration, and the survival of the original plans. Purcell and Elmslie's noteworthy use of indirect lighting is substantiated by the Polson house which still contains many of its original ceiling and wall fixtures. The living room corner windows, the tinted stucco, the primarily geometric character of the elevation, and the taut membraneous stucco surface are design features which contribute significantly to the aesthetic of the house's design. Lastly, the cost-saving designs, such as the cutting of two clapboards from one plank, were notable features of the house.

The Polson house is significant for its relationship with two other highly successful small open plan residences by Purcell and Elmslie. The C.T. Bachus house of 1915 has a cubic plan and an elaborate entry that are nearly identical to that of the Polson house and the Harry S. Parker residence of 1912-13 is another of the rare "salt box" roof houses designed by the firm.

(continued)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Brooks, H. Allen. The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1972)  
 Gebhard, David. "A Guide to the Architecture of Purcell and Elmslie", The Prairie School Review Vol. II, No. 1, (First Quarter, 1965) pp. 16-24 and pp. 5-13.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Less than 1  
 Quadrangle name Spooner, WI (15')

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A	1 5	5 8 17 3 16 10	5 10 7 16 5 13 10	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property is a rectangular plot located near the northeast boundray of the Spooner city limits, accessible by the Trails End Road which intersects with Wisconsin State Highway 53. The plot is described thusly: Originating at a point exactly two-tenths of one mile from the intersection of Highway 53 and the

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

state	NA	code	NA	county	NA	code	NA
state	NA	code	NA	county	NA n/a	code	NA

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Steve Sennott

organization Northwest Regional Planning Commission date February, 1983

street & number 301 Walnut Street telephone (715) 635-2197

city or town Spooner state Wisconsin 54801

# 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 [Signature] date Nov. 21, 1983

title Director, Historic Preservation Division, SHSW

For NPS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>Beth Garsvorn</u>	date <u>2/8/84</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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Continuation sheet Mrs. Richard Polson House Item number 8 Page 1

The plans, drawn by Elmslie on linen, include five large sheets of elevations, plans and details as well as two sheets of drawings for the light fixtures, survive to testify to the integrity of the interior, exterior and detailing of the Polson house.

The firm of Purcell and Elmslie, opened in 1909 when Elmslie joined the office of Purcell and Feick, had offices in Minneapolis and Chicago. Purcell and Elmslie designed many buildings throughout the Midwest such as banks, houses and churches when Prairie School architecture had spread beyond its suburban Chicago setting into remote areas such as Spooner, Wisconsin or Winona, Minnesota.

Although numerous Purcell and Elmslie residences survive in Minnesota and Iowa, Wisconsin has four, one of which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (The J.D.R. Steven house, Eau Claire, 3-1-82). The Mrs. Richard Polson house (1917) in Spooner, Wisconsin represents a conclusive Prairie School residence by Purcell and Elmslie significant as the work of important architects and as a rare Wisconsin example of their residential architecture.

FOOTNOTE

- 1 David Gebhard, "A Guide to the Architecture of Purcell and Elmslie" Prairie School Review Vol. II, No. 1 (First Quarter, 1965), p. 23

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Mrs. Richard Polson House, Spooner, Washburn Co., WI  
Continuation sheet Item number 10

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Verbal boundary description continued:

secondary Trails End Road, proceed due east, parallel to the south (front) facade of the house, one hundred feet, then turn north 90 degrees and proceed one hundred feet (parallel to the east facade), then turn 90 degrees west and proceed one hundred feet (parallel to the north facade), then turn 90 degrees south and proceed one hundred feet (parallel to the west facade), returning to the point of beginning. There are no other buildings contained within this designated plot of land. The Polson House is located in the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of section 29, Town 39 North, Range 12 West.