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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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 "N/A" 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. Use letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only 25% or greater cotton content bond paper.

1. Name of Property

historic name WINDWAY

other names/site number Kohler, Walter J. Jr., House

2. Location

street & number CTH "Y" north of CTH "O" N/A not for publication

city, town Town of Sheboygan N/A vicinity

state Wisconsin code WI county Sheboygan code 117 zip code 53044

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

No. 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 X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

x *[Signature]*
Signature of certifying official

May 17, 1988
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

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

[Signature] Entered in the National Register 7/28/88

 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

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

OTHER/conference center

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movements: Wrightian
International Style

foundation Concrete
walls Concrete
Brick
roof Asphalt
other Wood
Copper

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Windway is located on the east side of CTH "Y" about one half mile north of CTH "O" and the village of Kohler. Situated on nearly fifty-four acres among farms and rolling countryside, Windway abuts a low rise of land overlooking a broad expanse of lawn and the wooded Pigeon River. Constructed in 1937, the masonry building is a sprawling, two-story Wrightian house with International Style influences.

The complex plan configuration is a two-story L-shape with three one-story pavilions projecting north, south, and east from the eastern terminous. The roof form is flat. The foundations are gravel aggregate concrete, the walls are pink brick with a six-course common bond, and the roofing materials are asphalt and copper. The principal windows are single-paned wood casements, augmented by numerous porthole lights and a large, stepped staircase window of glass blocks, all with concrete sills and lintels. The main mass of the house and the northern one-story pavilion form a courtyard accessed on the west by a porte-cochere, which separates a three-car integral garage in the northern terminous from the main living quarters. The principal entrance is located in an unobtrusive alcove off the porte-cochere. The other functional entrances are equally discrete and cluster around the intersection of the pavilions and the main mass. Integral screened porches and lily ponds are located at the ends of the eastern and southern one-story pavilions, and at the vertex of the main mass. A low brick chimney disguised as a parapet wall is located at the juncture of the southern pavilion and the main mass.

The massing and materials of Windway emphasize its horizontal planes. The roof is accentuated by cantilevered eaves, horizontally sheathed and enriched by corner blocks. In the main mass the horizontal lines are emphasized by ribbon windows, brick belt courses, the unobtrusive chimney, and the strong single line of a gravel aggregate concrete pier and parapet wall commencing at the main mass vertex and continuing along the southern wall. The southern pavilion, the largest of the three, repeats these same features with twin piers and parapets, wrap around windows, and an integral porch and lily pond, creating a prominent visual counterpoint to the main mass. The eastern pavilion is a more modest twin of the southern pavilion.

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The interior follows an asymmetric functional plan. On the first floor, the hall and main staircase run east and west along the north wall of the main mass, with the guest suite, study, and play room to the south. At the eastern end of the hall, forming a right angle, is the gallery. The dining room and playroom flank the gallery and connect by full-wall doorways with accordian doors. To the north of the gallery is pantry, kitchen, and laundry room. To the south is the living room. On the second floor the hall runs east and west, with the nursery, son's room, and master suite to the south. The daughter's room and three servants' rooms are located over the porte-cochere and garage.

The fenestration visually connects the interior with the exterior environment. The ribbon and wrap around windows in the guest room, playroom, dining room, living room, nursery, son's room, and master suite are flush with the high ceilings and eave planes. Many of these rooms are connected to one another by full wall doorways and ceiling height accordian doors, creating large interior spaces extended by the numerous integral porches and lily ponds, and by the sleeping porches and sun deck off the master suite and nursery. The built-in furniture and planned arrangements also make use of the views and natural light. Built-in desks in the guest room, study, playroom, nursery, son's room, master suite, and daughter's room are all located at a window. The mirrored vanity in the master suite is also flanked by windows for natural light. In the living room, the sill height southern banquette forms a right angle below a wrap around window, creating a sunny conversational corner. Similarly, one of two sill height dining room tables is situated in a window corner.

The relation to the exterior is further enhanced by the interior finishing. The walls in the hall and gallery are belt coursed brick. In all the rooms the horizontal line of the plaster ceiling planes are unbroken by hanging light fixtures. The birch trim and furnishings repeated the exterior trim and eave sheathing which was originally varnished. Even the original green linoleum in the hall, gallery, playroom, and dining room appear as visual extensions of the surrounding lawn planes.

The interior also contains numerous original furnishings and interior design features which were the work of the architect and his wife. The furnishings designed by William Deknatel are mostly of birch and cherry: the dressing room vanity, the gallery bench, the play room game table, the living room coffee and end tables, the nursery adjustable desk, and the dining room tables, chairs, and buffet are among the more notable examples. All are reflective of the Art Deco style and the Modernism of designers such as Paul Frankl (1) and Walter Teague (2). The nursery desk lamp is also of note as the work of Art Deco designer Kurt Versen (3).

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The interior design places these furnishings and other upholstered pieces in beige rooms with strong accents of green, gold red, and black. The hall, gallery, dining room, and playroom have been recently carpeted duplicating the original linoleum palette of these same accent colors. The planned furniture arrangements are also clearly in evidence. In the living room the southern banquette is complimented by another at a right angle to the fireplace and flanked by floor to ceiling bookcases. The dining room is also noteworthy for having one table at the window and another near the gallery.

Windway was landscaped by C. B. Andrews in 1941 (4). The design begins with a circular drive and courtyard, the drive crossing a modest expanse of lawn and then dropping down over a small hill covered with white pines. Originally hedged by lilacs, the lower drive passes through the porte-cochere to the courtyard and then returns up the hill and back to the road. The house and circular drive occupy approximately ten acres. South of the drive and residence are about twelve acres of lawn broken only by a distant cluster of flowering trees and a few stone steps to a court for lawn tennis. To the extreme south and east is the Pigeon River over which the living room and dining room originally looked. Much of the estimated thirty-two acres flanking the river has been overgrown by secondary brush and trees. A cedar-edged drying yard, as well as cutting and vegetable gardens are located just off the courtyard near the kitchen. These two kitchen gardens have been converted to a small English garden. Maintaining its historic acreage without subdivision, the grounds retain their major features, now grown to full height.

- (1) Frankl, Paul. New Dimensions.
- (2) Greif, Martin. Depression Modern. p.p. 120-121.
- (3) Duncan, Alastair. American Art Deco. p.p. 69-71.
- (4) Original landscape plans at Windway.

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria A B X C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1937-1938 (1)

Significant Dates
1937-1938 (1)

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Architect: Deknatel, William (2)
Interior Design: Deknatel, Geraldine (3)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Windway is nominated to the National Register for its state significance under criterion C. The collaborative work of architect William Deknatel and interior designer Geraldine Eager Deknatel, Windway embodies the distinctive characteristics of the International Style with Wrightian influences. The low chimney, the brick belt courses, the general two-story plan with one-story wings, and the contrasting organic materials suggest Wright's influence. The blank walls, the obscured entries, the stepped massing, the absence of decorative detail, and the cantilevered eaves represent the more stark influence of the International Style. The home of former Governor Walter J. Kohler Jr., Windway is further distinguished by original furnishings and interior design features which were the work of the architect and his wife.

Historical Background

Walter J. Kohler Jr. (1904-1976) was a prominent industrialist and a leader in state politics. In 1936 Kohler was elected to the board of directors of Kohler Company, one of the nation's largest manufacturers of plumbing fixtures. After a tour of duty during World War II, Kohler became president of the Vollrath Company which manufactured stainless steel products. In 1950 Kohler ran for and won the first of three consecutive elections as governor, the second of which polled the first million votes for any gubernatorial candidate in state history. Failing to win the 1957 Senate election, Kohler returned to the Vollrath Company where he became chairman of the board. In 1932 Kohler married Celeste McVoy. The daughter of Chicago industrialist Eugene J. McVoy, Mrs. Kohler directed the construction of Windway which began in 1937 (4). The Kohlers divorced in 1945, and in 1948 Mr. Kohler married Charlotte McAleer of Philadelphia. In 1979 Windway was sold to the Vollrath Company to serve as a conference center.

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Architecture

A native of Chicago, William Deknatel (1907-1973) was born at Hull House, one of the nation's first settlement projects. He was educated at Princeton and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Geraldine Eager was educated at the New York School of Interior Design, worked for the Manhattan firm of Jones & Erwin, and later attended the Ecole du Louvre in Paris. The Deknatels married in Paris in 1930. Returning to this country, William Deknatel worked as a draftsman for Frank Lloyd Wright and the Chicago firm of Pond & Pond, which designed many of the buildings for the Hull House complex (5). Back in Europe he studied under International Style proponent Andre Lurcat, a left-wing ideologue involved in low-income housing design. Ultimately based in Chicago, the Deknatels' designed homes throughout suburban Chicago and Illinois: Glenview, Quincy, Evanston, Highland Park, Glencoe, and Barrington (6).

These early collaborative residences were typically the commissions of a wealthy, suburban intelligentsia. The 1941 Lambert Ennis House in Evanston, for example, was built for a Northwestern University professor and is in many ways a smaller version of Windway: the unobtrusive chimney, cantilevered eaves, wrap-around ribbon windows, and brick belt courses emphasize the horizontal planes of the design (7). Many of these same features are found in the design of the 1946 Emery Lancaster House in Quincy and the 1956 Maurice Rosenfield House in Glencoe. The Deknatels' collaboration in residential design continued for more than 20 years, but in his later life William Deknatel became individually more noted as Chicago city planner focusing on urban renewal. Chairman and director of the Near West Side Planning Board in Chicago, Deknatel played a key role in developing the plans for locating the University of Illinois on Halstead Street near Hull House (8).

When they returned to this country in 1936, the Deknatels' first commission was to design and decorate a "farm house" for their friend, Celeste McVoy Kohler. Completed in 1938, Windway was one of seventeen houses featured in Architectural Forum that were cited as the vanguard of future residential design (9). Characterized by their craftsmanship and integration of the avant-garde concepts into the mainstream of American residential design, the featured designs included the work of George Fredrick Keck, Walter Gropius, and George Nelson. Windway was also featured in Tomorrow's House by George Nelson and Henry Wright. In that volume the authors used Windway's planned furniture arrangement and window effects to illustrate important contributions to modern architecture (10). In a Chicago Art Institute exhibit on avant-garde design in Chicago's suburbs, William Deknatel was one of two featured architects. His 111 original drawings for Windway were featured prominently and have remained in the permanent collected works of contemporary Chicago architects in the Ryerson-Burnham Library. The designs include furniture, hardware, lamps, floor tiles, and carpets.

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The design of Windway incorporates both International Style and Wrightian elements. The low chimney, the brick belt courses, the general two-story plan with one-story wings, and the contrasting organic materials suggest Wright's influence. Of particular note are the copper cornices and downspouts above the lily ponds that create a waterfall effect in a heavy rain. The blank walls, the obscured entries, the stepped massing, the absence of decorative detail, and the cantilevered eaves represent the more stark influence of the International Style.

The furnishings and interior decoration reflect an Art Moderne influence. The architect-designed pieces have geometric lines, and use light colored woods with natural finishes, typical of the style. The glass block stairwell light, indirect soffit lighting, and strong geometric pattern in the floor coverings, as well as the prominent use of red, black, and green, are further evidence of the Art Moderne influence in Geraldine Deknatel's design. The living room fireplace, where brick, plaster, and black marble juxtapose contrasting colors and textures is further evidence of the Art Moderne influence.

The dichotomy of the architectural design can also be found in C. B. Andrew's landscape design. The grove of white pines on the north provides the kind of natural setting favored by Wright. The featureless lawn planes to the south, on the otherhand, seem better suited to the International Style. Purchased as a private country estate, the grounds interrelated with the building design. The setting and views were an important element of the building plan, and the design of windows, porches, and building projections were chosen to create a powerful relationship between interior and exterior spaces.

While the architectural study unit of the Cultural Resource Management Plan does not discuss Wrightian design independantly of Prairie School, it does identify key characteristics of International Style design which clearly apply to Windway: the flat roof, smooth wall surface, and windows with minimal exterior reveals arranged in horizontal and wrap-around ribbons. An architectural context for this rare type of design has not been fully developed, but several notable examples can be identified, many of which are in the Madison area. These include the 1938 Hibbard House (1505 Wood Lane) and the 1940 Cooper House (1512 Sumac Drive) in Shorewood, and the 1958 Walter Renk House (Renk Road) in Sun Prairie, all designed by W. V. Kaeser. These smaller homes have flat roofs, cantilevered eaves, ribbon wrap around windows, and strong horizontal orientation. Elsewhere in the state are isolated examples of George Fredrick Keck's work, like the 1940 William Kellett House in Menasha. The closest example is perhaps Wright's Wingspread in Racine County. Situated on estate grounds, horizontally oriented, and built of organic materials, Wingspread is richly embellished by Wright's artistic touches but lacks Windway's distinctive modernism.

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Windway is the Deknatels' only known residential design in Wisconsin and is considered one of their finest works. Very few changes have been made to the building, furnishings, or interior design, and some pieces still retain the original fabric. The Vollrath Company has undertaken to preserve Windway's integrity and restore those features which have changed. Their efforts are being guided by restoration designer Rosemary Z. Miley, whose credentials include a personal friendship with Celeste Kohler and Geraldine Deknatel.

- (1) Period of Significance is the construction period of the house.
- (2) Architectural Forum; July 1939, Page 1.
- (3) Interview with Geraldine Eager Deknatel, October 1987.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Chicago Daily News; 9/7/1956, found in Scrapbook on Architecture, Ryerson-Burnham Library, Chicago.
- (6) Blum, The Avant-Garde in Chicago's Suburbs. Page 3.
- (7) Ibid. Page 4.
- (8) Chicago Tribune; 12/29/1961; 10/5.
- (9) Architectural Forum; July 1939. Page 1.
- (10) Nelson and Wright, Tomorrow's House. Pages 36 and 59.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Blum, Betty. The Avant-Garde in Chicago's Suburbs. Art Institute of Chicago, 1984. Chicago, Illinois.
Nelson, George and Wright, Henry. Tomorrow's House. Simon and Schuster, 1945. New York, New York.
Architectural Forum. July 1939. Pages 50-53
Sheboygan County Landmarks, LTD historic sites files.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): _____ See continuation sheet
____ 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
Specify repository:
Sheboygan County Landmarks, LTD

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 53.9 Acres

UTM References

A	<u>1/6</u>	<u>4/3/7/6/6/0</u>	<u>4/8/4/6/4/8/0</u>	B	<u>1/6</u>	<u>4/3/7/6/6/0</u>	<u>4/8/4/5/9/8/0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>1/6</u>	<u>4/3/7/3/0/0</u>	<u>4/8/4/5/9/8/0</u>	D	<u>1/6</u>	<u>4/3/7/3/0/0</u>	<u>4/8/4/6/5/0/0</u>

____ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

X See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

X See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Peter J. Adams</u>	date	<u>February 14, 1988</u>
organization	<u>Peter J. Adams & Associates</u>	telephone	<u>414/722-8936</u>
street & number	<u>537 East Wisconsin Avenue</u>	state	<u>Wisconsin</u>
city or town	<u>Neenah</u>	zip code	<u>54956</u>

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Verbal Boundaries

Beginning at a point on the eastern line of CTH Y and the southwest corner of the northwest quarter of Section 17, Town 15 North, Range 23 East: north 902.9 feet, then easterly 591 feet, then south 164.1 feet, then east 745.6 feet, then south 1,674.9 feet, then west 1,336.6 feet, then north 972.9 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The property includes all the land acquired by the Kohlers in 1936 as the site of their estate. The boundaries include approximately the ten acres occupied by the landscaped circular drive and house, twelve acres of landscaped grounds south of the house, and nearly thirty-two acres of land along the Pigeon River which the living room and dining room were designed to overlook. Windway's 53.9 total acres represent the full extent of the original ownership; the property was purchased by the Kohlers in 1936 for the sole purpose of establishing a private country estate. The architectural significance of Windway is strongly tied to the complex interrelationship between the building and its landscape. The setting of Windway was an important element of the overall plan; views were essential design elements, and the design of and placement of windows, porches, and building projections were carefully chosen to create a powerful relationship between interior and exterior spaces. Because the landscape contributes to the overall significance of the property the entire 53.9 acres are included in the nomination.

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The Vollrath Company
ATT: Mary Kohler
1236 North 18th Street
P. O. Box 611
Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53082

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Photographic Materials - Identification

Windway
Kohler, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin
Exterior Photos by Peter Adams: August 1987
Interior and Aerial Photos by Mary Schuller: January 1988
Negatives at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin

- Photo #1 of 33: Aerial view.
- Photo #2 of 33: View from the southwest, west facade.
- Photo #3 of 33: View from the southwest, south facade.
- Photo #4 of 33: View from the southwest, living room pavilion.
- Photo #5 of 33: View from south, south facade.
- Photo #6 of 33: View from southeast, east facade.
- Photo #7 of 33: View from west, kitchen pavilion.
- Photo #8 of 33: View from the northwest, courtyard.
- Photo #9 of 33: View from the northeast, courtyard.
- Photo #10 of 33: View from the north, north facade.
- Photo #11 of 33: View from the west, porte cochere.
- Photo #12 of 33: Interior, view from the east, guest dressing room.
- Photo #13 of 33: Interior, view from west, guest room.
- Photo #14 of 33: Interior, view from east, guest room.
- Photo #15 of 33: Interior, guest room desk detail.
- Photo #16 of 33: Interior, view from east, hall.

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- Photo #17 of 33: Interior, view from east, hall staircase.
- Photo #18 of 33: Interior, view from north, gallery.
- Photo #19 of 33: Interior, gallery bench detail.
- Photo #20 of 33: Interior, view from northwest, dining room.
- Photo #21 of 33: Interior, view from southwest, dining room.
- Photo #22 of 33: Interior, dining room buffet detail.
- Photo #23 of 33: Interior, view from northeast, gallery and play room.
- Photo #24 of 33: Interior, play room game table detail.
- Photo #25 of 33: Interior, view from northwest, living room.
- Photo #26 of 33: Interior, view from southwest, living room.
- Photo #27 of 33: Interior, living room side table detail.
- Photo #28 of 33: Interior, view from southwest, upstairs hall.
- Photo #29 of 33: Interior, view from the southeast, upstairs hall.
- Photo #30 of 33: Interior, living room coffee table detail.
- Photo #31 of 33: Interior, view from the southeast, master bedroom dressing room.
- Photo #32 of 33: Interior, master bedroom closet detail.
- Photo #33 of 33: Interior, nursery desk lamp detail.