

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

HEURTLEY, ARTHUR, HOUSE

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: HEURTLEY, ARTHUR, HOUSE

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 318 North Forest Avenue

Not for publication: __

City/Town: Oak Park

Vicinity: __

State: IL

County: Cook

Code: 031

Zip Code: 60302

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: __

Public-State: __

Public-Federal: __

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: __

Site: __

Structure: __

Object: __

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

__

__

__

1

Noncontributing

1 buildings

__ sites

__ structures

__ objects

1 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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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.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

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
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: DOMESTIC

Sub: Single Dwelling

Current: DOMESTIC

Sub: Single Dwelling

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Early Modern

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Cement

Walls: Brick, stucco

Roof: Wood: Cedar

Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Heurtley House is a two-story building situated on Forest Avenue in a quiet residential neighborhood in Oak Park, Illinois. The lot measures 132 feet by 270 feet. The footprint of the building is approximately 49 feet by 67 feet. The remainder of the lot is divided into a service drive (12 feet by 30 feet) leading to a new Prairie style garage (noncontributing) to the north of the house and a large backyard to the east.

The house, which lies in parallel orientation to Forest Avenue, is set on the property 71 feet back from the street (to the main wall of the front promontory) and up against the north property line. This was not an uncommon arrangement for architect Frank Lloyd Wright houses. Similar site plans can be found at the William Martin House (1903), the Beachy House (1906), the Fricke House (1901-1902) and even the Nathan Moore House (1895), which is located directly across the street on Forest Avenue. All of these homes have major facades with a porch or veranda facing south, a very Victorian concept, devised to make use of the restorative qualities of the summer sun.

The Heurtley House is a simple, massive, earth-pressing rectangle, sheltered beneath a low-hipped cedar roof with broad overhangs. A solid monolithic appearance is created by the continuity of finish, the suppression of vertical lines and the exterior walls which slope in by 8 degrees at either side.

The principal elevation of the house facing west on Forest Avenue is asymmetrical, divided vertically into three unequal bays and punctuated by a wide central chimney. The compositional emphasis is overwhelmingly horizontal, principally formed by two colors of slender Roman brick, which are laid in alternating, projecting bands. The lighter color is the projecting course; the darker is the recessed course. To achieve a seamless effect, the color of the vertical mortar joints closely matches the color of the brick. A prolonged band of art glass casement windows on the upper level stretches across the length of the façade. Only the Romanesque arch of the front entry interrupts this all-pervading horizontality. This arch is echoed on the central fireplace within. At the ground level, a loggia, reached from the inside by a series of four art glass doors, sits in the recessed bay of the central section. To the extreme right and extending across the southern façade are a generous elevated open-air porch and a sweeping ground floor terrace.

A prow-shaped bay, which extends from the dining area on the upper floor down to the ground, adds interest to the north façade. A similar bay can be found on the back of the house. This prow shape is repeated in several areas in the house including the promontory of the front porch, a glazed cabinet in the living room and the southern terrace. A breakfast room addition, enclosed on three sides with casement windows and elevated on brick piers, also projects from the north side of the house.

Like so many of Frank Lloyd Wright's houses, the pathway that leads to the front door of the Heurtley House is long and circuitous. One moves toward the rear lot, turning sharply right, ascending to the porch with its planted urns. Turning left one must pass through the cave-like mouth of the arched entryway. The Darwin D. Martin House in Buffalo, New York (1903)

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(designated an NHL in 1986) has a similar approach, which combines driveway, walk and garden path.

Interior

In the Heurtley House, the major, private living spaces are elevated to an upper level. The ground floor is given over to a reception hall, a large reception room/playroom, guestrooms and a servant's hall.

Ground Floor

The leaded art glass front door leads into the large ground floor reception hall. This hall is paved in brick. The pattern of three brick pavers placed in four sets around a small white square tile resembles that of a pinwheel. A birch storage seat is built into the north wall. A large opening to the east, curtained in velvet, leads into the servant's hall.

In the reception hall, and indeed throughout the house, there is an abundance of carefully detailed woodwork. All of the wall molding, floors and cabinetry are made of lightly stained, highly varnished birch, which stands out against the matte roughcast plaster walls. The use of birch was unusual for Wright, who usually favored a more rustic oak. A band of trim runs along most of the walls approximately two feet below the ceiling. It mimics picture molding, but its function is purely decorative, visually lowering the level of the ceiling to a more human scale.

One progresses from the reception hall, through either of two glazed doors, into a spacious playroom. This room once served as the home's main reception room and music room. The focus of the room is a low, uncentered fireplace on the east wall toward the center of the home. Its surround is constructed of two colors of Roman brick. The same pinwheel pattern of brick, seen in the reception hall, paves the hearth. Seating and cabinetwork flank the fireplace. A built in storage seat completes the arrangement of the east wall. To the west, four leaded art glass doors lead to the protected outdoor loggia. On the south wall, a length of art glass casement windows and a door lead to the ground floor prow-shaped terrace.

A hallway runs on a north-south axis behind the playroom and across the length of the ground floor. Off this hall are a wood storage room, two guest bedrooms, a full bath and a servant's room. The wood storage room, which now serves as a small second kitchen, is fitted with birch cabinetry, a sink, a 1920s era stove and soapstone counters. The most significant feature of the bedrooms is the bands of casement windows, which run along the east wall of either room. Most of these windows have the same geometric patterned, leaded art glass panes, accented in pale green and gold, throughout the house. Unfortunately, a few of these windows have been lost, replaced with plain glass. The current owners are in the process of restoring all of the windows to their original appearance.

Modernized in the 1950s, the ground floor bathroom and an identical bath on the main floor have been restored to their 1902 appearance. The original claw foot tubs and birch medicine cabinets have been replaced. White hexagonal ceramic tiles cover the floors. As no historic photographs

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of the bathrooms exist, reproduction marble sinks and chrome and glass accoutrements have been added to echo the original style of the period.

Four steps, located across from the servant's room, lead down to a small lower level or sub basement, containing a storeroom, laundry room, boiler room and crawl space access. There is a crawl space under 80% of the home. The walls of the lower level are made of the same smooth textured plaster, which we see in all of the service areas of the home. The floors are concrete. A small trunk room on the same level is accessible from the landing on the main stairwell.

Main Floor

From the ground floor reception hall, one may progress up the stairwell to the private living spaces above. The twisting stairwell is enclosed by wooden screens with alternating spindles rotated at 45 degrees, echoing the pinwheel effect of the floor below. This architectural screening device is repeated in several areas on the main floor and in screening on the north side of the home's exterior. Inside, the screens allow the spaces to flow, opening up vistas to other rooms, which might normally be closed off by solid walls.

The main floor is surprisingly different from the low, almost cave-like spaces on the ground floor. Once released from the dizzying effects of the stairwell, the upstairs area is composed of airy, open and contiguous light-filled spaces. Color adds greatly to the lighter feeling of the main floor rooms. On the ground floor, the palette is deeper: dark browns, tans and ochre. Ascending the stairwell, the colors become considerably more animated and light: pale greens, golds, and pink tones. The living room is painted in a light green with a pale blue wash, echoing the sky effect of the open ceiling. These pastel colors were unusual for Wright but are highly appropriate for this house. They give the impression of being in a tree house. The natural, darker colors we see on the ground floor represent the lower areas of a tree trunk. The pastels of the upper floor represent a tree in bloom.

Clearly the most magnificent room in the house, the living room features a central arched fireplace on the east wall, flanked by a half-ingenook terminating in a tall prow-shaped glazed cabinet. The fireplace is composed of a two-colored brick surround. The familiar pinwheel configuration of bricks, from the hall, pave the hearth. A broad horizontal grouping of casement windows forms a band across the west wall. The ceiling opens up into the volume of the roof forming a tent-like effect. The roof planes are emphasized with heavy wooden trim. A false skylight, leaded in colorful geometric shapes, decorates the apex of the ceiling. The generous open air elevated porch can be reached through French doors which flank the room.

At some time prior to 1920, windows were added to enclose the porch. During the 1940s a master bath was installed at the west end of the veranda. The current owners have restored this porch to its original condition. The original painted canvas coating, rewoven in several places, still covers the floor. Large planters on the east and west corners have their own built in watering systems.

From the living room, the dining room on the northwest end of the main floor can be viewed through a glazed and colonnaded wall. The same linear molding below the ceilings in other

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rooms reduces the scale of the dining room to more human proportions. A light cove features hidden light fixtures and an early dimming system in the form of lamps, which are alternately switched to provide two levels of light. As in the living room, the ceiling opens up into the volume of the roof. A breakfront has been restored along the east wall near the butler's pantry.

As in the bedrooms on the ground level, the bands of leaded art glass casements, which line the east walls, are the focus of the main sleeping quarters. In the master bedroom to the south, a pair of leaded French doors lead out to the elevated porch. The smallest central bedroom has been turned into a master bath and dressing room, reflecting the décor of the early 1900s, including marble and chrome sinks, white hexagonal floor tiles and birch cabinetry.

Three major changes occurred while the Heurtleys lived in the house. First was the addition of screens or windows to the elevated open-air porch. Second was the addition of the breakfast room on the main floor, which is to the south of the kitchen. This room does not appear in the illustrations of Frank Lloyd Wright's work in the "Ausgeführte Bauten" of 1911. It does appear in a Heurtley family photograph a few years later.

The third change was the transformation of what was referred to in the original drawings as the "wood room" into a small food preparation area and pantry. Conveniently located near the playroom, this area would have eliminated the necessity of running up and down from the main kitchen during parties. The work on the breakfast addition and the conversion of the ground floor wood storage room to a second kitchen are thought to have gone through Wright's offices, although the dates cannot be confirmed.

In 1920, Frank Lloyd Wright's sister Jane Porter and her husband, Andrew, purchased the house for \$50,000. They lived there for the next 26 years. During the 1930s, the Porters turned the home into a duplex, with each floor transformed into its own separate apartment. The addition of a sink in the ground level pantry/prep area was necessary to turn this room into a usable kitchen.

Two subsequent owners modernized the kitchens and bathrooms, enclosed the front loggia and added a black iron gate to the home's arched entrance. A master bath was constructed in the last fifteen feet of the main floor veranda. The living room inglenook and the dining room breakfront were removed. A second chimney and furnace were added.

Soon after the purchase of the house in June of 1997, Ed and Diana Baehrend undertook a detailed restoration of the house directed by Oak Park architect John Thorpe. Mr. Thorpe has worked on several Wright restorations, including Wright's Home and Studio down the street, the F. F. Tomek House in Riverside, Illinois (designated a NHL in 1999), and currently the Frederick C. Robie House in Chicago, Illinois (designated a NHL in 1963). The interior has been returned to its original condition. All of the wood trim was restored and refinished. Historic paint color analysis was performed and all the original finishes were restored. In the living room, the half-inglenook and the art glass ceiling panels were recreated. New wiring, air-conditioning and humidification systems were redone.

The current owners have cleverly renovated the kitchen area to hide all the modern appliances behind birch cabinetry. The cabinets were designed to mimic those found in the existing butler's

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pantry, which is adjacent to the kitchen. A pristine Magic Chef commercial range, circa 1928, with a new matching custom-made hood is the focus of the room.

On the exterior, the elevated open-air porch and front loggia were opened up after being enclosed with windows for many years. All of the art glass windows were restored, cleaned or reproduced. New copper gutters to match the originals were replaced. A new cedar shingled roof was installed.

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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 C X D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):

A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria:

4

NHL Theme(s):

III. Expressing Cultural Values
5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design

Areas of Significance:

Architecture

Period(s) of Significance:

1902

Significant Dates:

1902

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Wright, Frank Lloyd

Historic Contexts:

XVI. Architecture
P. Prairie

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Heurtley House has been widely recognized as a critical work in the history of modern architecture both nationally and internationally. It is understood to be the first fully mature Prairie style house. It is comprised of all the fundamental characteristics we have come to associate with the style. Therefore, the house achieves a standard by which other Prairie houses can be measured and understood. Additionally, the Heurtley House marks a pivotal point in the early development in the career of the noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Of all the houses Wright designed for his wealthy suburban clients during this period, the Heurtley house may be considered to be the one which most clearly expresses the principles that would make Wright's work the most revolutionary form of avant-garde modernism in the history of modern Western architecture.

The Heurtley House is significant in the history of American and European architecture as a critical work in the development from traditional domestic architectural precedents to a new and powerful form of progressive expressionism. The house establishes patterns, which would be seen in various transformations in all the great Prairie houses such as Taliesin in Spring Green, Wisconsin (designated a NHL in 1976) and the Robie House. Major spaces are raised well above the terrain they overlook. Fireplaces are withdrawn into the center of the house and emphasized by low ceiling edges, built-in seating and cabinetry. Ceilings sweep up to echo roof forms. Architectural screening devices enhance views to contiguous interior spaces. Glass and glazed doors are located on walls distant from the fireplace. Exteriors consist of deep overhanging eaves, massive central chimneys, broad horizontal groupings of windows, and obvious balconies and terraces. The paths from exterior to interior are long and complex.

Perhaps the most notable and influential feature of the Heurtley House is its reorganization of the traditional multi-story concept. For the first time, Wright reversed the spaces that one would typically expect to find on the ground floor with those of the upper floor. The ground floor is given over, not to the main living spaces, but to bedrooms and a large playroom/reception room. The major spaces, including the living and dining rooms, are located on the topmost floor, directly under the roof. These rooms, reached by a twisting staircase, are raised well above the surrounding terrain. The Heurtley House introduced this new kind of multi-story house, and it would become the prevailing arrangement for Wright over the next few decades.

Locating the living and dining rooms directly under the roof allowed Wright to model these major living spaces in an important way. They open up into the roof's volume and borrow their configuration from it. This design achieved a spectacular contrast between the low ceiling edges and high center of the room not achieved in his earlier works. In the Ward Willits house designed just a few months before the Heurtley House, the living room ceiling, which lies under a floor of bedrooms, is flat and relatively low in comparison with Wright's later houses. In the Heurtley House, Wright goes so far as to emphasize this first application by picking out the geometry of the roof planes with heavy wood trim and a false skylight. Of course, Wright could have achieved the same effect by simply raising the height of the ground floor, but this larger vertical dimension would have compromised the overall horizontal emphasis of the structure.

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The impression of openness, achieved by uncovering the roof forms of the major living spaces, is further enhanced by an open floor plan, which allows uninterrupted views from the living room to adjacent spaces, in this case the dining room and the entry hall. Wright originated this open-plan arrangement.¹ Instead of the solid walls one would find in a more traditional building found in the United States, Wright used a number of architectural tricks to divide up spaces. Wooden screening devices enhance the view from living to dining room and from the stairwell to the ground and main floor hallways. A colonnaded wall in the living room offers a continuous vista through to the dining area. These attenuated elements and the views that they frame remind one of looking through trees to an open glade.

This sense of openness is further exemplified by the elevation of the main living areas over the surrounding terrain. From the heightened position of these raised areas, one is offered an increased view of the horizon and the flat midwestern prairie. In fact, the elevated vantagepoint is necessary if one is to have any sort of view over such low lands. Wright understood this, and the Heurtley House stands as the first domestic structure to digress from the usual relationship between the grade level and first floor. Wright wrote about his ideas in *The Natural House*, "I saw that a little height on the Prairie was enough to look like much more. Notice how every detail as to height becomes intensely significant."² Other elements offering the promise of panoramic views can be found in the prow-like forms found on the front and side porches, the prolonged window bands, the elevated open-air veranda and the long southern view which was achieved by locating the house up against the far northern boundary of the lot.

In the Heurtley House, more than in many other Wright houses, the feeling of openness is deeply contrasted with a feeling of shelter. The house is contained within a very dense rectangular volume and yet the interior spaces are allowed to rotate and interlock in a dynamic manner within the strict confines of the heavy brick walls. The energetic spaces flow around the solid sanctuary of overscaled, dominant central fireplaces, creating a sense of interior refuge. In the living room fireplace zone, the contrast between openness and shelter is particularly evident. The area is held down by low ceiling edges, creating an enveloping enclave. The center of the ceiling space forward of the zone releases high up to the interior of the single sheltering roof for a powerful effect.³

The feeling of shelter is further reinforced by the central placement of the fireplaces, the presence of the inglenook seating area in the living room, the dim light of the cave-like interior spaces found on the ground level, and the protective masonry porches and balconies. Additionally, the elaborate path leading up to the deep, low arch of the entry portal is reminiscent of the long and deliberately roundabout paths found leading up to the mouths of hidden prehistoric caves.

Another unusual and significant characteristic of the Heurtley House is its feeling of texture, primarily achieved by the use of alternating and projecting bands of exterior brick. For the first time, Wright used this technique to blend the building with the surrounding landscape by

¹ Hildebrand, Grant. *The Wright Space*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991, p. 36.

² Wright, Frank Lloyd. *The Natural House*. New York: Horizon Press, 1954, p.15.

³ Appleton, Jay. *The Experience of Landscape*. London: John Wiley, 1975, n.p.

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enhancing its overall horizontality. The undulating qualities of the projecting and recessed bands eliminate the hard edges seen in the Willits House, constructed just a few months before. The precision masonry and knife-like sharpness of the Willits House create the sense of a mass lying upon the earth, while the Heurtley House seems to rise up out of it.

The Heurtley House is located in Oak Park, Illinois, a community which lies less than eight miles west of the Loop, Chicago's business district. This neighborhood is part of a National Register district for Frank Lloyd Wright, which has become a focal point of Wright's early work. Four Wright houses are gathered within sight of each other and two more, including Wright's own home and studio (designated a NHL in 1976), are within a short walk. These houses show the development of the young architect and his creation of a unique style representative of the Prairie and American life.

Arthur Heurtley was born on December 26, 1860, the only son of Dr. Richard Walter Heurtley and Dr. Cornelia Brown Sill. He became a successful banker with the Northern Trust Company in Chicago, which he joined upon its organization in 1889. He remained with the bank until his retirement in 1920, ultimately reaching the position of Secretary.

Heurtley lived with his widowed father and stepmother in River Forest, Illinois until his marriage to Grace Crampton of Iowa in 1890. The newlyweds lived in River Forest until 1894, when they moved to Oak Park. They lived in three different residences with their two children Richard and Katherine before moving into their new house, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1902.

Arthur Heurtley probably met Frank Lloyd Wright through social connections. Wright, who was also a resident of Oak Park, was frequently involved in community events. In fact, many of Wright's clients knew each other and were friends or social acquaintances. Arthur Heurtley belonged to the Cliff Dwellers, the Chicago and Union League Clubs, the Chicago Golf Club of Wheaton, and the Oak Park Country Club. Wright also belonged to the Cliff Dwellers and although not a member was well acquainted with many members of the Oak Park Country Club, as many of his clients were affiliated with the organization.

Music was another connection between Wright and Arthur Heurtley and was Heurtley's passion and main recreation. He had attended the New York Conservatory and was known to have had a very fine voice. He served as President of the Apollo Music Club and the Oak Park Chamber Music Association. Wright was also a music lover, an interest inherited from his father. He played the piano and believed that a close relationship existed between music and architecture. In his *An Autobiography* Wright wrote "music and architecture blossom on the same stem: sublimated mathematics. Mathematics as presented by geometry. Instead of the musician's systematic staff and intervals, the architect has a modular system as the framework of design. My father, a preacher and music teacher, taught me to see - to listen - to a symphony as an edifice of sound."⁴

Heurtley was a very cultivated man, naturally drawn to the artistic personalities he met after business hours were over. A friendship nurtured by a love of music would have made Wright the

⁴ Wright, Frank Lloyd. *An Autobiography*. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1943, p. 227.

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logical choice as architect when the Heurtleys decided to build their new home. Likewise, for Wright to design for a man with such an artistic appreciation would have allowed him to create a particularly daring and creative work of art.

On March 21, 1902, Arthur Heurtley purchased the lot on Forest Avenue for \$9,250.00. Building permit No. 33 was issued on June 5, 1902. The contractor's name appears to have been "Pellenger Bros." The cost of the building was projected as \$8,000, a rather low amount for such a structure, even in 1902. The permit also lists the building as being "frame and stucco" instead of brick. Perhaps it would have looked too much like the Frank Thomas house, another Frank Lloyd Wright design, located just a few doors down the street. City directories suggest that the Heurtleys occupied their new home by late 1902.

The Heurtleys lived in the house until 1920, when Arthur Heurtley retired from the Northern Trust Company. The couple moved to Muscatine, Iowa, Grace Heurtley's hometown. Arthur Heurtley died in Muscatine on September 18, 1934.

One of the leading Frank Lloyd Wright scholars, Paul Sprague, has described the Arthur Heurtley house as "the first important existing house to be built on an above grade basement with the living rooms on the second floor. [It is] especially interesting for its brickwork and other details which indicate that Wright was considering highly textured alternatives to the simple massing of the [Ward] Willits house [1901-02, Highland Park, Illinois], even while the latter was under construction."⁵

⁵ Sprague, Paul; Paul Kruty; and Randolph Henning. "Buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright proposed for listing as National Historic Landmarks." Washington, DC: National Historic Landmarks Survey files, 1998.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**Unpublished Materials**

Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, "Arthur Heurtley House," September 1998.

Lesniak, Jack. "Arthur Heurtley House," unpublished training guide, 1998.

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Manuscript Collections

Collections on the Heurtley House located in the Research Center of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio, Oak Park, Illinois; and the Oak Park Public Library.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 Previously Listed in the National Register.
 Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
 Designated a National Historic Landmark.
 Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University
 Other (Specify Repository):

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than 1 acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	16	433620	4638000

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lot 16 of block two of the northwest quarter of the Kettlestrings addition to the Harlem subdivision, except for the east sixty feet of the original acre lot, in Cook County, Illinois.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Heurtley house.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

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Oak Park, Illinois
60302

Telephone: (708) 848-1976

Date: January 10, 1999

Edited by: Carolyn Pitts and Patty Henry
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