

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

715

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: Robert and Suzanne Drucker

House

Other names/site number: Suzanne Weese Drucker Frank

House

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: 2801 Iroquois

Road

City or town: Wilmette

State: IL

County: Cook

Not For Publication: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 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:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

	<u>OSHPD</u>	<u>7/24/13</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

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

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title : _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____
Don Nelson W. Beall _____ *9.18.13* _____
 Signature of the 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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMNESTIC: single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

International Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD, 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 Suzanne and Robert Drucker House was designed in 1952-54 by Harry Weese of Harry Weese & Associates and in 1963 received a second story addition by Benjamin Weese while he was with the firm. It is an L-shaped residence composed of two wings, with the front wing paralleling the street and the rear wing angled to the west. The exterior is sheathed in vertical wood board & batten siding with vast expanses of glass openings that connect to the out of doors. The house rests on a concrete foundation and is topped by flat tar and gravel roofs. Distinctly Modern, its massing is simple and geometric. On the interior, the first floor contains a living room, dining room, glazed sun porch, study/guest room and master bedroom and two bathrooms; the upstairs contains five bedrooms and two baths. These floors and a basement are connected by an open staircase. There is an attached carport facing the street. The house rests on a deep rectangular lot.

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Narrative Description

SECTION 7

GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The Suzanne and Robert Drucker House, 2801 Iroquois Road, is in the Village of Wilmette, which is located in the north part of Cook County, approximately fourteen miles from downtown Chicago. According to the 2010 United States Census, the Village of Wilmette has a population of 27,087, divided among 10,290 households; of those, 7,730 households contained families. Wilmette is one of eight North Shore suburbs located north of Chicago along Lake Michigan. These communities are, from south to north: Evanston, Wilmette, Kenilworth, Winnetka, Glencoe, Highland Park, Lake Forest and Lake Bluff. Wilmette borders Lake Michigan on the east, Evanston and Skokie to the south, Kenilworth to the north, and Glenview to the west. The Village of Wilmette is part of larger New Trier Township, which covers approximately seventeen square miles and serves approximately 56,000 people spread throughout Wilmette, Kenilworth, Winnetka, Glencoe, and the eastern portions of Glenview and Northfield.¹ The Drucker House is located in the Indian Hills Subdivision of Wilmette. Stone gate posts on the north side of Lake Avenue mark the entrances to Indian Hills.

Within the subdivision, the Drucker house is located on Iroquois Road, which runs east-west. The house is approximately two blocks north of Lake Avenue and centered between Illinois Road to the east and Hibbard Road to the west. It is accessed from Lake Avenue by Romona Road, which is located to the west of Iroquois Road. The house is on the south side of the street, with its primary elevation facing north. It is located two miles west of the Union Pacific Railroad's Wilmette stop and the surrounding commercial/retail district, and three miles west of the intersection of Sheridan Road and Lake Avenue. Sheridan Road is the major residential street that runs parallel to Lake Michigan and connects Wilmette with other North Shore suburbs to the north and the City of Chicago further south. Just east of the Sheridan Road/Lake Avenue intersection is Gilson Park and the Wilmette Harbor, while just south is the Chicago Transit Authority's Wilmette stop. The house is located approximately one mile northeast of the Lake Avenue exit from the Edens Expressway. This highway interchange is immediately surrounded by a small shopping district.

SETTING

The Drucker House is centrally sited on a deep rectangular lot, between the public sidewalk and neighboring southern house's neighbor that front onto Blackhawk Road. Approximately half an acre, 2801 Iroquois Road's lot has substantial and mature vegetation, narrow side yards and a fenced rear yard. The front lawn is open to Iroquois Road and a long

¹ New Trier Township Website. <<http://www.newtriertownship.com/>>

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driveway, constructed of pavers and situated near the lot's west property line, connects the house's attached carport to the street.

Bluestone forms a narrow path near the perimeter of the L-shaped house. Laid as a mosaic of various rectangular shaped stones, this path is carefully integrated into the designed landscape. Almost every section of the path is pulled slightly away from the house to allow a planting bed or groundcover to be introduced between it and the house. Broader expanses of bluestone are used to access the front door and to create terraces on both sides of the house's front wing. The front terrace of this wing is located east of the front door and is surrounded by a screen wall of painted wood slats. The front wing's rear terrace is located in the inside corner of the house's angled "L"-shaped footprint.

In addition to the prevailing bluestone, hardscape includes two concrete slabs supporting flat-roofed porches. These, too, are located on both sides of the front wing. The smaller slab is located at the east end of the north façade and is under an open porch. The larger slab is located at the east end of the south façade and is under a screened porch.

The house is heavily screened from neighbors along its west, south and east property lines with a combination of dense, closely spaced shrubbery and substantial, mature trees. These include a copper beech tree at the rear of the lot.

ARCHITECTURE

Exterior:

High style Modern in design, the Drucker House differs considerably from the 2 to 2-1/2-story historical revival-style homes that dominate the neighborhood. Characteristics that defines the Drucker House as Modern include lack of ornament, wings composed of simple geometric shapes, flat roofs, metal windows containing large expanses of glass or organized in geometric patterns, sliding glass doors and walls sheathed with simply-sawn vertical wood siding. Modern houses of the period frequently had terraces, porches and paths and plant material carefully designed to integrate the exterior and interior. They often had carports rather than the ubiquitous garages characteristic of homes designed after the car became popular in the 1910s. The Drucker House shares these characteristics. Its architect was modernist Harry Weese, principle of Harry Weese Associates, who designed 2801 Iroquois Road in 1952 for his sister and brother-in-law, Suzanne and Robert Drucker. There have been no other homeowners during the house's sixty-year history.

The L-shaped Drucker house has geometric massing, stands two stories and is set back 85' from the street. All its roofs are flat, covered with tar and gravel, and are edged with a thin aluminum lip. A low, cylindrical, painted brick chimney rises from the center of the house's front wing through the roofline. The unornamented exterior walls of 2801 Iroquois are sheathed in painted vertical board & batten cedar siding. Trim is minimal, limited to painted metal frames of doors and windows and flat spandrels. Slatted wood walls screen the porch and terrace on the

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front of the house. They are also employed in the adjacent carport; these screen walls are painted the same color as the house. Large expanses of plate glass, especially at the rear of the house, create a close relationship with the surrounding landscape. Windows are thoughtfully organized, with similarity in size and shape of fenestration, but with no attempt at symmetry.

The front wing of the "L", which is oriented north-south, measures approximately 40' x 18'. Originally it stood one story; however the expanding Drucker family needed a second floor bedroom addition and it was constructed across the front wing in 1963. The architect of the addition was Ben Weese, Harry and Suzanne's brother, who worked for Harry Weese & Associates and designed it in sympathy with the style and utilizing the same materials as Harry Weese's original design. The rear wing of the "L", is not precisely perpendicular, angling approximately 10 degrees southwest in order to maximize sun exposure, provide a more spacious rear yard² and allow better views. The perimeter of the rear wing measures approximately 45' on the west, 38' on the east, 18' on the south and 9' on the north.

Extending beyond the "L" are three projections---a front porch and adjacent screened terrace, a carport and a rear screen porch. The adjacent front porch and terrace extend approximately 30' across the front of the house and project approximately 10.' Although their walls are identical in height, the porch has a flat roof covered with tar and gravel, while the terrace is open to the sky. The railing of the porch and the walls of the terrace screen are covered by a continuous skin of vertical wood slats painted white. The attached carport is also on the front of the house. It is located in the northwest corner, opposite the porch/terrace. Both the carport and porch/terrace project the same distance and have flat roofs covered with tar and grave. The carport measures approximately 18' wide and 20' deep. On the rear, (south side) of the house is the large, painted wood screen porch. It extends approximately 15' across most of the front wing's rear wall. Accessed from both the living room and dining room by sliding glass doors, this porch is approximately 10' deep and topped by a flat roof with a simple wood cornice fascia. There is a small terrace between the angled wing of the house and the screened porch.

The north (front) elevation encompasses the full length of the house's east-west (front) wing, as well as the adjacent carport and, rising behind the carport, the second floor of the rear wing's front wall. The first floor of the north elevation is abundantly glazed at the west end and has several entries. Like most of the house entries, these entrances are protected by metal storm doors, and painted metal spandrels fill the area between the tops of the windows and the roofline. At the east end of the first floor is a glazed door that opens into the living room and is sheltered under the roof of the open porch. Behind the adjacent slat-screened terrace is a glazed wall. This wall has a sheet glass window flanked by two pairs of stacked casement windows; a glazed door at the west end opens to the kitchen. Slightly west of the kitchen door is the main entrance. It consists of a solid, flush, painted wood door with a narrow transom above and a single, narrow sidelight to the east. A flat, shallow projecting roof shelters the main entrance and connects the top of the terrace with that of the carport. This entrance gives the appearance of being recessed because it is so closely flanked by the projecting porch and carport. The main entry's board-and-batten west wall wraps north to become a wing wall for the carport. The carport's west wall is

² Ben Weese, notes provided to Susan Benjamin, February 12, 2013.

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also board-and-batten, however its south (rear) wall is a slat screen like the front porch. This rear wall ends near the side of the house to allow access from the carport to the house's side entry. Wood slats are repeated at the front of the carport, where they band the roofline.

The second floor of the front wing was added in 1963. There are two windows on its north elevation. One consists of a centrally-located group of four elongated casement windows that are organized as stacked pairs. The other, positioned at the west end of the addition, is a slender vertical window that is divided into two casements. It aligns with the narrow sidelight of the front entrance below.

The west (side) elevation of the house stands two stories. At its north end is a deeply recessed first floor entrance that has a transomed glass door that opens to the front hall. A pent roof shelters this side entrance, and on the second floor above is a pair of vertical casement windows. Immediately south of this recessed side entry is a below-grade entrance to the basement. Its large, generously-glazed opening has a door and three different types of rectilinear windows—transom, casement and awning. This entrance is surrounded by shallow retaining walls and is accessed by a concrete staircase. South of the basement entry, the west elevation's second floor slightly overhangs the first floor. The second floor is lighted by two vertical windows and a horizontal ribbon window. The first floor has high, narrow, horizontal ribbon windows that flank a shallow vertical board and batten projection.

The L-shaped rear (south side) of the Drucker House consists of three elevations---the front wing's back (south) wall, the rear wing's back (south) wall and the rear wing's east (side) wall. Across most of the first floor of the front wing's back wall is the screened porch. The second floor of the front wing's back wall is part of the 1963 addition. In general, the rear of the house has large expanses of glass. Several of these expanses include doors that provide access to the outside.

The first floor of the front wing's rear façade is almost completely glass, with two fixed sheet-glass panels at its east end, sliding glass doors in the center and a fixed sheet-glass panel at the west end. Originally, the easternmost fixed window consisted of a pair of sliding glass doors. The glass openings are now fixed. The wooden screen porch shelters all but the westernmost window. The rear facade of the second floor of the front wing, which was added in 1963, has an off-center pair of glazed openings. The east pair is divided vertically into a fixed glass panel and a door that opens onto the screen porch roof. At the west end of the second floor is a fixed sheet of glass with a wide sidelight containing four casement windows. The sidelight is divided in half vertically and at wainscot-height horizontally.

Sections of the rear wing's back (south) and side (east) walls are also abundantly glazed. This wing's east façade has a two-story, off-center group of four windows that are stacked in pairs separated by a painted metal spandrel. Each of the four windows is a large fixed sheet of glass with a sidelight containing two casements. The group is flanked by glazed doors on the first floor. The rear wing's narrow south façade has a glazed grouping on the east half of the first floor. This group is comprised of two fixed glass sheets and a sidelight divided into two casements. The easternmost sheet of glass originally was a glazed door. The second floor has a

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painted metal fascia at the cornice. Below the fascia, the wall is filled by glazed doors that flank a flat, painted wainscot, above which are a pair of windows with sidelights. Fronting the second floor is an overhanging balcony with a simple metal railing with vertical openings. The west side of the balcony has a full-story privacy wall that is a continuation of the house's west façade.

The east elevation of the house is predominantly board and batten siding. There are no glazed openings on the first floor. The second floor was added in 1963. At the north end of the addition there is a single vertical pair of casements.

Interior

The interior of the house has two full levels of living space and a partial finished basement. The walls of the interior are flat and are mostly painted. Paneling, used as an accent, is found in limited areas including the passage side of the kitchen's south wall, the west wall of the first floor study, the master bedroom west wall and as wainscot on the main staircase. Ceilings on the first floor are also primarily flat and painted, but on the second floor many ceilings are covered with paneling and supported by exposed beams. Some of the second floor ceilings are painted. Doors on the first floor are flush and are either painted or stained. On the second floor, most doors are louvered and either painted or stained. Trim is very limited and primarily consists of thin baseboards painted to match the walls. Flooring throughout most of the first floor is 6" clay quarry tile laid on the diagonal, with quarry tile baseboards. The living room and bedroom, however, are carpeted. On the second floor, the bedrooms are also carpeted but the rest of the floors consist of cork squares laid on the diagonal. The bathrooms throughout the house have ceramic tile floors.

The house contains eleven rooms. Across the front wing of the L-shaped first floor are the powder room, front hall, kitchen, dining room and living room. The first floor's rear wing contains the stair hall, a study/guest room, bathroom and master bedroom. On the L-shaped second floor, the 1963 front wing has three bedrooms and a bathroom. There are two bedrooms and a bathroom in the rear wing.

First Floor

The main entrance of the house is located at the west end of the front wing. The door opens south into a narrow hallway that runs north/south. The east wall of this hall does not extend to the ceiling and is freestanding, which enables access to passages off its north and south ends. This freestanding east wall is 6'2" high, has five pairs of flush black walnut doors that contain storage space. The other side of this wall functions as the west wall of the kitchen. The front hall has a powder room off its northwest corner. To the south is the hall closet and then the glazed side entry.

At the south end of the main entrance hall any feeling of confinement ends as the space widens and is flooded with light from the many surrounding glazed openings. Here is where wings meet, the junction of their long glazed walls providing an abundance of natural light and a panoramic view out to the back yard. Off the juncture's west side is a three-story space

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containing the main staircase. Rising from the basement through to the second floor, this staircase is lighted from behind (from the west) by the large glazed opening at the basement entry. The staircase itself facilitates light penetration and appears to “float” because of its open risers, its dark stained treads that seem to “disappear” and the openness of its slender metal railing which is painted white. Vertical boards, forming black walnut wainscot, line the walls along the staircase. The rest of the stairwell’s walls are painted white, like most of those throughout the house.

East of the main entry hall and stair junction are the other rooms of the house’s front wing. Passages along the glazed north and south walls of the front wing access the galley kitchen and the dining room and lead to the living room, which is located at the east end of the wing. The north passage has a glazed door accessing the screened front terrace. The south passage accesses the rear screen porch from a pair of sliding glass doors. Between the kitchen and dining room is a freestanding wall of dimensions similar to that between the front hall and the kitchen. It borders both the living room and dining room and includes a pass-through. The wall between the dining room and living room is the same height and incorporated a two-sided fireplace, whose large round brick stack reaches up from the fireplace and through the ceiling. The living room, which is raised a step above the dining room, accesses the front porch through a glazed door in its northwest corner.

Inside the kitchen, the historic cabinetry remains. In general, the cabinet frames are metal, the doors and drawers are wood composite, and on the east wall there is a bank of upper cabinets with frosted glass doors. Below these cabinets, in the south half of the kitchen, the backsplash can drop forward to serve as a formal pass-through between the kitchen and dining room. The kitchen’s Formica countertops have been replaced but match the originals. The kitchen can be closed off on its south end by a pocket door. A swinging door at the north end of the kitchen’s west wall provides access to the front hall, while opposite it a split door with a piano hinge opens into the dining room. The south end of the kitchen’s east wall is open but can be closed off by a split door with a piano hinge. When open the door rests flush against the wall of the hallway.

The dining room shares its west partition with the kitchen and the east partition with the living room. The upper third of the west partition is cabinets with sliding glass doors; below the cabinets is the Formica pass-through and a paneled wall. The east partition has grass cloth-covered sliding doors on its south half; these were originally painted royal blue and orange. On the north half is a painted brick wall containing the unadorned fireplace opening. There is no hearth. The dining room light fixture is ceiling mounted and consists of circular plastic tubing with 24 small frosted light bulbs.

The living room shares its west partition wall with the dining room. The south half of this wall is bookshelves with cabinets below. The north half is the opposite side of the dining room’s brick fireplace and wing wall. The edges of the projecting living room fireplace are framed with a raised soldier course. The living room side of the firebox opening is trimmed with brass; above the fireplace the wall is stucco. There is a travertine hearthstone.

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While the front wing of the first floor contains the public rooms, the rear wing of the first floor contains three private rooms along its west wall—two bedrooms with a tandem bathroom. A passage along the glazed east wall of the rear wing flows southwest from the main stair junction. At the north end of this glazed wall is a door opening east onto the rear yard terrace. The passage accesses the study/guest room at the north end of the rear wing, while a door at the passage's south end accesses the master bedroom.

The study/guest room is completely open to the passage. It can be closed off by a pocket door that is concealed behind the passage's storage wall between the two bedrooms. The master bedroom, located at the south end of the rear wing, accesses the back yard through a door in its northeast corner. There is a closet with built-in storage along its north wall. The south wing's private, tandem bathroom now is accessed solely by a door in the northwest corner of the master bedroom. The opening opposite it that enabled access to the bathroom from the study has been walled shut, but this change is easy to reverse because the door on the study side remains in place. This bathroom retains its original fixtures.

Second Floor

The L-shaped second floor of the Drucker House is accessed from the first floor by the main staircase. The main staircase opens east onto the second floor at the juncture of the front and rear wings. These are the wings that were constructed in two stages.

The rear wing, staircase and landing are part of the original 1952 design by Harry Weese. This wing, which has excellent integrity, is similar in plan to the floor below. A large bedroom space (that can be divided vertically with an accordion wall) is located at the south end. This space accesses a balcony through doors in both its southeast and southwest corners. A tandem bathroom, laid out like the bathroom immediately below, is positioned between the south bedroom and a bedroom at the north end of the rear wing. Access to the tandem bathroom is at the west end of each room. The north bedroom has a wide opening to a hall running along the glazed east wall of the wing. This bedroom, which has closets and built-in storage along its south wall, can be closed off by a pocket door that slides behind a hall storage unit. The rear wing hall, which also accesses the south bedroom, flows into the stair landing at the north end of the wing. A pocket door at this point enables the hall of the rear wing to be closed off from the stair landing. Access from the rear wing to the front wing is gained through a single-light door in the stair landing's north wall.

The front wing of the second floor is the addition designed in 1963 by Ben Weese. It too retains its integrity and is similar in plan to the floor below. There are three bedrooms along the south wall and a bathroom in the northwest corner. (The original plans labeled one a "sewing room".) In the middle bedroom, the round brick chimney stack of the first floor fireplace continues through the floor and up through the ceiling and above the roof line. Both the middle and east bedrooms have a door accessing the flat roof of the rear porch. A dogleg hall, running mostly along the north wall, provides access to all the rooms of the front wing. The northeast bathroom has two doors opening onto the hall. Inside, this bathroom is divided in half with a wall featuring a door that can be closed so that two people can use the bathroom simultaneously.

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The south half of the bathroom has a toilet and sink, while the north half has a combined tub and shower as well as a built-in bench.

The basement of the Drucker House is accessed on the interior by the main staircase. This staircase descends from the first floor and opens west to a broad landing which also serves the below-grade exterior basement entry at this level. Stairs on the east side of the landing continue the descent to the basement proper. Some of the basement is finished as an office and entertainment area; other space is unfinished. There also is a semi-finished combined mechanical and laundry room. The basement floor is mostly carpeted, however the mechanical room has linoleum flooring.

Conclusion

Sue Weese Drucker Frank continues to live in the house that was built for her family almost 60 years ago. It has remarkable integrity on both the exterior and interior, having experienced relatively few changes. The only major alteration – the second floor addition to the front wing (which is characterized by similar stylistic features) was designed by Ben Weese in 1963. It has gained significance in its own right. At the time of the addition, Ben Weese was working in the office of Harry Weese & Associates. The addition to the Drucker House is Modern, uses the same materials as the original house, is similar in scale and introduces no new detailing. Even the kitchen is unaltered; only the Formica countertops were changed. More convenient and easy-to-operate windows that match the historic windows were installed in the early 2000s.³ Since the house has radiant heat in the tile floors and coils in the ceiling there was a concern with putting in air conditioning, but Space Pak was installed without interfering with any historic features. Changes to the basement consisted of adding built-in cabinetry and installing mechanical updates. Other than repainting, these are the only major changes that have been made to the house since 1963. Because of its Modern style, its design excellence and fine integrity, the house is an important work of architecture in the community.

³ Casement windows with interior screens were installed. Sue Frank wanted screens that were integral with the windows so they wouldn't need to be changed out.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

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

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Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance
1954-1963

Significant Dates
1954, 1963

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

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Weese, Harry. Harry Weese & Associates
Weese, Benjamin. Harry Weese & Associates

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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 Post World War II Suzanne and Robert Drucker House is locally significant and meets Criterion C for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Designed by Harry Weese for his sister Suzanne, the Drucker House is architecturally significant as an excellent example of a Mid-century Modern house. The house is simple, functional and carefully-detailed, with a design based on geometric relationships not historical precedents. It is distinctly Modern, while incorporating Weese's personal brand of Modernism--a synthesis of International Style, Scandinavian and Midwestern influences. When expanded in 1963, Harry's brother Ben Weese designed an addition compatible in style, scale, materials and detailing with the original design of the house.

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

HISTORY

The Robert and Suzanne Drucker House was designed by Harry Weese early in his career for his younger sister, Suzanne, who has been the only occupant since the house was completed in 1954. It was built to meet the needs of a growing family and continues to be enjoyed for the functionality and flexibility of its floor plan,⁴ a plan based on the needs of the family, not dictated by a traditional, often symmetrical, layout. Prior to the construction of the house, Suzanne and Robert Drucker were living with their three children in an apartment in Evanston, Illinois. They always wanted to build and Harry was very happy to design their new home. Robert's mother lived nearby and raised four children in the neighborhood, so the area was highly familiar to the Druckers. It was also convenient. Because of having to fire the first contractor, the house took 2-1/2 years to build and they lived in Mrs. Drucker's house while their new home was being constructed.⁵

Although the neighborhood was developed in the 1920s, there were many vacant lots surrounding the parcel of land that Sue, as she is known, and her husband purchased. Theirs was one of the largest lots. It was deep as well as wide and allowed for a beautiful big back yard that opened off the rear of the house. Knowing that they were going to be living in a Modern house, Sue was concerned, while the house was being constructed, what their traditionally-minded neighbors might think. She was sensitive to their feelings, but found when she inquired that they were actually fine with the design.⁶

⁴ Sue Weese Drucker Frank, Interview, January 8, 1912. The background information on the design and construction of the house was provided by Mrs. Frank in this interview.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

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Since Sue's brother designed their home, he knew what the family would really like. Foremost was bringing the outside of the house in. The open staircase allows light to floor the front hall. The house was designed as an "L", but not the typical L shape. The west wing was angled to the west during the process of building so as to form an obtuse angle that would maximize the size and view of the back yard and the amount of interior light. When the children were young, the ample yard even accommodated a large ice rink. Sue commented how much she likes the amount of light, that you "could never feel morose in this house."⁷ Sue's son, Harry Drucker, noted in Kitty Baldwin Weese's book, *Harry Weese Houses*, "the house was filled with windows facing south which embraced the warm winter sun and gave wonderful light and warmth."⁸

Harry Weese was very aware of the siting of the house, where the windows should be placed. The north-facing front has relatively few windows and where there are large openings they are screened from the street. The south-facing rear facades are 3/4 glazed. Between the house and the yard is a broad screened porch.

Sue Frank wrote in Kitty Weese's book,

The large expanses of glass are oriented for the best sun and light with no loss of privacy. An easy flow, informality and our wonderful screened porch are things we have enjoyed—the porch tells us our weather changes. In bad weather our children liked playing inside the big windows on cork floors."⁹

On the interior, convenience dominates the floor plan. Harry's 1952 plan allowed for four bedrooms, with a master and office/guest room/bath on the first floor and one bedroom for each child and a shared bath on the second. With two more children, there was a need for additional space. In 1963, Harry's brother Ben Weese, while working for Harry Weese & Associates, designed a second floor wing with three bedrooms, though one of the three was called out as a "sewing room" on the original drawings to compliment Harry's design. It is located at the east end of the house. In addition, there is a full basement for utilities and a winter time playroom. Kitty Weese, Harry's wife, described how well the house accommodates family change. "The house often reverberates with large family gatherings and frequently draws the now-grown children and eleven grandchildren back for visits."¹⁰

Spaces flow into one another. The two-sided fireplace opens into both the living and dining rooms and storage walls between the front hall, kitchen, living and dining rooms don't extend to the ceiling. Yet rooms can be closed off—for convenience and privacy. There is an accordion door between the kitchen and hallway accessing the living and dining rooms and a pocket door closing off the more private study/master bedroom area. A pass through was

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Kitty Weese was Harry Weese's wife. Kitty Baldwin Weese. *Harry Weese Houses*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1987. P. 58.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 57.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 56.

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installed between the kitchen and the dining room. There is a glass cabinet between the dining room and the kitchen, cleverly detailed to be frosted on one side to hide utilitarian items and clear on the other to showcase nicer objects. The northwest side of the kitchen has a door that can swing shut to create a passage from the dining room to the screened patio on the north side of the house. Built-ins are everywhere, under and over bedroom closets, tucked behind hallway closet doors and set into walls under bookshelves. Although there is no attic and no garage, the house has plenty of storage. Sue recalled that Harry thought that the garage was a place to collect stuff. Instead he installed a carport with 4' x 6' storage cabinets, close enough to the residence so things wouldn't freeze."¹¹

EUROPEAN MODERNISM

Modernist principles, which are reflected in the Drucker House, were established in America in 1932, when the Museum of Modern Art held its influential exhibition entitled *The International Style*. Similar styles of buildings from fifteen countries were featured by practitioners who have since become closely associated with the history and development of Modern architecture: Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Richard Neutra, Marcel Breuer and others. The principles, which were published in the show's catalogue, included 1. Architecture as volume, with walls serving as screens to divide spaces; 2) Regularity, where there is an orderliness of structure and similarity of parts and 3) The avoidance of applied decoration.¹² These concepts translated into buildings that featured open plans, walls with vast expanses of windows, simple wall surfaces, repetition of design elements and simple forms based on geometry not historical precedent. The Drucker House contains walls that don't extend to the ceiling, serving as dividers that separate rooms. The geometric order, consistency and of detailing and lack of applied ornament that characterize International Style architecture characterize the Drucker House.

Modernism made its mark in Chicago during the 1930s with the 1933 Century of Progress Exhibition, which featured George Fred and William Keck's House of Tomorrow and Crystal House, two Modernist icons, and with the 1937 arrival of Mies van der Rohe and Lazlo Maholy Nagy. Both had taught at the Bauhaus, the school of design established in Germany in 1919, and brought with them elements from the school's curriculum--including the absence of ornament, functionalism, simplified forms and a sense of harmony and clarity. These elements typified the International Style buildings that were showcased in the Museum of Modern Art Exhibition and which were subsequently built in Chicago

Harry Weese admired the architects who designed houses in the International Style. Robert Bruegmann, in his biography of Weese, stated "like almost all of the architectural students of his generation with any interest in European modernism, he eagerly read Le

¹¹ Sue Frank interview.

¹² These principles are described in the illustrated exhibition catalogue. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1966. Reprint of *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1932.

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Corbusier's *Vers une architecture*, translated into English in 1927 as *Towards a New Architecture*.¹³ In his oral history, Weese expressed huge admiration for Mies. When interviewer Betty Blum asked him about Mies, he responded, "He was like a Buddha. He'd sit in a chair. He would pontificate, and we would all be hanging on his words sitting on the floor". She inquired, "What was the magic about that man that prompted people to lionize him." His response was "the younger generation is always looking for something that is closer to their hopes, dreams and lifespans", and that Mies exemplified those things. He added that because with Mies you had the clarity and the technique in his architecture. What he taught us was how to build very efficiently. When asked if he found that compatible with what you were already interested in? His immediate response was "Yes. We could see that Beaux-Arts was petering out. There was no way that you could afford to build those ornate buildings anymore. You had to have them factory-made. We could see it coming."¹⁴ He added, when asked in his oral history, "if Mies van der Rohe hadn't been in Chicago and hadn't done any good work, what kind of buildings would have been built?" His response was, "Watered-down Beaux-Arts buildings. We'd still be kicking the dead horse."¹⁵

Mies van der Rohe came to define the Modernist aesthetic in commercial and institutional architecture in Chicago and in many places throughout the country. His designs shaped the development of the steel and glass skyscraper, influencing the architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and countless other firms. Unlike Mies, Harry Weese did not have a singular approach to architecture. And he generally abandoned the steel and glass that the earlier Modernists, including Mies van der Rohe, admired and utilized. One exception to this is the 30-story Time-Life Building, a steel and glass office building with an exterior grid, constructed in 1968-70.¹⁶ Although the Time-Life Building is the only one of his designs that was in the idiom of Mies, the clarity of form, which Weese so admired in Mies' work, is generally reflected in his architecture including in his design for the Drucker House.

Scandinavian design was very popular in the middle of the 20th century, especially for furniture and household objects like those produced by Dansk. Houses with comfortable wood furniture, either produced in Scandinavia or influenced by Scandinavian design were frequently published in 1950s architectural journals and popular magazines. Even before then, in 1947, Harry, his wife Kitty Baldwin Weese and Jody Kingree opened "Baldwin Kingree," a store that sold inexpensive modern designs directly to the public, rather than through the wholesale system. After a trip east to secure the Midwest franchise for Alvar Aalto's line of furniture, they opened their store in the Diana Court building in Chicago at 105 E. Ohio Street. The shop carried Aalto's "Artek" furniture from Finland, textiles by Alexander Girard, glass by Venini and furniture by

¹³ Robert Brueggemann. *The Architecture of Harry Weese*. Building Entries by Kathleen Murphy Skolnik. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

¹⁴ *Harry Weese Oral History*, p. 21.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 257.

¹⁶ The Time-Life Building is located at 541 North Fairbanks Court, Chicago. Although the shape of this steel and glass tower relates to the architecture of Mies, its Cor-ten steel, frame, gold-tinted mirrored glass and powerful scale personalize the building and set it apart from the buildings designed by Mies.

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Bruno Mathsson and Charles and Ray Eames. Bruegmann noted that the shop grew to serve as a salon for Chicagoans interested in modern design and offered people the opportunity to fill their homes with affordable, architect-designed furniture and objects. In his oral history, Harry mentioned that he thought his sister Sue (Drucker) would have been a very good manager.¹⁷ That didn't happen, but her house is filled with architect-designed furniture by Harry, Mathsson and Aalto. Baldwin Kingree, with Harry's guidance, foreshadowed Design Research, which Benjamin Thompson opened in Cambridge in 1953 and, later, Chicago's Crate & Barrel.¹⁸ The book, *Baldwin Kingree: Midcentury Modern in Chicago, 1947-1957*, written by John Brunetti, was published in 2004.

Weese later remembered that Scandinavia was a tremendous revelation and the place where he 'first saw modern architecture in actuality' ".¹⁹ In the summer after finishing his architecture studies, he traveled to Europe on a 1200-mile journey through France, Germany, Austria and Scandinavia and England to study architecture, "particularly modern architecture." He visited Paris where he saw the International Exposition of 1937. Bruegmann speculated that he would almost certainly have seen the Finnish pavilion designed by the rising star of Finnish architecture, Alvar Aalto, with its natural materials and warm natural wood furniture, also by the architect. Weese thought Aalto's designs more humane and relaxed than the work of the more doctrinaire Modernists. He was willing to incorporate natural materials and craft traditions....²⁰ Weese's extensive use of wood, both inside and out, in the Drucker House, expresses this influence. The human-scaled and naturally textured architecture of Swedish architect Erik Gunnar Asplund also influenced Weese.²¹ This is seen in the vertical siding of the Drucker house, with the vertical texture repeated in the vertical wood slats that reinforce this textured surface.

Harry Weese's devotion to warmer natural materials like brick and wood may also be found in the work of other Modernists of his generation including Eero Saarinen, Edward Larabee Barnes, Paul Schweikher, Edward Dart and the early work of Bertrand Goldberg. Each of these architects, who were practicing in America, and others gave this naturalist approach its own "look", having been variously influenced by Scandinavian architects, the International Style work of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, Japanese architecture and even the Usonian work of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Weese's admiration for Mies and for Aalto and Asplund was profound. The clarity and simplicity characteristic of Mies' work and the respect for warm natural materials and creature comfort characteristic of Aalto and Asplund can be seen in Weese's architecture and specifically in his design for the Drucker House. It was the European Modernists, not America's iconoclastic architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who influenced Weese. In 1940, he made a trip to Taliesin with Gordon Bunshaft from Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. This pilgrimage was important to many

¹⁷ Harry Weese Oral History,

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 30-32.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Bruegmann, p. 19.

²¹ Ibid. 75.

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young American architects. Weese, however, like Bunshaft and his Modernist contemporaries, considered Wright to be a relic of the 19th Century.²²

THE MODERN AMERICAN HOUSE

Admittedly there is no clear-cut definition of what makes an American house “Modern”. Not all Modern houses share the same characteristics except that they seem to generally share a disregard for history.²³ In her discussion of “New Canaan Modern: The Beginning 1947-1952” Jean Ely notes that the European antecedents of the modern movement in architecture are the German Bauhaus (which generated the roots of the International Style) and the American antecedents can be traced back to H. H. Richardson, Louis Sullivan, Stanford White and Frank Lloyd Wright with the greatest expression in the skyscrapers of the Chicago School and the “Prairie Houses” of Wright.²⁴ Although from the vantage point of the 2000s, there may be an understanding of the precedents, there seems to have early on been no universally accepted characteristics of the Modern House. In the early 1940s, however, there was an excellent attempt at figuring out what then constituted a Modern house made by James and Katherine Morrow Ford.

The characteristics of the “Modern” house in America were discussed in the book titled *The Modern House in America* first published in 1940 by James and Katherine Morrow Ford.²⁵ A purpose of their book was to call attention to “a movement which we believe to be of deep significance both to architecture and to life.” They saw the movement not as a “trivial change in public taste” nor as a “fad” but as a logical outgrowth of social and economic changes that have been running their progressive course for decades. People were developing new interests and

²² *Ibid.* p. 25.

²³ In his book on The Harvard Five in New Canaan, Connecticut, where Philip Johnson’s iconic glass house is located, William D. Earls, AIA, notes that “It may be ironic to regard modern houses as historically significant since the houses themselves appear to have a disregard for history.” William D. Earles, AIA. *The Harvard Five in New Canaan: Midcentury Modern Houses by Marcel Breuer, Landis Gores, John Johansen, Philip Johnson, Eliot Noyes & Others.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006, p. 10.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Jean Ely. “New Canaan Modern: The Beginning 1947-1952”. P. 11.

²⁵ James Ford and Katherine Morrow Ford. *The Modern House in America.* New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., Inc. 1940. The book went into several printings. The citations for this nomination were taken from the sixth printing, 1947. Profusely illustrated with work by architects throughout the United States, it contains photos of work in the Midwest by Keck and Keck, William Deknatel and Philip Maher. Frank Lloyd Wright’s work was omitted because “illustrated accounts...are available in other volumes.” Importantly, in the book’s preface, the authors express their “deep appreciation” and guidance to Professor Walter Gropius, who was then Chairman of the Department of Architecture at Harvard University and to Dr. Sigfried Giedion, who was General Secretary of the International Congress of Modern Architecture. The illustrations reflect a variety of interpretations of Modern residential architecture and a clear indebtedness to The International Style. Pp. 6-7.

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values and the authors saw these as reflected in Modern architecture. The goal of the Fords was to define the characteristics of the Modern house and bring examples to public attention at a time when little had been published on the subject.²⁶

Foremost in the design of the Modern house was a plan based on the life of the family who lived in the house, not on traditional neo-classic or Colonial, French, Spanish, Dutch or English precedents. The plan was to be functional not derived from stylistic precedent. It was to be a departure from the common symmetrical plan after a close study of a family's interests and needs. The full gamut of work and play, domestic and social life were to be considered, the family's chores and hobbies and their routines of sleeping, bathing, dressing, and eating. Flow and circulation were paramount.²⁷ The Drucker House, with its compartmentalization into zones for family living and its connection to the out of doors, was designed entirely to meet the family's needs and interests. Sue commented in an interview that Harry discussed everything with her and her husband during the design process.²⁸ When Ben Weese designed the second floor addition, there was no window at the east end of the hall, but when Sue requested one of Ben, it was installed. The same close interaction between client and architect occurred with Ben as it had with Harry.

Family living had changed by the 1940s. There was no longer a need for separate rooms, types of rooms that provided separate functions—sewing rooms, laundry rooms storage cellars, attics. People's space needs changed with easy access to shopping, improved refrigeration, public provision of libraries, schooling, music and recreation. There could be fewer rooms and rooms could provide double functions, like the Drucker's study/guest room. Labor-saving devices and accessibility to stores and recreational facilities meant fewer chores and more leisure time—time for children to play in the yard or on the porch.

The Fords in their definition of Modern noted the impact of “power driven machinery”, with an emphasis on modern kitchens and bathrooms, modern heating, plumbing and lighting. Modern houses catered to the homeowners' convenience and efficiency. The kitchen of the Drucker House, for instance, functions efficiently, with a pass through to the dining room. It is a small corridor kitchen that easily accesses the hallways as well as the dining room. The room was designed for ease of use. Bathrooms are small, but simple and efficient.

Modern architecture, the Fords noted, seeks not style but substance, not ornament or ostentation but rational simplicity.²⁹ No phrase more aptly describes the Drucker House. Geometry not applied ornament defines the house. It is simple, with numerous built-ins, pocket doors to divide living areas. Spaces flow into one another, with the open staircase a three-dimensional sculptural element connecting the three floors.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 7.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 12.

²⁸ Interview Susan Benjamin and Sue Weese Drucker Frank, January 8, 2012.

²⁹ Ford & Ford, p. 12.

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The Fords call out a particular characteristic of Modern residential architecture, one often associated with the architecture of George Fred and William Keck: the orientation of the house in relation to the sun.³⁰ Harry Weese also paid careful attention to this in his design for the Drucker House. The south is largely glazed with a terrace, a screen porch and vast expanses of glass allowing sun to flood the interior. Yet when it is very hot, the family could use the north terrace, protected from the sun by a slatted wall. There are doors located throughout the house accessing the outside terraces and yard. Vistas are created from all the south-facing rooms. Any sense of confinement is totally eliminated. The Modern house, according to the Fords, seeks not merely shelter, but “the opportunity for unhampered and gracious living.”³¹ This opportunity is present and the phrase aptly describes the house that Harry designed and Ben expanded for their sister’s family.

Writing in 1992, Maxwell, Shirley and James C. Massey weigh in on defining the Modern House in the *Old House Journal*. They note that the Post-World War II houses, built in the 1950s, are characterized by open floor plans, bedrooms set apart from the rest of the house with parents’ and children’s’ quarters separated, a greater number of bathrooms than found in older houses, the omission of interior trim and the construction of carports. The carport was considered the most typical feature, with the car occupying the “place of honor in front of the house.”³² These characteristics are all found in the Drucker House.

An interest in modern design became popular in the years following World War II. During the 1950s, the Modern house was celebrated in the *Architectural Record*. Although the *Record* had been published since 1891, it was only in 1956 that *Record Houses* made its debut. The early issues celebrated innovative architecture; the editors appreciated its inventiveness. Although the Druckers’ house dates from a few years before the first issue came out and wasn’t among the relatively few selected for publication, like them its design was “frankly modern”.³³ In the published *Record Houses*, new materials, like fiberboard, plywood, plastics and aluminum and new construction methods, specifically prefabrication, were incorporated into most designs, typically adopted as a means of cutting costs. Factory-made modular panels were installed in the Drucker House. Floor-to-ceiling side-sliding glass sash installed in aluminum frames replaced the role of the picture window.

³⁰ Less than two blocks away, at 2716 Blackhawk Road, the Kecks, known for their experimentation with passive solar heating, designed the Herbert Bruning House. Built in 1935, this house was photographed by Hedrich Blessing for the *Architectural Record* and is illustrated in the Fords’ book, p. 64.

³¹ Ford & Ford, p. 12.

³² Shirley Maxwell and James C. Massey. Postwar Houses and the Cape Cods and Split- Levels of the 1940s. *Old House Journal*, July-August, 1992, p. 59.

³³ In his introduction to *Modern American Houses: Four Decades of Award-Winning Design in ARCHITECTURAL RECORD*, Clifford A Pearson made that observation, p. 8. Clifford A. Pearson, Editor. *Modern American Houses: Four Decades of Award-Winning Design in ARCHITECTURAL RECORD*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, in Association with *Architectural Record*, 1992.

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In the first issue of *Record Houses*, Editor A. Lawrence Kocher, an advocate of Modern architecture wrote that the open plan expressed freedom, an acceptance of change.³⁴ It was a time when, after the realities of a Depression and World War II, life was without servants and young families, like the Druckers, were building comfortable places in the suburbs. Houses of the fifties reflected the lives of families who sought togetherness and informality. The homes that were constructed, whether Ranch Houses or Cape Cods, fit this lifestyle. The Modern house, lacking dust catching surfaces and filled with built-ins, was particularly attractive to suburban families who wanted a care-free way of living. They were free to enjoy hobbies, hold scout meetings, entertain friends on the terrace (frequently around the bar-b-q grill), garden, read on the back porch and watch television. The fifties was the first decade where not only was the TV a household focus, the programming mimicked the lives of the TV audience. The wholesome all American family was a popular theme. Shows included "The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet (1952-1966), "Leave it to Beaver" (1957-1963), "Life with Father" (1953-1955) and The Donna Reed Show" (1958-1966).³⁵ Houses, especially Modern houses, grew less pretentious and the families who lived in them grew more relaxed and less extravagant. Clifford Edward Clark, Jr. writing in *The American Family Home*, noted that, with the post-World War II baby boom, when the birthrate rose from 2.2 births per woman in the 1930s to 3.51 in the 1950s, the family was the center of fun and recreation and happiness came from togetherness in the home.³⁶

The new look of the modern house fit the lifestyle of the modern family. Window walls, which could easily be easily fabricated, allowed parents to watch their children playing in the back yard. Over-stuffed traditional furniture was typically replaced by comfortable contemporary pieces in informal settings. Fireplaces were a cozy element but were treated, not with formal ornamentation, but as sculptural pieces. In the Drucker House, the fireplace opens to both the living and dining room. The formal staircase was also abandoned. In the Drucker House it is open, a sculptural element that serves as the functional and the visual centerpiece of the house.

When Sidney K. Robinson wrote an essay, "The Postwar Modern House in Chicago" in 1993, he discussed how Chicago architects working during the years of post-war economic recovery, between 1945 and 1953, incorporated both the need to move in a new direction and, at the same time, to establish continuity with a past that had been disrupted by the Depression and the war. He noted that they could not realistically adopt the extreme of the ultramodern House of Tomorrow and Crystal House designed by the Kecks for the 1933-1934 Century of Progress nor could they follow the technological extremes of the other homes exhibited at the fair like the StranSteel House. And they couldn't "ignore the real social and economic changes and slip back

³⁴ Thomas Hine, "The 1950s: Of Tailfins and Bug spray." Clifford A. Pearson, Editor. *Modern American Houses: Four Decades of Award-Winning Design in ARCHITECTURAL RECORD*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

³⁵ http://wikipedia.org/wiki/1960_in_television

³⁶ Clifford Edward Clark. *The American Family Home, 1800-1960*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

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into a Cape Cod Fog.”³⁷ Harry Weese’s Drucker House utilizes traditional natural materials as well as new ones such as laminates created by new technology.

Harry Weese’s biographer, Robert Bruegmann, points out that many of the buildings of the post-war decades hold a special attraction for us today, marking a particularly optimistic moment in architectural history. America, after emerging from World War II, was enjoying a strong economy. Architects “imagined that they could fulfill the dreams of the pioneers of the modern movement and bring modern architecture, good taste and good design to millions of ordinary citizens.” He added that “architects like Harry Weese succeeded in this task to a considerable degree.”³⁸

Jack Hartray, a long-time employee of Harry Weese & Associates, was quoted in an article, “On the Life and Work of Chicago Architect Harry Weese” in the July, 2010, issue of *Chicago Magazine*. He commented, “Harry was a (modernist) architect who was doing very interesting buildings, but they weren’t like anyone else’s”.³⁹ Harry’s work was more humanistic. He admired the texture of more traditional materials like wood and brick and the comfortable feelings engendered by human-scale spaces.⁴⁰ It was these characteristics that drew him to contemporary Scandinavian architecture--the work of Aalto and Asplund. The angled wing of the Drucker House, in fact, resembles that on Asplund’s “Villa Snellman” built in Djursholm, outside Stockholm, in 1918. The Drucker House reflects Harry Weese’s eclectic approach to Modernism applied to the specific needs of his sister’s family.

No individual style characterized the work of Harry Weese. *Chicago Tribune* architecture critic Blair Kamin noted in the July, 2010 issue of *Chicago Magazine* that “...all his work reflected a concern for context, climate and urban design”.⁴¹ In his obituary on Weese, Kamin called him “an eclectic, who thought about everything.”⁴² The design of the Drucker House takes into account its siting on a beautiful large lot, Chicago’s sunny and shady days and its convenient suburban location. The house has a large back yard enjoyed by the Drucker family; an enclosed porch and an open terrace, and a carport to accommodate two automobiles.

³⁷ Sidney K. Robinson “The Postwar Modern House in Chicago”. *Chicago Architecture and Design, 1923-1991: Reconfiguration of an American Metropolis*. Edited by John Zukowky. Munich and Chicago: Prestel, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1993, p. 201.

³⁸ Bruegmann, p. 7.

³⁹ Robert Sharoff. “On the Life and Work of Architect Harry Weese.” *Chicago Magazine*, July, 2010. <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/July-2010/On-the-Life-and-Work-of-Chicago-Architect-Harry-Weese>.

⁴⁰ This devotion to warmer materials like brick and wood may also be found in the work of other Modernists of his generation including Eero Saarinen, Edward Larabee Barnes, Paul Schweikher, Edward Dart and the early work of Bertrand Goldberg.

⁴¹ Blair Kamin. “Harry Weese unmasked: *Chicago Magazine*’s look at a great Chicago Architect”. *Cityscapes*, a Daily Chicago Journal about the Buildings and Urban Spaces that Shape our Lives. July 16, 2010.

⁴² Kamin, Blair. “Harry Weese, Visionary Architect known as ‘Chicago’s Conscience’”, *Chicago Tribune*, November 1, 1998.

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HARRY WEESE

Harry Weese was born in 1915 in Evanston, Illinois, but grew up in Kenilworth. In 1933, he entered Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Although he graduated in 1938 from M.I.T., Harry transferred to Yale in 1936. Despite the fact that both the Yale and M.I.T. curriculum were based on Beaux-Arts System, Harry Weese stated in his oral history that the Beaux-Arts was petering out, that there was no way that you could afford to build those ornate buildings anymore. You had to have them factory-made. We could see it coming.⁴³ After graduation, Weese was awarded a fellowship at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, directed by Eliel Saarinen, Eero Saarinen's father. He studied pottery and textiles in addition to city planning. At Cranbrook, Weese was exposed to Modernist principles, working alongside Eero Saarinen, Ralph Rapson and Charles Eames, who were to become significant Modern designers.

After graduation, Harry moved to Chicago and joined the firm of Skidmore Owings and Merrill (S.O.M.). In 1941, he enlisted in the Navy, serving as an engineering officer.

When the war ended in 1945, Harry moved back to Chicago, noting that only a handful of people were doing significant modern design in the city: George Fred and William Keck, the Bowman Brothers, Paul Schweikher, Andrew Rebori, Mies van der Rohe and the firm of SOM, and he would be more likely to stand out.⁴⁴ Harry briefly returned to S.O.M. before opening up his own office, "Harry Weese Associates" in 1947.⁴⁵ During these years, the late 1940s and early 1950s, Harry designed homes for family members as well as for others in Barrington, Illinois, Champaign, Illinois, Davenport, Iowa, and in Columbus, Indiana. Bruegmann wrote, "All of these buildings (including the Drucker House) could be described as being modern in a relaxed, Scandinavian way."⁴⁶

During the late 1950s and 1960s, Harry Weese's career flourished. He continued to design houses, but he also received large commissions throughout the world, including embassies, church and school buildings, commercial buildings, urban renewal projects, municipal projects, Chicago's Metropolitan Correctional Center and his most important commission, the Washington Metro System. Bruegmann points out that the Metro established Harry Weese & Associates as the country's foremost architectural designer of rail transit systems and led to the firm's involvement in the planning and conceptual design of systems in cities in North America and overseas, including Miami, Los Angeles, Dallas, Buffalo, Toronto and Singapore. Harry also made his mark in historic preservation, leading the effort, in 1964-7, to preserve and restore Adler & Sullivan's Auditorium Theater, supervising the restoration of the Chicago's Field Museum and of Orchestra Hall. In 1979, he refurbished a derelict cold storage

⁴³ Harry Weese, Oral History, p. 21.

⁴⁴ Bruegmann, p. 30

⁴⁵ *Harry Weese Oral History*.

⁴⁶ Bruegmann, p. 26.

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warehouse into condominiums facing the Chicago River, one of the city's first buildings designed to revitalize the banks of the Chicago River.

Beginning in the 1950s, shortly after completing the Drucker House, Harry's work began to receive wide-spread recognition. He was published in both architectural journals and popular magazines, including the *Architectural Review*, *Life Magazine* and *Architectural Record*. With a national reputation and an impressive list of commissions to his name, Harry was made a Fellow of the A.I.A. in 1961, and received the Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize in architecture from the National Institute of Arts & Letters in 1964. His award was received only 10 years after he had completed his design for his sister Susanne's house. In 1978, Harry Weese & Associates received the "Firm of the Year Award" by the A.I.A. That year the Chicago Press Club named him "Chicagoan of the Year".

Weese died in 1998. His *New York Times* obituary lauded Weese as "a major figure in Chicago architecture and planning since the 1950s."⁴⁷ The *Chicago Tribune's* architecture critic, Blair Kamin, described Harry in the obituary he wrote as "the renowned architect who shaped Chicago's skyline and the way the city thought about everything from the lakefront to its treasure trove of historical buildings." He noted that "...he presented a humanistic alternative to the sterile, steel-and-glass buildings then being turned out by followers of Mies van der Rohe" This humanist approach is clearly seen in Harry Weese's 1952 design for the Drucker House.

BENJAMIN WEESE

Benjamin Weese was born in 1929 in Evanston, Illinois. He received his B.A. and an M.A. in architecture from Harvard and a certificate from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Fontainebleau, France. Returning to Chicago, he joined his brother's firm in 1957. In the mid-1970s, he and fellow architects, formed the "Chicago Seven", to promote a wider understanding of Chicago's diverse architectural history and to advance the work of more eclectic contemporary architects. An ardent preservationist, Ben was a co-founder of what is today the Chicago Architecture Foundation, which was established to purchase and preserve H. H. Richardson's Glessner House. He served on the Chicago Landmark Commission for many years, advocating for the preservation of the city's significant architecture. He has also been on the Board of the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine arts. In 1974, only ten years after his work on the Drucker House, Ben was elected to the College of Fellows of the A.I.A. In 1977, he opened his own office, today Weese, Hickey Weese, in partnership with his wife, Cynthia Weese.⁴⁸

When Harry Weese's brother Benjamin (Ben) Weese designed the addition to his sister Sue's house in 1963, while in the Harry Weese' office, it was built to accommodate the needs of the Drucker's growing family. Sympathetic to Harry's original design, it used the same materials

⁴⁷ Herbert Muschamp. "Harry Weese, 83, Designer of Metro System in Washington." *The New York Times*, November 3, 1998.

⁴⁸ Weese, Benjamin (1929-) *Oral History* by Annemarie van Roessel. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, April 28, 29, 30, 1998. Ben's biography is taken from this oral history.

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and quietly complementing his brother's design aesthetic. Robert Bruegmann has commented that during the 1960s, when Ben was in Harry's office, he had "considerably more autonomy than anyone else in the office."⁴⁹ Working on small scale institutional and housing projects, rather than large commercial jobs, he designed the Northside Junior High School in Columbus, Indiana, a group of townhouses in Chicago's Hyde Park and the apartment building at 55 East Chestnut, Chicago. Like Harry, Ben has an oral history commissioned by the Art Institute of Chicago.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Indian Hill Estates

Annexation of the 1500 acres between Illinois Road and the North Shore Line that would comprise the western portion of Indian Hills Estates, occurred in April, 1926, just after the North Shore Line ran electric train track through the Skokie Valley, promoting drainage of the marshland. The subdivision was conceived and partially funded by Henry W. Ducker, Robert's father. The elder Drucker was a real estate attorney with the Chicago law firm of Urion, Drucker, Reichmann & Boutell, who resided on Mohawk Road.

Following annexation, architect and planner Philip Maher laid out the 170-acre Indian Hills Subdivision, where the Drucker House is located.⁵⁰ The plan featured winding roads, a departure from Wilmette's rigid grid system, with lots planned initially to be one to two acres. It was to be a low-density subdivision, designed in the romantic tradition with homes that were designed with deep lots, facing the curving roads. Ultimately, the size of most lots was half an acre or smaller, however. The lots, which featured broad front lawns set back 50' from the street, were bordered by a public sidewalk and did have large rear yards with no alleys. The lots and streetscape were landscaped with large trees to create a park-like setting, with stone gateposts installed to mark the entry to Indian Hill Estates.

Promotional material described the future Indian Hill Estates (named after the nearby prestigious Indian Hill Country Club) as an "ideal community" of individual designed houses "estates of distinction" on expansive lots.⁵¹ The fashionable suburban house of the 1920s was a comfortable refuge, based on traditional architecture. Houses built by the developer, Bills Realty, were based on historical styles—Colonial, Tudor, Renaissance Revival, Spanish Eclectic; most cost at least \$20,000. They were intended for executive and professional families. Henry and

⁴⁹ Bruegmann, p. 40.

⁵⁰ Philip Maher was a noteworthy architect who, during the early 1920s, partnered with his father, noted Prairie School architect George Washington Maher, before opening his own office. In 1922, their firm, George W. Maher and Son, Architects and Planners, laid out the Kenilworth Community Development area. Maher also designed several houses in Kenilworth and Wilmette.

⁵¹ A considerable amount of the information on the history and development of Indian Hill Estates was taken from lecture notes provided by Connie Casey, who gave a talk on the subject, June 11, 2006.

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Mary Drucker, whose home was at 1125 Mohawk, and two of his law partners built homes in the Colonial Revival style. His was designed by Ralph Stoetzel. Other important architects designed homes in Indian Hills Estate. They included Prairie School architects Barry Byrne and Walter Burley Griffin as well as Mayo & Mayo, Spencer S. Beman and Rapp & Rapp.⁵² George Fred Keck designed 26 residences, including three for the Bills Brothers. Keck, who became famous for his solar houses, designed almost all of the houses in Indian Hill Estates in traditional styles, primarily Tudor.⁵³ The final house in the subdivision, however, was Keck & Keck's 1936 International Style Herbert Bruning House. No further building activity took place in Indian Hill Estates from then until after World War II.

With movement to the suburbs having begun in earnest in the Twenties, it picked up considerably in the 1950s, after the Depression and the war. Every professional family had a car, and many became two-car families. The carport of the Drucker House was designed to accommodate two automobiles. The country was becoming less rural and primarily urban or suburban. During that time, commuting by car was easy for those living in Indian Hill Estates. On December 20, 1951, "Edens Parkway", Chicago's first expressway, opened. Located only a few miles west of Indian Hill Estates, it had three lanes in each direction. Today known as "Edens Expressway", it was named after William G. Edens, a banker, an early advocate for paved roads and a sponsor of Illinois' first highway bond issue, in 1918.⁵⁴

Postwar construction was considerably different from that which took place in the twenties. Utilizing technology that had been developed during World War II manufacturing--prefab window units, weather resistant plywood, latex glues and caulking, and composition board products--houses were designed that could be assembled quickly and efficiently. This happened all over the country in suburban areas like Levittown. But the construction that took place at Indian Hill Estates was a far cry from the 100,000's of new units built in Levittown and similar developments for returning Veterans. The Postwar years at Indian Hill Estates saw the construction of many single story houses, but homes that continued Bills Realty's vision of creating moderate size individual houses in an English Park setting

Houses in Indian Hill Estates that were constructed after World War II were designed in a variety of building types and styles. Some stood two stories. Others were ranch houses and split levels. Some were based stylistically on historical styles; others were more Modern in inspiration, sometimes called "Contemporary", with little reference to stylistic precedents. There are several two story houses that were inspired by Classical, Colonial or French architecture. There are also examples of Colonial Revival Ranch Houses. One is located at 1000 Ramona and one at 2025 Iroquois. There is a Modern one-story house, with a two story section at 1009

⁵² Beman was the son of Solon S. Beman, known for his design of Pullman and Christian Science churches. Rapp & Rapp are best known for having designed elaborate movie palaces

⁵³ Keck went into private practice in 1926 and undoubtedly designed what would "sell", in stylistically popular styles, which during the Twenties were those based on historical precedent.

⁵⁴ [Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edens_Expressway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edens_Expressway)

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Seneca. It is sided with stone and horizontal wood siding; with multiple slanted roofs. The house does not have the design continuity found in the Drucker House. There are two split levels in the neighborhood. One, which is located at 2717 Iroquois, is red brick with square multi pane windows in each corner and topped by a hipped roof. The other may be found at 2314 Iroquois. It is a brick house, with multiple gable roofs. The 1950s and 1960s houses in Indian Hill Estate, whether traditional or Modern, fit their settings as comfortably as the older traditional homes. All are very different from the Drucker House.

Development Houses

Builders were constructing houses in subdivisions located to the south of Indian Hill Estates in West Wilmette, but they are not comparable to the Drucker House. All are variations on a theme, not unique like the Drucker House. There is a handsome enclave of Modern ranches and split levels in the 2800 and 2900 block of Birchwood, in "L. Cooper's Birchwood Manor", south of Lake Avenue. They are of brick or combinations of stone and brick or wood and brick. Some have slanted roofs; some have flat roofs. Examples may be found at 2806 Birchwood, at 2807 Birchwood, at 2822 Birchwood and at 2828 Birchwood. Hollywood Builders, in a c. 1955 sales brochure in the collection of the Wilmette Historical Society, advertises "bi levels." One was the "Hollywood Special, which had sloped roofs. It was face brick with horizontal wood boards. The "Ambassador" was slightly larger, the "true luxury bi level." Other models, which were built with gable roofs, were designed to appeal to those with more traditional tastes.⁵⁵ All of these houses were built by developers, not to suit the needs of a specific homeowner. Although many are competent examples of Mid-century houses, they were designed to be part of a large scale housing development. Many of these houses are similar to houses built during the same period of time in Indian Hill Estates. The houses that are comparable to the Drucker House are found in East Wilmette.

Modern Houses in East Wilmette

The Drucker Residence, with its Ben Weese addition, is the only Wilmette house designed by Harry Weese, and is an eloquent example of Mid-century Modern architecture by a distinguished architect nationally- recognized for the significance of his work. The comparable distinguished architect-designed houses are located in the southeast corner of the village. Keck and Keck designed a residence, at 1325 Sheridan Road, in 1955 for Milton Rustgen. It is a simple rectangular house. A handful of Modern houses were designed in the 1950s by J. Marion Gutnayer, who is not as well-known as Harry and Ben Weese or George Fred and William Keck. His own house was built in 1957 at 1328 Sheridan Road. Supported by slender posts and sheathed in stone, its living space is located on the second floor. In 1955, he designed a one-story Modern house, at 400 Sheridan Road. Another Modern house, with a stone facade, was built in 1952; it is located at 1156 Michigan. The designer was Oliver Sandquist. There is a split level at

⁵⁵ "Hollywood Builders." C. 1955. Brochure in the collection of the Wilmette Historical Museum, Wilmette, Illinois.

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416 Sheridan Road, designed in 1958 by Fisher & Shaffer. These are all architect-designed houses designed to fit in an established neighborhood of traditional, thoughtfully-designed houses. None, however, bear resemblance to the two-story house designed by Harry Weese in 1952 with its addition designed by Ben Weese in 1963.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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Robert and Suzanne Drucker House
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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Author's personal
collection _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property .5

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- 1. Latitude: 42.081656° Longitude: -87.744698°
- 2. Latitude: Longitude:
- 3. Latitude: Longitude:
- 4. Latitude: Longitude:

Robert and Suzanne Drucker House
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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lot 10 in the Re-subdivision of Lots 1-12 in Block 6 in Indian Hill Estates, being a subdivision in the S ½ of Section 29, T42N, R13 East of the 3rd P.M.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.) The boundary is the legal description of the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Susan S. Benjamin, Courtney Gray Resnick, Gwen Sommers Yant,

organization: Benjamin Historic

Certifications

street & number: 711 Marion

Avenue

city or town: Highland Park state: IL zip

code: 60035

e-mail: ssbenjamin@sbcglobal.net

telephone: 847-432-1865

date: March 10, 2013

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.)

Robert and Suzanne Drucker House
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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.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Name of Property:	Robert and Suzanne Drucker House
City or Vicinity:	Village of Wilmette
County:	Cook County
State:	IL
Name of Photographer:	Susan Benjamin
Date of Photographs:	January 8, 2012 to January 12, 2012
Location of Original Digital Files:	#1 Old State Capitol Plaza
Number of Photographs:	15

Photo #1
North Elevation, camera facing southeast

Photo #2
Detail of North Terrace, camera facing east

Photo #3
West and South Elevation, camera facing northeast

Photo #4
South and East Elevation, camera facing northwest

Photo #5
East Elevation, camera facing west

Photo #6
Detail of Main Entrance on North Elevation, camera facing south

Photo #7
Detail of Entries on West Elevation, camera facing east

Photo #8
Entry Hall and Main Entrance, camera facing north

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Photo #9

View of Stair Hall and South (Rear) Wing Hall from Entry, camera facing southwest

Photo #10

Main Staircase and West Entries, camera facing west

Photo #11

Living Room, camera facing southwest

Photo #12

Dining Room, camera facing north

Photo #13

Bedroom 1, camera facing southwest

Photo #14

South (Rear) Wing Hall from Second Floor Stair Landing, camera facing south

Photo #15

Bedroom 5, camera facing south

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**

Robert & Suzanne drucker House

Name of Property

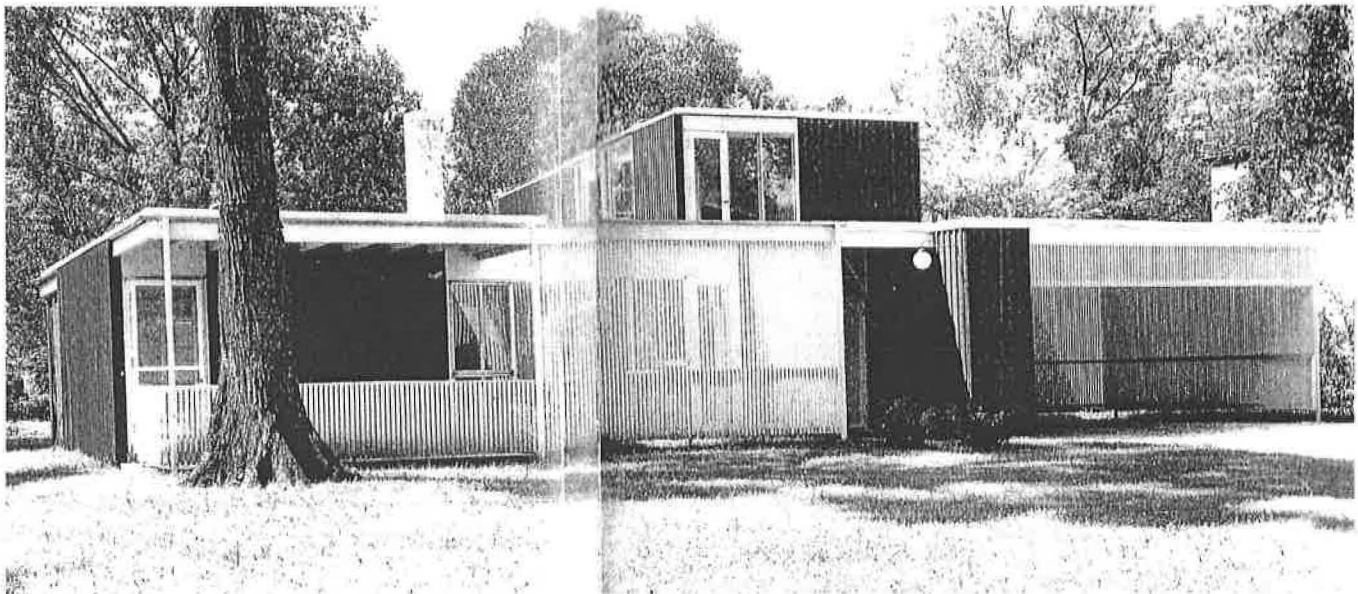
Cook County, IL

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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Historic Photographs

Page 1



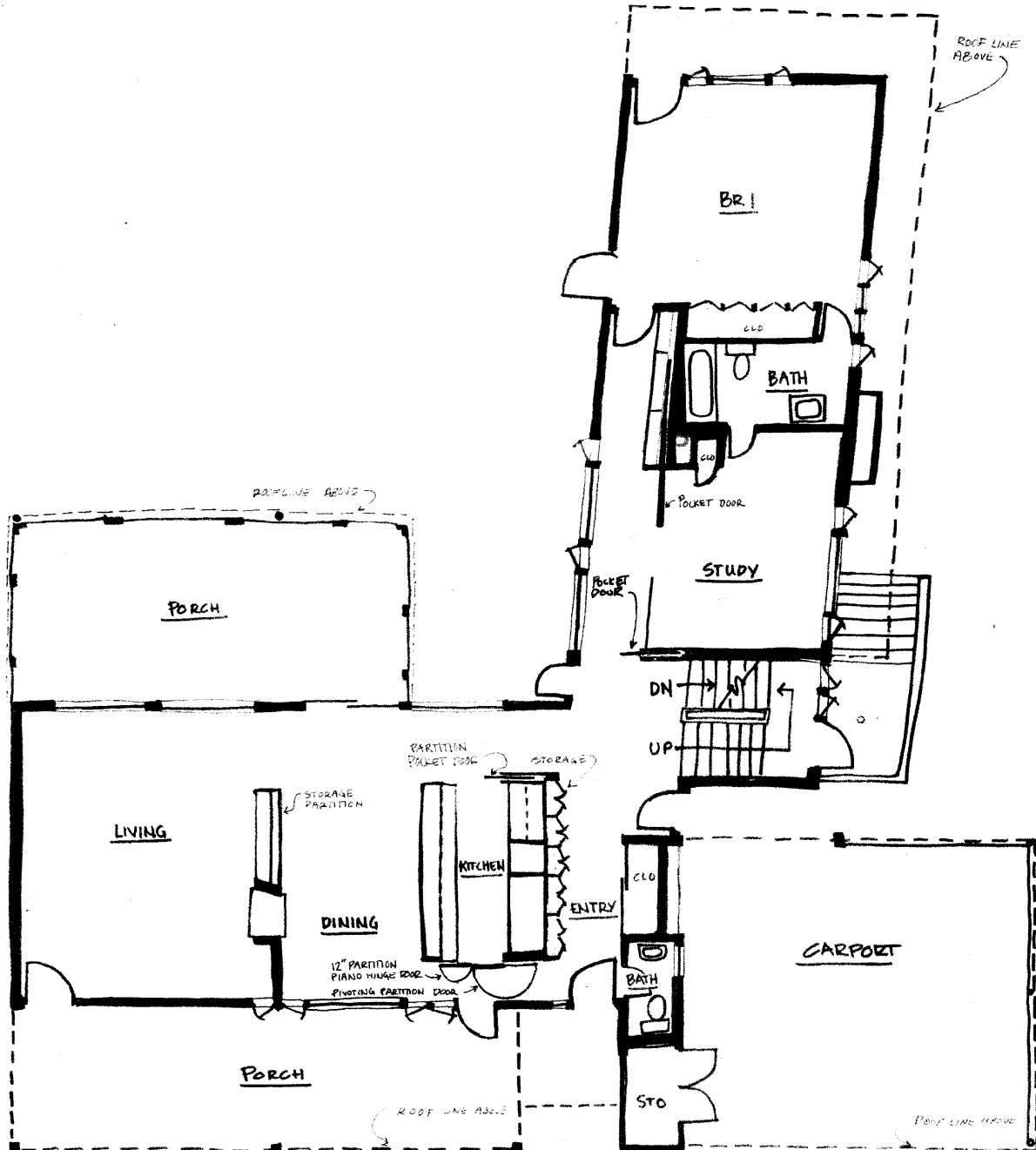
Drucker House prior to second-story addition

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Floor Plans Page 1

Robert and Suzanne Drucker House
Name of Property
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N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



ROBERT AND SUZANNE DRUCKER HOUSE
EXISTING CONDITION DRAWINGS

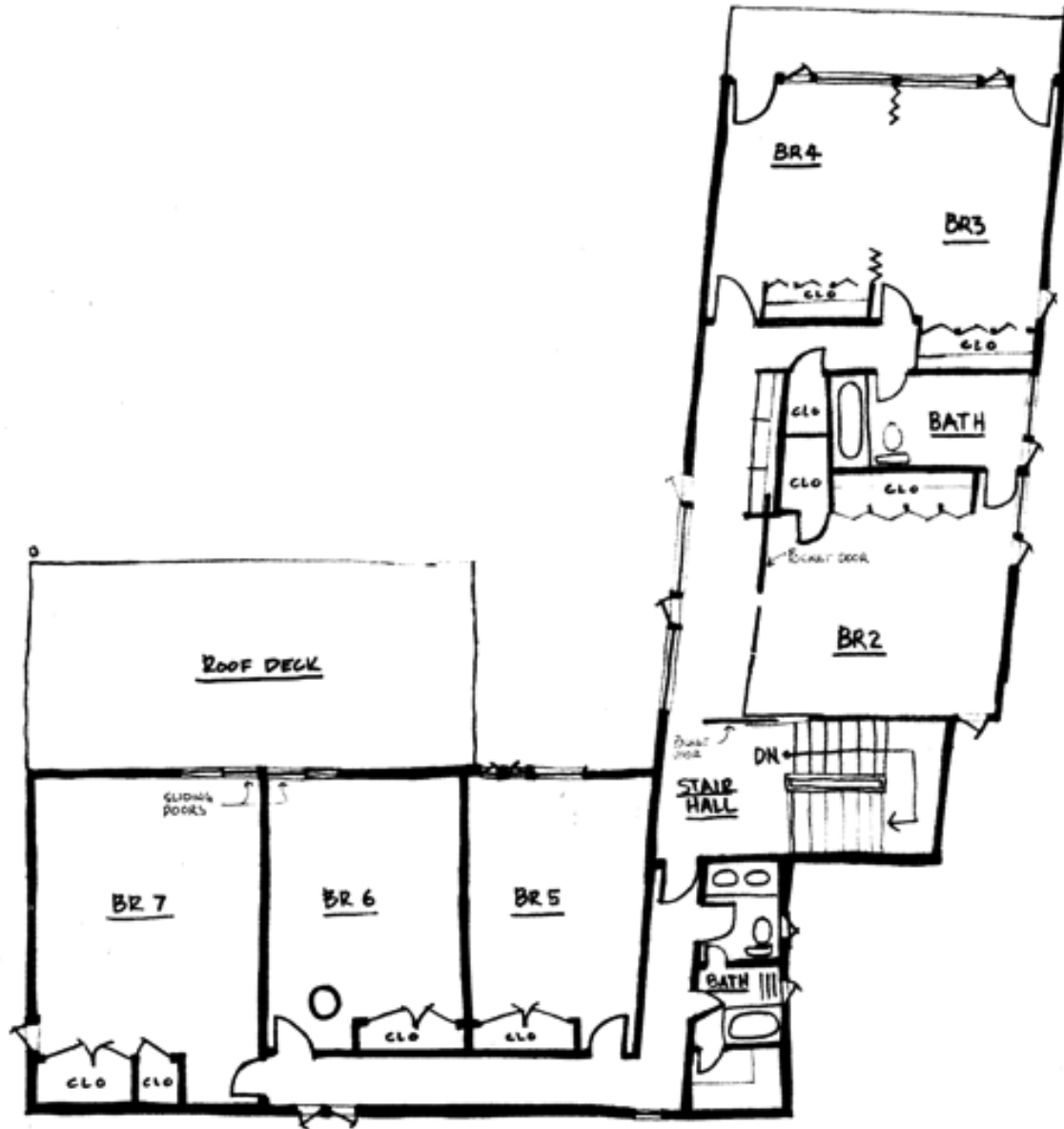
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
NOT TO SCALE

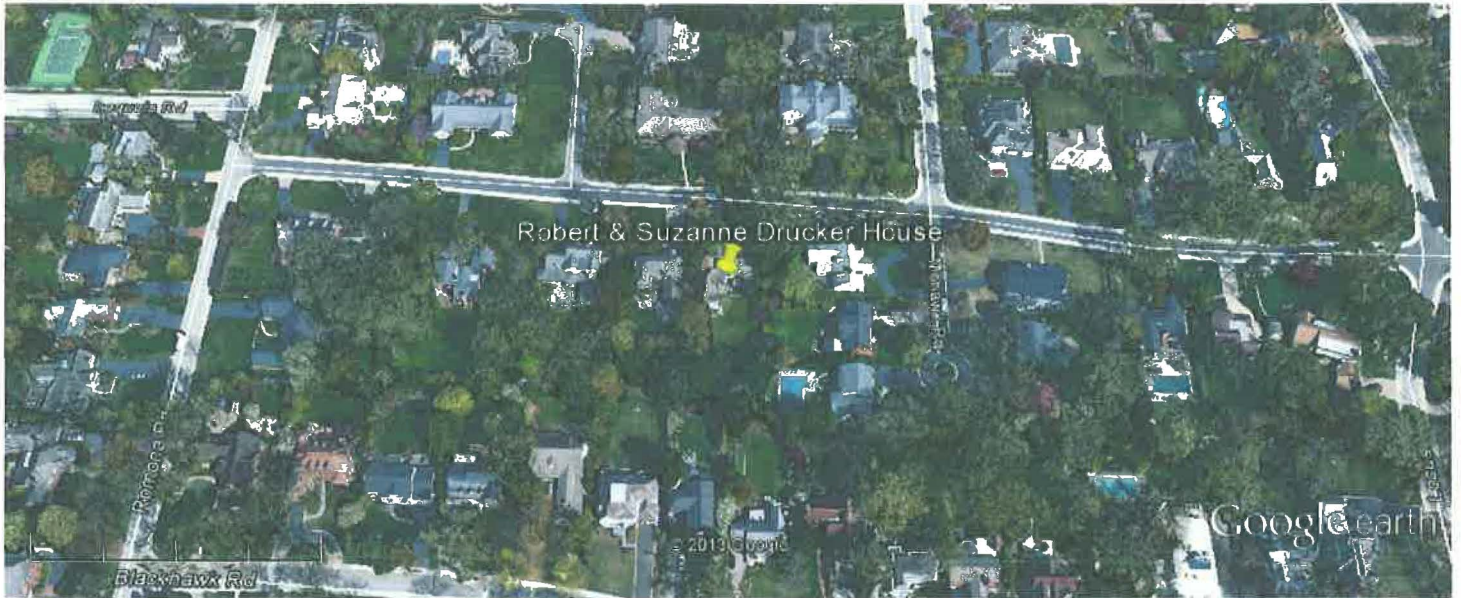
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

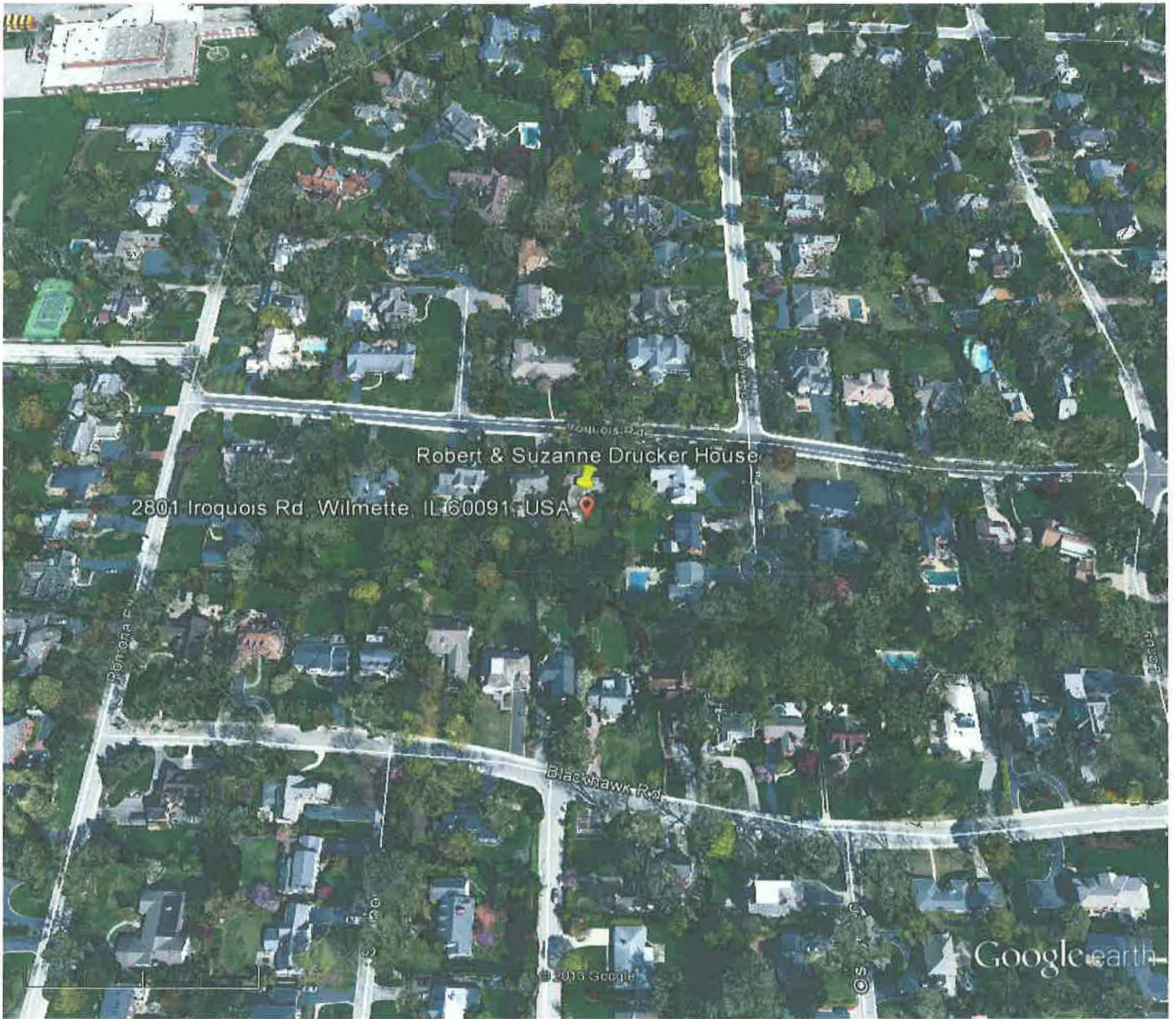
Section number Floor Plans Page 2

Robert and Suzanne Drucker House
Name of Property
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County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)





Robert & Suzanne Drucker House
Cook County, IL Coordinates 42.081656° -87.744698°



Google earth

feet
meters





2801





















A white bookshelf with multiple shelves. The top shelf holds several vases and a bowl. The middle shelves are filled with books of various sizes and colors. There are also some decorative objects, including a small figurine and a framed picture. The bottom shelf has a stack of books and a small lamp.

A white fireplace with a dark metal surround. The fireplace is empty. On top of the fireplace, there are several decorative items, including a duck figurine and a small house model.

A wooden chest of drawers with four drawers. On top of the chest, there is a round mirror, a lamp, and some other decorative items. A small figurine is also visible on the chest.

A small wooden side table with a lamp and a teapot. The table has two shelves. The top shelf holds a lamp with a white shade and a small teapot. The bottom shelf has a stack of books.

A glass coffee table with a book and a small plant. The book is titled "The Architecture of Barry Weese". The plant is in a small pot and has yellow and white flowers.

A white sofa with a green and white patterned pillow. The sofa is positioned on the right side of the room.









UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Drucker, Robert and Suzanne, House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ILLINOIS, Cook

DATE RECEIVED: 8/02/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/26/13
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/10/13 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/18/13
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000715

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 9.18.13 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.