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NPS Form 10-900 (Rev. 8/86) | NPS/Iowa SHPO Word Processor Format (Approved 5/88) | OMB No. 1024-0018

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service

SEP 30 1988

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in **Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms** (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "NA" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Jack Lamberson House
other names/site number: Robert McCormick House

2. Location

street & number: 511 North Park Avenue | | not for publication
city, town: Oskaloosa | | vicinity
state: Iowa code: 19 county: Mahaska code: 123 zip code: 52577

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
|XX| private	|XX| building(s)	1	0 buildings
|__| public-local	|__| district		sites
|__| public-State	|__| site	0	1 structures
|__| public-Federal	|__| structure		objects
	|__| object	1	1 Total

Name of Related multiple property listing: Iowa Usonian Houses by Frank Lloyd Wright
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. |__| See continuation sheet, section _____ page _____.

James E. Jacobs DSHPO — September 23, 1988

Signature of certifying official — Date

Bureau of Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property |__| meets |__| does not meet National Register criteria.
|__| See continuation sheet, section _____ page _____.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

|✓| entered in the National Register.
    |__| See continuation sheet, section __ page __
|__| determined eligible for the National Register.
    |__| See continuation sheet, section __ page __
|__| determined not eligible for the National Register.

|__| removed from the National Register.
|__| other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date: 11/9/88

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Domestic - Single Dwelling	Domestic - Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)
Wrightian

Materials (enter categories from instructions)
foundation Brick
walls Brick, Glass
roof Asbestos
other Concrete Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.
|XX| See continuation sheet, section 7 page 2

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: |__| nationally |XX| statewide |__| locally

Applicable National Register Criteria |__|A |__|B |XX|C |__|D
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) |__|A |__|B |__|C |__|D |__|E |__|F |XX|G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Architecture	1951	1951

Cultural Affiliation
N.A.

Significant Person
N.A.

Architect/Builder
Wright, Frank Lloyd

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. |XX| See continuation sheet, section 8 page 2

9. Major Bibliographical References

|XX| See continuation sheet, section 9 page 2

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:

|XX| State historic preservation office
|__| Other State agency
|__| Federal agency
|__| Local government
|XX| University
|__| Other

Specify repository:
University of Washington

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2 acres

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	15	531290	4571950
B			
C			
D			

|__| See continuation sheet, section _____ page _____

Verbal Boundary Description |XX| See continuation sheet, section 10 page 2

Boundary Justification |XX| See continuation sheet, section 10 page 2

11. Form Prepared By

author/title Chery Peterson, Architectural Historian
preparer Ralph J. Christian, Architectural Historian
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation Date 9/7/88
street & number State Historical Bldg., Capitol Cmplx. telephone (515) 281-8697
city or town Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50319

Description:

The Lamberson house and the Alsop house, both in Oskaloosa, Iowa, were each commissioned in the late 1940s and were each built by the same contractor and completed in 1951. While true to Usonian ideals, the Jack Lamberson house is unique about the Iowa Usonians for its extensive utilization of 60' and 120' angles. Its low, sweeping pitched roof gives the Lamberson house a deceptively large appearance, yet of the seven Iowa Usonians only the Miller house is smaller.

Oskaloosa is the county seat of Mahaska County in southern Iowa, 60 miles southeast of Des Moines. The Lamberson house is located in the northeast quadrant of the city in a moderately affluent residential development. This section of town has a rolling topography with native timber in the low-lying areas. The Lamberson house was one of the first houses to be built in this neighborhood. The property, previously farmland owned by Mr. Lamberson's father, originally included five acres at the crest of a gentle hill. During the early 1950s the Lamberson house remained surrounded by cornfields. Later, as the neighborhood developed, the Lambersons sold approximately three of the original five acres. Today the neighborhood is completely developed, with an eclectic mix of house styles, yet the Lamberson house has retained its commanding presence on the grassy hilltop.,

With regard to construction of the Lamberson house, the footings on which this house is built are most likely Wright's "dry wall footing." The foundation walls of the Lamberson house are of brickwork similar to and indistinguishable from the brick walls. The brick walls are cavity walls with fiberboard insulation. The dark red bricks are laid in running bond, with raked horizontal joints of white mortar and flush vertical joints of dark red mortar. The 60' and 120' corners are built with special corner bricks which allow for sharp, flush corners, unlike the well-known Hanna House where standard bricks are laid in an open, interlocking fashion at the 120' corners.

The continuous red concrete floor mat of the Lamberson house is etched with the 4'-0" x 4'-0" grid; the 30' shift of the grid pattern is especially noticeable in the master bedroom. As the house has settled, the floor slab has cracked and these slight cracks follow the grid lines.

Beneath the concrete floor slab are the pipes of the radiant heat system spaced approximately 2'-0" on center throughout the house. The furnace and the pump are in the utility room off the kitchen. The system is divided into three zones with valves which the owner adjusts. The sophisticated original thermostat is designed to anticipate temperature changes within the house by measuring both the indoor and the outdoor air temperatures. The present owners, Mr. and Mrs. McCormick, have been very happy with the "gravity" heat system, and, after learning how to adjust the system, have had no major difficulties. In the living room the "gravity" heat system is supplemented with baseboard heat.

The red concrete floor mat of the Lamberson house originally extended from the living room out to the terrace, but has since been replaced at the terrace with a newer gray-colored concrete slab. The replacement slab is not scored with the 4'-0" x 4'-0" grid lines; lacking these and the red color, the visual continuity of the floor has been lost. Problems with the terrace apparently began after the low wall which surrounded the terrace was altered to add steps. Failure of this low wall and of the terrace slab then lead to the necessary replacement of both. As rebuilt, the low brick terrace walls which were originally solid are now open with wood railing between brick piers.

The roof of the Lamberson house is a very low-pitched, irregular hip roof with deep overhangs. The overhangs reach their greatest projection over the 60' corners of the house where they extend as much as 10'-0". When the east elevation of the Lamberson house is viewed from the street, this dynamic roof appears to lift out and up, although the main ridge lines are actually level. Trimming the roof, the fascia of redwood is sharply canted; the shingles are red-colored asbestos shingles; and skylights are located over the bathrooms, the master bedroom, and over the carport.

Inside, all of the ceilings except the ceiling of the kitchen-utility area are finished with wide redwood boards which run parallel to the main roof ridges. As with each of the other houses of this study, the varying ceiling heights in the Lamberson house were designed to define the different spaces: intimate where the ceiling is low, with a feeling of spaciousness where it is high.

The manipulation of ceiling heights is very successful in the small Lamberson house. Low ceilings at the main entrance and along the gallery open to the higher, sloped or raised ceilings of the living room, kitchen, bedrooms, and bathroom, making these rooms feel bigger by contrast. The dark, warm-toned redwood tempers this "drama," and the low ceiling decks emphasize the sheltering quality of the roof.

Lighting in the Lamberson house is provided by incandescent lights recessed in the ceilings or ceiling decks. The regularly spaced, square recesses are covered with glass, flush with the ceiling surface. Those in the ceiling decks not only shine light down into the room but are open at the top to cast light up to the sloped ceilings.

With its deep overhangs and breezy hilltop location, the Lamberson house is a cool house in warm weather. Casement windows or operable skylights in each room allow air to circulate through the house. The current owners have one window air conditioner, installed in a gallery window, which they typically use during only a few weeks of the summer.

All of the original Wright-designed furniture in the Lamberson house was built of redwood or redwood veneer plywood. Movable pieces of furniture have all been lost, but in the living room there remains an unusual desk and cabinets built into a deep niche in the north wall. There are also original redwood shelves in this room built at the

height of the window sills. A built-in couch remains in the dining area, built into a long, shallow niche in the west exterior wall. The original redwood dining table built by Mr. Lamberson has been lost, as have the chairs. This trapezoidal-shaped dining table was actually three tables with triangular tabletops that all fit together to make the one large table. The cabinets and shelves of the kitchen and gallery were built after the house was completed. Hardware throughout the house is minimal in design with the significant use of brass, piano-type hinges. Interior wood walls are finished with 4'-0" wide, flush redwood veneer plywood panels.

Of all the Iowa Usonians, the galleries of the Lamberson house and the Alsop house have the least provision for storage, other than for books. In the Lamberson house the gallery provides a short section of counter with storage below and then approximately 8'-0" of floor-to-ceiling bookshelves.

The fireplace of the Lamberson house is altered from its original design. The fireplace as originally built had a brick hearth flush with the concrete floor and a high lintel supporting the brick wall above. The lintel, its soldier course still visible in the brick wall, was built at the same height as the ceiling decks. This fireplace was undoubtedly grand, but it had functional problems--it would not draw and it filled the house with smoke. To remedy this problem, Mr. Lamberson installed a fan in the chimney and Mr. Wright designed a copper hood. Later owners have filled in the fireplace opening with matching brickwork, considerably lowering the lintel height, and have installed a small, conventional firebox. The outer portion of the original brick hearth still exists.

The Lamberson house was originally well constructed and it is currently in good condition and is well maintained. Although alterations have occurred, they have not significantly damaged the character of the house. The Lamberson house is a good example of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian work. The planning, the use of materials, the construction techniques, and the details are all typical of Wright's postwar residential style, more specifically of his designs for small houses in northern climates. Among the Iowa Usonians, the efficient, economical, and modern Lamberson house is significant for the direct influence it has had upon residential design in the Oskaloosa community. The Lamberson house is also significant among the Iowa Usonians for its unique hexagonal planning proportioned by a square unit module.

Significance

One of seven Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian houses built in Iowa, and one of two Usonians built in Oskaloosa, both completed in 1951. This house is unique among the Iowa Usonians for its extensive utilization of 60'and 120' angles and for its evocative, low and sweeping hip-type roof.

Direct influence of this house and the Wright-designed Alsop House ("A" Avenue East) on local residential design was documented in a feature article of the March 1958 House and Home in which these two convention-breaking houses were credited with starting a ". . . homebuilding revolution in Oskaloosa" (House and Home, March '58, p. 94). Upon completion, the Lamberson House was toured by an estimated 9,000 visitors during a public open house.

The Lamberson House is an important example of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian work in Iowa. The planning, the use of materials, the construction techniques, and the details are all typical of Wright's post World War II residential style. Among the Iowa Usonians, the efficient, economical, and "modern" Lamberson House is significant for the direct influence it has had upon residential design in the Oskaloosa community. The Lamberson House is also significant among the Iowa Usonians for its unique hexagonal planning generated from a square unit module.

Construction was supervised by John De Koven Hill. Published in various Frank Lloyd Wright catalogues, House and Home, and Seargent's 1984 Usonian Houses, the house and grounds are of continuing interest to architectural scholars, photographers, and historians.

Unconventional or "modern" features, characteristic of Wright's Usonian design and ideals include: open planning based on grid system, emphasizing one large living-dining space; central kitchen and utility core; carport rather than garage; slab-on-grade construction, with radiant heat system embedded in slab; low sloping roof with varied ceiling heights inside; window walls and horizontal window bands; climatic considerations including natural lighting and ventilation, and solar control; natural expression of materials; use of thin, "sandwich-constructed" wood walls; built-in furniture; and a large scale fireplace.

The Lamberson family lived in their Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian until 1960. The present owners of the Lamberson house are Mr. and Mrs. McCormick, a retired couple. The McCormicks have lived in the house since 1972. Because the Lamberson house has had at least three different owners, an accurate history has been difficult to compile. Mr. Lamberson, who still lives in Oskaloosa, remembers little of the structure's early history. Records of correspondence with Mr. Wright have been lost as well as the owner's copies of the working drawings.

The original owners of the two Oskaloosa Usonians, the Lamberson and the Alsops, were once close friends. Mrs. Lamberson had studied Wright's work as a design student at the University of California, Los Angeles. The two couples, both with young children, talked together of building new homes, and each wrote to Mr. Wright within the same year. Together the two couples also made their first trip to Spring Green to meet with Mr. Wright. It was around 1947 when the Lambersons first contacted Wright. In Storrer's The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1948 is listed as the year that both the Lamberson house and the Alsop house were designed. The most certain date is that of completion. Both houses were completed in 1951, the Alsop house somewhat prior to the Lamberson house.

The builder of the Lamberson and Alsop houses was Jim De Reus, then a partner of Sparks Construction Company in Oskaloosa. De Reus had studied architecture at Iowa State College and was eager to build the Wright-designed houses. Mr. De Reus said of the Alsop house in a 1959 article in House and Home:

> The minute I saw the blueprints I knew we were in for a completely new experience--new for us and new for our community. For the blueprints showed that:
> This was a new kind of house.
> This was a new way to site a house.
> This was a new way to build a house.
> The custom house that Mr. Wright designed and we built was different in every way from the kind of houses we had been building in Oskaloosa. (p. 127)

Previous to the 1959 House and Home article on the construction of the Alsop house, both the Alsop and the Lamberson houses were highlighted in the March 1958 House and Home in a feature story by Kathryn Morgan-Ryan on housing trends in Oskaloosa. In this article the two houses were credited with influencing the building boom that had begun in Oskaloosa after the war. Upon completion of the two houses in 1951, there had been a public "open house" at which "Over 9,000 people trekked out to look at these two Frank Lloyd Wright custom houses . . . what they saw started a homebuilding revolution in Oskaloosa." (p. 94) According to Jim De Reus, "People who came out of curiosity went home with a longing: they, too, wanted a house with all that the word stands for." (p. 127)

Features of the two houses specifically referred to in the 1958 article were the terraces, which made possible indoor-outdoor living; the single-loaded bedroom hall, or gallery, with its provisions for storage and for natural light and ventilation; the efficient use of space; built-in furniture; cathedral ceilings; large fireplaces; and skylights.

When interviewed in 1985, Mr. Lamberson recalled that during the design and construction of his Usonian there were no alterations to Mr. Wright's original design, that there were no original plans for later additions, and that there were no major construction problems. Of preliminary plans, Mr. Lamberson recalled only a very

extensive site plan which included a swimming pool north of the house and terrace, set into the side of the hill with the downhill side supported by retaining walls. The pool was never built, and the site is now an expansive lawn with a few fruit and ornamental trees, and junipers around the house which are neatly kept but overgrown. The drive and ample parking area are asphalt paved and, to the south of the parking area, there is a wood-frame storage shed, painted red, not of Wright design. The present owners of the Lamberson house, Mr. and Mrs. McCormick, who have seen the original drawings for this house which are kept by the Taliesin Associated Architects, recalled a family room addition planned for the bedroom wing.

The Lamberson house has a somewhat monolithic, solidly enclosed appearance and seems not as comfortably open to its site as the other houses in this study. The living room, with a long window wall on the east side, is open to a wide view and to natural ventilation, but because the finish floor at this point is raised above finish grade, a connection with the ground is not sensed. Windows throughout the rest of the house are set on a high 3'-8" sill. The house has commonly been compared to a ship, and in her 1958 House and Home article, Morgan-Ryan likened the terrace to the ship's prow. As originally built, the small terrace of the Lamberson house was completely enclosed within low brick walls, with no access to the lawn. It has since been altered to overcome that inconvenience.

The Lamberson house is built of brick, concrete, redwood, and glass. The building materials are the same for both the exterior and the interior: brick walls are exposed inside as well as outside, the redwood roof soffits are an extension of the redwood-finished ceiling decks, and the concrete floor mat was designed to continue outdoors to entrance area and to the terrace. A final material, steel, is likely concealed in the roof.

The design of the Lamberson house contains typical Usonian characteristics, the first of which is the open plan. The living room, dining area, and kitchen are open and arranged around a central fireplace. The kitchen-utility area becomes the solid, anchoring core of the house, with masonry walls rising up through the otherwise unbroken planes of the roof. The highest ceiling in the house is, in fact, that of the kitchen-utility area. This windowless space is lit and ventilated by a large operable skylight in the high ceiling. Other ceilings follow the pitch of the roof, creating a variety of ceiling heights, with the repeated utilization of skylights. Beyond the open living and dining area, a gallery with a band of windows on one side, lined with shelves on the other, leads to the bedrooms and the bathroom. The Lamberson house has no attic, no basement, and no garage. The heating is Wright's system of "gravity" heat.

Although it is not squarely rectilinear like the other houses of this study, the Lamberson house is planned on a 4'-0" x 4'-0" square grid. The grid of the bedroom wing is shifted 30° from that of the main living areas. Seargent, in Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses, defines a plan such as this as a "Diagonal" type Usonian

plan. Walls in the Lamberson house are either in line with the grid or they cut across the grid at 60' angles. The resulting rooms, in plan, are parallelograms and hexagons. Thirty-five years after building this house, Mr. Lamberson distinctly recalled his visits to Taliesin spent listening to Wright's philosophy of the "hex."

In a 1937 summary of the Hanna "Honeycomb" House in Standord, California, Mr. Wright wrote:

> . . . I am convinced that a cross section of honeycombs has more fertility and flexibility where human movement is concerned than the square. The obtuse angel (120 degrees) is more suited to human "to and fro" than the right angle. (Hanna and Hanna, p. 77)

Of his own Usonian, Mr. Lamberson recalled that the unusually shaped rooms were very comfortable to live in. The main drawback of the house for the Lambersons was not in the shape or arrangement of the room, but, rather simply, that the house was too small for a family of five. Not enough room and not enough storage, and only enough space under the carport for one car! Yet, overall, Mr. Lamberson agrees that this house was very modern and ahead of its time and "aesthetically great."

Mr. Wright never visited the Lamberson or Alsop sites nor the houses. Designs were based upon the clients' needs and budgets and were completed using topographic plans and photographs of the site. John DeKoven Hill was Wright's representative for both projects and made visits during construction but did not reside in Oskaloosa and was not directly paid by the clients. Mr. Lamberson estimated that the construction cost for his house was approximately $25,000, and for the Alsop house approximately $30,000.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Jim De Reus, "What We Learned from Frank Lloyd Wright," House and Home, February 1959, p. 127.

Paul R. Hanna and Jean S. Hanna, Frank Lloyd Wright's Hanna House: The Client's Report, (New York: Architectural History Foundation: Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), p. 77.

Kathryn Morgan-Ryan, "Oskaloosa, Iowa," House and Home, March 1958, p. 94.,

John Seargent, Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses: The Case for Organic Architecture, (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1976).

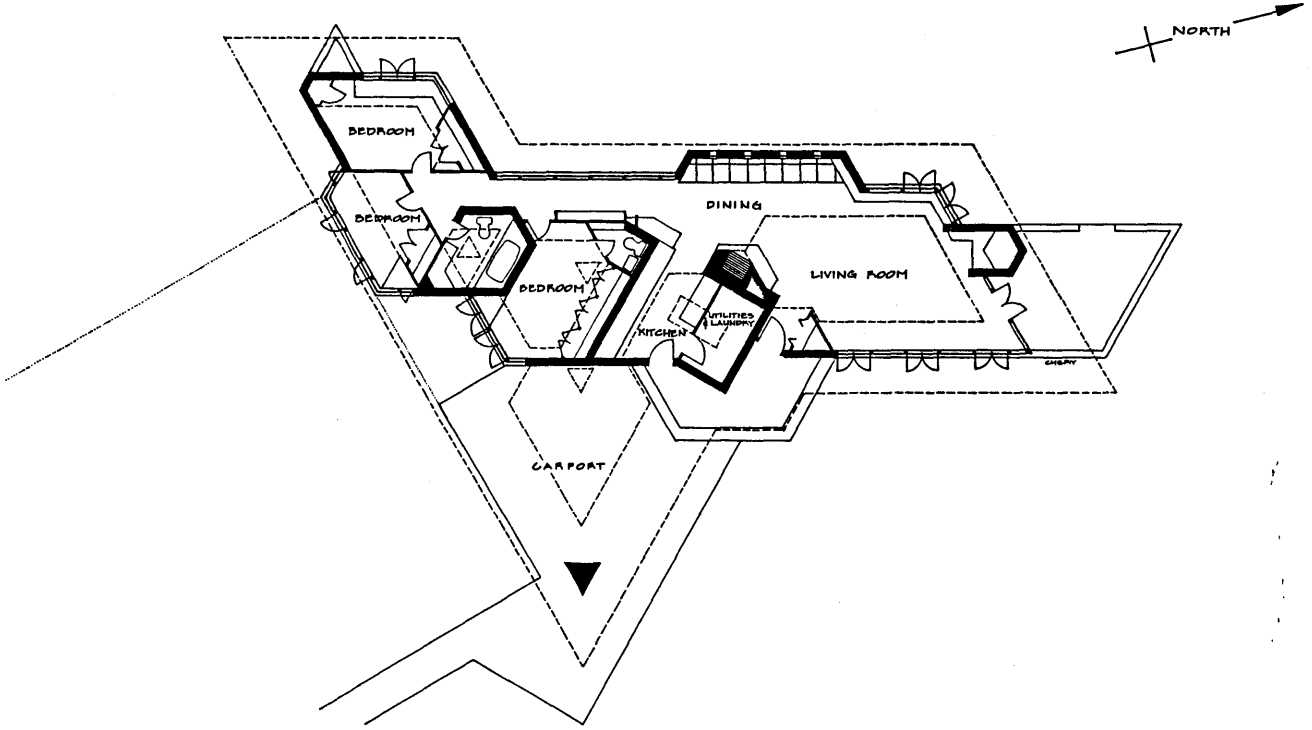
Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property encompasses the south 248 feet of Lot 10 swne except the west 150 feet, Township 75, Range 15, Section 18.

Boundary Justification

The boundary described above contains approximately 2 acres and consists of the Lamberson house and its Surrounding acreage. It is being nominated in its entirety because site was an integral part of usonian design in terms of Wright's philosophy of living in harmony with nature.

LAMBERSON HOUSE, OSKALOOSA, IOWA.



from Frank Lloyd Wright's Iowa Usonians.
University of Washington Master's Thesis
by Chery Peterson