

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

JUN 20 1983

date entered

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

1. Name

historic

Bradford-Pettis House

(D009:15-16)

and/or common

NA

2. Location

street & number

404 South 39th Street

NA not for publication

city, town

Omaha

NA vicinity of

state

Nebraska

code

031

county

Douglas

code

055

3. Classification

Category

district

building(s)

structure

site

object

Ownership

public

private

both

Public Acquisition

in process

being considered

Status

occupied

unoccupied

work in progress

Accessible

yes: restricted

yes: unrestricted

no

Present Use

agriculture

commercial

educational

entertainment

government

industrial

military

museum

park

private residence

religious

scientific

transportation

other:

4. Owner of Property

name

LaVonne K. Plambeck

street & number

12504 Pacific Street

city, town

Omaha

NA vicinity of

state

Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

Douglas County Register of Deeds

street & number

Douglas County Courthouse, 1819 Farnam Street

city, town

Omaha

state

Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title

Historic Omaha Buildings Survey

has this property been determined eligible?

yes

no

date

On-going

federal

state

county

local

depository for survey records

Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission, City Planning Department

city, town

Omaha

state

Nebraska

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>NA</u>

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

The Bradford-Pettis House is a rectangular, two-story residence with raised basement and garret. It is enlivened by wrought-iron trim. The structure is covered by a hip roof with four hipped dormers. The roof is clad in red tile and is defined by wide, overhanging, horizontal eaves. A spreading, full-frontal terrace with centrally-located portico, supported by stout brick piers, further defines the horizontal emphasis. The interior is spacious and airy, accentuated with hardwood floors and doors, inlaid woodwork, and stained glass windows. A garage is located in the rear. The integrity of the structure is good with relatively few changes to the exterior and interior floorplan.

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The 66' x 60' two-story house originally was constructed of reddish-brown brick with terra-cotta window and door surrounds. Exterior brick was painted light gray with window and door surrounds painted white in a 1964 renovation. The projecting galvanized iron eaves and soffits, wrought-iron porch railings and terra cotta window and door surrounds are detailed in various oriental motifs. The large rectangular-shaped house has few facade projections, only the front portico and sun room at the rear. The solidity of the mass is emphasized. Windows are tri-partite with prominent terra-cotta surrounds.

The centrally located front portico is supported by stout brick piers and projects from the structure's formal east facade. The porch is flanked by brick terraces which continue unbroken to the building's corners. A cantilevered porte-cochère of similar detail supported by massive wrought-iron brackets is located on the south facade.

The structure's hip roof is clad in red tile and is punctuated by oversized dormers, continuing the tri-partite window motif. The roof is punctured by slender chimneys at the exterior wall.

Large multiple window openings produce a spacious and airy interior. The interior features hardwood oak floors. Maple, mahogany and walnut woodwork is employed throughout the house. Noteworthy is the spacious foyer and main staircase which are centrally placed in the house. A large parlor is situated to the south of the foyer and a library is located to the north of the foyer. The library features a fireplace, burlled pocket doors, and woodwork ornamented by strips of colored wood inlaid in geometric patterns. A formal dining room is located off the library. The remainder of the first floor is taken up with a former kitchen, breakfast room, bathroom, pantry, and sun room. On the second floor the staircase rises to a centrally-located sitting room. To the north is a large master bedroom suite with sitting room, dressing room and wardrobe, and bathroom. The remainder of the second floor includes bedrooms, a former bathroom and a sun room. The garret, used presumably as servants quarters, has a sitting area, bedrooms, hallway, and bathroom. It is reached by a rear staircase which serves all levels of the house. The basement includes a large ballroom with fireplace, laundry room, storerooms and wine cellar.

Beamed ceilings, burlled paneling, hardwood doors, and leaded and stained glass windows in geometric and floral patterns are extensively employed in the foyer, parlor, library, dining room, master bedroom suite and (formerly) in the breakfast room.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

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Originally the house featured canvas covered walls of painted seasonal landscapes. Also, the house has stained glass light fixtures and tile-faced fireplaces. Many of these features were removed or altered in previous remodelings of the house.

A brick, flat-roofed garage of later date is located to the west of the house. The yard is terraced and features a brick retaining wall to the north.

The Bradford-Pettis House was designated a landmark in 1979 by the City of Omaha's Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission. The house has recently been rehabilitated and serves as the Montessori Educational Center, a children's school.

## 8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1910

Builder/Architect John McDonald, architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The primary significance of the Bradford-Pettis House lies in its architectural contribution as a grand house of one of Omaha's business and social elite, which exhibits a combination of Prairie style and Georgian Revival influences. John McDonald, a prominent Omaha architect, designed the residence in 1910 for Dana and Savilla Bradford. The house was constructed by local contractor Jonas Printz at a cost of \$19,000. A successful Omaha businessman, Bradford was president of the Bradford-Kennedy Lumber Company, once one of the largest wholesale lumber businesses in the West. His widow, Savilla, married Edward F. Pettis. Pettis was secretary-treasurer and a director of the J. L. Brandeis and Sons Store. He was an active business, social and community leader.

Dana C. Bradford (1865-1923) was born in Wichita, Kansas. He moved to Omaha in 1893 and became employed as a salesman for the S. K. Martin Lumber Company. In 1895 Bradford, along with A. V. Kinsler, purchased the business. In 1901 with T. Frank Kennedy, the Bradford-Kennedy Lumber Company was formed by purchase of Kinsler's interest, and during the early twentieth century, the company came to be one of the largest wholesale lumber businesses in the West. The company controlled many mills and timber holdings in Idaho and Washington.

An enthusiastic patron of the arts, Dana Bradford amassed one of the most complete libraries in the city and a collection of paintings. "His home reflected his artistic taste and love of the beautiful." (Omaha Morning Bee, "Prominent Lumberman Succumbs," October 29, 1923, p. 1). Bradford's culturally directed lifestyle, along with his awareness of current architectural trends is reflected in the house. His ownership of a prominent lumber company accounts for the extensive use and the superior quality of interior woodwork.

The person with the longest association with the house is Savilla (King) Pettis (1888-1979), daughter of C. H. King, pioneer stockman of Casper, Wyoming. She married Dana Bradford in 1907. The scale of the first floor rooms, large even in comparison to the houses of Omaha's social elite of the time, speaks of the type and amount of entertaining the family expected to enjoy. She had four children with Bradford, a son, Dana C. Bradford, Jr., continued in the Bradford-Kennedy Lumber Company upon reaching adulthood. Noted for her beauty, she was described as one of Omaha's wealthiest widows in the 1920's. After her husband's death in 1923 she married Edward F. Pettis in the house in 1926.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre.

Quadrangle name Omaha North, NE

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>5</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

North 1/2 of Lot 1, Block 17, Smith's Addition, Douglas County, Nebraska. Includes all historically associated property.

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

state	NA	code	county	code
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state	NA	code	county	code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

Robert Peters, Preservation Administrator

name/title Edited by Penelope Chatfield Sodhi, Bob Puschendorf, State Historic Preservation Office

organization Omaha City Planning Department  
Nebraska State Historical Society

date May, 1983

street & number 1819 Farnam Street  
1500 R Street

telephone (402) 444-7000  
(402) 471-3850

city or town Omaha  
Lincoln

state Nebraska

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Martin D. Knott 6/7/83

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Delores Byers Entered in the National Register date 7/21/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET    Significance    ITEM NUMBER 8    PAGE 2

Edward Fitch Pettis (1894-1963) was born in Lincoln, Nebraska. After studying agriculture and business at the University of Nebraska, he assumed the vice-presidency of the Lincoln Trust Company at the age of twenty-three. He came to Omaha in 1920 and pursued careers as vice-president of the Omaha Trust Company and as controller for the Eppley Hotels Company. He married Savilla (King) Bradford on February 6, 1926. In 1935 became credit manager for the J. L. Brandeis Store, advancing to secretary-treasurer and to director of both the Brandeis Store and Brandeis Investment Company. Devoted to civic work, Pettis served as vice-chairman of the Golden Spike Days celebration and councillor of Ak-Sar-Ben. He was named king of Ak-Sar-Ben in 1950 and under his leadership the College World Series became one of the community's major annual attractions. His many civic activities included serving as officer and president of the Chamber of Commerce, chairman of the City Auditorium Committee, and associate chairman of the Omaha Centennial. He also served the Cerebral Palsy Civic Committee, Omaha Industrial Foundation, Associated Retailers, 4-H, Y.M.C.A. and Junior Achievement. At the Children's Memorial Hospital and Creighton University, he was a member of their respective governing boards. After years of service in promoting Omaha civic and social causes, he died in 1963. A member of the Chamber of Commerce said "To lose Ed Pettis is as great a loss a city can suffer." (Arvid E. Nelson, Jr. The Ak-Sar-Ben Story, p. 374). His widow sold the house shortly after his death.

The architect of the house, John McDonald (1861-1956), was one of Omaha's prominent architects who began practicing in the city in the boom years of the 1880's and continued for many decades. McDonald developed a successful Omaha firm with the help of major commissions from the city's prominent families. Most notable of these, the George A. Joslyn family commissioned John McDonald over a period of thirty years to design several varied structures including their residence, the Joslyn Castle (1903, NRHP), the First Unitarian Church (1917, NRHP), and the Joslyn Memorial Art Museum (1928). All of these buildings were constructed during an era (1900-29) characterized by great prosperity, a vast business boom and, in general, an optimistic outlook on the future.

Architecturally, the house is a combination of the Prairie style and the Georgian Revival style. The height, massing and arrangement of the facade is typical of the Georgian Revival style. There are also relatively few projections from the facade. The most prominent one is the monumental front portico which is centrally-placed (a common feature of Georgian Revival), but its size, the broad terrace, the stout, rectangular piers, low roof, and oriental inspired iron railing and soffits reflect Prairie style influences. The symmetrical window and door arrangement show Georgian antecedents, but the grouping of windows in threes, suggesting ribbon windows without actually realizing it, is a Prairie motif. Hipped roofs are used in both Georgian and

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET    Significance    ITEM NUMBER    8    PAGE    3

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Prairie styles. Other Prairie style motifs are the original organic color scheme, the oriental motif in railings, eaves, soffits, door and window surrounds, and interior woodwork and stained-glass window designs. The treatment of the porte-cochère as a cantilever is perhaps a unique arrangement in Nebraska. The deep overhanging eaves and horizontal emphasis from the strong cornice, terraces across the front, and stringcourses are further Prairie characteristics.

The interior plan is basically a Georgian central hall floorplan. The large foyer, prominent staircase, and parlor create a grand entrance to the house. The first floor hardwood woodwork is highlighted by inlaid patterns in a Prairie style manner. Stained glass windows are found in the house and, surprisingly, they reflect a wide variety of stained glass design styles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: some windows have geometric patterns in a Prairie Style motif; some have the opalescent nature scenes of the Tiffany manner; the geometric medallion type is found in the upstairs sitting room; and a scene painted on glass, an uncommon technique, depicts children in a garden. The variety of design types and their placement throughout the first and second floors also reflects Bradford's interest in the arts and architecture. The woodwork is an outstanding feature of the interior. Hardwood and burlled paneling of excellent quality covers the majority of wall surface in the entrance hall, library, dining room, and formerly in the parlor.

The Bradford-Pettis House is architecturally significant for its use of Prairie style and Georgian Revival influences, and as a prominent residence in Omaha's Gold Coast neighborhood, an area of the city's business and social elite in the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

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