NPS Form 10-900
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

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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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Ford, Sam and Ruth Van Sickle, House
Other names/site number:
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 404 S. Edgelawn Drive
City or town: Aurora State: IL County: Kane
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

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 ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X **national** ___**statewide** ___**local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___**A** ___**B** X **C** ___**D**

DSHPO 01/08/16

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

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**

Ford, Sam and Ruth Van Sickle, House
Name of Property

Kane, IL
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X 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 3.8.16

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	X
District	
Site	
Structure	
Object	

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
2	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling=Residence

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling=Residence

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Modern Movement: Organic

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: Walls:coal, cullet (or slag) glass, plate glass, vertical cypress clapboard, exposed steel structure. Roof: cedar shingles, membrane roofing, glass

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph
The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is a one story, single-family house on a site approximately two and one-half miles west of downtown Aurora, Illinois. The house is an example of Organic Design and is immediately noticeable in its residential area due to its highly unusual form and materials. The main section of the house is a dome formed by the rotation of curved Quonset hut ribs around a central axis. The dome is covered with a roof of cedar shingles. Around the base of the dome, on the northwest side of the house, its steel ribs are exposed and wrap an enclosing wall of coal and cullet (or slag) glass. On the southeast side of the house approximately one third of the dome has been opened to the exterior to create an exterior living space. Here separation between interior and exterior space is created by glass walls radiating from the center of the dome. Two smaller quarter-domes flank the main dome to the south and the northeast and enclose bedrooms. The smaller domes are structured and enclosed in a manner similar to the main dome. A carport projects to the west from the main dome. The western end of the carport's flat roof is curved in plan, complementing the round form of the domes. A U-shaped driveway curves beneath the carport roof. On the western edge of the property, between the arms of the driveway, is an ornamental wall built of coal. This wall is a contributing resource on the property. Along with coal, cullet glass and cedar shingles, other distinctive materials used on the house are vertical cypress clapboard, large sheets of plate glass, and one inch diameter rope, which covers the flat ceilings of the house. In all, these forms and materials give the house a striking visual impact. Built in 1949-50, the house is in an excellent state of repair with a high level of historic integrity.

Narrative Description

Geographic Context

The Ford House sits on a city block in western Aurora, Kane County, Illinois, bounded by South Edgelawn Drive on the west, Kenilworth Place on the north, Rosedale Avenue on the east, and Southlawn Place on the south. It is sited in the northwest quadrant of the block. The grading of this area is relatively flat, though there is a rise to the northeast.[1] The house itself has a clear axis of symmetry running from the northwest corner of the block to the southeast. Originally, Sam and Ruth Ford purchased only the west half of the block; the east half of the block was developed separately and another house was built there at a later date. In 1996, current owner Sidney K. Robinson purchased the property to the east and demolished the house on it. This now allows the Ford House to sit with an equal amount of open space on either side of its axis of symmetry. The current configuration of the landscape was put in place after the demolition of the adjacent house, and includes an area of approximately one-half acre that has been planted with prairie grass. Historically the Ford House landscape included lawn with shrubs and trees typical of other residential properties in the area.

Physical Description—Exterior

The house is oriented with a relatively opaque "public side" facing to the northwest. The more transparent "private side" of the house faces southeast toward the center of the block. Description of the house does not fall easily into categorization of "east elevation," "west elevation," and so forth. This is a function of the organic design of the house and its curved forms—one view flows into another all the way around the house.

From the west

On the west side of the property, approximately 20 feet south of the southeast corner of Kenilworth Place and South Edgelawn Drive, is the north access point of the house's U-shaped driveway which curves southeast, then curves south, under the carport, and then curves back to the southwest, to another access point on Edgelawn, approximately 50 feet south of the first access point. Between these access points, along the western edge of the property, is a low masonry wall of randomly laid chunks of coal with circular openings in it. This wall, which gives a preview of the unusual materials and forms that are used in the main part of the house, can be seen on Goff's original design drawings for the house and is a contributing structure of the nominated property. The top of the wall is irregular with its highest point at approximately 5 feet above grade. At either end, the top of the wall slopes to the ground. Due to its irregularities, the wall could be interpreted romantically as a ruin, and the plantings that have grown over

[1] In a letter from Don Tosi to Goff dated January 15, 1948, Tosi indicated the property rose to the southeast (letter in the Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago). Either there has been a significant change in the topography since that time or Tosi was mistaken in the direction.

portions of it accentuate that effect. The three circular openings in the wall allow partial views of the house, sometimes showing components, such as the bright red-orange curved steel beams which support the main dome, to be seen out of their usual context.

From the west, the most prominent component of the Ford House is the large dome that encloses the main living space of the house. The main dome is flanked by two smaller quarter-domes to the south and northeast, both of which contain bedrooms, and is formed by the rotation of curved Quonset hut ribs around a central axis. Starting at a height approximately 6 feet 8 inches above grade, the main dome is covered with cedar shingles. These shingles curve up to the high point of the steel ribs, approximately 18 feet above grade, where the roof becomes nearly flat and is covered with standing seam copper. At the top of each curved rib, straight steel ribs rise to meet at the center of the dome, forming a relatively shallow, cone-shaped cap to the house that terminates approximately 24 feet above grade. On the north and west sides of the cone, the areas between the straight ribs are filled with glass. At the top of this cone, flues for fireplaces in the center of the house exit the roof. Above the flues is a slender, steeply pitched, 8-foot-tall cone, formed by an open metal frame.

Below the eave of the shingle roof, the curved ribs—which give the dome its form and structure—are exposed. Here the ribs are not the Quonset ribs themselves, but instead are 4-inch by 4-inch wide-flange steel beams that have been crimped to follow the curve of the Quonset ribs. On the large dome, these heavier ribs are embedded in the house's concrete foundation wall, and they are connected to the thinner Quonset ribs just above the eave of the shingle roof. These ribs are painted red-orange to contrast them with the surrounding materials. Within the circle of steel ribs, below the roof eave, is a non-structural masonry enclosure wall made of randomly laid chunks of coal and cullet glass.[2] The use of the roughly finished coal and cullet glass for the enclosing wall contrasts with the regularity of the precisely curved steel ribs. At various locations within the wall's mortar, colored and clear glass marbles are embedded.

At the southwestern section of the main dome, the flat roof of a carport projects to the west. The north and south edges of the carport roof are parallel, and are located in line with the center of the main dome on the north and the center of the smaller, quarter dome on the south. The west end of the roof is curved and is held up by two steel columns that are concealed in a storage unit on the west side of the curved driveway. In plan, the storage unit has two curved sides, like an elongated football: the curve of the west side of the unit follows the arc of the carport roof above, while on the east side of the unit, the curve follows the driveway as it goes beneath the carport roof. The storage unit is covered with vertical cypress clapboards. This material is used consistently for all the opaque vertical walls of the house, aside from the coal walls. The ceiling of the carport is largely made up of 4-foot by 8-foot composition panels[3], painted red, whose

[2] Contractor Don Tosi referred to the type of coal used as cannel coal, a duller, more compact coal than anthracite coal.
Don Tosi, interview by Sidney K. Robinson. Tape recording, Ford House, Aurora, Illinois, June 19, 1995, transcribed, then annotated by Tosi, January 1997, 22. The original manuscript of the Tosi interview is in Robinson's possession.

[3] The panels are labeled "Transite" on the working drawings. Transite was a asbestos-cement product produced by Johns-Manville Corporation. While this is likely the material that was installed, this has not

joints are covered by dark wood battens. The panels are circumscribed by a circle approximately 13 feet in radius. This circle shares a center point with the arc of the curve of the west side of the west carport storage unit. At the center of the panels is a light fixture. The portions of the carport ceiling outside the circle of red panels are covered with rope approximately one inch in diameter. This rope wraps around the circle of red panels and continues up the carport's curved soffit to the roof edge. The surface treatment of rope is consistently used for all flat ceilings and soffits in the main spaces of the house. The wood joist structure of the carport roof is held from above by two steel beams whose western ends rest on the steel columns concealed in the west storage unit. The enclosures of these beams project above the roof and can be easily read. To accentuate their presence, the ends of the beam enclosures are extended beyond the west edge of the carport roof by copper forms that curve slightly upward. The eastern ends of the beams are supported by columns that are concealed in a crescent-shaped, cypress-covered storage unit. This unit is integrated into the enclosure of the main dome. At the north, the cypress unit is joined to the dome's coal wall by a single sheet of glass. This relationship is typical throughout the house—nowhere do coal and wood touch, as they are always joined, or separated, by a sheet of glass.

To the south of the carport's east storage unit is the main or "front" door to the house. This entrance is sheltered under the south edge of the carport roof. The door itself is covered with vertical cypress clapboard and is set in a wood frame. On either side of the door are full-height sheets of glass that serve as sidelights and separate the door from the cypress-covered storage unit to the north and a curved cypress wall on the south, which encloses a bathroom and storage area adjacent to the south bedroom. The glass to the south is cut and turns approximately 45 degrees to meet the curved bathroom wall at a 90-degree angle. The bathroom wall curves around to the east, where it becomes straight and intersects with the quarter-dome of the south bedroom.

The bedroom dome displays all the components seen on the main dome, but with slight variations. Because the dome is only one-quarter around, the skylight at the center is actually sliced on two sides and, therefore, is much more complex than the conical skylight on the main dome. From the southwest, the skylight appears as a quarter-circle-shaped sheet of glass sloping down to the southwest from a high point above the center of the dome. The curving lower edge of the glass sheet sits on a copper-sheathed collar. This collar, in turn, sits on the standing seam copper roofing that covers the nearly flat top of the dome. Below the copper sheeting, cedar shingles follow the curve of the dome to a termination point approximately two feet above grade. As on the main dome, the smaller dome's ribs are exposed between the roof and grade; the difference here is that actual, lighter-gauge Quonset ribs are embedded in the foundation wall, instead of being carried on heavier ribs, as they are on the main dome. Like the main dome, the ribs of the smaller dome are painted red-orange, and behind them is a curved wall of coal. While this short wall does not have cullet glass used in its construction, it does have glass marbles embedded in its light colored mortar.

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been confirmed.

From the southeast

As noted, the house has an axis of symmetry running from the northwest to the southeast. Viewing the house from the southeast, this symmetry is clearly visible. In the center of the view is the main dome. On either side, to the south and the northeast, are the quarter domes containing bedrooms. Connecting the three domed sections are flat roofs that shelter support spaces.

As described in the view from the west, the main dome derives its form and structure from Quonset hut ribs rotated around a central axis. As viewed from the southeast, the ribs are completely exposed. Here approximately one-third of the dome's enclosure has been removed to create an outdoor living space within the form of the dome. From the southeast, the transition from the heavier, wide flange ribs at the base of the dome to the lighter Quonset ribs above is clearly visible. In order to give the exposed ribs lateral (horizontal) support, half-inch-diameter steel reinforcing bars have been welded to the exposed ribs. These horizontal bars also reinforce the sense of enclosure to the outdoor living space provided by the vertical ribs.[4] The inner walls of the exterior living space are made up of planes of glass placed along lines that radiate from the center of the dome. The left glass wall is on a line that extends due south from the center of the dome. The right glass wall runs to the northeast. At the center of the dome, the concrete slab drops down 2 feet and 7 inches. This circular area, with a radius of 14 feet, 6 inches, creates a lower level space that continues into the interior of the house. Also at the center of the dome, the steel structure that supports the interior ends of the Quonset ribs is encased in a copper enclosure. This enclosure also contains fireplaces in both the sunken exterior and interior living areas. In front of the fireplaces, raised concrete hearths cantilever from the central structure. Against the vertical wall at the drop of the concrete slab, a curved built-in cypress bench faces the exterior fireplace. On either side of the bench, next to the glass walls that radiate from the center, are wood steps connecting the two slab levels. Continuing the symmetry of the space, cypress-covered doors are placed in the glass walls on either side of the exterior fireplace hearth.

Above the sunken portions of the outdoor and indoor living spaces is a round, cantilevered balcony that radiates from the center of the structure. This balcony has the effect of providing a sheltered intimacy to the sunken areas below it. The copper enclosure containing the central structure and chimney flues continues up above the balcony level, narrowing in radius as it rises. At the balcony level on either side of the copper enclosure, and separated from it by narrow sheets of glass, are rectangular cypress-covered storage units that project outward from the planes of glass. Adjacent to the storage units are cypress-covered doors giving access to the interior of the balcony.

The glass walls between the interior and exterior living spaces of the main dome are held in place by steel mullions. Formed by stock T-shaped sections, these mullions are extremely narrow interruptions in the planes of the glass walls. The transparency of the glass walls is accentuated by the extension of interior finishes into the exterior space, such as the cypress clapboard that covers the interior of the dome, or the rope-covered ceiling and soffits below the cypress. At the top of the exterior space, the Quonset ribs converge to be supported by a steel collar at the center

[4] Early photographs show that metal insect screen originally covered the ribs of the exterior living space.

of the dome. Clearly visible above this are the undersides of straight ribs that create the conical roof at the top of the dome. Over the exterior living space on the southeast, the conical roof is opaque, unlike the skylight section that may be seen above the interior space viewed from the west.

The glass walls that divide the inner and outer living spaces of the main dome continue to the south and northeast to create the exterior walls of the two smaller domed bedrooms. In the bedrooms, the glass walls span vertically between floor-level sills and flat, rope-covered ceilings. The ceilings are 6 feet 8 inches above the floor level. The glass walls are interrupted horizontally by cypress doors that allow access to the bedroom wings from the exterior. At the outer edges of the house, the glass walls terminate at the curved edges of the smaller domes. As with the main dome, finish materials straddle interior and exterior. The low coal walls at the perimeter of the small domes, the cypress clapboard of the domes' ceilings, and the horizontal planes of the flat, rope-covered ceilings all can be easily read on both the interior and exterior of the house. At the outside edges of the house, the flat roofs are boldly accentuated, cantilevered several feet beyond the domes on either side of the house.

Above each bedroom—between the lower, flat roofs and the curved, upper roofs—vertical planes of glass create clerestory windows. The pie-shaped geometry of the quarter-domes creates two straight clerestory surfaces that meet at a 90-degree angle at the center of each dome. Above the clerestories, the upper ends of the ribs of each dome meet at quarter-circle steel collars. These collars are held in place vertically by angled steel struts that interrupt the planes of the clerestories and rest on the flat roof decks of each bedroom. Because the bedroom domes are not complete circles, their skylights are more complex than that of the main dome. The vertical pieces of glass that meet at the centers of the domes between the struts are connected by vertical butt joints. These pieces of glass rise above the curved roofs of the domes to carry the glass of the skylights. The top edges of these vertical pieces are angled to allow sloped pieces of laminated glass to sit on top of them. The laminated glass is held to the vertical pieces by adhesive and metal clips. The sloping of the top pieces of glass allows for the shedding of water, but it also accentuates the verticals at the centers of the domes.

From the north

From the north, the house appears almost wholly sculptural. There are no doorways or windows in the standard sense. Viewed from this direction, the main dome and the bedroom dome to the northeast appear as fully-rounded forms. At the base of both are coal walls with the curved, red-orange ribs exposed in front of them. In the smaller dome, the length of rib is reduced significantly, as is the gauge of the ribs, emphasizing the difference of scale between the two domes. Above the coal walls, the curve of each dome is covered by cedar shingles; above the shingles, standing seam copper covers the curves at the tops of the ribs. Each dome is capped by its skylight. The differences between the two skylights are clear in this view: the main dome's skylight is the full cone shape and the smaller dome's skylight is the complex quarter circle. One way in which a sense of scale can be gained from this direction is by means of the horizontal line of the flat roof that cuts across the view at intervals. Starting on the left, with the cantilever of the roof at the bedroom, this line terminates at the right with the roof of the carport.

Physical Description—Interior

Main living space

Entering the house from the west, through the main entry door, one is brought into a vestibule created by a number of curved forms. On the immediate left and right are curved volumes covered with vertical cypress clapboard; on the left is the storage area adjacent to the carport, and on the right is the bathroom adjacent to the south bedroom. Directly ahead is a columnar screen created by the convex curve of the dome ribs. Beginning at the left edge of this screen, the coal enclosure wall begins to wrap around the base of the dome. The space of the vestibule "leaks" out to the left and right between the cypress-covered forms and the dome ribs. On the left, the nominal "interior space" terminates at a sheet of glass that closes the gap between the curved storage area and the curved coal wall, though the view in this direction continues unimpeded through the narrow gap to the lawn beyond. On the right, the space between the cypress-covered volume of the bathroom and the curving columnar screen narrows but never completely disappears, as it skirts the main living space on its way to the entrance to the south bedroom. The vestibule's rope-covered ceiling is the interior continuation of the carport ceiling. Its relatively low height and dark color help accentuate the difference between the vestibule and the main living area, which can be seen ahead through the columnar screen of the dome ribs.

Just beyond the ribs, the rope-covered ceiling curves upward to form a soffit that follows the curve of the dome in plan. At this point, the vestibule opens up dramatically to the main living area under the large dome. Straight ahead is a shelving unit that screens the view to the center of the dome. This shelving unit is critical in diverting one's path from going directly to the center of the house; instead one must go left or right, following the space around the curve of the dome. The path to the right terminates after a short distance at the glass wall which separates the interior and exterior living spaces. At the base of the glass wall, the floor slab stops short of the glass to allow for a rectangular planting area. In this location, fig and rubber plants have been planted, which now cover much of the glass wall. Turning right in front of the plants leads to the south bedroom; turning left leads toward the center of the dome. In this direction, one can either ascend a flight of stairs along the face of the glass wall to the balcony, or descend four steps to the kitchen area. The kitchen is screened from the entrance by the shelving unit.

Returning to the vestibule and turning left, the space follows the exterior coal wall around the upper level of the main living area. This allows for a 9-foot-wide living space that curves around the perimeter of the dome. At a point approximately straight west of the center of the dome, the shelving unit that screens the kitchen ends. This visually opens the space at the lower level to the upper living space. The upper space terminates at the glass wall separating the interior and exterior living spaces. Like at the south end of the upper living space, large plants grow in front of the glass wall. Also mirroring the other end of the upper space, in front of the plants one can either turn left to enter the northeast bedroom, or right to go up to the balcony or down to the lower living space.

The lower space originally was the dining area, and an upholstered banquette is built against the wall at the change of floor elevation. At the center of the lower space, in the copper enclosure of the house's structural core, is a fireplace with a raised hearth, similar to the fireplace and hearth in the exterior space. Like the lower area on the exterior, the lower interior space gains a sense of intimacy thanks to the cantilevered balcony above it. On the balcony level, the copper enclosure of the central structure diminishes in diameter as it rises. On both sides of this enclosure is a cypress clapboard-covered storage unit and adjacent door to the exterior balcony, as described on the exterior. As it rises, the copper enclosure is interrupted by the steel collar that supports the ends of the Quonset ribs where they converge in the center of the space. Above this, the copper enclosure continues to the top of the space, to the collar which supports the upper ends of the straight ribs that rise from the tops of the Quonset arcs. The spaces between the straight ribs are filled with glass to provide light to the balcony area, which originally was intended to be an artist's studio.

Below the skylight, the inner face of the dome is covered with cypress clapboards laid in a herringbone pattern. The cypress continues down the curve of the dome to the top of the coal wall, where it terminates behind a cypress valence which caps the wall. Behind this valence is a continuous band of neon lighting, which can wash the surface of the dome. Behind the lighting, between the exterior face of the coal wall and the interior face of the cypress ceiling, is a horizontal surface with hinged flaps that originally gave access to air vents. Now closed and insulated, these vents originally worked in tandem with still-functioning exhaust fans located in the upper part of the cypress ceiling. The valence above the coal wall terminates at the curved soffits of the rope-covered ceilings of the vestibule and the area leading to the northeast bedroom. Beyond the transition points between the valence and the soffit, the coal wall ends. Both ends of the wall have a noticeable batter as they rise from the floor to the flat ceilings. As at the vestibule, the steel ribs are exposed at the northeast end of the upper living space, creating a columnar screen through which one passes to reach the northeast bedroom.

As noted, the kitchen is in the south portion of the lower section of the main living area. The space is partially screened from the adjacent lower dining area and the front entrance by cabinets. The kitchen cabinets are faced with vertical cypress clapboard. To maintain consistency of finish, the cabinet units with drawers are covered with cypress-faced doors which open to reveal the drawers behind them.

Bedroom wings

As described on the exterior, the main living space is flanked by quarter-domes to the south and the northeast, which contain bedrooms. While the domed bedrooms are practically identical, the areas which link/separate them to/from the main living area are slightly varied to allow for somewhat different programmatic uses. Between the main living area and each bedroom is a cypress clapboard-covered volume that contains a bathroom and closets for utilities and storage. Oblong in plan, one short side of each of these volumes is semi-circular in form. In both volumes, the circular ends extend outside of the building enclosure to be read as additional curved forms on the exterior of the house. The halves of these volumes, which end in curves, enclose bathrooms that connect with the bedrooms. In the case of the south bathroom, there is a

door to the main living area, allowing that bathroom to act as guest bathroom for the main space. The interiors of the bathrooms are finished with cypress clapboard. The rectilinear ends of the bathrooms are fitted with three-sided mirrors. The curved ends are filled with oval tubs made of black terrazzo. The bathroom ceilings are covered with rope; above the tubs, at the center point of the curved wall's radius, is a round skylight. Adjacent to the bathrooms, at the square ends of the cypress clapboard-covered volumes, are the closets for storage and utilities. In the south volume, off the main living space, is a utility closet containing the hot water heater for the radiant heating pipes in house's floor slab. In the northeast volume is a closet for a washing machine and another for the domestic hot water heater. The other closets in both volumes open off the bedrooms for use as clothes closets.

The quarter-circle bedrooms are reached through a short corridor between the square ends of the cypress-covered volumes and the glass walls that extend from the center of the house. In these corridors, interrupting the glass walls, are cypress-covered doors to the exterior. The flat ceilings of these corridors extend into the bedroom areas, but quickly stop at curved soffits that follow lines just inside the straight clerestory windows above. Similar to the ceiling of the main dome, the ceilings of the bedrooms are covered by cypress clapboard in a herringbone pattern. These ceilings follow the curve of the domes down from the central skylights to a height approximately two feet above the floor. Below that, knee walls of coal follow the perimeters of the quarter-domes. On the sides of the rooms that are glazed, the coal knee walls project outside beyond the glass walls. At the other ends, the knee walls are separated from the cypress-covered volumes by small sheets of glass.

Alterations and Restoration

The Ford House has been altered relatively little over its history, and the building maintains a very high degree of integrity. Alterations that have occurred typically have been limited to minor finishes. The banquette in the lower interior living space was reupholstered in a naugahyde-like material that does not match the original. The original yellow linoleum counters of the kitchen were replaced with multi-colored mosaic tile by a later owner; this tile subsequently was replaced in the early 1980s with a less conspicuous terra cotta-colored laminate by yet another owner.

Since purchasing the house in 1986, current owner Robinson has restored or repaired several major elements. Beginning in 1991, a new composition roof was installed on the flat roofs and new cedar shingles were installed on the domes. During the following year, the central skylight was reconstructed.[5] In 1993, the skylights over the bedrooms were replaced; Goff's original

[5] To address this issue, owner Sidney Robinson enlisted the aid of three Chicago consultants: sheet metal contractor Al Wagner, architect John Vinci, and architectural historian Tim Samuelson. A significant point of discussion was the bottom termination of the triangular segments of glass that formed the cone-shaped skylight. The goal was to raise the bottom edge of the glass to create a drip edge on the exterior. This location had been a significant site for leakage. The bottom edge would be adhered to the substrate below it, but would not be framed, allowing it to move as required when the building moved. To achieve a drip edge and to minimize potential leaks that might arise from snow buildup, Wagner wanted to lift the

design had butt-joined glazing in these skylights, which, unfortunately, did not hold up and were replaced with framed joints. At the time of the 1993 restoration, advances in glazing techniques allowed the original skylights to be recreated with butt-glazing; the only addition needed was the clips that hold the sloped top pieces of the skylights in place. By 1996 the Quonset hut ribs in the exterior living area had badly corroded where they met the heavier curved steel ribs. To repair this, the bottom 18 inches of each Quonset rib in the exposed area was removed and replaced with sections of heavier, wide flange steel to match the base ribs.

In 2002, the curved cypress bench of the exterior living area was restored, and deteriorated rope on the southwest-facing soffit of the carport was replaced. In 2008, deteriorated cypress clapboard on the west face of the west carport storage unit was replaced by reclaimed old-growth cypress. The cedar shingles of the domes were replaced and the flat roofs were recovered with ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) rubber membrane roof in 2011. At the same time, in an effort to increase the energy efficiency of the building envelope, additional insulation was installed beneath the shingles, and the vents at the bottom of the main dome roof were closed permanently and insulated.

The original war-surplus "bomber blister" skylights of the bathrooms were replaced with flat pieces of plexiglass under the ownership of Don and Lily Berk (1980-86). The Berks' son Leo, who grew up in the house, is now a visual artist, and he fabricated skylights to the original specifications of the bomber blisters. These skylights were installed on the weekend of February 22-23, 2014. In October of 2014 the exterior of the coal masonry wall surrounding the main dome was repointed using a carefully formulated lime-based mortar. At the same time the ornamental wall, which had for several decades been covered by shrubbery and experienced some deterioration, was restored.

glass as high as possible. Countering Wagner's goal was Samuelson, who was concerned that shimming between the straight steel ribs of the cone and the frames of the individual lites would create something of a tunnel effect from below, minimizing the overall transparency of the skylight. The creation of a 1½-inch curb at the bottom of each lite eventually was agreed upon.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [ ] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [X] C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- [ ] 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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1949-1950

Significant Dates
1949-1950

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

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Bruce Goff
Don Tosi

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance, as a masterwork of twentieth century architect Bruce Goff. Its period of significance is 1949-1950, the years of its construction. Goff was a leader of the American Organic design movement, who, through his teaching at the University of Oklahoma and his design work, continues to influence contemporary architects. The house was designed by Goff in 1947-49 during a period of particular creativity and displays many of the important qualities found in his work. These include a strong underlying geometry and complex spatial variety. The house is an excellent example of Goff's creative use of materials. From the Quonset hut ribs, which give the house its basic form, to the coal and cullet glass wall which encloses its main living space, these building components show Goff's uninhibited openness to exploring new uses for materials. Goff was particularly fortunate at the Ford House that his design was brought to fruition by general contractor Don Tosi. Tosi had been a student of Goff's and then a draftsman in his office, working on the Ford House drawings. This makes the Ford house an especially faithful and well constructed example of Goff's design ideas. In addition, the house's excellent state of preservation and high level of historic integrity help to give it an important place in both the work of Bruce Goff and twentieth century architecture.

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

The Ford House and the Development of Western Aurora

The Ford House is located in the Country Club Estates subdivision in western Aurora, Kane County, Illinois.[6] Platted on May 22, 1926, Country Club Estates experienced little development before the end of World War II.[7] The Ford House site was undeveloped when the Fords purchased the northwestern portion of the block bounded by Edgelawn, Kenilworth, Rosedale and Southlawn from Charles M. Burgess in December 1947. This parcel measured 129 feet east-to-west and 109 feet north-to-south. In September 1949, the Fords purchased the remaining 100 feet of the block to the south of their original purchase, creating an overall parcel of 129 feet

[6]Subdivision information and ownership history was taken from the plat map and tract books on the website of the Kane County Assessor's Office, accessed April 22, 2013, http://lrs.kanecountyrecorder.net. This data was augmented by information in city directories in the collection of the Aurora Historical Society.

[7]A 1939 US Department of Agriculture aerial photograph shows that a house on Prairie Street was the only house built in the subdivision south of Marseillaise Place, a block north of the Ford House site. See the Illinois State Geological Survey, Illinois Historical Aerial Photographs, accessed February 22, 2014, http://maps.isgs.illinois.edu/ilhap, US Department of Agriculture aerial photograph, July 12, 1939, roll 1, exposure 6. A sketch made at the time of construction (in the Bruce Goff Archive) indicates that the large colonial on the block south of the Ford House site was already constructed.

east-to-west and 209 feet north-to-south. The house was built on the northern portion of this parcel. As Sam Ford was an avid golfer, the Fords' choice of location for their home probably was influenced by its proximity to the Aurora Country Club, one block south of this site.[8]

During the time that the Ford House was being built, major institutions in the area included the Aurora Country Club to the south and Aurora College (now Aurora University) to the east. Residential development of the area was relatively contemporaneous with the construction of the Ford House, taking place from the end of World War II through the 1960s. Another noteworthy example of residential architecture in the area is the Goldman House on the corner of Prairie Street and South Evanslawn Avenue; designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Keck and Keck, it was built shortly after the Ford House.

Participants

Albert G. "Sam" Ford and Ruth Van Sickle Ford, Clients

When Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford decided to build their new home in 1947, they lived in a substantial brick house at 480 Lake Street in Aurora. Ruth Van Sickle was born in Aurora on August 8, 1897, and had lived in the Lake Street house since 1909. A graduate of West Aurora High School, she attended the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts and graduated from there in 1918. She married Sam Ford of Geneva, Illinois, on January 27, 1918, while Sam was in the military. She gave birth to their daughter, Barbara, in October of that year.[9]

While Sam was a civil engineer employed by Western United Gas & Electric Company, Ruth began her career as an artist. In 1920, she returned to the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts to teach and eventually became its director and president, purchasing the school in the 1930s. Ruth continued to head the institution until selling the academy in the early 1960s.

Ruth Ford was active in numerous arts organizations. In 1954, she became the first Illinois woman to be invited to join the American Watercolor Society. In 1960, she became the first professional woman artist to become a member of the Palette & Chisel Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago, and she was the first American artist to exhibit in the country of Haiti, at the island's national art museum, displaying her Caribbean watercolors. Aurora University awarded Ruth Ford an honorary doctorate of fine arts in 1974.

After the Fords sold their Bruce Goff-designed house at 404 South Edgelawn, they moved to a smaller house at 69 Central Street in Aurora and lived there until 1984, when they moved to the

[8] It is current Ford House owner Robinson's understanding that Sam Ford had a golf cart that he would drive between the house and the Country Club. According to Ruth Ford's biography Sam Ford's ashes were cast under a tree near the entrance to the Aurora Country Club. See Nancy Smith Hopp, *Warm Light, Cool Shade, the Life and Work of Ruth Van Sickle Ford* (Aurora: Pen Works Press, 2011) 150.
[9] Most biographical information on Ruth Ford comes from Hoop, *Warm Light Cool Shadows*.

Countryside Care Center in Aurora. Sam died one night after their move. Ruth Van Sickle Ford died on April 18, 1989.

Bruce Goff, Architect

Born in Alton, Kansas, on June 8, 1904, Bruce Goff lived as a child in numerous small towns in Kansas and Oklahoma, as well as in Denver, Colorado, while his family moved to follow job opportunities for his father.[10] By 1915, his family had settled in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where Goff was apprenticed to the architectural firm of Rush, Endacott & Rush in 1916, at just twelve years of age. Through publications in his employer's library, Goff was exposed to the work of architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. Young Goff wrote to these architects, receiving warm responses in both cases. This began a connection with Wright that would be significant throughout Goff's life; however, this connection has, to some extent, been misleading, overemphasizing the relationship between the two. Despite his lasting regard for Wright, Goff's work was based on an individuality that clearly differentiates his designs from those of the older architect's.

Though Goff quickly rose to become a partner in his firm, with its name being changed to Rush, Endacott and Goff, the Great Depression forced that partnership to be dissolved in 1932. In 1934, Goff moved to Park Ridge, Illinois, to work with sculptor Alfonso Iannelli, whom he had met earlier in Tulsa. By 1935, Goff was teaching part-time at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, beginning an association with Ruth Van Sickle Ford that would culminate in his design of her house in the late 1940s.[11]

From July 1936 to the following summer, Goff was the director of the design department of the Vitrolite Division of the Libby-Owens-Ford glass company. While Goff found the design limitations imposed on him by this position unsatisfying, his exposure to the glass products with which he worked no doubt left a lasting impression. This impression would be made manifest by the introduction of glass cullets—residue from the industrial process of making glass—into the coal wall which surrounds the main living space of the Ford House.

After leaving Libby-Owens-Ford in 1937, Goff returned to teaching at the Academy and started an independent architectural practice in Chicago. This lasted until 1942, when Goff entered the U.S. Navy. In 1943, Goff was assigned to the Naval Construction Battalion, or Seabees, and was stationed in Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska; later that year, Goff was reassigned to Camp Parks, near San Francisco. During this period he designed a number of projects for the Navy that required him to make creative use of materials at hand. These projects included an

[10] Biographical information for Bruce Goff comes primarily from David De Long, *The Architecture of Bruce Goff, Buildings and Projects 1916-1974* (New York and London, Garland Press, 1977), and De Long, *Bruce Goff, Toward Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, The MIT Press, 1988).

[11] De Long, *Toward Absolute Architecture*, 318 n. 5, indicates that Goff had joined the Academy staff by the summer of 1935. The According to the book's chronology, Goff returned to the Academy in 1937, after working with Libby-Owens-Ford in Toledo, and appears to have continued teaching there until he left Chicago for service in the Navy in 1942.

assortment of both new and altered buildings to which Goff was able to give a sense of uniqueness. Relative to the Ford House, the most notable of these was the Camp Parks Chapel, in which Goff used the Quonset hut rib and form as the basis of his design, mitigating its tube-like form with cross-axial walls and a clerestory.

In 1945, after his discharge from the Navy, Goff opened an architectural office at 2027 Haste Street in Berkeley, California, staying there until 1947, when he was appointed chair of the Department of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. This time in Norman was an extremely productive period for Goff, both as a designer and educator; he designed not only the Ford House, but several of his most significant built projects, including the Bavinger House (1950), in Norman, and the unbuilt Price Studio No. 1, designed for Joe Price in Bartlesville, Oklahoma (1953).

After leaving the University of Oklahoma in 1955, Goff moved to Bartlesville, where commissions included the built Price Studio No. 2 (1956, 1964, 1974). In 1964, Goff moved to Kansas City, Missouri, and then to Tyler, Texas in 1970, carrying on his independent practice in each location. He died in Tyler on August 4, 1982.

Don Tosi, Builder

When the first Ford House contractor abandoned the project, young Don Tosi was brought as general contractor. Just twenty-six years old at the time, Tosi later recalled telling the Fords, when they asked him to take on the project, "I feel confident that I can do it. I haven't had that sort of experience, but I feel confident that I know the house, I know what has to be done to create Bruce's design, and I can do it."[12] Tosi had good reason to believe he knew what needed to be done for Goff's design. He had been both Goff's student and draftsman for several years, and he had worked on the Ford House drawings.

Don Tosi was born in Chicago on January 20, 1923. In a 1995 interview with Sidney Robinson, Tosi related that he met Goff at the Chicago Academy of Art, which he attended after graduating from high school.[13] Tosi had originally been leaning toward industrial design, but Goff "took him under his wing," and he became more interested in architecture. For one year before going into the Army, Tosi apprenticed with Goff in his studio on Howard Street on the north side of Chicago. There, Goff introduced Tosi not only to architecture, but to painting and to Goff's other major interest—music. Tosi spoke movingly of this introduction: "[N]ever until I got to Bruce and I heard his music did I find myself completely engrossed with music—the excitement was unbelievable to me."[14] After serving in the Army from 1942-46, Tosi joined Goff, who was now living in Berkeley, California; Tosi and two other apprentices lived on the first floor and Goff

[12] Don Tosi, interview, 9.
[13] In this interview Tosi shared much biographical information. Additional information can be found in, Charlie Wilkins, "The Homes of Builder Don A. Tosi," *Historic Illinois*, 34, no. 4, (2011) 3-8, as well as Tosi's obituary from the Naperville *Sun*, accessed, January 16, 2013, http://legacy.suburbanchicagonews.com/obituaries/stng-napervillesun/obituary.aspx?n=donald-a-tosi&pid=134161538.
[14] Don Tosi, interview, 128.

lived on the second. Tosi's work with Goff during this period included alterations to the Bachman House in Chicago, and the proposed Kozak House in Sleepy Hollow, California.

Tosi returned to the Midwest around the time that Goff moved to Oklahoma to teach at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. He set up an office in Elmhurst, Illinois, and began to act as a contractor in "self defense."[15] As Tosi recalled it, immediately after World War II contractors typically would build only the least complicated houses possible to maximize their profit in a market which was clamoring for new homes. Tosi became a contractor in order to build his own unusual designs. In October 1949, Tosi became the contractor of the most unusual house of his career, the Ford House. Tosi would go on to be a respected house builder in the western Chicago suburbs, particularly Aurora and Naperville. He died on January 30, 2009.

Design of the Ford House[16]

By 1947, Sam and Ruth Ford had been living in a two-story brick house on North Lake Street in Aurora for several decades. Apparently, the Fords went into partnership with Goff without specifying the exact type of design he should give them. Ruth Ford wanted a "modern home" with gallery space for her paintings. According to a July 6, 1950, *Chicago Tribune* article:

> When Mrs. Ford decided a few years ago that she wanted to build a modern house, she had nothing special in mind but the amount of space she needed and the amount of money she wanted to spend. Goff had taught at the academy [the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts] for seven years, and Mrs. Ford was acquainted with is work. She asked him to design a modern home.[17]

As Ruth Ford later remembered, "I had the Academy of Fine Arts about 25 years—Goff was there eight or nine years—taught interior design—then he taught privately at home—including Don Tosi, the builder of the house, who took private lessons with Goff."[18] While it is not known exactly how familiar the Fords were with Goff's past work, Ruth Ford probably would have been aware of his work in the Chicago area. The Elin and Rant Houses (1938) in Northfield; the Cole House (1939) and Unseth House (1940), both in Park Ridge; the Colmorgan House (1940) in Glenview, all were designed while Goff was teaching at the Academy. As discussions regarding

[15] Don Tosi, interview, 7.
[16] The narrative of the design and construction of the Ford House was written using documentation from the Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago and information in the 1995 interview of Don Tosi by Sidney Robinson. Because Goff was teaching at the University of Oklahoma at Norman at the time the Ford House was being designed and built a sizable amount of correspondence between the Goff, the Fords and Tosi exists in the Goff Archive. This is in contrast to Goff's other important house of this period, the Bavinger House, which was being constructed in Norman while Goff was living there. There is very little correspondence in the Goff Archive relating to that house.
[17] Shirley Lowry, "Critics 'Burn Up' Couple Living in House Built of Coal", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 July 1950, p. W-A3.
[18] Ruth Ford interview by David G. De Long, May 21, 1974. With thanks to David De Long who shared his unpublished notes from this interview with me.

the house began in the summer of 1947, Goff's Ledbetter House in Norman, Oklahoma, was under construction.[19] Whether the Fords knew of this building is not known, but when the agreement for architectural services was signed by the Fords and Goff in October 1947, they would have known they were going to get something out of the ordinary.[20]

On October 14, 1947, Goff sent the Fords an agreement for architectural services to be signed. In the attached letter, he said he had been "living" their house and stated, "Sometime these things have to be struggled with …and show signs of the struggle, but I believe this job will emerge clearly and beautifully and smoothly. Everything seems to naturally work out naturally [*sic*]. Of course having such understanding clients is a big help and a strong incentive. I hope…and am sure, you will like it." Regarding price, Goff wrote, "You will note that I gave you a flat rate of 10% based on your figure of $20,000. I believe that you will have to spend that much nowadays to get what you want and it does not seem that prices will come down any."[21]

On November 21, Ruth Ford wrote, "Dear Bruce, I don't want to sound too expeditious, but how are the sketches for our 'shanty' coming along? I'm just very anxious, dear. With love, Ruth Ford."[22] Her light but clear manner indicates the level of rapport between architect and client. Goff responded on December 3, explaining that sketches for the "shanty" would come soon and making reference to a change in the lot location that required him to change the plans. Goff apparently was referring to the fact that Ruth Ford indicated in a letter on October 10, 1947, that her husband was not able to buy the northeast corner of the block bounded by Edgelawn, Kenilworth, Rosedale and Southlawn as planned, but bought the southeast corner instead. In fact, the house was built on a northwest corner lot, purchased by the Fords in December 1947. By January 15, 1948, correspondence from Don Tosi to Goff clearly refers to a northwest corner lot as the site for the house.[23]

The plans Goff sent to the Fords were for the first of three schemes that would be created for the house. Significantly, it is the first scheme that ultimately was built. According to Don Tosi, the distinctive Quonset ribs were used because they were inexpensive, adding, "That was a starting point, and it gave him a shape that he felt was interesting. Bruce liked to work with shapes."[24] Goff was very familiar with the Quonset hut from his years in the Navy during World War II as a part of the Naval Construction Battalion, or Seabees[25].

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[19] These discussions are mentioned by Goff in his letter accompanying an agreement for architectural services.

[20] *Toward Absolute Architecture,* 321 n. 15, indicates that the construction contract for the Ledbetter House was signed on July 12 1947 and the Oklahoma City Times reported its completion on May 1, 1948.

[21] Goff to Sam and Ruth Ford, 14 October 1947, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago

[22] Ruth Ford to Goff, 21 November 1947, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago

[23] There is minor confusion here, as Tosi labeled the east-west street on the north side of the lot as "Westlawn." Westlawn is in fact a north-south street three blocks east of Edgelawn.

[24] Don Tosi, interview, 102.

[25] Along with prototype designs using Quonset ribs for Stransteel, Goff used the ribs on a project for the

When they received the plans at the end of 1947, the Fords liked what Goff designed. As the July 6, 1950, *Chicago Tribune* article described it:

> [Sam Ford], a gas engineer for Western United Gas and Electric company [*sic*], didn't say a word for two hours when he first was shown the plans. After studying them on the living room floor, he declared, "This will probably be the most interesting place in the world to live. Let's build it!"[26]

Sam Ford wrote to Goff on January 13, "I like it—and a lot."[27] The Ford House often is referred to as the "Ruth Van Sickle Ford House," and it is assumed that Ruth was the driving force behind the selection of Goff as designer.[28] While this may be true, Sam took an active role in discussions regarding the house, typically focusing on budget and construction issues. Sam's appreciation for the design did not keep him from listing a number of cost-cutting options in the January 13 letter, including reducing the diameter of the house from 48 feet to 36 feet, eliminating the depressed area around the fireplace, and cutting out the upper studio level.[29]

By April 16, Goff was assuring Ruth that, "Don [Tosi] should have the working drawings done very soon,"[30] though by May 12, Ruth was "a little disturbed things have not gotten started."[31] Tosi's involvement in the house was crucial from the design phase through the end of construction. His time as a protégé of Goff's before World War II, and working for Goff in California after the war, gave him a thorough understanding of Goff's design goals. According to Tosi, it was while he was working for Goff in California that the architect received the request from the Fords for their house, though by the summer of 1947 Goff was teaching at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Tosi had no interest in joining Goff at the university and

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Kozak House project. In that design the ribs were paired, but reversed at their connection to form a letter S.

[26] Lowry, "Critics 'Burn Up' Couple Living in House Built of Coal".

[27] Sam Ford to Goff, 13 January 13, 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago

[28] In their 1996 interview Robinson specifically asked Tosi, "And the request came from Ruth?" Tosi responded, "Yes. I don't know how it came about, but I know when I got there [Berkeley, California] Bruce was starting the first design for the Ford House." Don Tosi, interview, 11-12. As discussed in note 32 below, Tosi appears to have arrived in California in the summer of 1946. This would have been a full year before the first discussions of the Ford House.

[29] In his January 13, 1948 letter to Goff, Sam Ford also suggests reducing the "garage" from two cars to one. Originally the carport space was to be enclosed with accordion doors. While discussion of the removal of these doors has not survived, it would seem likely that this was another cost cutting measure. Sam Ford closes with, "I can assume Ruth is pretty happy about and with what you have in mind. If you please her, you will have taken care of me."

[30] Goff to Ruth Ford, 16 April 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago

[31] Ruth Ford to Goff, 12 May 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago

may have stayed on in California through most of 1947.[32] Regardless, by January 1948 Tosi was living at his parents' house in Broadview, Illinois, starting his own design and contracting business. In a letter to Sam Ford, Goff wrote, "I am writing Don too and briefing him on several points he needs information on. Please call on him when necessary as I am sure his experience on the Bachman work in Chicago and his understanding of what we are aiming at should be of help both to you and Linder."[33] Carl Linder was a contractor acquaintance of Sam Ford's, with whom Ford reviewed drawings. Ford also expected Linder eventually would act as contractor for the construction of the house. Clearly, by this point Tosi was Goff's *de facto* site representative. It is not clear how formally this role was stated, but on July 29, Goff wrote to Ruth Ford that he would like Tosi to sit in on meetings with Linder.

Linder had a number of concerns about the design. Sam Ford listed these concerns in a letter to Goff on July 20, 1948; Goff responded systematically to each of these concerns in a letter dated July 27.[34] Some items Goff recognized as matters of personal preference, and he did not resist

[32] This chronology is somewhat unclear. De Long, *The Architecture of Bruce Goff*, 239, n. 41, states that Goff confirmed that while he "closed" his California office "permanently" when he moved to Norman, Oklahoma, at the beginning of 1947, some later drawings carried the Berkeley address for legal reasons. Tosi stated that after moving to California he stayed there about a year and a half, which means roughly the end of 1947. Tosi further indicates that the first two, possibly all three schemes were worked on in California. If Tosi's memory was correct, it may be that while Goff's formal studio was closed at the beginning of 1947, Tosi (and perhaps others) remained and worked on Goff's projects in California.

[33] Goff to Sam Ford, 27 July 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

[34] Ford and Linder probably would have been reviewing working drawings dated July 10, 1948, copies of which are in the Goff Archive. A revised set of Scheme 1 working drawings in the Goff Archive is dated August 27, 1948. A synopsis of their concerns and Goff's responses is as follows:

1. Concern over constructability of copper skin at center pipe—Goff was confident that a competent builder should have no difficulty constructing the copper skin.
2. Eliminate the fireplace at studio level—Goff had no objection to this.
3. Eliminate second stair to studio near bedroom—Goff thought it will be more convenient with second stair, but felt this was the Fords' call.
4. Concern over strength of balcony—Goff responded with calculations.
5. Request for detail on where flues stop at roof—Goff clarifies configuration.
6. Concern that brass wire screen at top of center column will plug with soot—Goff said the holes in the screen will be large enough that they will not plug.
7. Concern over sheathing the sphere of the dome on the outside—Goff "believe[s]" this should work.
8. Concern over the sheathing of the interior of the dome—Goff stated the application of the spiral wood pattern "should present no difficulties in application." Tosi would later modify this detail as discussed below.
9. Want more detail on the top of the coal wall—Goff stated that he would provide this.
10. Question how the hemp rope is to be attached—Goff responded broad headed nails would be used.
11. Concern over design of the steps to studio—Goff wrote, "Tell Linder not to worry about the strength of the steps" and enclosed calculations.
12. Concern over detail of linoleum at balcony edge—no response.

these Ford/Linder proposals, which included the elimination of a second stair to the balcony (this remained in the final construction) and the elimination of a fireplace at the studio level (this was not constructed). In other cases, one senses some friendly exasperation on Goff's part. Regarding Linder's questioning of the strength of the studio-level cantilever, Goff responded, "We did not guess at it, Sam! I am enclosing calculations to prove our design." In this letter, Goff emphasized his trust in Don Tosi to assist the Fords and closed, "We are responsible for a sound piece of architecture and believe me you are going to get it!"[35]

For all Goff's confidence in his responses to Sam Ford, Ford's concerns about costs were well-founded and would remain an issue throughout the design and construction of the building. The Fords' original expectation was to build their house for $20,000, but by January 13, 1948, Linder already had informed Ford that he was "sure" that $20,000 was low.[36]

In his July 29 letter to Ruth Ford, Goff wrote:

> Now a word of advice to be patient!.... Please do not let minor questions disturb you or make you discouraged. Every building operation is grief from start to finish, but it is our job to worry about these little matters not yours. So throw it on us, please, and keep faith. We all want and are working for the same thing…a really good piece of architecture for the Fords!... And we'lll [*sic*] get it! Keep your chin up and thanks again, from your friend.[37]

To address the issue of cost, the initial scheme was abandoned for a time. The second scheme used Quonset ribs in a more traditional linear form. Along one side were kitchen, bath, and bedroom on a lower level, and a studio, bath, and bedroom on an upper level. These spaces were a part of a larger, rib-covered space encompassing both interior and exterior living areas. On October 18, 1948—a full year after the initial agreement—Ruth Ford wrote Goff:

> I am sorry I feel as I do about quansit [*sic*] huts but too I feel they are not your design. They were something conceived for war time living and gives me the same feeling as a prefabricated house does – The use of the ribs as they were in the round one was totally different and didn't suggest in any way the rather horrible (to me) quansit shape –…. I am sure as Sam said the other night "I am sure no one can give you a plan you can live with but Mr Goff." And I am sure he

13. Questioned whether the floor covering of the balcony was the same inside as out—Goff responded yes.
14. Think glass rail at balcony will be "terrifically expensive" and Sam Ford does not "particularly like it, and I am sure Mrs. Ford doesn't either"—Goff advocated for the lightness it will give, but was willing to look at something else if that were requested.

[35] Goff to Sam Ford, 27 July 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[36] Sam Ford to Goff, 13 January 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[37] Goff to Ruth Ford, 29 July 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

> is right. We want simple and easy but functional living, plenty of closet room light & air….[38]

Goff took her comments to heart, because by November 19, Ruth sent Goff a telegram saying, "now plans are beautiful."[39] The third scheme jettisoned the Quonset ribs and definitely lost its linearity; in fact, it appears much less focused on a specific design idea than either of the earlier schemes—it is something of a combination of the two. The coal wall-encompassed living area of the first scheme was now covered with a sloping roof which rose up to also cover the two-story kitchen/studio/bedroom unit of the second scheme. On the opposite side of this two-story unit, balancing the living area, was a screened exterior space whose configuration in no way resembled elements of the earlier schemes.

In spite of Ruth Ford's acceptance of the third scheme, cost was still a major concern. Goff wrote Tosi on February 26, 1949:

> I can't see how the Ford House should cost more than the limit they set this time…. If we get contractors away from dilutions [*sic*] of grandeur and to really figure what is there. Do all you can to discourage Sam from trying another scheme. It is very important for us to get this house built for them and I believe we can, even if we have to substitute some materials to keep the cost down. Much as I would like to have the coal wall, it is not worth that much, so I suggest prices on clinker brick culls…. Mostly black and try some more with the coal.[40]

In an undated letter, Goff again wrote to Tosi:

> Please do all you can to keep Fords straight. Linder is naturally pulling the old contractor trick of trying to discredit the architect by bringing up "practical" matters we are supposed to be too dumb to know about.[41]

Construction of the Ford House

Though three full schemes for the house were drawn, by May 6, 1949, Goff wrote the Fords that he was "happy to hear the contractor Mr. Morvay might be interested and wants to build our plan #1."[42] According to Tosi, it was he who connected Morvay to the Fords.[43] After returning to

[38] Ruth Ford to Goff, 18 October 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[39] Ruth Ford to Goff, 19 November 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[40] Goff to Tosi, 26 February 1949, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[41] Goff to Tosi, no date, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[42] Goff to Sam and Ruth Ford, 6 May 1949, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Illinois from California and setting up his own contracting firm, Tosi came into contact with Morvay:

> He was involved in some sort of an operation that the other fellow in my office was handling—building houses or something. At the time, then, I happened to ask him if he would be interested in bidding on the Ford House—we had the drawings in the office, and his representative came in and saw them and said, "Let me take these back to Morvay and talk to him about it." That's how he got interested, and that's what happened.[44]

While Goff may have expressed pleasure to the Fords regarding Morvay, to Tosi he wrote: "glad you have Morvay on the job. Be sure he doesn't take over the job and substitute materials without my permission and ruin our design."[45]

City of Aurora records show that a building permit was issued on July 14, 1949, to "erect metal frame wood sheathed house." The contractor was Morvay & Co. and the estimated cost was $30,000.[46] On November 8, Tosi wrote Goff, "Progressing splendidly on Ford job and hope to have Morvay in hand soon."[47] This optimism must have been short lived, as Tosi later told of the fate of Morvay:

> I think at that time he had bid somewhere between fifty and sixty thousand dollars. We had agreed to that, and so we advanced him four thousand dollars as per agreed contract. He started the building, and I came out to see how they were doing and whether they had located it properly, and so forth. I would come out about every three or four days. And finally one day I got a call from Bruce, and Bruce said, "Don, I don't know what the problem is. I'm going to be out that way shortly, but Morvay doesn't want you on the job. You're interfering." I said, "Interfering? I don't understand it. I haven't done anything but just look and check the dimensions and the location of the building. If that's the case and Mrs. Ford wants it, fine, I won't go back out." He said, "Well, wait till I get there. Don't go back. Wait till I get there, and we'll get it straightened around." Another three or four days went by, and Mr. Ford called me and he said, "Can you come

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[43] Morvay's first name was never used in surviving correspondence or in Tosi's recollections, but may have been Anthony A. Morvay, who was convicted in 1951 of defrauding "over 17 victims $30,000 in a scheme to build homes which never materialized." "Jury Convicts Two in $30,000 Homes Fraud", *Chicago Daily Tribune* 10 March 1951, p. 9.

[44] Don Tosi, interview, 17-18.

[45] Goff to Tosi, no date, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

[46] Charlie Wilkins, Project Assistant, City of Aurora Planning and Zoning Division, email to author, 29 March 2013. Interestingly, a second permit was issued 12 December 1950, for "additional work to interior," estimated at $23,000. Morvay Const. Co. is listed as contractor, though Morvay would have been long off the job by that point.

[47] Tosi to Goff, 8 November 1949, letter in the Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

> out, Don?" …. [T]hey told me they had advanced Morvay another eight thousand dollars to pay for the concrete and to pay for the labor, and one thing or another, because the [union] business agent refused to send any other carpenters out or form-setters out because he hadn't paid the last workers. Morvay owed twenty-five hundred dollars on the concrete. The Fords advanced Morvay another four thousand dollars, and he disappeared. He had the one bedroom foundation in and about half of the main circle unit formed, that was it. The Fords asked me if I would take over…. He disappeared and they never did find him. The Fords never heard anything about him or found him. This was in October of 1949 that he disappeared. As I say, they had just started the outside rim and we were laying out the balance of it and continued, and to completion. [48]

Having had experience in construction while in the Army, Tosi felt confident that he could make Goff's design a reality. "Anyway, when I got to Aurora I called the business agent and went over to him. He recommended a couple of carpenters to call to get a good foreman".[49] Tosi recalled that he had no trouble getting the crew into the spirit of the job, "They were good old boys…. And then I got an old mason—all of these people that got real excited about the building were older people."[50]

Tosi's role as Goff's draftsman for the Ford House working drawings gave him a unique understanding of Goff's design goals. Nonetheless, as with most construction projects, certain elements of the working drawings required interpretation by the construction team. Goff had written to Sam Ford in his July 27, 1948, letter, "Please realize there are many small structural details which have to be worked out as every job progresses."[51] Tosi stated that Goff was only on site three of four times in the course of construction and that he probably did not call Goff more than a dozen times, and then only for specific aesthetic decisions. "[T]ogether with two of the carpenters, my foreman and myself and another carpenter, we elected to try this or try that or try this or that. And they would get up there and fiddle around and say, 'Yes, like this, and I think maybe if we did this. What do you think about that?'"[52]

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[48] Lowry, "Critics 'Burn Up' Couple Living in House Built of Coal" states, "Construction was begun in the spring of 1949, but bogged down with contracting problems. Abandoned for the summer, work began again with a new contractor in October. Don Tosi, a young Maywood builder who had studied with Goff at the academy, took the project." This is somewhat contradicted by a letter from Ruth Ford to Goff 9 September, making reference to a mason contracted to Morvay who was playing "prima donna." Given Morvay's subsequent actions, one wonders what the whole story was. In the same letter, Ruth Ford commented, "Sam and I are now playing contractor's helpers as Don doesn't seem to be doing these things and I am becoming most impatient with regard to the progress."

[49] Those involved with the house according to Tosi include: Holman, copper work, Chuck Arnold, steel erection, Elmer Anderson as foreman. Leo Lakeman, was carpenter for a short period. "We had an Indian, though, and I can't remember his name. We used to call him 'Chief.' But he lived in the area, and was an Indian—a full-blooded Indian—and he was an excellent carpenter." Don Tosi, interview, 10.

[50] Tosi noted that at the time he was 26 years old, so "older" was relative. Don Tosi, interview, 24.

[51] Goff to Sam Ford, 27 July 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

[52] Don Tosi, interview, 133.

As Tosi noted, when Morvay "disappeared" roughly half the foundation was completed[53]. Tosi's earlier site visits would have given him an understanding of the state of the construction. Around the edges of the circular foundations, pockets were formed for the steel ribs to be inserted. "[W]e poured the wall with pockets for the 'H' beams, and then we set the steel on the wall and poured the pockets full with the 'H' bars in place…. There was no way I was going to try to get the 'H' beam in the form while pouring the foundation."[54] Tosi noted that the City of Aurora had its input in the construction of the house:

> Before I could get the permit, Aurora insisted on having an engineer's certification on the plans. They wouldn't accept just an architect's certificate. They wanted an engineer's certificate. The engineer questioned whether their Strandsteel was going to be strong enough to be embedded into the foundation at the base.[55]

At the city's insistence, the relatively lightweight Quonset ribs of the large dome were not embedded into the foundation, but were attached to 4-inch by 4-inch structural steel columns, curved to follow the arc of the rib. These columns were curved by what Tosi called "a simple device" devised by a steel company in St. Charles, Illinois. According to Tosi, the Quonset ribs were new steel, directly from Strandsteel, as opposed to being army surplus.[56] After being painted on the ground, the steel was then embedded in the foundation. The whole dome was given rigidity by welding steel purlins between the ribs covered by the roof. Where the ribs were exposed in the exterior living area, horizontal steel reinforcing bars are welded to them. The wood sheathing added rigidity to the structure as well. According to Tosi, "We had the inspector out several times and made a mock-up rib section, he accepted it."[57]

The coal wall of the Ford House may be its single-most noted design element. The wall itself is 18 inches wide at the bottom and is made up of two 4-inch wythes of masonry with an air space in between. The separate wythes of masonry interlock with mesh at the top. In his 1995 interview with Tosi, Sidney Robinson noted "I haven't been in the Bavinger House, but I have been in Joe Price's house in Bartlesville, and one of the things that I really like about this wall, which is not true in either one of those later houses, is that it's all random ashlar horizontal bed. The glass is irregular, but the stone, the coal is horizontal." Tosi responded straightforwardly, "Well, I made this one. That's why." When asked if that was how Goff wanted it, Tosi said he did not know:

[53] Ruth Ford also noted in a 9 September letter to Goff that some work had been done on a mockup of the coal wall.
[54] Don Tosi, interview, 20.
[55] Don Tosi, interview, 18-19.
[56] Goff and Tosi had worked with Stransteel on a number of design proposals for the use of Quonset ribs, including for housing and movie theaters. See De Long, *The Architecture of Bruce Goff*, p.195, regarding a Berkeley housing proposal. Drawings and correspondence regarding the housing proposal and theaters can be found in the Bruce Goff Archive of the Art Institute of Chicago. Tosi also referenced the Strandsteel theaters in his interview with Robinson.
[57] Don Tosi, interview, 20.

> I had to lay all of the glass and everything connecting to it. [The mason] wouldn't touch it. He said, "I can't do that." I said, "Why can't you do it? You've got glass here, and you've got glass on the other wall the same way so that it shines through." He said, "You do it." ….I had a tough time with him…. The mason was set in his ways of masonry and he felt more knowledgeable about producing these walls properly—I simply had an aesthetic feeling for the end result.

Regarding the sources for the coal and glass:

> We found out Libby Owens [Ford glass company] in St. Louis had an old plant in which they still dropped the residue onto the ground and got these big chunks…. They sent a truck down to southern Illinois to get the cannel coal and sent another truck down to St. Louis to pick up the glass culls…. I remember trying to find the marbles. That was hard. Bruce wanted green ones, clear ones. He didn't want red ones for some reason because the red wasn't the right color…. Yes, blue ones and green ones to match the culls….[58]

Among Tosi's contributions to the Ford House, probably the most significant was the final configuration of the cypress ceilings on the interior of the house. Goff's original design for the cypress was to have continuous lengths of clapboard from the bottom of the dome to the top in a spiral pattern. Tosi believed that the width of the exposed clapboard would vary so greatly from bottom to top as to be unbuildable; instead, he developed a herringbone pattern for the siding and built a section of it.

> I called Bruce and I said, "Bruce, there isn't any way on God's earth that I can use one board and get it to go all the way up." He said, "Well, can't you get wider siding?" I said, "Not wide enough to do that…. I made up a herringbone pattern, and I think it looks pretty good." He said, "Send me a picture of it and I'll let you know." I sent him a picture, and he called me back a day or two later after he had received it and said, "Fine. Go right ahead."[59]

A two-man team screwed the number one-grade cypress siding onto the ribs, block planed it in place, and finished it with a solution of copper quinolinolate with "a little bit of white added to get the bright color."[60]

> Bruce came out after we had them up. I don't think he came out any time in between. But when he came out and he looked at them, he just looked and looked and looked. He didn't say a word. He just looked and looked and looked. When

[58] Tosi notes in his letter to Goff of 8 November 1949, "Haven't had time to contact Libby Owens Ford yet, but will do tomorrow". According to Lowry, "Critics 'Burn Up' Couple Living in House Built of Coal", "Hard cannel coal, which is mined in large chunks in Kentucky, was selected for the walls because of its cheapness and durability. During the coal strike, Tosi kept on building because cannel coal – not usually used for fuel – could be found in any coal yard."
[59] Don Tosi, interview, 31.
[60] Don Tosi, interview, 25.

> Bruce was happy and pleased, he was like a little kid. He'd bounce. He'd literally bounce.[61]

The coiled rope, covering the flat ceilings in house, was war surplus material. According to Tosi:

> They had ads in the paper all of the time for war surplus, and I singled one out and we bought a large amount, we had bales and bales and bales of it. I think we bought a truckload of the rope…. Oh, they nailed rope for a month and a half or two months, every day.[62]

In the kitchen, to create a consistent vertical clapboard surface, there are no horizontal drawers showing. All drawers are behind cabinet doors covered uniformly in the vertical siding. According to Tosi, "Bruce wanted all the cabinets to look that way. Mrs. Ford wanted drawers in there, so I talked to Gottlieb Sipple and we decided that the easiest way to do it was to put the doors on and then put the drawers behind it."[63] In general, Goff tended to design minimal kitchens, and Tosi remembered the original refrigerator was a small one. According to Tosi, Goff didn't "do any cooking or food preparation, and so consequently he tends to neglect these requirements."[64] As Ruth Ford remembered, "The kitchen counter was a lovely yellow linoleum."[65]

On September 27, 1950, Ruth Ford reported that "the glass is mostly in place…the last piece is to go in Friday."[66] Secured in place by relatively thin steel frames, the glass walls have held up remarkably well. This is particularly notable at the studio level, where the give of the cantilevered floor could have caused cracking. This is a testament to Goff's confidence in the calculations made for this floor.

The Fords moved into the house in the fall of 1950.[67] A major issue that plagued the Fords and subsequent owners was the heating of the house. On December 12, 1951, Sam Ford wrote to Goff, "[H]ouse don't heat well when 10 below zero and strong wind from the NW. Work this out, will you?"[68] The original heating system for the house was radiant heating through hot water in copper piping in the concrete floor slab. This system relies on the heat of the floor to radiate warm air up through the space. Typically reliable in a house of standard ceiling height, the high

[61] Don Tosi, interview, 58.
[62] Don Tosi, interview, 25.
[63] According to Tosi a German cabinet maker in Aurora named Gottlieb Sipple did all the cabinet work in the house. Tosi had great respect for Sipple and called him "an excellent craftsman."
[64] Don Tosi, interview, 78.
[65] Ruth Ford interview.
[66] Ruth Ford to "Mr. Cobb", 27 September 1950, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[67] An October 10, 1950, *Chicago Tribune* article states the Fords were to move into their house "soon." The same day Ruth Ford wrote Goff, "We must get moved in as soon as possible." "Mrs. Ford Will Tell College Club of Her Ultra-Modern Home", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10 October 1950, p.4.
[68] Sam Ford to Goff, 12 December 1951, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

domed spaces of the Ford House proved too much for the system in extreme weather. Also at issue was the relatively porous building envelope. From the very beginning, the roof was seen as a possible culprit. In 1954, Sam Ford was still corresponding with Goff regarding this issue, and he wrote on January 13, "What to do?... I want something cheap—fast & effective. Please."[69] Significant changes were never made by the Fords to improve the heating of the interior.[70]

According to Tosi, the house ultimately cost about "a hundred and seven or seventeen thousand dollars," some of which he absorbed.[71] Tosi felt that Sam Ford was aware of the total costs.[72]

> Fortunately, the Fords were so enthralled with it and so dedicated to it that they advanced the money. But they didn't want to in the beginning…. They realized that I was executing it properly, and Sam would oftentimes come and say, "Don, I don't know how you're doing it, but you're doing a tremendous job on this and that," and kept complimenting me and encouraging me to keep going.[73]
>
> Mrs. Ford often said, "I could have never gotten that much advertising or publicity [for the Academy of Fine Arts] with that much money." …And she had boxes of clippings from all over the world. Mrs. Ford had a clipping service that saved any article that featured this house or the academy school.[74]

Recalling his time with Goff, Tosi said:

> And this building. I just look at it and say that if I hadn't been there, I don't think it would ever have gotten built. I really don't think so…. I don't think it would have ever gotten built. And so it's my contribution, to whatever it's worth….[75]

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[69] In another letter consulting Goff about the issue Ford closes the discussion saying, "Maybe your answer will be 'Do nothing and quit fretting.'" Sam Ford to Goff, no date, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

[70] Despite these various issues a December 29, 1955, *Chicago Tribune* article states, "The house, tested by several years of occupancy, has proved most liveable [sic,], insists Mrs. Ford." Miller, Lucy Key, Front Views & Profiles", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 December 1955, p. A4. In 1994 Robinson installed a convection air system that sent air into the volume of the main domed area and improved the heating of the space significantly.

[71] Lowry, "Critics 'Burn Up' Couple Living in House Built of Coal" states, "The house has from 2,200 to 2,400 square feet of floor space and the total cost of the house and ground will be $55,000 to $60,000. It is expected the house alone will cost $42,000."

[72] In his statements to Robinson, Tosi said the bid was originally about $60,000. After discussing the final cost of the house, Robinson notes that *Life* magazine quotes the figure $64,000. (Eliot Eliosofon, photographer, "The Round House", *Life*, 19 March 1951, 70-75). Tosi responded, "Yes, I know. That was the original bid we had…. And Bruce didn't want it to appear larger for much of this house has built in items that would not be included in other homes." These items included built-in and custom-built furniture.

[73] Don Tosi, interview, 172.

[74] Don Tosi, interview, 87.

[75] Don Tosi, interview, 151.

Sam Ford's no-nonsense personality came out when he discussed the house later with architectural historian David De Long:

> My opinion is that all architects have in their files the design of a round house, but few find a client nutty enough to build one—but Mrs. Ford is an artist. The house was a sort of showplace. We got awfully tired of people coming by—an article in *Architectural Forum* saying Mies [van der Rohe] rode past the house and didn't ask why. Richard Neutra impressed me as thinking that no one had any business liking the house unless he (Neutra) liked it—he crawled under everything—seeing and asking how each piece was supported—he gave me the impression that he was "so-and-so" and I had to like anything he did. Got a $10 tip once from people in a Cadillac.[76]

Ruth Ford told De Long, "A teacher at the Academy compared the house to a Tibetan house of twigs and leather."[77] Robinson has written that the house was a "trophy" house for Ruth Ford.[78] In time, the publicity that she gained for her art and for the Academy became too much.

> We gave up the house because I got so I couldn't be nice to people—once when my mother was 92 and had fallen—people would look in the windows and walk in—I had to keep everything locked—a few nice people would come by—crowds particularly after the *Life* article.[79]

On a more positive note, she recalled to De Long:

> Mr. Ford and Don Tosi worked on the house—Sam (Mr. Ford) is an engineer—Don adapted the wood shape…. I had pictures well placed inside; Bruce fixed a hanging rail in the wood above the coal wall…. Give Goff my regards—I'm nostalgic every time I pass the house.[80]

Ownership of the Ford House

In 1950, the Fords transferred ownership of the house to the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, which also was owned by Mrs. Ford. The relationship of the Ford House to the Academy was a close one. It appears that the house was built as an extension of the Academy—it was used to display Ruth Ford's paintings, to host gatherings related to the Academy, and, in no small part, to

[76]Sam Ford interview by David G. De Long, May 21, 1974. With thanks to David De Long who shared his unpublished notes from this interview with me.
[77] Ruth Ford interview.
[78] Sidney Robinson, "Residential Masterpieces: Bruce Goff, Ford House, Aurora, Illinois, U.S.A., 1949-50", *GA Houses* 68 (2001): 64-79.
[79] Ruth Ford interview.
[80] Ruth Ford interview.

gain publicity for the Academy. At a certain point that publicity appears to have become overwhelming, and the Fords moved to a small house in Aurora around 1960.[81]
In August 1962, the house was sold to its next owners, John and Florence Nottolini. The Nottolinis owned the house for less than two months, transferring it to Clement J. and Mary Ann Boyle in October 1962. The Boyles owned the house for five years.[82] In April 1967, A.J. and Mary Ann Armbruster purchased the house. On February 12, 1968, the Armbusters wrote to Goff to consult regarding an addition to the house; a local architect by the name of Livingston is referred to in the correspondence. A letter from the Armbrusters to Goff on May 28, 1968, indicates that drawings had not yet been begun, though they hoped to occupy the addition by fall of that year; this addition was never built. In March 1971, drawings were made by the architecture firm Kleb, Shelp & Associates, for an addition to the house, but the Armbrusters did not build this design, either.[83] In May 1972, Carl and Hanni Jenssen bought the house.[84], and they lived in the house for 4 years before selling it to Alan Krumlinde in August 1976. In January 1980 the house was bought by Donald J. and Lily Berk. It is current owner Sidney Robinson's understanding that the house was unoccupied when the Berks moved in. The Berks lived in the house for six years.

In October 1986, current owner-occupant Sidney K. Robinson purchased the Ford House. In 1996, he bought the eastern half of the block where the house is located. Siting the house on the northwestern corner of the block, Goff created an axis of symmetry that ran roughly from the northwest corner to the southeast corner of the first parcel purchased in 1947. When the Fords purchased the parcel of land south of the original parcel in 1949, this axis lost its original southeast reference point. Robinson's purchase of the eastern parcel allowed the house to sit comfortably on this axis and address the entire block.

Statement of National Significance

Bruce Goff was a leading figure in what may be called the second generation of American architects practicing organic design. The first generation, now overshadowed by the powerful work of Frank Lloyd Wright, also included Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin, George Grant Elmslie, and William Grey Purcell. They found a theoretical basis in the writings and work of Louis Sullivan. Sullivan's interest in the expression of the individual, represented by the poetry of Walt Whitman, for example, was balanced in the work of these organic architects by the idea that a design must grow from the needs of the user. In the quest for this type of architecture, many of these architects worked in the style that is now known as the Prairie

[81] It is Robinson's understanding that there may also have been a financial motivation on the part of the Fords in selling the house.
[82] During that time another member of the Boyle family may have lived in the house with Mary Ann. In the 1963 and 1964 City Directories, Thomas Boyle is listed with Mary Ann (this may also simply be an incorrect listing).
[83] Correspondence and sketches for the first Armbuster addition project are in the collection of the Bruce Goff Archive at the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries at the Art Institute of Chicago. Drawings for the second project are in the possession of current Ford House owner Robinson.
[84] The 1971-72 Aurora City Directories indicate that a Will and Ruth Miller lived in the house in those years.

School. Goff would go beyond the first generation in his search for designs that were specific to each project and also not tied to a specific style. While there are identifiable similarities in his various works, his goal was, as much as possible, to create "an architecture" specific to each user's request. His work has been considered to be a counter-point to prevailing International Style design of the mid-twentieth century. In spite of his work apparently not fitting the mold of mainstream architectural design, his Eugene Bavinger House (1950) was awarded the American Institute of Architects twenty-five year award in 1987, only two years after it attained eligibility.

The Sam and Ruth Ford House holds a significant position in the work of Bruce Goff. Designed in 1947, the house came at the beginning of a period from 1947–1956 that architectural historian David De Long, in his monograph on Goff, *Toward Absolute Architecture*, has labeled "The Liberation of Genius."[85] This period of Goff's life, while he was teaching at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, witnessed the creation of several of his most important works, including the Ford House; the Bavinger House, in Norman, Oklahoma; and the project for a studio for Joe Price in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

In 2015 De Long placed the Ford House clearly in the top rank of Goff's work:

> The Ford house is one of Bruce Goff's most important designs, and among those that survive it is easily one of his very best. It was designed during what I believe to be his most creative period, between 1946 and 1956; for most of that time he was chair of the department of architecture at the University of Oklahoma, an environment that seemed to stimulate his best efforts. The Ford house is a major example. It is significant as an example of Goff's extraordinary originality, especially its spatial complexities generated by intersecting spherical volumes. It is significant for its use of unexpected materials: masonry walls of coal and glass cullet, war surplus bomber skylights and rope added within, and a structure of creatively reconfigured Quonset hut ribs. In his manipulation of found materials, Goff created one of the most extraordinary interiors of any house in America, its dramatic volumes based on a logical resolution of functional elements and its shapes defined by those unexpected, yet quite workable, materials.... It is a house that stands as a major statement of Goff's creative genius and of his expression of essential American values.[86]

During the 1947-56 period, certain design concepts that Goff had been developing became integrated into his work. In a 1953 talk on "The New Geometry in Architecture" at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Goff spoke of

> [O]ur increased desire to have the space inside and outside to be more continuous, more flexible, more dynamic and more active….We are not satisfied with just a box, no matter how nice the box looks…. Some of us want [geometry] more

[85] De Long, *Bruce Goff, Toward Absolute Architecture*, 87-138.
[86] De Long, "Revisiting the Ford House," *Friends of Kebyar Journal: Bruce Goff's Ford House, Living in Joyful Order*, vol. 30.3, no. 82 (Winter 2015), 10-12.

> active, alive—not just a background for activities. Some of us feel a building should be expressive of what it is, more than just geometry.[87]

The Ford House clearly demonstrates these qualities, in such elements as the open plan of its main interior and exterior living spaces and in the expression of the bedrooms in the geometric forms of the wings.

Form

David De Long has identified two formal types that are helpful in understanding the dynamic space in Goff's residential work. The two types are designs of determinate form and designs of indeterminate form. With the determinate form, interior spaces and their programmatic uses are very closely allied with the overall form of the enclosure of the building. In its most literal sense it is "form follows function." With the indeterminate type, the relationship between the interior programmatic spaces and the building's exterior form is loose, sometimes to the point of clear disconnection. In the Leidig House project of 1946, the common areas, the bedrooms, and the bathrooms are literally islands separated by running water. The whole is enclosed by walls and roof that have little direct connection with the programmatic spaces.

A part of the significance of the Ford House is that it may be considered to have elements of both these concepts. The domes clearly express a hierarchy of spaces: the common living area under the large central dome flanked by the private bedrooms under the smaller quarter-domes. Yet at the same time, the flat roofed areas that separate the domes could be considered analogous to the areas of water between the islands of the Leidig House. The interior spaces in these flat-roofed areas slide around the more determinate forms of the domes. This is especially noticeable in the entry vestibule. Here space is defined by the curves of the carport storage unit, guest bathroom unit, and the columnar screen of the main dome ribs. Environmental conditions require that between these forms, sheets of glass separate interior from exterior. One can imagine, though, that at these points Goff would have preferred no enclosure at all. This would allow the space of the vestibule to leak out beyond the confines of the building, emphasizing the contrast between the determinate forms and the indeterminate zones between.

Throughout the Ford House Goff played with dualities such as this contrast between determinate domes and indeterminate intermediate spaces. In the form of the house itself the full, rounded, roofed domes of the asymmetrical northwest "public" side are contrasted with the open partial domes of the symmetrical southeast "private" side of the house. At the main entry the solid, opaque front door is placed within a "wall" of thin, floor to ceiling glass, inverting the expectation of a "wall" being solid and opaque and the door appearing to be the accessible component within that wall. All the doors to the house are opaque and are set in glass walls. The play with dualities is carried through to the conical roof above the center of the main dome. Here, over the otherwise opaque roof of the domed interior area, the cone is filled with glass to open up the interior to light. Conversely, above the exterior living area, where the curved ribs are

[87] Philip B. Welch, ed., *Goff on Goff* (Norman and London, University of Oklahoma Press, 1996) 298-300.

uncovered and the space is otherwise open to the elements, the cone is covered with opaque roofing.

The clear separation of bedrooms from the main living area is likely the built manifestation of the relationship of the three original residents of the house—Sam and Ruth Ford, and Ruth Ford's mother, Anna Van Sickle. A number of Goff's house designs were for completely circular houses, such as the Garvey House in Urbana, Illinois, where the common living areas and private bedrooms all are within a relatively pure circular form. In Goff's spiral Bavinger House, built for a family consisting of Eugene and Nancy Bavinger and their young children, sleeping areas were actually suspended pods within the main living area. At the Ford House, occupancy by three adults called for a greater degree of privacy in the bedrooms. This programmatic requirement is clearly expressed in the overall form of the building.

Within the approximately 1,525 square feet of the open interior of the main dome, Goff created a remarkable number of spatial experiences. On passing through the main vestibule, one enters the C-shaped upper level of the space, which follows the coal wall around to the north and east. Here one must go left or right because the shelving unit backing the kitchen cabinets is directly forward. While the center of the dome can be clearly seen above the mezzanine, it cannot be accessed at this point, undermining the straightforward centrality of the space and enlivening the experience of it. The idea of encouraging movement around the perimeter of the dome was particularly appropriate to its original use as a gallery for Ruth Ford's painting. The screening of the kitchen area also screens one end of the C-shaped gallery from the other, allowing space to unfold as one walks around the gallery. The gallery is open to the curved ceiling of the dome above, creating a spacious open feeling with interesting views of the exposed structure beneath the central skylight. This contrasts with the experience of the space below the mezzanine. This is an intimate space with a low ceiling created by the balcony above it. Current owner Robinson has likened the experience of the lower section as being in the archetypal "cave" versus the "tent" of the upper area. Yet another experience can be had on the mezzanine itself; here, light comes down from the skylight above and views are of the curved ceiling at eye level and the gallery below. As original owner Sam Ford later said, "[O]ne attractive asset: you couldn't sit in the same place—you soon realized a better place to be sitting…."[88]

While the forms of the Ford House and their placement may appear whimsical, placement adheres to a rigorous logic. Whether all the relationships that can be found in the house were planned in advance cannot be known. What is clear is that Goff set up formal framework that allowed these relationships to occur. The main dome is located on a diagonal line that runs from the northwest to the southeast corner of the block on which the house sits. The southeast portion of the main dome is opened to the outdoors, receiving morning south light. The glass walls that create the separation between the interior and exterior living areas of the main dome continue beyond its edges to create the glazed walls of the bedrooms, one wall going due south, the other going to the northeast. A short interior corridor follows each of these glass walls. On the opposite side of the corridors from the glass walls are enclosures for the bathroom and storage units for each bedroom. The center of the quarter-dome of each bedroom is placed at the corner of each

[88] Sam Ford interview.

unit where the short corridor enters the bedroom. In the south bedroom, the ceiling soffit that follows the south wall of the bathroom and storage unit continues to the west, outside of the bedroom dome, to create the south edge of the carport roof. The north edge of the carport is parallel to the south edge and is in line with the center of the main dome. The circular area of the carport proper is pushed to the north between the north and south edges to allow space for the main entry. The carport is an important component in the massing of the house. In breaking the symmetry of the northwest side, it gives visual interest to that side of the house and it gives logic to the location of the entry. Without the carport, the point of entry could be (ambiguously) between the large dome and either of small domes.

Materials

The Ford House is an excellent example of Goff's extraordinarily creative use of materials. Using the Quonset hut rib as an initial source of inspiration, Goff created the house's major domed form by rotating the ribs around a central axis. In the process of rotation, Goff took a utilitarian item—used for miles and miles of wartime buildings—and completely divorced it from its former associations. Ruth Ford had a strong reaction against Goff's second scheme for the house, which used the ribs in their traditional configuration. This aptly points out the clear differences of both space and association between the house as built and the traditional Quonset hut.[89] Goff continued to show his openness to alternate materials in the cladding and enclosure of the building's form. The rope that covers the flat ceilings and soffits was war surplus material. Its use may have been derived from straight corrugated metal soffits in earlier projects.[90] The curve of the soffits at the Ford House in both plan and section required that a material other than corrugated metal be used. The corrugated surface of the rope may therefore be an interpretation of the metal in earlier designs.

Probably the most unusual materials used in the house are the coal and cullet glass of the curved wall that surrounds the main living area.[91] These unusual materials are a clear example of Goff's being unencumbered by pre-conceived uses for materials, using what some have called "found materials." This combination of random masonry and cullet glass—first used here in the Ford House—would become something of a trademark for Goff. Similar materials were used in two of

[89] In general, Ruth Ford's confidence in Goff regarding design matters is apparent in their correspondence. She wrote in May 1950, regarding some design decisions, "I trust your judgment on these things more than anyone else's." Ruth Ford to Goff, 15, 1950, Bruce Goff Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago.
[90] Goff proposed corrugated metal soffits in the Kozak House project, Sleepy Hollow, California (1946).
[91] Goff's familiarity with cullet glass may have come from his time as a design director for the Libby-Owens-Ford glass company. Regarding the use of coal, according to current Ford House owner Sidney Robinson, Goff preferred black backgrounds to display paintings. De Long notes in *Toward Absolute Architecture* that in 1947 Goff hung black shower curtains on the walls of his Norman, Oklahoma, apartment. As the curved masonry wall of the main living space was to be used to display Ruth Ford's paintings, the use of coal becomes an understandable choice. In addition to these materials, the working drawings called for the exterior surfaces of the bathrooms to be covered with purple mirror. The mirror is not mentioned in correspondence. It is not known at what point it was removed from the project.

Goff's other best-known works: the Bavinger House (using cullet glass set in local sandstone) and the Price Studio in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

For all the striking materials used at the Ford House, they are used in a straightforward way that continues the rigorous geometric logic of the house. The materials used on both the large and small domes are the same. Cedar shingles clad the domes' exteriors. The interior ceilings are covered in cypress clapboard in a herringbone pattern. At the base of each dome is a curved masonry wall of coal. The vertical surfaces of support spaces, including the storage units of the carport, the bathroom and storage units adjacent to the bedrooms, the kitchen cabinets and the storage units on the balcony, all are clad in vertical cypress clapboard. Flat ceilings (except of the circular area of red panels above the carport and the closet interiors) are covered with rope. As an additional discipline, nowhere are the two materials used for vertical surfaces, the coal masonry and the cypress clapboard, allowed to touch—they are always separated by sheets of glass. This is even true at the relatively inconspicuous location where the short coal walls of the bedroom domes come close to the walls of the adjacent bathroom and storage units. Here a small piece of glass is inserted to separate the two. Much of the success of the installation of the materials at the Ford House can be attributed to its builder Don Tosi, who, as a former student of Goff's, understood the architect's design goals.

The Significance of the Ford House in the Context of Goff's Extant Work

The National Register nomination for "Resources Designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma," identifies three major periods of Goff's career: his formative years, up to 1938; years of "Discovery and Transformation," from 1939 to 1946; and a period of "Expressions of Diversity and Continuity, from 1947 to 1982."[92]

In the first period, Goff's major extant works are considered to be the National Historic Landmark Boston Avenue Methodist Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma (1926), and the Riverside Studio, Tulsa (1928). Both buildings show Goff's early assimilation of outside design sources. The tour-de-force Boston Avenue Methodist has a plan which is derived from Louis Sullivan's St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (1910-14). Its tower shows influences of German Expressionism. In fact, the Church is often thought of as a prime example of American Art Deco. The Oklahoma Resources nomination notes that the Riverside Studio is "replete with familiar icons of Modernism – flat roofs, smooth walls of stucco and windows with thin steel frames. Goff, though, was searching for a more personal idiom of expression and infused the design with unique features that transcended the familiar."[93] In summing up this period the nomination notes: "Although some designs were quite innovative, the early work does not have the sense of continuity of ideas that characterizes buildings produced in later years."[94]

[92] Arn Henderson, "Resources designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma," multiple property National Register listing, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, listed 2000.
[93] Henderson, section E, page 8.
[94] Henderson, section E, page 9.

The period from 1939 to 1946 was a time of growth for Goff. It began while Goff lived in Chicago, extended through his time in the Navy, and ended with his move to Norman, to teach in the Department of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma. "From 1939, with design of the Cole House, to the 1946 proposal for the Leidig House, a remarkable transformation in Goff's aesthetic occurred."[95] One of Goff's most notable built designs from this period is the Unseth House in Park Ridge, Illinois (1940). The small Unseth House contains seeds of a number of themes that would be important in Goff's later work, including the Ford House. These themes include a plan based on a strong geometric form and a central fireplace lit by a skylight. Due to the last years of the Depression, World War II, and later to post-War shortages, though, Goff's opportunities to build were relatively limited during this period.

Though the Oklahoma Resources nomination groups the remainder of Goff's work under one period, from 1947 until his death in 1982, in fact, as David De Long has noted, the period from 1947 to 1956, during Goff's tenure in Norman, was a time of particular significance. From this period the major extant works are, aside from the Ford House: the Ledbetter House in Norman (1947), Hopewell Baptist Church in Edmond, Oklahoma (1948), and the Franke House in Sapulpa, Oklahoma (1955).

After moving to Bartlesville, Oklahoma, in 1956, Goff had a productive period, designing a number of houses, such as the Motsenbocker (Bartlesville, 1957), Durst (Houston, Texas, 1958), and Collins (Bartlesville, 1959) Houses. These houses, built of traditional masonry or frame construction, often have plans based on unusual geometry, but their chief interest lies in their unusual ornamental details, which often highlight doors, beam-ends, and window openings. The Gryder House, Ocean Springs, Mississippi (1960), and Struckus Houses, Woodland Hills, California (1979), are extreme examples of this type of house.

Among the most significant extant houses of Goff's post-Norman career (which was primarily residential), are the Pollack, Duncan, and Nicol Houses. Each house is strongly determined by its geometry. The Pollack House in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (1957), is based on a nine-square plan, with peaked roofs over each square. The Duncan House, Cobden, Illinois (1965), has a sinuous plan, laid out along field stone walls, which curve back and forth, creating a series of separate, but related spaces. The Nicol House in Kansas City, Missouri (1965), is a purely centralized house, with a highly formalized plan, made up of a central octagonal space, surrounded by eight smaller octagonal spaces, the whole plan being contained within the shape of an octagon.

Though each of the major post-War works mentioned strongly manifests themes that are important to Goff's design work, including the a plan with a strong geometric basis (Hopewell, Franke, Pollack, Nicol, Duncan), central fireplace and skylight (Nicol), and the use of bold materials (Ledbetter and Duncan), only the Ford House brings these themes together with both such coherence and such complexity. No other extant Goff building, aside from the Hopewell Church, uses non-traditional structural materials to such an extent and in a manner that so determines the building's form. No other extant Goff building uses such an unusual pallet of

[95] Henderson, section E, page 15.

materials, materials that are not used as applied ornament, but are integral to the enclosure and finishes of the house. Additionally, no other extant Goff house was constructed by such a sensitive builder, in the person of Don Tosi, and with such supportive clients as Sam and Ruth Ford. Tosi's understanding of Goff's goals and his own high aesthetic standards, and the Fords' willingness to finance the house's construction, were integral to bringing to fruition one of Goff's most significant built designs.

The Ford House and Its Contemporaries

The Ford House fits into a period after World War II of wide-ranging exploration in American residential architecture. Its contemporaries include Mies van der Rohe's Fransworth House (1946-51) in Plano, Illinois, Philip Johnson's Glass House (1949) in New Canaan, Connecticut, and the Charles and Ray Eames House (1949) in Pacific Palisades, California[96]. Like the Ford House, all these houses use steel in their framing. The Farnsworth and Glass Houses are essays in an elegant aesthetic that emphasizes precision of construction and transparency of envelope. Along with its steel frame, the Eames House uses industrial components such as light weight steel web joists, exposed steel deck ceilings and plywood sheathing. The playfulness of the interiors that the Eames created within a house built of industrial components compares with Goff's playful, uninhibited exploration of the actual materials and forms of the Ford House. At the same time, the Ford House displays a disciplined and systematic application of those forms and materials, as well as an absence of applied ornament, that allows it to be compared to the Farnsworth and Glass Houses, though it is of a strikingly different aesthetic.

A very different form of late 1940s housing is manifested in R. Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House of 1944-46[97]. This round house bears a number of superficial similarities to the Ford House, including form and the use of materials not traditionally associated with residential building. Like the Quonset ribs and rope of the Ford House, production of materials in the Dymaxion such as aluminum, plexiglass and fiberglass, had been simulated by World War II. Profoundly different from the Ford House, though, was the goal of mass production of the Dymaxion House. Its "one size fits all" design was in stark contrast to Goff's goal of creating an architecture appropriate to each client.

Goff's goal can easily be seen in a comparison of the Ford House with Goff's two other most prominent works of the period, the Bavinger House and the first phase of the built Joe Price Studio. Similarities among the three include plans with strong geometries, the circle of the Ford House, the spiral of the Bavinger and the triangle of the Price studio, as well as an inventive use of materials, including the random masonry and cullet glass walls found in all three. Striking differences in the houses are also found that can be traced to the lifestyles of the original owners. At the Ford House residency of three adults called for zones of privacy in the clearly

[96] All four houses, the Farnsworth House, Glass House, the Ford House and the Eames House, are published in Yukio Futagawa, *GA Houses Special: Masterpieces 1945-1970* (Tokyo, A.D.A. Edita Tokyo Co., Ltd., 2001).
[97] See, among others, Frederico Neder, *Fuller Houses: R. Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion Dwellings and Other Domestic Adventures* (Zurich, Lars Muller Publishers, 2008).

differentiated bedrooms, while the young Bavinger family lived in a house largely composed of one continuous space. The Price Studio was the quintessential post-war "bachelor pad" with a single bedroom in one of its three short wings and thick pile carpeting throughout that encouraged bare feet and sitting on the floor. The loss of the Bavinger house and Price Studio makes the survival of the Ford House particularly significant.[98]

From its completion in 1950 the Ford House has been recognized nationally and internationally for its significance. In 1951 the house was introduced to the American public by *Life* magazine, which published 6 pages of color photographs of the house[99]. In 2001 the Japanese publication *Global Architecture* issued a special number entitled *GA Houses Special: Masterpieces 1945-1970*, where the Ford House was featured chronologically with the Eames House, Farnsworth House and Glass House. Other international publications on the house have included the German periodical *Bauwelt* in 2004[100] and the Japanese book *Living in Great American Houses*[101]. In 2014 the Institute of Visual Arts at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, hosted the exhibit "Leo Saul Berk: The Uncertainty of Enclosure". An expanded exhibit of Berk's work interpreting the Ford House called "Structure and Ornament" was then shown at the Frye Museum in Seattle in 2015. As noted on the Institute of Visual Arts' website, "The Uncertainty of Enclosure explores the impact of an architecturally iconic residence—Bruce Goff's Ford House in Aurora, Illinois—on the art of Leo Saul Berk."[102]

Conclusion

The Sam and Ruth Ford House, designed by Bruce Goff and built by Don Tosi, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance under Criterion C for architecture, as an outstanding example of American Organic Architecture by an acknowledged master of that style, Bruce Goff. The house contains concepts that overlap with much of mid-twentieth century American architecture, but it also has an individuality that is apparent as it sits in it Mid-Western suburban neighborhood. In addition, its excellent state of preservation and high level of historic integrity give it an important place in both the work of Bruce Goff and twentieth-century American architecture.

[98] The Price Studio was destroyed by fire in 1996. The Bavinger House was severely damaged in 2011 and access to the site has been curtailed. While a portion of its spiral walls may remain, it appears the house itself has been essentially demolished.
[99] Eliosofon, "The Round House".
[100] Sidney Robinson, "Ruth Ford House", Bauwelt 37, October 2004, 26-29.
[101] Atsuko Tanaka and Soichi Murazumi (photographer), *Living in Great American Houses*, http://www2.ksknet.co.jp/book/, 2009.
[102] Institute of Visual Arts at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, "Exhibition & Program Schedule." Accessed March 23, 2014. http://www4.uwm.edu/psoa/inova/schedule.cfm. The catalog for the Frye Art Museum exhibit is, Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, ed, *Leo Saul Berk, Structure and Ornament* (Seattle, The Frye Art Museum, 2015).

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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Sidney Robinson, "The Postwar Modern House in Chicago", in *Chicago Architecture and Design, 1923-`1993*, John Zukowsky, ed. (Munich, Prestel-Verlag, 1993).

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Pauline Saliga and Mary Woolever, eds., *The Architecture of Bruce Goff, 1904-1982: Design for the Continuous Present*, (New York, Prestel, 1995).

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Atsuko Tanaka and Soichi Murazumi (photographer), *Living in Great American Houses*, http://www2.ksknet.co.jp/book/, 2009.

Don Tosi, interview by Sidney K. Robinson. Tape recording, Ford House, Aurora, Illinois, June 19, 1995, transcribed, then annotated by Tosi, January 1997.

Philip B. Welch, ed., *Goff on Goff, Conversations and Lectures* (Norman, The University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

Charlie Wilkins, "The Homes of Builder Don Tosi", *Historic Illinois*, vol. 34, no. 4, December 2011, 3-8.

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
_X__ Other
Name of repository: _Bruce Goff Archive, Ryerson & Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago__

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.25

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)
Latitude: 41.753544° Longitude: -88.358726°

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The historic boundary for the Sam and Ruth Ford House is the four sided parcel corresponding to its current legal boundary. The parcel covers the entire city block bounded by Kenilworth Place on the north, South Rosedale Avenue on the east, Southlawn Place on the south and South Edgelawn Drive on the west.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The historic boundary was delineated to encompass the property's two contributing resources, the house itself and the ornamental wall on the western edge of the property, as well as the landscaped area making up the rest of the legal property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: John H. Waters/Architect
organization: Independent
street & number: 4250 N. Marine Drive
city or town: Chicago state: IL zip code: 60613
e-mail john.h.waters@gmail.com
telephone: 773.871.7226
date:

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

See continuation sheets

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 100 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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 11 Page 1

Ford, Sam and Ruth, House
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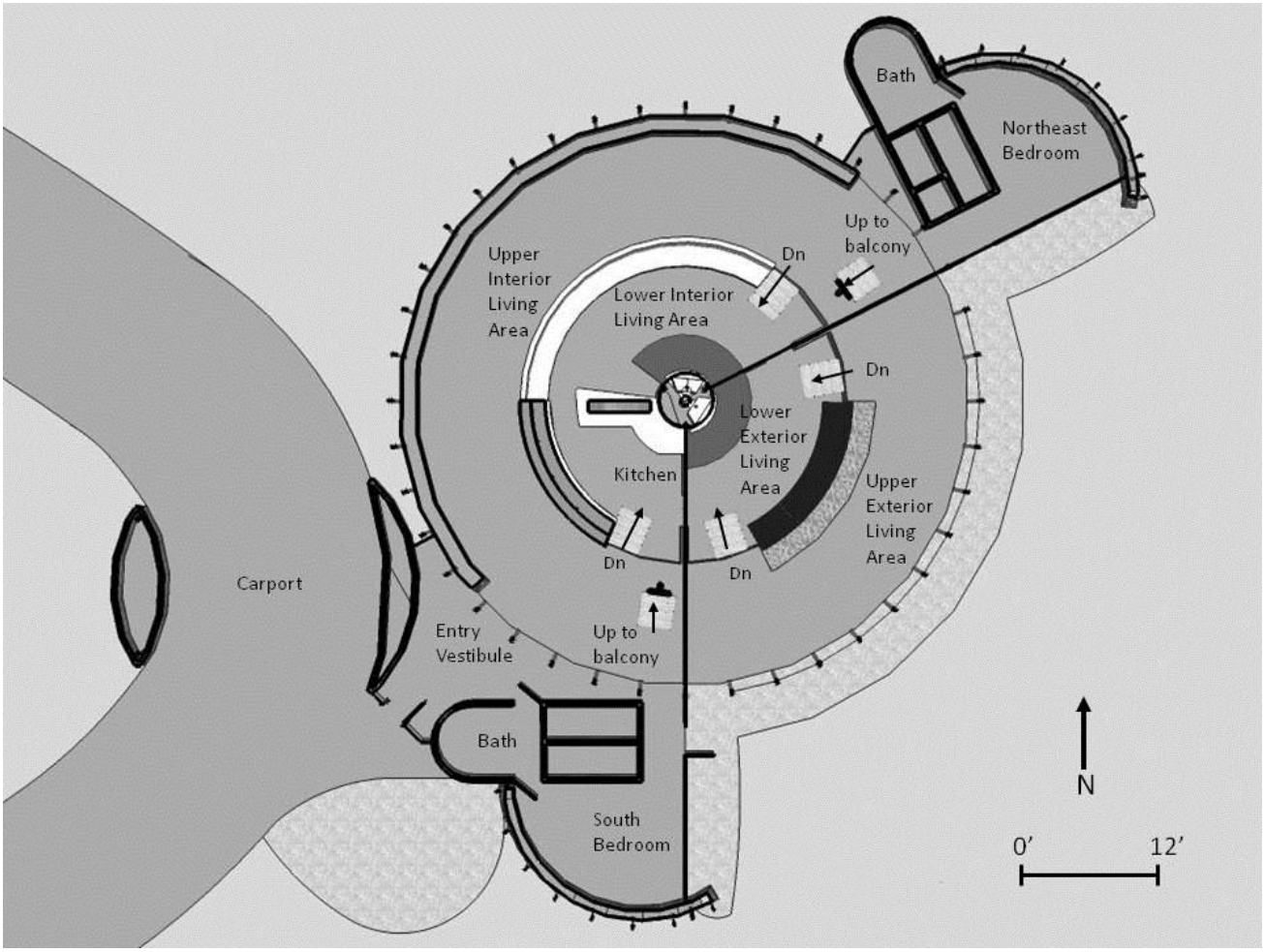
Kane County, Illinois
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Plan

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 11 Page 2

Ford, Sam and Ruth, House
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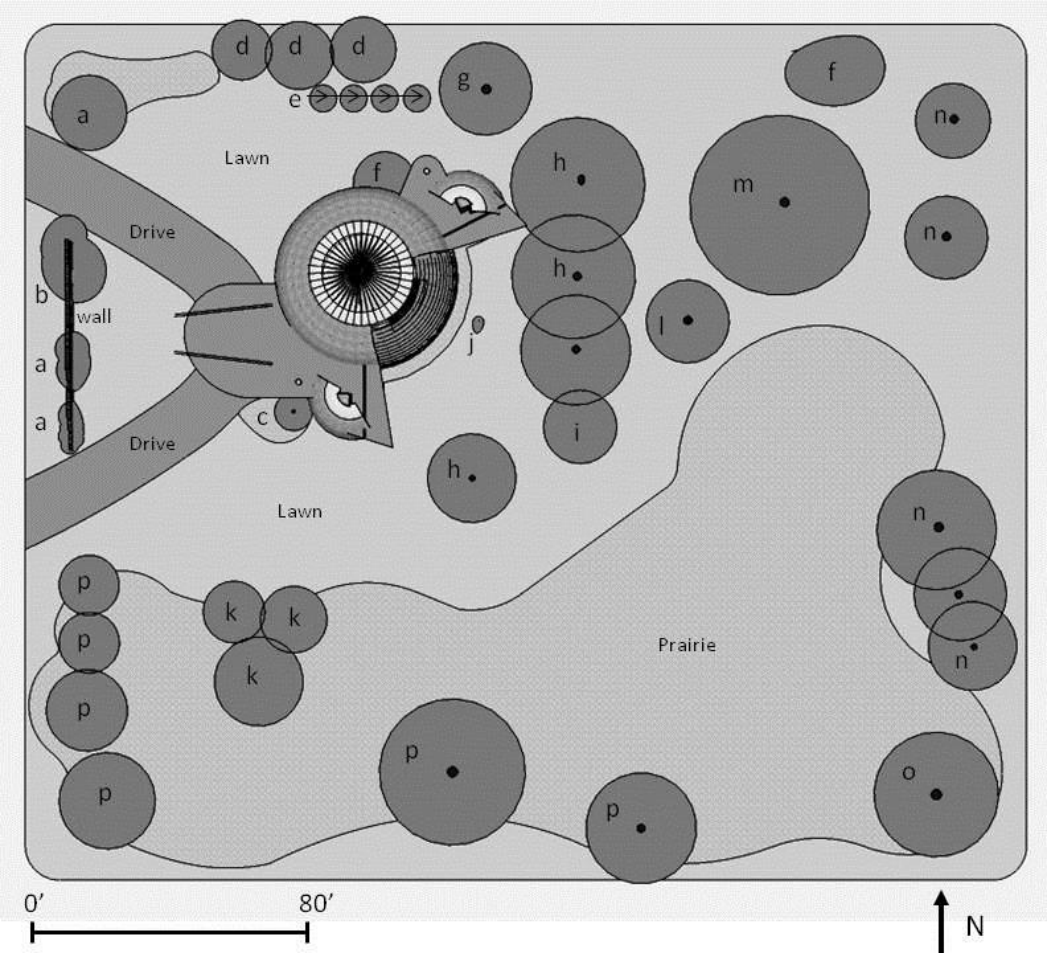
Kane County, Illinois
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Planting Key:

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b. Mugo Pine
c. Spruce
d. Elm
e. Lilac
f. Yew
g. Cherry
h. Maple
i. Red Bud
j. Weeping Pine
k. Hawthorne
l. Burr Oak
m. Linden
n. River Birch
o. Apple
p. Volunteer

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 11 Page 3

Ford, Sam and Ruth, House
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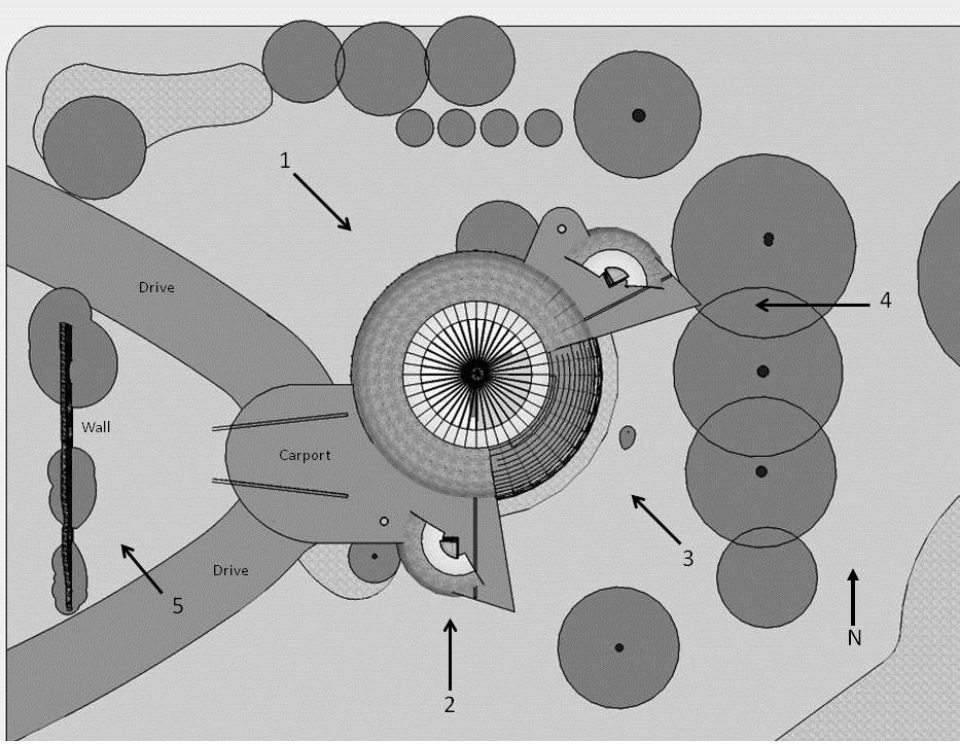
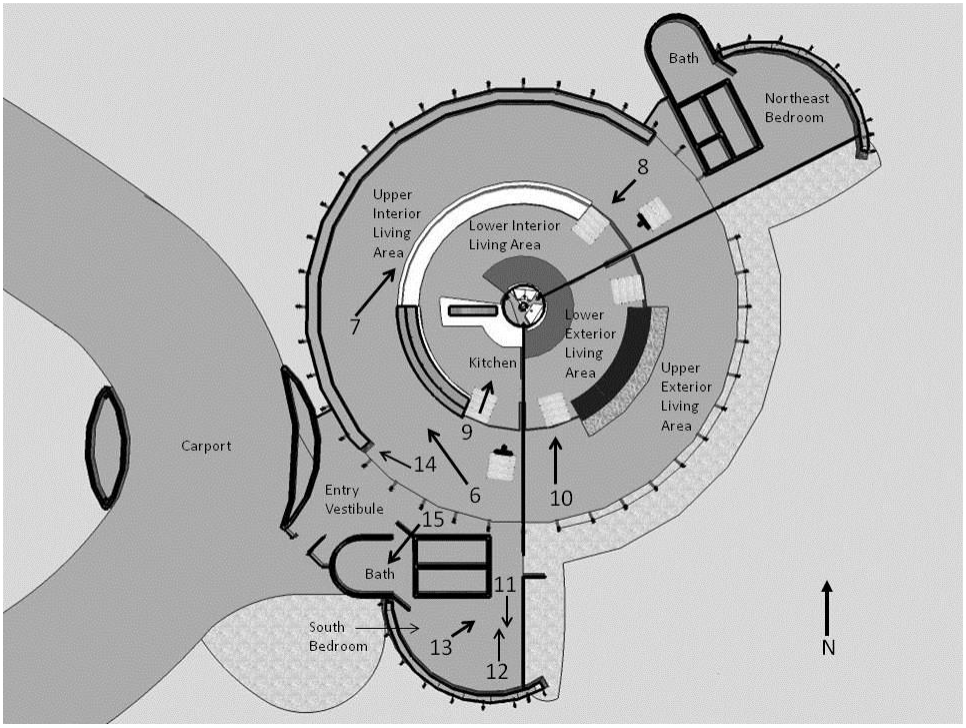
Kane County, Illinois
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Exterior photograph locations 1-5



Interior photograph locations 6-15

Photo Log
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City or Vicinity: Aurora

County: Kane State: Illinois

Photographer: John H. Waters

Date Photographed: 23 April 2014, except 5 of 15 taken 19 November 2014, and 14 of 15 taken 12 June 2014

1 of 15: House, camera facing southeast

2 of 15: House, camera facing north

3 of 15: House, camera facing northwest

4 of 15: House, camera facing west

5 of 15: Site, view of contributing wall camera facing northwest

6 of 15: House, view of Interior Living Area camera facing north

7 of 15: House, view of Interior Living Area camera facing northeast

8 of 15: House, view of Interior Living Area camera facing south

9 of 15: House, view of Kitchen area, camera facing south

10 of 15: House, view of Exterior Living Area camera facing north

11 of 15: House, view of South Bedroom, camera facing north

12 of 15: House, view of South Bedroom, camera facing north

13 of 15: House, view of South Bedroom skylight and clerestory, camera facing north

14 of 15: House, view of end of coal wall showing coal, cullet glass, rope soffit and cypress clapboard ceiling, camera facing northwest

15 of 15: House, view of South Bathroom, camera facing southwest

Early Photographs (from collection of current owner Sidney K. Robinson):

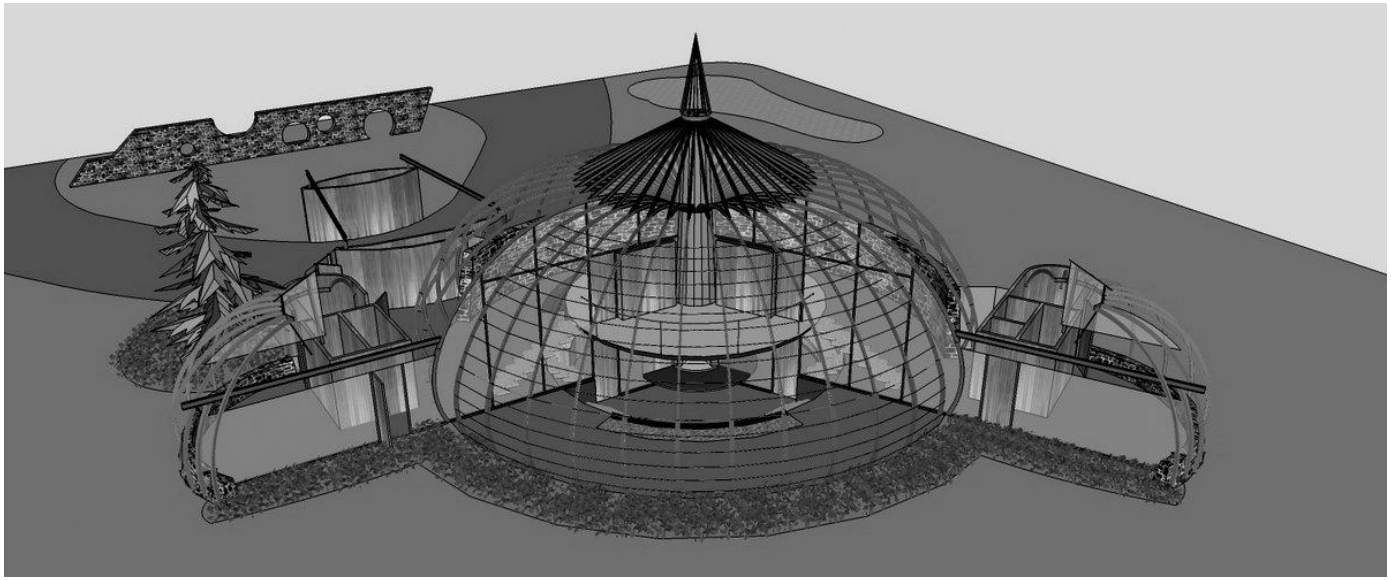
Photograph of construction of porte cochere from southwest, November 1949.

Photograph of construction of coal and glass masonry wall adjacent to northeast bathroom June 1950.

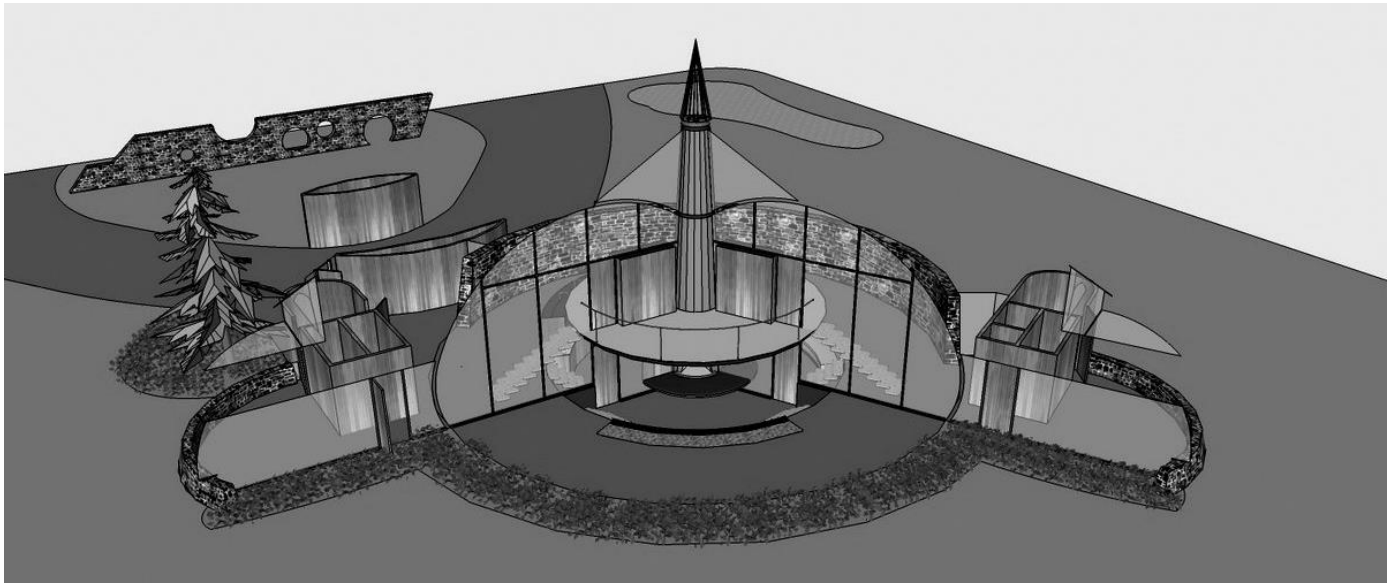
Porte cochere from southwest September 1950.

Ornamental wall and porte cochere from southwest September 1950.

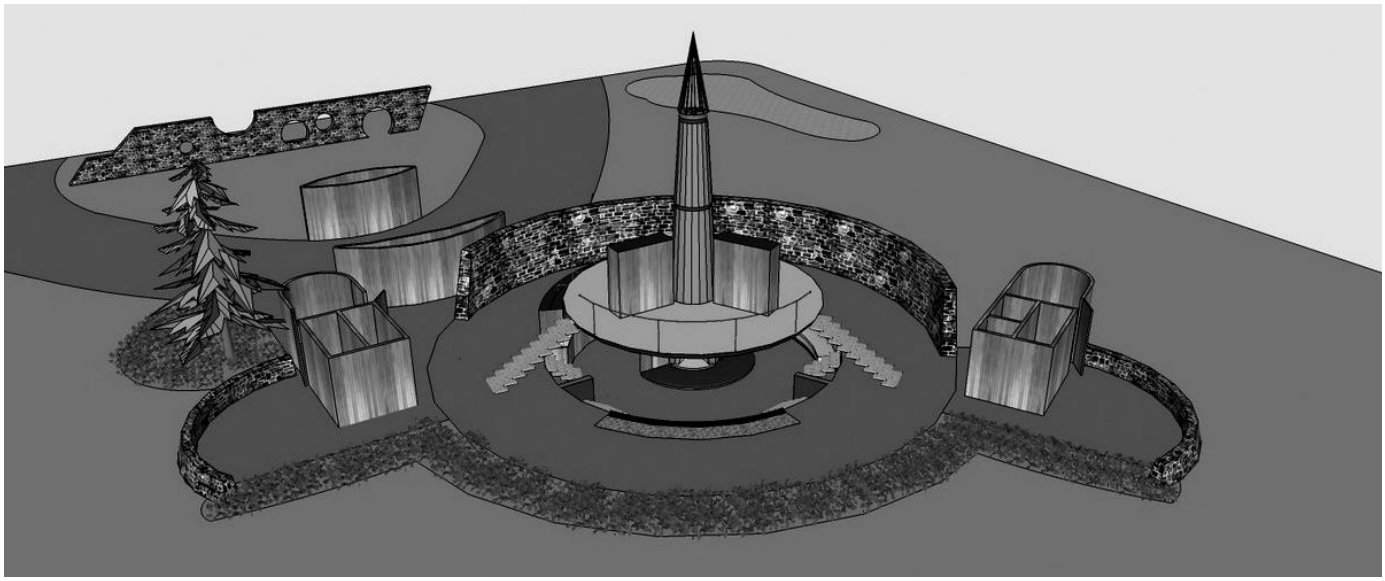
Three-dimensional model showing Ford House building components:



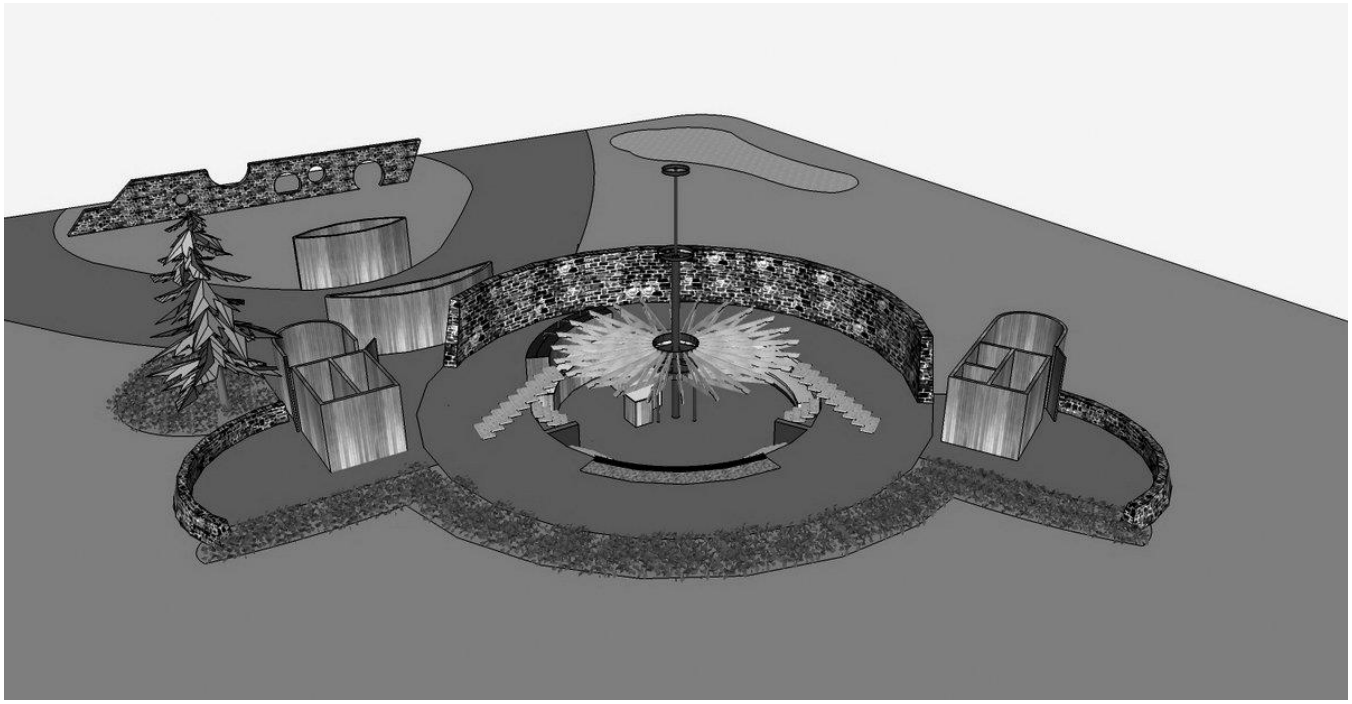
Roof removed showing Quonset rib structure.



Quonset rib structure removed showing glass surfaces.

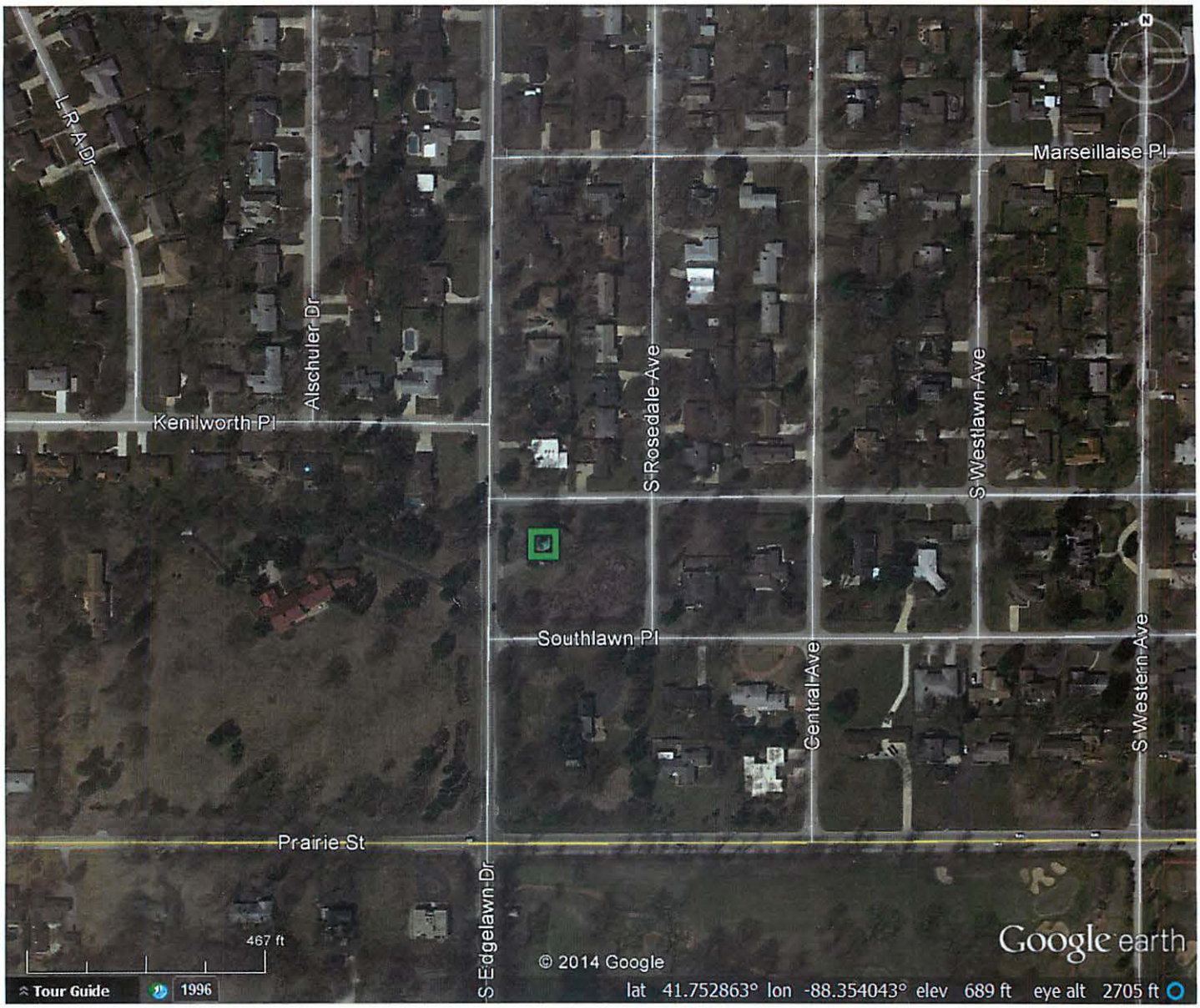


Glass removed showing central balcony and core, and masonry and wood walls.



Sheathing of central balcony and core removed showing central column and cantilevered balcony.

Ford, Sam and Ruth Van Sickle, House **Kane County, IL**



Latitude: 41.752863 **Longitude**: -88.354043

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Ford, Sam and Ruth Van Sickle, House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ILLINOIS, Kane

DATE RECEIVED: 1/22/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/22/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/08/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/08/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000056

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 3-8-16 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.

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

One Old State Capitol Plaza • Springfield, Illinois 62701 • www.illinois-history.gov • TTY 217.524.7128

RECEIVED 2280
JAN 22 2016
Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

January 8, 2016

Ms. Barbara Wyatt
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW Suite NC400
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Wyatt:

Enclosed for your review are two National Register Nomination Forms. They have been recommended by the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council and signed by the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer. They are being submitted in a digital format on the enclosed disks, and are the true and correct copies.

Arcade Building - Riverside, Cook County

Sam Ford and Ruth Van Sickle House - Aurora, Kane County

Please contact me at the address above, or by telephone at 217-785-4324. You can also email me at andrew.heckenkamp@illinois.gov if you need any additional information or clarification. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Andrew Heckenkamp
National Register Coordinator

Enclosures