

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 98001408

Property Name: Opitz, Edbert and Josie, House

County: Spink State: South Dakota

Lustron Houses in South Dakota  
Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*Linda McCuller*                      December 2, 1998  
Signature of the Keeper                      Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

**Section 8. Significance:**

The period of significance is, hereby, amended to read "1949" to correspond to the property's date of construction.

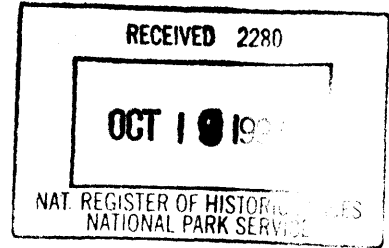
-----  
Michelle Saxman-Rogers of the South Dakota State Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



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

1. Name of Property

historic name Edbert and Josie Opitz House  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 204 E 2<sup>nd</sup> St not for publication \_\_\_  
city or town Redfield vicinity \_\_\_  
state South Dakota Code SD county Spink code 115 zip code 57073

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide  locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jay D. Voigt 10-05-98  
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
  - See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register.
  - See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

*Linda McClelland*      12/02/98

---



---



---



---

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Domestic</u>	Sub: <u>Single Family</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Domestic</u>	Sub: <u>Single Family</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Lustron Westchester

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Concrete</u>
roof	<u>Enameled steel</u>
walls	<u>Enameled Steel</u>
other	_____
	_____

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

See Continuation Sheets

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

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

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

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

**Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)**

Industry \_\_\_\_\_  
 Architecture \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1946-50 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates** 1949  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder** Architects: Roy Blass & Morris Beckman

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

See Continuation Sheets

---

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

---

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

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

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: South Dakota State Historical Society, Pierre, SD



---

**Property Owner**

---

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

name Robert and Josie Opitz  
street & number 204 E 2<sup>nd</sup> St telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Redfield state SD zip code 57469

---

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**Section 7 Page 1**Narrative Description:**

The Edbert and Josie Opitz House was built in 1949 and is a two bedroom Westchester Lustron. The rectangular grey enameled steel house is entered directly from the gable end through a corner porch that measures 6' x 12'. The house stands on a small lot in a neighborhood with houses of like age. The structural steel panels rest on a concrete slab foundation. The property retains a high degree of historic integrity and is in excellent condition.

Redfield is a medium sized town located in northern central South Dakota. This Lustron is located in a neighborhood with other like age buildings on a quiet residential street laid out in a grid pattern.

The Westchester model was the most popular of all Lustrons manufactured and this is a good example of the most common two-bedroom type. The two-bedroom Westchester is distinguishable from all other Lustrons by the 6' x 12' cutout located on the gable front. The main entrance to the house is located under the cutout. The interior to the two-bedroom Westchester was originally constructed with kitchen built-in cabinets with pass-through to a china cabinet in the dining room. Other features are the built-bookcase and cabinets in the living room, combination dishwasher-clothes washer in the kitchen, automatic water heater, built-in vanity and storage cabinets in the master bedroom, seven large closets and a radiant panel heating system. Most bathrooms in the Westchester and especially the three bedroom Westchester Deluxe model were outfitted with all essential elements for storage like a built-in antennae like) projection for a washcloth in the shower, swiveling tooth-brush holder, and built-in tissue holder. All that was needed from the owner was a refrigerator, stove and furniture. The interior doors are enameled steel, sliding pocket doors, which continues the streamline appearance and decreases the need for the space a swing door requires. The floor covering originally consisted of resilient asphalt tiles. Because of the durability of the enameled steel, the majority of the original features are still retained in the home today. Those that have been changed are the combination dishwasher-clothes washer, the floor tiles have been covered with wall-to-wall carpeting.

The most often changed item in a Lustron house is the heating system. The original system consisted of a small generator supplying radiant heat through the ceiling panels to waft pleasing rays down through the house without uncomfortable forced air moving dust around. However, this was usually the first item to fail or act insufficiently.

The exterior of the house contains very little ornamentation. However, the 2' x 2' grey enameled panels, the blue-green enamel tile roof, enameled steel panel chimney, and the bay window give this house its distinct appearance. One common feature to the two and three bedroom Westchester

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**Section   7   Page   2  

houses is the single decorative spiral porch-roof support. The gabled ends are clad in 1' wide vertical cream-colored enameled steel panels. The front and back slide-pocket doors. The original windows are still in place. They contain all-aluminum sashes and with cream-colored enamel surrounds and curved lintels.

The interior floor plan to this Lustron follows that of all other two-bedroom Westchester homes. The entrance is on the east elevation under the 6' x 12' cutout. The entrance leads directly into the living room, which contains a 8' x 2' dove grey, floor-to-ceiling beveled panels. A large picture window with side casements on the north elevation gives the appearance and feeling of openness in this room. To the left is the pen dining room. This room also contains one of the large picture windows. The dining-room and kitchen are attached by a china cabinet, with pass through that allows for easier access between the kitchen and dining room. The kitchen contains one small double casement window that are owned by a turning a crank handle. The rear door is also located in this area, on the south elevation. A utility room is provided that contained the original heating unit and a space for a laundry. The bathroom is located down the hall from the living room on the left. Across from the bathroom is the master bedroom. This room contains built-in drawers, cabinets, and floor-to-ceiling closets with sliding pocket doors surrounding a large vanity mirror. There is also a large picture window with side casements on the north elevation and one of the smaller double casement windows on the west elevation. The second bedroom is located across the hall from the master bedroom. It does not contain any of the built-ins. Its major features are the small double casement windows on the west and south elevations, and a pocket-door closet. A linen closet is located between these two bedrooms. All ceilings in the house consist of 4' x 4' steel enamel panels. The bathroom and kitchen are the only rooms that are yellow in color.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**Section 8 Page 3**Narrative Statement of Significance:**

The Optiz House, built in 1949, is significant under Criteria "A" for its association with the mass production of post-World War II housing and construction method innovations. It is also significant under Criteria "C" as an example of new and innovative construction method for residential housing. The frame and body of these houses are constructed entirely from porcelain enameled steel, and includes a modern "ranch-type" design and open layout.

The Lustron Corporation was formed in response to the growing national demand for increased affordable housing in the United States. In some areas demand was generated before the war ended. Often these demands were concentrated in areas where production for war materials or military schooling was located. Housing was crowded and rents became inflated. To counter this problem the War Production Administration placed price controls on housing cost. Other reasons for scarcity of housing was the decrease of building projects in the 1930s due to the depression. Also, during the war, materials that could have been used for housing were reserved by the government for war related needs. For almost seventeen years housing production came to a standstill.

After the war, returning GIs needed affordable housing for themselves and their new families. The United States government tried to ease the situation by continuing price controls, offering low interest housing loans and encouraging the development of moderate priced housing. The government estimated that over three million new housing units would be needed at the end of the war, with an additional twelve million needed within a ten year period. To deal with the problems of housing, the Veteran's Emergency Housing Program was established with Wilson W. Wyatt appointed Housing Expediter in January 1946. To quickly expand housing production the Veterans' Emergency Housing Act was passed to set up a program to increase markets for new types of materials and prefabricated building, set aside materials to be allocated to residential construction efforts, and guaranteed loans to finance new projects under the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

It was in this atmosphere that the Lustron Corporation was formed. In 1946, Carl Gunnar Strandlund, vice-president and general manager of Chicago Vitreous Enamel Products Company went to Washington, D. C. to request steel to produce all-steel gas stations for the Standard Oil Company. Strandlund's plan was rejected on the basis that materials were needed to go toward housing and not gas stations. He was encouraged by Wyatt to develop a plan for a house instead. Later that year, Strandlund returned with plans for an all-steel house designed by Illinois architects Roy Blass and Morris Beckman. Not only could the house be constructed from available materials, the manufacture time and price were well within an acceptable

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**Section 8 Page 4

range. It was estimated that one hundred houses could be produced per day within nine months at a retail price of \$7,000. Finally, in late 1946 the Reconstruction Finance Corporation committed a \$12.5 million dollar loan to production. The location for the production of the new Lustron houses was a vacant Curtiss-Wright factory near Columbus, Ohio. Strandlund invested in state-of-the-art equipment and based production on the automobile assembly line. This was supposed to make manufacturing more time and cost efficient.

The major design element of the Lustron house was the all-steel parts, which included studs, trusses, wall frame assemblies, exterior walls, roof shingle panels, rain gutters, window and door frame panels. Wall and ceiling panels were entirely encased in porcelain enamel, as were sliding doors, built-in cabinets, closets and every other surface. The concrete slab floor was covered in resilient asphalt tiles.

The prototype Lustron house designed by Blass and Beckman was known as the "Esquire." This design was never actually used in the construction of the houses. Instead a modified version classified as the Westchester was adopted as the standard. The difference between the two was the removal of a rear jog in the Esquire that allowed the bathroom and rear bedroom to be enlarged.

The Lustron came in three models which were the Westchester (the most popular), the Newport and the Meadowbrook. The approximately ninety percent of the houses built were the two and three-bedroom Westchester and Westchester Deluxe models. The two-bedroom plan measures thirty-one by thirty-five feet on the exterior with a 6' x 12' entrance porch. The three-bedroom model measures thirty-one by thirty-nine feet and does not have a corner cutout porch. Instead the house is entered directly from the gable end under an attached canopy. This plan with built-in amenities, was later designated the Westchester Deluxe. Smaller, less expensive two and three bedroom Newport and Meadowbrook models were later offered. However, very few were produced. One-and-a-half and two-and-a-half car garages with connection breezeways were made available in 1949-1950, but only a minimal number were produced.

The Lustron Corporation operated from 1946 to 1950 before its government loans were recalled and the business came to a halt. Unfortunately many outside factors affected the success of Strandlund's project. Pressure from lumber and concrete companies fearful of losing their business cast a negative light on the future and competition for loans became fierce. After only four years of production and approximately 2500 houses in production and standard design ideas. These included built-in combination dishwasher-clothes washer, built in cabinets, and construction methods that allowed the house to be erected in about one to two weeks. All surfaces in

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**Section 8 Page 5

the house were made of the same enameled steel, which made them durable and gave them a singular look.

There are approximately thirty-eight Lustron houses in South Dakota including two and three bedroom Westchester models and one Newport model. Not all of the Lustrons in the state are eligible for listing due to distracting alterations and additions; however, this house is a good example, retains a high degree of historic integrity and represents a typical two bedroom Westchester model. Architecturally the house is illustrative of the technological advancements in housing construction and the use of new building materials.

The Opitz House is located in Redfield, South Dakota. Redfield is the county seat for Spink County, located in the northeast region of the state. The Opitz House is located in a quiet residential neighborhood with houses of similar age. The Opitzs were not the original owners of the home. Vernon and Margaret Moxon bought the house in 1949 at a price of \$10,000. After being transferred to Huron in 1956, the Maxons sold the house to Mrs. Grace Hicks. It is uncertain when the Opitzs bought the house. One interesting note, when the Moxons tried to contract to have the cement poured for the floor no one in town would do it. They had to contract with someone in Miller.

The Lustron was offered as a total package distributed through a dealer with pre-planned site layouts for maximum success of the setting of the house. The builder for this Redfield Lustron was Fred W. Weisenburger. The Weisenburger Construction Company franchise constructed Lustron houses in Huron, Miller, Pierre, and Martin. Unfortunately, information about Mr. Weisenburger's building company and history as a Lustron dealer is unknown. The Weisenburger Construction Co., is no longer in business.

Lustron houses are significant under Criteria "A" because of their association with broad trends in United States architectural development. The origination of the Lustron Corporation and houses were the direct result of the housing shortage after World War II. Although the Lustron Corporation was not as successful as other companies, such as Levitt & Sons, it played a major role in the development in post-war housing.

Lustron houses are also significant under Criteria "C." The Lustron home was an innovation in housing design born from necessity. It was developed to meet specific needs; low cost, quick production, and the employment of available post-war materials. The use of built-in cabinets, recessed drawer handles, and sliding pocket doors made more space available. This allowed a smaller, less expensive house to be built that retained a feeling of spaciousness. Contributing to this feeling was the architects' use of an open floor plan and large picture windows. Also important was the use of the assembly line to manufacture and package the total house for quick

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**Section 8,9 Page 6

assemblage on site. Most important was the application of porcelain enameled steel to the construction of housing.

Although Lustron houses have not yet met the fifty year criteria, its exceptional importance as contributing component in United States post-war history should make it eligible under Criteria Consideration "G."

**Bibliography:**

Keister, Kim. "Showing Its Metal." *Historic Preservation*. The Magazine for the National Trust of Historic Preservation. January-February, 1995.

The Lustron Home Informational Brochure.

Mitchell, Robert A. "What Ever Happened to Lustron Homes?" *APT Bulletin* vol. XXIII, Number 2, 1991.

Multiple Property Nomination. Lustron Houses in Georgia. Georgia State Historical Preservation Office. Atlanta, Georgia.

Multiple Property Nomination. Lustron Houses in South Dakota. South Dakota State Historical Society. Pierre, South Dakota.

Ohio Historical Society survey information regarding guidance for Lustron database.

Oral interview with Mrs. Margaret Maxon, August 11, 1998.

Redfield Phone Directories, 1949-1957.

Scupholm, Carrie. Sioux Falls Historic Survey, Summer, 1992. Prepared for the Sioux Falls Board of Preservation, Sioux Falls, South Dakota and South Dakota State Historical Society Preservation Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 Page 7

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The Opitz House resides on lot 8 of block in Myers First addition to the city of Redfield.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundaries include the original site, the same as that historically associated with the property.