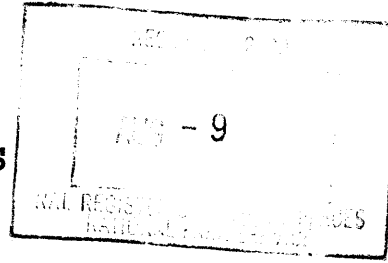


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



**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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Gordon House

other names/site number Gordon, Conrad and Evelyn, House

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 879 W. Main St not for publication
city or town Silverton vicinity _____
state Oregon code OR county Marion code 047 zip code 97381-1207

=====

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally X statewide _____ locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James Hamrick 28 July 2004
Signature of certifying official/ Deputy SHPO Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====
4. National Park Service Certification
=====

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 ___ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the
 National Register
 ___ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the
 National Register
- removed from the National Register

Edson Beall 9/22/04

___ other (explain): _____

Edson

Signature of Keeper

Date
of Action

=====
5. Classification
=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>one</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>one</u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register none

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

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: museum

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Usonian

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
roof WOOD: Plywood
walls CONCRETE; GLASS; WOOD
other _____

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

Attached

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

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

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

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

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1964

Significant Dates 1963-64

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Wright, Frank Lloyd
Goodrich, Burton G.

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

Attached

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Attached

- Previous documentation on file (NPS)
 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

- Primary Location of Additional Data
 State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives
The Oregon Garden

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property 1.0 acres

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>10</u>	<u>516448</u>	<u>4982367</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

X See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Attached

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

Attached

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Mary L. Murphy/Gordon House Coordinator

organization Gordon House Conservancy date January 30, 2004

street & number 879 W. Main St PO Box 1207 telephone 503/874-6006

city or town Silverton state OR zip code 97381-1207

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

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

name The Oregon Garden Foundation

street & number 879 W. Main St PO Box 155 telephone 503/874-8100

city or town Silverton state OR zip code 97381-0155

=====
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. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240

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DESCRIPTION

General Characteristics

The Gordon House has a T-shaped plan with a net area of 2,133 square feet and an overall footprint of 7,350 square feet. The plan has two stories at the top of the T with one story at the leg of the T. However, the one story element has an 11-foot interior height of the major space of the Gordon House, the Great Room. The main floor has the entrance to the house with guest closets and a master bedroom with built in closets and drawer space, bath, and access to a private east terrace. Also on the main floor is the utility room with the terminus of the second level laundry chute at the utility sink. A service entrance provides secondary access to the kitchen and to an office that served Conrad Gordon's farm business needs and provided a small bathroom. The kitchen, or "workroom" as Wright called it, is minimal in square footage but soars to a two-story height with a skylight. The extra height makes the space a big room with natural light and ventilation. The kitchen has a counter that is suitable as an eating area.

The T-shaped plan is modified by the flat roof of the rectangular three-car carport, which is supported by six three-inch pipes supporting columns in two rows. The carport roof is placed at a right angle to the body of the two-story portion of the house. This right angle relationship helps to define the main entrance to the house. The carport ceiling is unfinished western redcedar plywood. The house roofs are flat at two levels corresponding to the taller two-story space and the shorter one-story space of the Great Room. The house roofs are of built-up construction with copper flashing and integral roof drains and down spouts. The roof structure itself is a system of beams and joists with fitch beams at the fascias to support the larger cantilevered roof overhangs. The fitch beams are up to 32 feet in length and consist of ¼ by eight-inch steel plates sandwiched between the two-by-ten wood fascia beams and attached to the joists of the roof structure.

The wood material forming the exterior walls is Western redcedar horizontal one by eight siding applied in a variation of rebated siding with a natural finish. The concrete blocks forming walls, columns, and the fireplace is placed with horizontal joints struck at 3/8 inch depth and the vertical joints struck flush. This masonry style is an example of horizontal emphasis throughout Usonian design that uses horizontal units, whether concrete block or wood siding, to create a vertical element or wall. Horizontal wood siding lines up with the masonry masses and extends beyond along the sides of the cantilevered balconies to capitalize on the east and west views from the second floor bedrooms.

The Gordon House exterior east elevation contains the mass of the master bedroom concrete masonry walls with the cantilevered balcony above. Tall wood window-doors between three concrete block columns to the north establish a rhythmic connection to the mass of the concrete block fireplace. The north elevation contains the exterior view of the perforated board that defines the interior library space. The freestanding northwest corner concrete block column ties the triple cantilevered roof overhang together visually. The north elevation shows no corner columns emphasizing the roof cantilevers whose extent produce an almost exaggerated perspective of building mass. The west elevation

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contains the anchoring mass of the fireplace chimney above the roofline with five concrete block columns and tall wooden window-door combinations ending with the vertical concrete block kitchen tower extension. The cantilevered balcony above anchors these elevation elements.

The south elevation contains the second floor perforated boards serving as privacy screens on the windows and as a decorative element connecting the two cantilevered bedroom balconies. The concrete block masses and the edge of the carport roof intersection define the main entrance to the house. The stepped-back wall planes surrounding the front door further define the entrance.

The second level of the Gordon House features two more bedrooms with balconies at the east end and west end and separated by the main bathroom. The upstairs rooms are connected on the south side by a long hallway. The hallway has nearly continuous storage units below a band of perforated board privacy screens. The privacy screens allow ample filtered light to the hallway and provide the necessary privacy on the public entrance side of the house. The main bath contains a built in tub with shower and a full-length tiled counter top and mirror. The bathroom also has an example of Wright's interest in newest technology: a uni-body or one-piece cast toilet and the mixing sink faucet. The bedrooms had views of the Willamette River from the west balcony and a view of Mt. Hood from the east bedroom balcony. Both bedrooms have built-in closets, study desks, and bookshelves with individual wall units for additional heating. Cabinet storage similar to that in the hallway extends into the bedrooms to provide additional storage. All Western redcedar interior panels, cabinets, wood trim, baseboard, and doors are finished naturally.

The small basement, essentially under the kitchen workspace, contains the water heating system for the gravity or radiant heat system in the concrete main floor and for the wall units on the second floor. The radiant heat pipes are cast into the concrete floor, with hot water pipes routed through the walls to the upper floor wall units. The wall units are not heaters but fans that when called upon, circulate air across the hot water pipe coils in the wall unit providing heat to each room and controlled by individual thermostats. A second water heater in the basement provides potable water for domestic use in the kitchen, laundry, and bathrooms. The basement also has a small incinerator for burning paper trash conveyed by a small chute from the utility area on the first floor.

Specific Features

The Gordon House porches or terraces are extensions of the interior floor slab with a three-step transition to grade. This step up transition further defines entrances at the main front door and along the east and west sides of the body of the house, where the tall wood window-doors provide nearly continuous access to both sides of the Great Room. The indoor/outdoor slab further extends the floor plane through the house and illustrates the Usonian inside/outside character. The main entrance is recessed and defined by the step up of the slab and the carport roof where it intersects with the exterior wall. Entrances to the house are further defined by the step down of the ceiling plane at the carport roof and exterior overhangs.

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Most of the windows in the Gordon House are fixed panes, a cost saving measure. Ventilation is provided by the tall wood window-doors on the main floor and the doors at the second floor bedroom balconies. The fixed perforated board windows provide natural cross lighting from south to north on the second floor. The Great Room windows are screened where needed for privacy or sun shielding through the use of the perforated boards, or fretwork, as a decorative screen that allows and provides light, reduces direct glare, ensures privacy, and offers an economical alternative to draperies or stained art glass. In the ground floor office space, there are three equally spaced single pane windows. The side windows are out-swinging casement and the center window is fixed. These windows continue to provide ground floor natural ventilation and previously offered a view of the Willamette River. Built-in office furniture designed by Wright remains extant and includes a three-sided desk, bookshelves, and gun cabinet. A cedar-veneered, freestanding, two-drawer file cabinet also remains in the office.

The second floor east bedroom has a series of six wood french doors with single pane, fixed glazing. In addition, there is a corner set of doors at the northeast corner of the bedroom. When the corner doors are opened and combined with the opened french doors of the north and east walls, the walls are nearly eliminated as planes, and the visual barrier from inside to the outside disappears and completely opens the bedroom to the outside.

The room doors of the Gordon House are of two types: the solid face and the wood window-doors. Where possible, the doors are standard height as a cost economy and consistent with Usonian scale. The doors are of Western redcedar and are finished naturally. All exterior doors open out from the rooms. The open doors do not intrude into the interior space and, as a plane between inside and outside, the opened tall window-doors tend to disappear with only the door edge visible. The concrete block fireplace and chimney serve as a large defining element and spatial anchor that establishes the limits of the living room as Wright's center of the home. With a strong cantilever at the north corner directly above the hob, the fireplace offers a corner opening to the library and a traditional front to the living room space.

Important Decorative Elements

The open floor plan, an architectural concept developed over many years by Wright, is best demonstrated in the Gordon House Great Room. As described by Wright, the open floor plan, in a space with sufficient volume, allows a combination of uses that can overlap and share the floor space without conflict or loss of function. The Great Room, with its twelve-foot ceiling height, offers a sufficient volume to contain the entrance to the room itself, the dining area, the living area, and the library and entertainment area at the north end. On the second floor, the nearly uninterrupted flow of the floor plane and the ceiling plane describe architecturally the spatial flow inherent in an open floor plan.

Decorative elements include the 15-degree chamfer on all wood baseboards and trim, counters, and shelf edges. Wood elements align with the concrete block horizontal courses, making a visual connection of the elements. Perforated

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board privacy screens, or fretwork, are signature elements of Usonian houses. This treatment consists of two pieces of plywood sandwiching one piece of glass between them. The screens function somewhat as stained or leaded glass or other decorative window treatment that provides privacy and creates evolving shadow patterns and punctuated, fractured views of the sky and landscape. While all Usonian houses have perforated board privacy screens, no two are alike. The Gordon House fretwork is an abstract angular pattern based upon the 15-degree angle, thereby creating another visual connection with other decorative elements.

The intersections of exterior and interior elements create strong visual connections of both materials as well as integrating the different materials from the outside to the inside. An example of this design feature is the horizontal siding passing through the window plane to masonry mass with the lap joint of the siding corresponding to the block coursing.

Significant Interior Features

The floor planes of both house levels confirm Wright's architectural investigation of the open floor plan where multiple uses and room functions within a sufficient volume of space can occur. This is shown most plainly in the Great Room. After entering from the parking area, the ground level concrete slab steps up and the ceiling level steps down to a height of six-foot ten-inch at the entrance door. Moving forward to the Great Room, this compression of entrance space is expanded dramatically to twelve feet at the edge of the Great Room. The volume created contains the dining area progressing to the living room and finally to the library.

Two-by-two foot concrete block columns with two three-by-ten foot tall wood window-doors provide a centering point for the wood beams, which span the Great Room and extend past the column line outside to the roof overhang. The ceiling joist beams are encased with Western redcedar with cedar paneling between them forming the ceiling.

The concrete block fireplace has an asymmetrical opening to serve both the living room area and the Library. The fireplace has a concrete block hob built in, and the masonry mass of the fireplace cantilevers into the Great Room. The Library at the north end of the Great Room is defined by the perforated board fretwork enclosing the seating area and bookshelves with filtered light and fractured views of the outside.

There are no outbuildings.

Landscape Elements

An intimate garden "room" is created by a four-course concrete block wall in a semicircle on the east side of the Gordon House. The wall forms a defining element of the immediate house site, without obstructing the extended views to the north and east. A six-foot high concrete block wall along the east side of the carport and extending

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beyond the edge of the cantilevered roof defines the limits of the car parking and blocks any view of the parked cars from the east view. The new site accomplishes the same north orientation and site elevations of the original wooded site, and the original rural character.

Summary of Building Alterations

There have been none other than what can be considered as part of the relocation of the Gordon House. In fact, the greatest change was in the siting of the house from its original location near the Charbonneau residential development in Wilsonville to The Oregon Garden in Silverton. Despite the relocation of some 26 miles, the original north-south orientation and the finish floor grade have been maintained. All other elements were protected and reassembled as originally constructed.

The relocation was prompted by the sale of the Gordon house, after the death of Evelyn Gordon, to a local couple who subsequently announced their intention to demolish the Gordon house and build a much larger home on the property. Since the Gordon House was listed on the Clackamas County (Oregon) List of Historic Structures, a hearing before the County Commissioners was required to secure the necessary de-listing and subsequent demolition permit. Becoming aware of this public process, the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy negotiated an agreement with the buyers to obtain the Gordon House and relocate it to The Oregon Garden site. A stipulation of the agreement required the house to be moved within 105 days starting November 30, 2000.

Planning for the relocation determined that the Gordon House could be moved in four main pieces, thereby minimizing the impact of the move and keeping the necessary deconstruction to a minimum. The concrete block walls under the second story were to be cut at five feet from the concrete floor allowing steel beams to be inserted under the second floor, which then could be raised as a single 24 by 70-foot section. The carport roof section would be moved as one 18 by 34-foot piece. The Great Room ceiling and roof would be moved in two sections, about 24 by 35 feet each. This determined that the ground floor would be dismantled and moved in pieces. The entire house was documented by taking specific measurements, preparing as-built drawings, and otherwise recording all aspects and architectural elements of the house. After moving the roof sections, the remaining portions of the Gordon House were placed onto three 50-ton dollies for the move. The four sections of the house were moved the 26 miles south to The Garden over a three-day period arriving on March 11, 2001, four days ahead of the 105-day deadline. Relocating the Gordon House to The Oregon Garden avoided certain and imminent demolition.

The selection and specification of building materials and construction methods by Wright for the Gordon House allowed for the exacting nature of the relocation and reconstruction of the house to be accomplished. The concrete slab floor with the integral heating pipes was replaced as originally designed. Concrete block is still a standard building material today, which allows for exact replication. While additional concrete reinforcing bar was used to comply with current building code standards, it serves to strengthen the structural integrity of the Gordon House to

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ensure its safety for its lifetime. Because of Wright's vision, the materials and methods for constructing the Gordon House could be done again, in a manner not unlike an expansion or remodeling of the house, a project that Wright would have approved fully.

Deterioration

The Gordon House condition is fair to good. Water damage has occurred due to deferred maintenance during Mrs. Gordon's sporadic occupancy of the house over the last several years of her life, and the ensuing four years the house stood vacant. Deterioration is primarily water damage limited to soffit areas affected by roof leaks and horizontal siding pieces exposed to prevailing weather. The original interior walls are intact, as are all doors, cabinets, wood trim, furniture, and shelving. The Gordon House continues to present an accurate representation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian house design and subsequent construction for Conrad and Evelyn Gordon.

Restoration and Rehabilitation Plans

Maintenance and necessary renovation continues under the stewardship of the Gordon House Conservancy and with oversight by the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy. With a minimum of deviation from the original menu of materials and techniques of construction, the Gordon House was saved from demolition. Continued restoration will ensure the preservation of this Usonian home for future generations. The Oregon Garden site places the Gordon House in an appropriate setting with established public access, fulfilling the mission of preservation and public education.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Gordon House is the only structure in Oregon designed by the famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright (Pfeiffer, *Personal Letter*). This house embodies the principles of one of his most important contributions to architecture – the Usonian house (Sergeant, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses*)– for this reason it qualifies for eligibility under Criterion C. In addition, the Gordon House meets Criteria Consideration B as a moved property that retains enough historic features to convey its architectural values and retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Moving the Gordon House to The Oregon Garden has replaced it in a setting replicating the original rural site while retaining the north compass orientation as specified on Wright's original design blueprints. The Gordon House rises to significance and meets Criteria Consideration B by retaining its site integrity and maintaining the relationship between the house and its setting as Frank Lloyd Wright envisioned. And finally, the Gordon House meets Criteria Consideration G as a property that has achieved significance within the last fifty years. The Gordon House is of exceptional importance because there are no comparable properties representing Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian values in the state of Oregon.

Frank Lloyd Wright and the Usonian Design

Frank Lloyd Wright is widely considered the greatest architect of the 20th century. He designed over 1,100 houses, museums, churches, schools and other buildings (Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation), and is responsible for many innovations in building design, many of which can be seen in the Gordon House. Wright spent his early years in the rural Wisconsin countryside, where he observed the patterns and rhythms of nature. He came to believe that buildings should blend with their surroundings, drawing inspiration from nature. Many of Wright's designs were for personalized single-family houses. In designing for families, he rethought the nature of American family life and house design.

The Usonian design was the result of Frank Lloyd Wright's quest for his ideal dwelling to solve USONIA's (an acronym for the United States of North America) need for a house of moderate cost and high architectural quality. (18. Wright, *The Natural House*) The houses came to be known as Usonian. In his book *The Testament*, Wright explains,

“Samuel Butler, author of *The Way of All Flesh*, originator of the modern realistic novel, in his *Erewhon* (“nowhere” spelled backwards) pitied us for having no name of our own. “The United States” did not appear to him a good title for us as a nation and the word “American” belonged to us only in common with a dozen or more countries. So he suggested Usonian -- roots of the word in the word unity or in *union*. This to me seemed appropriate. So I have often used this word when needing reference to our own country or style.” (p. 160)

Frank Lloyd Wright had long been interested in designing affordable houses for families of modest means. Like his fellow contemporary social reformers, he believed in the political and moral values exemplified by home ownership and believed that a well-designed house would produce a happier, more harmonious and enlightened society. (PBS,

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website) As early as 1901, Wright wrote of his ideas to decentralize cities. His early writings were thought-provoking, but it wasn't until the 1930s that the growing demand for low-cost, single-family housing would provide him with the opportunity to actually design and build the Usonian house.

Wright reduced the cost of building his Usonians in part by using low-cost materials, leaving them in their natural state, lessening the use of expensive field labor, and by simplifying the heating, lighting, and sanitation systems. Finishing the outside of the house as the interior was finished was the ideal to further reduce construction cost. However in his *An Autobiography* Wright said, "At least this must be our economy if we are to achieve the sense of spaciousness and vista we desire in order to liberate people living in the house." Furthermore Wright pointed out the following items exemplified in the Gordon House:

"Now what can be eliminated? These:

1. Visible roofs are expensive and unnecessary, though desirable.
2. a garage no longer necessary as cars are made. A carport will do, with liberal overhead shelter, walls on two sides. Detroit still had the livery-stable mind. It believed the car must be stabled so – no longer.
3. The old-fashioned basement, except for a fuel and heater space, always a plague spot. A steam-warmed concrete mat four inches thick laid directly on the gravel or broken stone filing, the walls set upon the same, is better.
4. Interior "trim" no longer necessary.
5. No radiators, no light fixtures. We will heat the house the "hypocaust" way, gravity heat, make the wiring system itself the light fixtures, light upon and down the rooms. Light will thus be indirect, except for a few outlets for floor lamps.
6. Furniture, pictures and bric-a-brac unnecessary because walls can resinous oil would be enough. Only the floor mat of concrete squares needs waxing.
7. No painting at all. Wood best preserves itself. A coating of clear resinous oil would be enough. Only the floor mat of concrete squares needs waxing.
8. No plastering in the building.
9. No gutters, no downspouts.

To assist on general planning: what must or may we use in our new construction? In this case five materials: wood, brick, cement, paper, glass. To simplify fabrication we must use our horizontal-unit system in construction: also use a vertical-unit system which will be the width of construction: also use a vertical-unit system which will be the width of the boards and battenbands themselves, interlocking with the brick courses. Although it is getting to be a luxury material, the walls will be board-walls the same inside as outside – these thicknesses of boards with paper placed between them, the boards fastened together with screws." (p. 516)

The work of the first half of Frank Lloyd Wright's career was generally known as the "prairie" period and inspired numerous contemporaries who were known to have worked in the prairie style. Wright's Usonian work spanned from

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1933 to the end of his life (1959) and included an impressive scope of work. After years of being obscured by his personal life, Wright's professional life once again grew in prominence. During the early years of the Great Depression, Wright, like most architects, suffered from a lack of work. However, he used this time to think deeply about American society, democracy, how we live on the land and how we occupy our homes. The result of his thoughtful contemplations was the creation of his so called Usonian ideas for land planning and building design.

After the depression Wright started to concentrate on his utopian city plan, Broadacre City. Magazine articles, lectures, and books resulted in a model being built for a presentation in an exhibit in New York City's Rockefeller Center. Broadacre City gave a visual form to his ideas for a model environment. Frank Lloyd Wright responded to America's post-war demand for low-cost affordable housing by returning to the ideals of Broadacre City. The result was his Usonian architecture.

The building of both Falling Water, the Kaufmann weekend house at Bear Run, Pennsylvania, and the Johnson Wax Company Administration Building in Racine, Wisconsin marked the beginning of Frank Lloyd Wright's "second career." The second half of his career would be the most productive. In 1937, Wright built his first Usonian home. The Herbert Jacobs house in Madison, Wisconsin, although not as grand, would have a more lasting architectural significance than either of the larger projects. The Jacobs' Usonian would become, "... a pattern for more simple and, at the same time, more gracious living . . ." (Wright, *Architectural Forum*). The architectural "grammar" of the Usonian allowed for the houses to retain their basic characteristics with the open floor plan; private front entry; modular grid extending seamlessly from interior to exterior; unique fretwork window treatment; radiant heat; cantilevered roofs with broad overhangs; floor-to-ceiling window doors; and ample built-in closets and cupboards, and yet be varied to suit differing clients and sites.

As Wright's Usonian designs were published, a whole new generation of architects learned from them. In 1954, Wright published *The Natural House*, his primary text on the Usonian house. *The Natural House*, along with his 1932 *An Autobiography* and portfolios of Wright's work from *The Architectural Forum* and other architectural periodicals, successfully introduced architects and the general public alike to the Usonian. *House Beautiful*, a women's magazine, contributed significantly during the 30s, 40s, and 50s in making Frank Lloyd Wright a household name. In addition, *House and Home* magazine issued a wealth of Usonian advice to America's homebuilders.

The success of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian homes can be found in the "...combination of low building costs and the very nature of the home." (Sergeant, p. 27) Sergeant further explains, "The materials and special characteristics of the Usonians gave a sense of serenity, variety, and security that were well recognized by their owners. This was so true that for many clients, their home became one of the most important elements of their lives." Wright, in *The Natural House*, wrote his own commentary on the relationship between homeowner and home: "The Usonian house, then, aims to be a natural performance, at that are integral to site; integral to environment; integral to the life of the inhabitants. A house integral with the nature of materials – wherein glass is used as glass, stone as stone, wood as

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wood – and all elements of environment go into and throughout the house. Into this new integrity, once there, those who live in it will take root and grow. And most of all belonging by nature to the nature of its being.” (p. 123).

In his Usonian philosophy, Wright advocated the use of common locally available materials. It was his distinctive methods of building with these materials that made his buildings unique. He developed his “radiant” in-floor heating system, glass and wood sandwich wall construction, and geometric modular unit system of construction during this period and continued to advocate for utilizing materials to highlight their natural characteristics. Social and economic changes determined that the days of live-in help were fast disappearing. Wright responded by rethinking his house design to make his buildings statements about the new family life. He planned small bedrooms with most of the floor space concentrated in the living room area, which included several functions and encouraged family members to gather together for many activities. Walls of glass were placed to bring the inhabitants into a harmonious relationship with nature. All of these developments were documented in the press with several professional journals (e.g., *Architectural Forum*) and popular magazines (e.g., *House Beautiful*) devoting entire issues to his ideas and the Usonians that resulted.

His Usonian concepts revolutionized house design from then on, gave form to mid-century’s changing values and trends – home ownership, family, informal lifestyles, modern conveniences, outdoor living, privacy –, and continue to be valuable examples within the professions today. The timelessness of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian designs has transcended other architectural and interior fashions, which have come and gone.

The Gordons and Their Wright House

The Gordon House is an authentic Usonian style designed by one of our most important American architects, Frank Lloyd Wright. Evelyn and Conrad Gordon were visiting Frank Lloyd Wright’s architectural studio, Taliesin West in 1956, when they expressed a sincere desire to have their dream home designed by the renowned American architect. Mrs. Gordon had long been an admirer of Mr. Wright’s work. An interview with Frank Lloyd Wright was arranged. This personal meeting played a very important part in determining that the Gordons and Wright shared a “common intent.” Frank Lloyd Wright found this shared intent necessary for him to build a house for another. This interview confirmed for Mr. Wright that the Gordons were perfect clients for his Usonian design. They had purchased 240 acres of cleared land in 1948 with 320 acres of adjacent land. They farmed grain crops and raised livestock at this location for more than a decade. Evelyn Gordon had a sophisticated interest in the arts. She was a fine art student at Mills College, Oakland, California, and the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. Mrs. Gordon was an accomplished weaver and a dedicated art collector. The Gordons were typical of Wright’s Usonian clients: cultured, land-rich, but not necessarily wealthy.

1956 was a very productive year for the 88-year-old architect, and Frank Lloyd Wright was reluctant at first to accept the Gordons as clients. He felt, however, that the Gordons’ request for an economical home on their working farm in

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Oregon's Willamette Valley was the perfect venue for the Usonian design. One of Wright's life goals was to have his designs in every state of the Union and there were none in Oregon. He had completed a preliminary study for Richard Hansen, Corvallis, and had submitted a design for the Statesman Journal Building, Salem, but neither was executed.

A deciding factor for Wright was that one of his most trusted Taliesin apprentices, Burton G. Goodrich, had opened his own practice in Lake Oswego and agreed to oversee the construction of the Gordon House. Goodrich was an apprentice during the pivotal Usonian years 1934-1941. He drew plans for the first Usonian houses and even oversaw the construction of the Broadacre City wood model for an exhibition at Rockefeller Center in New York City (April 1935). The Rosenbaum Usonian, built in Florence, Alabama in 1940 was Goodrich's first experience in building a Frank Lloyd Wright house. The Rosenbaum House is considered a particularly outstanding example of the Usonian genre. Goodrich's knowledge and experience in Usonian construction assured the architectural purity of the Master's design, making the Gordon House a significant example of Usonian architecture. In comparing the Gordon House with the early Usonians, Goodrich felt that "... the design was more developed than the earlier ones he did in the late 30's and 40's." (Gragg, *The Expulsion of Frank Lloyd Wright*)

The Gordon House design rises to exceptional significance as one of only two Usonian type designs utilizing a particular parti, or design scheme: a two-story T-shaped plan with 1 ½-story living room space. It was this parti that Frank Lloyd Wright published in Life Magazine in September 1938 to introduce the Usonian design to the American people. In 1939, Wright used this early parti to design a house for the Bernard Schwartz family, Two Rivers, Wisconsin. He returned only one other time to this original parti, and that was for the Gordon House design in 1957. The original authenticity ensured by Goodrich and Usonian architectural purity embodied by the Gordon House make it a significant presence in Oregon under Criterion C. (Woodin, *A Moving Experience* and *The Gordon House has been Saved! Restoration is Under Way*)

Through correspondence between Wright and Goodrich, the Gordons provided site information necessary to draw the house plans. The Gordon House beautifully exhibits the Usonian grammar, yet it is specific to its owners and site. Conrad Gordon was still working the land when the house design was developed. Wright designed a farm office for him with access through a side door to accommodate the business needs without disturbing the privacy of the home. Wright provided Evelyn Gordon with a space for her weaving loom. Wright even adjusted the square footage by nearly 25 percent at the request of Conrad Gordon to "keep within the \$25,000 limit." The Gordon parcel presented a stunning view of Mt. Hood to the east and a view to the north and west of the Willamette River. It was for this land that Frank Lloyd Wright designed their Usonian home.

The Gordon House is truly of the Usonian style and was built with common materials: wood, concrete and concrete block, and glass. It was built on a seven-by-seven-foot modular grid – the largest module Wright used for any of his residential designs. The vertical module is 8-3/8 inches high, which is a size determined by the standard dimensions of a concrete block and grout joint (Woodin). Building on the ground, rather than in it, afforded precious labor cost

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savings. The small footprint consolidated utilities, and the radiant floor heat eliminated the labor involved in placing ducting and water pipes. The prefabricated wall units consisting of studless board and batten sandwich panels allowed additional cost savings. In the Gordon House, as in other Usonian, exposing the concrete, cement block, and wood as part of the construction design eliminated unnecessary finish materials and labor. Standardized construction methods and details also reduced the architect's time.

When the Gordon House was completed in 1964 at a final cost of \$56,000, *The Oregonian* newspaper commemorated the event with an extensive article. An open house for the public, instead of a planned weekend, lasted five days, hosting 1,500 visitors as well as 300 students. (Woodin, *A Moving Experience*) The Gordons graciously shared Oregon's only Frank Lloyd Wright-designed structure and Oregon's only Usonian design. Throughout her life Evelyn opened her home to those who were interested in Wright's architecture. She maintained a guest book and kept the many letters of thanks and appreciation she received from visitors. Guests were treated not only to a walk through the house but also to Evelyn's loving stories of how her home expressed Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian values.

Relocation and Reassembly of the Gordon House

After Evelyn's death in 1997, the Gordon's heirs offered the property with the house for sale. Knowing of their mother's love of her Frank Lloyd Wright designed home; it was their desire to sell the property to someone who would restore the home. Although the asking price was lowered twice, the house sat vacant for almost four years. The property was finally sold to David and Carey Smith for \$1.1 million in September 2000. The county's Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) zoning designation made it impossible for the Smiths to build a second house on their new property. They could choose to live in the Gordon House, build connected to it, or have it removed and build their "dream house." The Smiths contacted a local designer to design a replacement residence. The designer refused the job, citing the Gordon House's historical significance, which prompted the Smiths' decision to have the house removed from the Clackamas County List of Historic Structures in preparation to demolish it. It was this culmination of events that alerted the people of Oregon that they were about to lose their only Frank Lloyd Wright building. The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy (FLWBC), a Chicago-based organization devoted to preserving Wright's built legacy, proceeded to work to save the Gordon House. An advocacy team was formed which included the FLWBC Advocacy Committee, EcoHome Foundation, Portland American Institute of Architects (AIA), Oregon Historical Preservation League, The Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, and many others. Hours of negotiations by Conservancy board member Deborah Vick procured an eleventh-hour agreement with the Smiths to donate the Gordon House to the Conservancy. The agreement was contingent on the house being moved in 105 days and the Smiths receiving the tax deduction.

An article regarding the plight of Oregon's only Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian home appeared in *The Oregonian*. The outcry from Oregonians was overwhelming, prompting Randy Gragg of *The Oregonian* to print in his column the following, "I have never received as many e-mails and letters over an issue in sixteen years of public life,

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Commissioner Mike Jordan said, thumbing a phone-book size pile of paper he said had arrived “from across the country.” (Woodin, *The Gordon House has been Saved! Restoration is Under Way*)

With the pressure of a firm 105-day deadline, FLWBC trustee Deborah Vick, EcoHome Foundation executive director Larry Woodin, and Robert Dortignacq, American Institute of Architects Historic Preservation Committee chair, began the process for evaluating options for moving the building. Where can we move the Gordon House? Three qualified proposals were entertained by the FLWBC. The Gordon House was originally designed to be constructed on an isolated rural site, not part of a neighborhood or alongside other houses. Over the previous three decades, the original site had become the antithesis of the Usonian concept; over time, the Gordon House found itself surrounded by a community of attached townhomes with a zone of expensive river-view properties and high-priced, suburban-styled houses. The Oregon Garden was chosen by the FLWBC to receive the house in large part because it offered a site that emulated the early character of the original in many significant ways and provided a viable public operation accessible to many.

Another similarity of the second site to the original was the proximity to the city of Silverton. The historic Aurora Colony, located near the original Gordon farm, and the city of Silverton became part of the Oregon landscape at about the same time. In 1854, Silverton became a city serving nearby farmers until the appearance of the narrow gage railroad made lumber an important product. In 1856, Aurora Colony was established on the banks of the Pudding River where it became famous for its craftsmanship, fine farms, orchards and music. A short distance south of Silverton in the Evergreen district is the descendants of German and Swiss immigrants who have a similar history to the German settlers of Aurora. Their cultural values of hard work and commitment to religion along with their love of the land is still alive today contributing to the strength of both the Silverton and Aurora area communities. (Hoblitt, *When Silverton was Young*)

The process of moving the Gordon House included careful scrutiny by historians, scholars, and preservation architects to assure that the building would be located in a manner closely related to its original site (including most importantly the original north compass orientation). Vick and Dortignacq reviewed several locations in The Oregon Garden before recommending the current site in order to ensure that the site was the most supportive of Wright’s original design intentions. It was also important to the siting committee that the location chosen for the Gordon House was separated from the main Oregon Garden activity areas to ensure the integrity of the house’s immediate setting. It was also imperative that the materials of the structure would either be brought intact or, where not possible, reconstructed in identical material, texture and color. To do this, experts from the FLWBC and the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation worked with a number of consultants and assured that the highest possible standards were maintained. The Gordon House can rightfully be shown as a building of significance in demonstrating the proper techniques for accomplishing such an important and daunting task. (Woodin, *Personal Interview*) Upon viewing the house at the grand opening, Burton Goodrich remarked that perhaps this was an even better site than the original.

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The result is that the Gordon House is sited to match the original property on a sloped site that was re-graded to recreate as nearly as possible the feeling of the original site and to offer comparable vistas in the intended viewing directions. Also of great importance is the siting into a grove of mature deciduous trees, which replicates the scene at the original Wilsonville site. The reconstructed house also utilizes all of the original woodwork, cabinets, furniture, appliances, and fixtures, intact. The move necessitated the replacement of the first-story concrete block masonry and the concrete floor and basement. Though structurally reinforced to meet current building code standards, these parts were recreated to the original in every way, including original measurement differences and inconsistencies. It is virtually impossible to tell which masonry work is original and which is new. The Gordon House stands as an excellent example of a successfully deconstructed, moved, and reassembled building of exceptional architectural and historical significance. (Woodin, *Personal Interview*) In *The Gordon House: A Moving Experience*, Larry Woodin documents the simultaneous activities, which precipitated the actual move:

“In early January of 2001 the EcoHome Foundation sponsored a public tour of the house to benefit the FLWBC and welcomed over six hundred visitors in two days. The willing support of the media and the help of members of the Wilsonville Library Foundation and the Portland AIA, who helped staff the house, assured success. Meanwhile, The Oregon Garden team worked diligently documenting and dismantling the house and preparing for the move and restoration of the house. The restoration architect, Rob Dortigniac, was the FLWBC’s on-site monitor. Project manager Kim Knox insured that the timeline was carefully adhered to, and house mover Bob Berg and Shoap House Movers paved the way for the four large pieces of the house to be moved successfully. While The Oregon Garden team worked to prepare the building for its move, the Conservancy’s site team – John Thorpe, Harvard Professor Neil Levine, and Larry Woodin – worked with assistance from Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer and the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives to find the best way to site the building at the Oregon Garden, respecting the particulars of the Wright plan and the original site. FLWBC Board members Lawrence and Sharon Tarantino and Larry Brink provided input on the siting and began consulting on the many technical questions of the move, reconstruction, and restoration.”

The Great Room roof sections and carport roof arrived at The Oregon Garden on Sunday, February 25, 2001. Sunday, March 11, brought the largest single piece, the entire second floor. The crew toasted the final move with champagne and a huge sigh of relief that the deadline had been met with time to spare.

Thanks to a remarkable group of individuals, contractors, and technical specialists the Gordon House opened to the public on March 1, 2002. They had saved an important work by America’s most important architect. It is open to the public to be enjoyed as a treasure for the state of Oregon and an educational tool for all who visit.

The Gordon House is the only Wright building open to the public in the Pacific Northwest. Molly Murphy, Gordon House Coordinator said, “The number of visitors is an indication of the great amount of interest, enthusiasm and

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excitement, not only about Frank Lloyd Wright but about the whole idea of American architecture. People are very interested in seeing this building up close and personal.” (*The Oregon Garden Guide*) The mission of the Gordon House is to educate the public on Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian architecture. The Gordon House, is a wonderful example of true American architecture, commissioned by an Oregon farmer and his wife, and designed by the most famous architect of the twentieth century – Frank Lloyd Wright.

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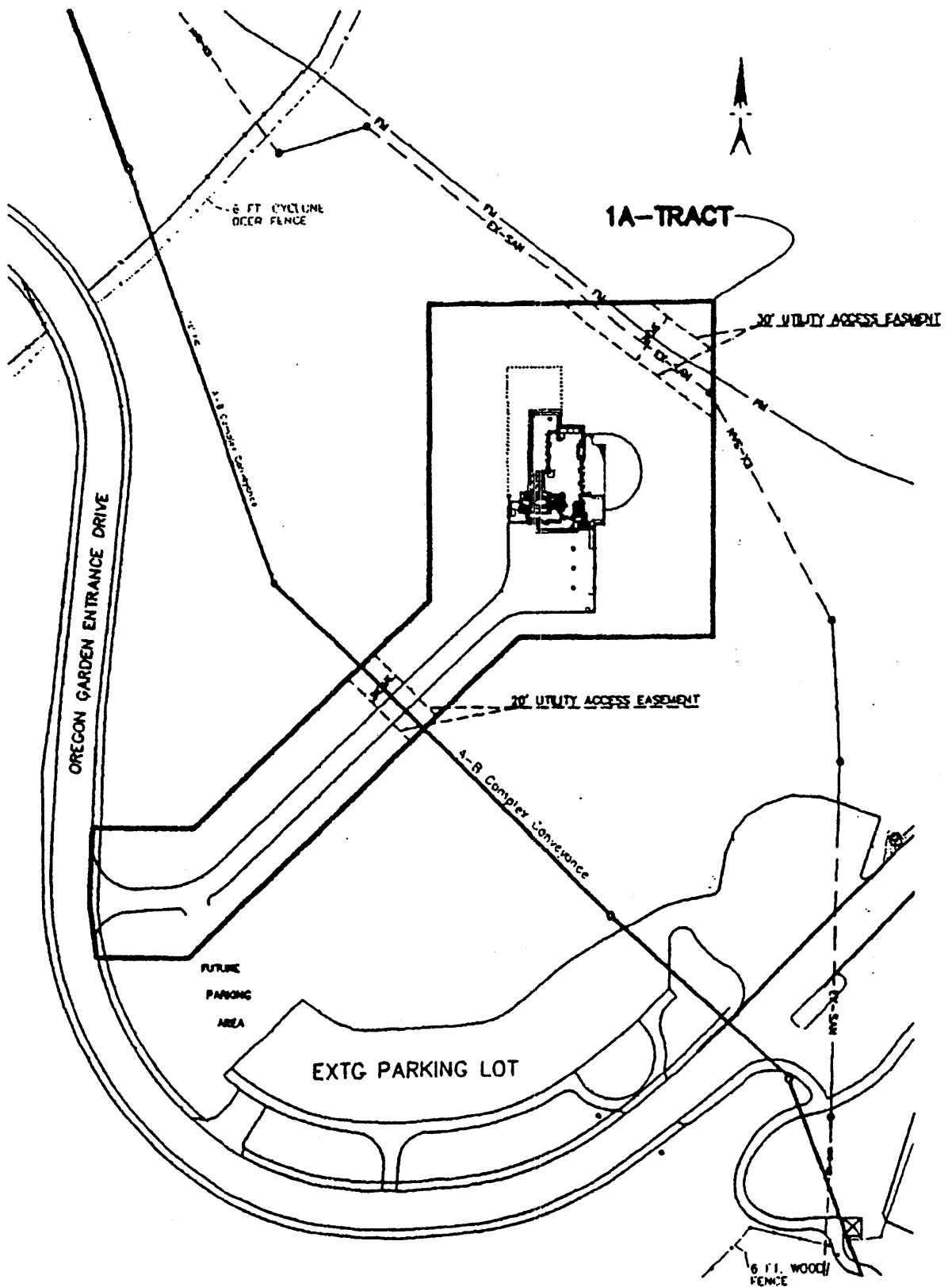
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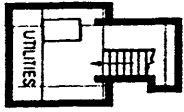
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Date: January 17, 2004
Negatives held by Eric Silberg
c/o The Gordon House Conservancy
879 W. Main Street, P.O. Box 1207
Silverton, Oregon 97381-1207

- No. 1 South and west facades; view to northeast.
- No. 2 South facade; view to northeast.
- No. 3 North and west facades; view to southeast.
- No. 4 North and east facades; view to southwest.
- No. 5 South and east facades; view to northwest.
- No. 6 View from west bedroom balcony; view to northwest.
- No. 7 East bedroom and balcony; view to northeast.
- No. 8 Living (Great) room; view to northeast.
- No. 9 View toward first-floor master bedroom; view to east.
- No. 10 Dining alcove and view into kitchen; view to southwest.
- No. 11 Living (Great) room; view to west.
- No. 12 West bedroom and balcony; view to west.

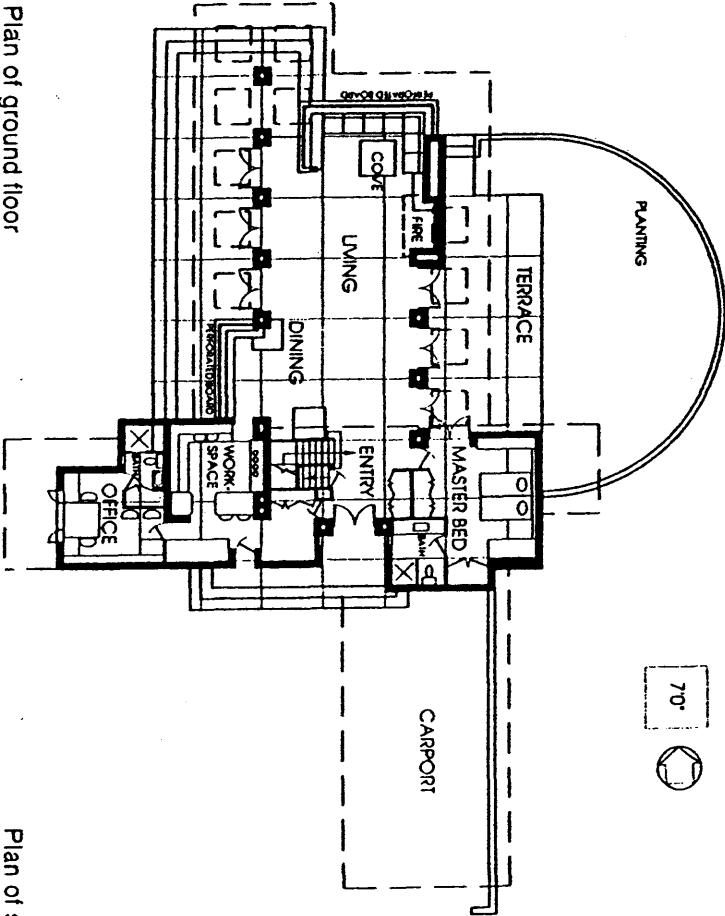
Frank Lloyd Wright House : 1-acre Tract
Within the Oregon Garden



Plan of basement



Plan of ground floor



Plan of second floor

