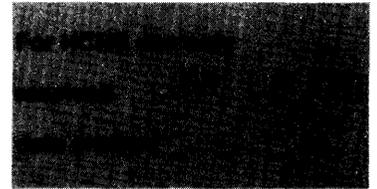


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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



1. Name

historic Lowell E. Walter House

and/or common Cedar Rock

2. Location

street & number NW of Quasqueton off SR W35 _____ not for publication

city, town Quasqueton _____^xvicinity of congressional district 3

state Iowa code 19 county Buchanan code 019

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Iowa Conservation Commission

street & number Wallace State Office Building

city, town Des Moines _____ vicinity of state Iowa 50319

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder's Office

street & number Buchanan County Courthouse

city, town Independence _____ state Iowa

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Lowell Walter House Reconaissance Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records National Park Service

city, town Omaha _____ state Nebraska

7. Description

Condition
 excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one
 unaltered
 altered

Check one
 original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

(The material that follows is taken directly from Wesley Shank's report prepared for the National Park Service.)

Architectural merit and interest

The house is an important example of a midwestern residential type developed by Wright and characterized by its provision for living simply and in harmony with nature.

Condition of fabric

Good

Summary description

The house has one story; and the overall length, measured parallel to the bedroom wing and extending from the far corner of the living-dining room to the outer wall of the maid's room is approximately 150 feet. The plan follows the characteristic tadpole form of Wright's Usonian plan, the bedroom wing of the house constituting the tail of the tadpole and the living-dining room the head.

Description of the exterior

Foundations

Foundation walls, where visible, are of brickwork indistinguishable from the walls of the house above.

Wall construction

Exterior walls are of dark-red bricks laid in running bond; that is all bricks are stretchers; and there are no headers. The faces of the bricks measure eight inches by 2½ inches. Vertical mortar joints are finished flush and are colored to match the bricks. Horizontal mortar joints are raked and of uncolored light-gray mortar. Mortar joints are three-eighths of an inch wide. Walls are in good condition except at the brick clearstory at the kitchen where is evidence of repaired mortar joints.

Structural system

Load bearing masonry walls and steel T-columns support a reinforced-concrete roof slab. The detailing of the T-columns partially conceals them within the woodwork of the glass walls. The floor consists of concrete panels laid, apparently, on a bed of gravel. The roof slab appears to be monolithic.

(See Continuation Sheets)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Porches, stoops, terraces

One enters the house by means of a sheltered terrace from the carport and parking area, passing along the east side of the length of the bedroom wing to the front door. The roof of the house is extended to provide shelter. The terrace floor consists of the same type of concrete panels used for the floors in the house. A brick retaining wall encloses the outer side of this terrace, which is about 5 feet above grade level. At the north side of the living-dining portion of the house, in the angle with the bedroom wing, there is an unroofed terrace paved in the same manner.

Chimneys

All chimneys are of the same red brick as the walls. Two of the chimneys are close to one another: the fireplace chimney and that of the heating system. The third is at the master bedroom.

Doorways and doors

The front door is of flush slab design and is of walnut, as is its door frame. The service door nearby and its interior screen door are also of walnut with a walnut doorframe.

Windows

The full height windows in the living-dining room and in the bedrooms are framed in walnut and have no muntins. Some of the windows are fixed; others are outward opening french doors, and these are equipped with inward-opening screen doors of walnut. The glazing is of single thickness. Walnut stops are used instead of putty on the exterior side of the glass. At the base of these windows, on top of their bottom rail, an ingenious trough of copper collects the condensed moisture which collects on the inner side of the glass in cold weather, and weep holes through the windows conduct this moisture to the exterior. Discoloration of the lower rail of several of these windows indicates probable areas of rot in the wood. In the entry hall closet and along the outer wall of the gallery (Hallway) to the bedrooms, a band of small windows is placed at the ceiling line. These consist of panes of glass 11 inches wide and 6 inches high set in concrete frames. All rooms have clearstory windows framed in walnut. Many open. There are a few additional windows of more conventional size and shape, framed in walnut and screened.

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ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE two

Roof

The roof is a reinforced-concrete slab which overhangs the walls about 5 feet at the living-dining room portion of the house, somewhat less at the bedroom windows, and somewhat more at the entrance terrace. The overhang at one corner of the carport is extended more yet and creates a dramatic effect as one approaches the house. Where the overhangs shade some of the glass walls, they are pierced by large square openings. The branches of vines are trained so that their leaves will close these openings in summer and allow sunlight to penetrate the house in winter. A continuous clearstory lights and ventilates the bedroom wing. Other clearstories do the same for the kitchen, entry hall and the living room. The roof of the last clearstory is pierced by nine small, square skylights. The edge of the principal roof curves upward gracefully to a level somewhat higher than that of the upper surface of the roof. The soffit and upturning edges of the overhang are plastered and are painted a brick-red color which, judging from old colored photographs, may have originally been a bit darker than it is now. The clearstory roof has a very narrow overhang with a copper-covered fascia worked in a pattern and curved roughly to the inverted form of the edge of the main roof. Published information about the house states that the whole roof was planned to carry a layer of soil planted with grass, but this is not present.

Description of interior

Floor plan

Living-dining room, entry hall, utility room, and a portion of the kitchen form the main part of the plan. These group in an irregular form, the main element of which is the living-dining room, roughly 32 feet square. Attached to this at an angle of 120°, into which a portion of the kitchen extends, is the bedroom wing. It contains along its western side a powder room, a bathroom, two bedrooms, another bathroom, and the master bedroom. A hallway runs along the eastern side of this wing. The main roof of the house continues beyond the master bedroom to form a carport with two parking places, and further still is a small unit comprising a maid's room and bath and a tool room. This unit provides support for the far side of the carport roof.

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Flooring

This is the same throughout, concrete panels which, in the living-dining room, measured 31 inches by 62 inches and which are laid in pairs, side by side, to form an overall basketweave pattern. Panel surfaces are a dark, glossy brick-red color. Where the edges of the panels were chipped, one may see that their top surface has an integral red color, somewhat lighter. A few cracked panels were noted. At panel joints differences in level of as much as a quarter of an inch were observed in several parts of the house.

Wall and ceiling finish

Living-dining room, entry hall, kitchen-utility room, and tool room walls are brick, both interior and exterior walls. For the other rooms, the exterior walls are brick and the interior partitions are wood framed, about 4 inches thick, and surfaced in horizontal boards of walnut 8 inches wide and a 1 3/8 inch walnut molding at the horizontal joints. This molding projects slightly beyond the face of the boards and is formed in the shape of a projecting dihedral angle. Such a partition also separates the utility space from the kitchen, but is not full height, measuring only 7 1/2 feet high. The walnut is not stained and has a very fine glossy finish. Ceilings are of sand-finished plaster applied directly to the soffit of the concrete roof slab. At the clearstory ceilings, the plaster is painted the same brick-red color as the soffits of the overhangs. The lower ceilings are approximately 7 feet 3 inches high, and the clearstory ceilings are approximately 9 feet high. In several places the ceiling finish shows evidence of moisture damage and subsequent repairs.

Doorways and doors

Closet doors in the entry hall and in the bedrooms are of folding, accordion type and made up of 10 inch wide boards hinged with piano hinges. Other interior doors are of flush slab type. Frames are of a single piece of wood rabbeted to receive the door. All doors and frames are walnut, not stained, and with a clear glossy finish. Doorways are 7 feet 1 inch high and slab doors are 1 3/8 inches thick. Window frame detailing is concealed. Fixed glass is held by sash members matching the sash members of windows that open.

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Interior trim

There is a great deal of cabinetwork in the house, all of walnut with a fine, clear, glossy finish. Cabinet doors are piano hinged. The most prominent feature is the low shelving at the center of the living-dining room, with a planter at its base, that subdivides this room. Here also, near the door to the kitchen, is a built-in buffet and table. Nearby are a built-in counter, bookshelves, and table. There is a similar but smaller counter in the entry hall. Kitchen cabinetwork has flush doors. Bedrooms have built-in closets and tables with mirrors. The bedroom hallway has base cabinets and shelving the entire length of the outer wall. The fireplaces are simply detailed in brick, with black metal mesh hanging curtains serving as fire screens. The hearth of the living room fireplace is sunken down two steps and has a specially designed iron grate. An unusual feature of the house is the presence of the Wright-designed furniture in the living-dining room, matching the built-in cabinetwork: side tables, upholstered chairs, and small hexagonal tables.

Hardware

The hardware is bronzed in finish, plain, and unusual in the use of piano hinges for folding doors and cabinet doors.

Mechanical and electrical equipment

Wright called the system of heating used in this house "gravity heating." The concrete floor panels serve as radiant surfaces for heat coming from hot water circulating in pipes embedded in gravel under the floor panels. In addition, there are baseboard convectors at several of the full-weight windows and at several other locations as well. There is no air conditioning nor system of forced-air ventilation. The clearstory windows and the large area of the french doors are designed to promote the natural circulation of air. The broad roof overhangs are designed to shade the walls to prevent their heating up.

At most of the clearstories the lower ceiling projects to form a cove, where fluorescent tubes provide indirect lighting. Other lighting is provided by surface mounted sockets with oversized spherical light globes.

Most unusual are the prefabricated plumbing units in the three bathrooms. These units consist of toilet and tub along one wall. A box containing the washbasin moves along the top of these two fixtures, covering whichever one of them is not in use. These units are made of white, porcelain-enameled steel principally.

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Site and surroundings

Orientation and general setting

The main portion of the plan is oriented with the fireplace wall to the east and the large glass areas of the room facing south and west. From this portion, the bedroom wing extends in a northerly direction giving the bedrooms a west-northwest exposure approximately. The house is placed at the side of a knoll, which rises at the inner side of the angled plan (north-west) and drops off at the outer side. The view of the river is seen from the west and south windows of the living-dining room. The level of the house is considerably above the river, commanding a fine view of the wooded river valley. The approach is by way of a private gravel road to the highway at the east. There is a graveled parking space and turnaround with a red-brick retaining wall at the carport and entrance to the house.

Historical landscape design

On the knoll above the house is a semicircular brick wall and bench at the side of a circular area paved in brick. At the center of this area is a place for a fire. Down the hill slightly, on the south side of the house, is a circular pool with a similar semicircular brick wall partly surrounding it. The living-dining room terrace had a quarter-circle-shaped planting bed adjoining it (seen in old photographs of the house), and retaining walls create wide planters at the south windows of the living-dining room and at the entrance terrace. The ground around the house is planted in lawn. Trees visible around the house, to the extent that winter conditions reveal, are either native or harmonious in placement and species with native growth in the locality.

Outbuildings

The river pavilion situated at the water's edge utilizes the same materials as the house: brick walls, flat concrete roof deck with upturned edges, and walnut wooden elements. The pavilion has two stories, the second entered by means of an exterior stairway to a concrete deck at the second level. The deck spans dramatically from the pavilion to the top of an enormous bolder. The lower level of the pavilion contains storage space for a boat, reached from the water by means of a ramp. Part of the second-story deck is enclosed by metal pipes to form a screened sleeping porch. The guest room at the second floor has a fireplace, a minimal kitchenette, and a bath. The river pavilion is in good condition, but needs repair work for its wooden elements and for some of its brickwork.

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
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<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 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		

Specific dates 1950 - Present

Builder/Architect

Frank Lloyd Wright

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lowell Walter House, despite being less than 50 years of age, possesses exceptional significance both to Iowa and the nation. It was the first of seven houses in Iowa that Frank Lloyd Wright designed according to his Usonian principles. Also, it is the only executed design by Wright of its type and construction, using brick masonry and upturned reinforced concrete roofs. This upturned roof profile became widely accepted for commercial buildings in particular and a very familiar form in modern architecture. The Walter House is also important because it exemplifies Wright's best thought in the 1940's as to what a home for the typical American family should be. The plans were originally made on commission from the Ladies Home Journal for a major article by Wright. The site itself has significance because it figures in Indian legends about two star-crossed lovers, Wapsipinicon and Chief Quasqueton, who are said to have leaped from a rock here to their deaths. It is believed that the Walter House is the only Wright design in which concern for treating an already famous site influenced the design and placement of the buildings.

(See Continuation Sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet.)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 11.5 acres

Quadrangle name Quasqueton

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	5	6	0	1	0	9	0	4	6	9	5	3	1	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing									

B

1	5	6	0	1	4	5	0	4	6	9	5	2	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

1	5	6	0	1	4	2	0	4	6	9	6	2	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet.)

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph J. Christian, Architectural Historian

organization Office of Historic Preservation date

street & number East 12th & Grand Avenue telephone (515) 281-3306

city or town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Adrian D. Anderson*

title Director date 1/3/83

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u><i>Frank McClelland</i></u>	date <u>3-2-83</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet

SIGNIFICANCE

Item number 8

Page One

(The material that follows is taken directly from Wesley Shank's report prepared for the National Park Service.)

SUMMARY

The Walter House was constructed between 1948-1950 on a knoll overlooking the Wapsipinicon River. It provides an uninterrupted view of the River and Valley. It is a long spreading structure firmly set on the hillside. The house has a living-dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms, utility room, two bathrooms, entrance hall, and a carport separating the maid's quarters from the main house. It is in a secluded location about 1/3 mile off the main road.

Wright designed the house to take advantage of the view, give the feeling of being outdoors while yet having the sense of shelter, and to provide year round comfort. Floor to ceiling windows are used extensively throughout the living room and bedrooms. Clearstory windows in every room release hot air and bring in added light.

The flat concrete roof extends considerably beyond the walls and turns up on the ends. Where it extends over the windows, there are large openings giving the overhangs a large scale trellis appearance. Vines grow to these openings, providing shade during the summer.

All furniture, down to the lampshades, were designed by Wright. He selected the style and color of curtains, upholstery, rugs, and paint. Paneling throughout the house, along with much of the other wood, is walnut. He designed bookshelves, doorknobs, and latches for the windows and doors.

The house was designed for simple living. One room serves several functions and the furniture serves the requirements of both rooms. The furniture and architecture are more closely integrated than in almost any other Wright house. There is no attic or basement. Well planned storage space within the house is provided as a convenient alternative.

Wright built many so-called Usonian houses. These were houses for living in harmony with nature and for simple living. All unnecessary items found in the typical American house were slashed in this Usonian house. The Lowell Walter House is an excellent example of this Usonian concept and is a kind of culmination of one of Wright's important midwestern house types.

A boathouse located along the river was also designed by Wright. The same concepts used with the house were applied with the boathouse.

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EVALUATION OF THE HOUSE AND ITS SITE

As a design for living in harmony with nature

The house is built on the side of a knoll, commanding to the south and west a panoramic view of the Wapsipinicon River and the broad river valley, and to the north a view of the upward slope of the knoll. As one approaches the house from the drive, the house appears nestled into the hillside. From the river below, it appears as a long spreading structure firmly planted in the slope above one. From within the house, one experiences the pleasure of views off to the river and its valley and upward along the slope of the knoll. These views are important features of the rooms of the house, especially of the living-dining room, which Wright called the garden room. The views change with the seasons, with the weather, and with the time of day, as does the pattern of sunlight entering the room. The clearstory admits light both early and late in the day. Also plants are brought into the house in the large planter in the center of the room. The glass doors on the north side of the room allow one to walk easily to a paved terrace outside. Thus the house is strongly related visually with nature--the outdoors--and related in a harmonious way.

The house is designed to be comfortable during summer weather. In nearly all rooms, large double doors of glass open to the outside for ventilation. Clearstory windows in every room release hot air and, in addition, bring in added light. The flat roof extends beyond the walls considerably, shading them from the heat of the sun. A remarkable feature of the roof overhangs is the fact that where they project over some of the glass walls, they are pierced by large square openings, giving the overhangs the appearance of large-scale trellises. Vines are trained so that their leaves will close the openings over during summer to provide leafy shade.

During the winter, the vine leaves having fallen, the openings in the overhanging roof admit additional sunlight through the glass walls to warm the house. A system of heating which Wright pioneered in this country warms the rooms noiselessly and without drafts. The heat radiates from the concrete floors, heated by hot water in piping embedded in gravel beneath them.

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The house was completed in 1950, and for this time it provided favorably the means for summer comfort, and without the expenditure of energy, a fact of increasing interest today. The glass doors and the clearstory windows assured a maximum of natural ventilation, and the broad overhangs augmented by foliage shaded the walls and windows. There was no air-conditioning nor any built-in system of forced air ventilation. The original design called for rigid insulation on top of the roof deck and a covering of sod. Only the insulation was put in place. Perhaps the sod was found to be unnecessary.

Energy conservation during the winter months does not appear to be a feature of the design. The working drawings of the house showed double glazing for the large glass areas, but only single glazing had been installed. The heat loss through single glazing would be considerable, even with the heavy drapery drawn. However, in clear weather, the heat gained from the sunlight entering through the glass would certainly aid in warming the house.

To summarize, the house allows its occupants to live in harmony with nature to an unusual degree: psychologically and spiritually by the strong visual relationship of house to the outdoors, by means of views of the landscape at all seasons, by the fact that its occupants may walk outside from many of the rooms, by the connection with nature which the plants in the planter establish, and by the natural light and sunlight which penetrate the glass walls, clearstory windows, and skylights; physiologically by means of the comfort of natural ventilation in summer and warmed floors in winter; and ecologically, in summer at least, by the fact that no energy is used to achieve comfort.

As a design for simple living

The possibilities for simple living in this house are augmented through reduction of the amount of furniture needed and of the number of separate rooms. Tables, shelving, cabinets, and some seating are built into the house. The freestanding furniture which is still needed in the large living-dining room was specially designed for the house by Wright. This room is skillfully subdivided so that one portion provides the space and built-in shelving, sideboard, and tables needed for dining. The freestanding chairs of the living area and those of the dining area are the same so that all may be used as dining chairs, and a built-in hexagonal table may be combined with freestanding hexagonal tables to form dining tables of various sizes as needed. The table height is specially lowered to serve these chairs. Thus the furniture serves the requirements of both

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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rooms, just as one room serves the needs of separate living and dining rooms, and the design of furniture and architecture in this house are more closely integrated than in almost any other Wright house.

Further simplification includes replacing the conventional garage with a carport, sheltering the automobile but not enclosing it completely, and the omission of both attic and cellar. Wright thought that garage, attic, and cellar added unnecessary expense, and well planned storage space with the house is provided as a convenient alternative.

As an example of the work of America's most well-known architect

Most of Wright's architectural effort was spent on the design of single-family houses, a building type to which most people relate. His willingness to innovate and to make pronouncements on architecture and on American life in general, and the imaginative qualities of his buildings had, by the beginning of the post World War II years of his career, aroused the interest of average Americans in him. He was a colorful figure and probably the only architect the most people have heard of. He is undoubtedly among the greatest architects of his time.

During the years of the Great Depression and until World War II, he evolved and saw built many of his so-called Usonian houses, a design type which resulted from his efforts to provide houses that people of average income could afford and to improve the design of houses for them as well. He slashed all that was unnecessary from the typical American house, and the result provided the basis for many of the features which are found in the Lowell Walter house: a design for living in harmony with nature and for simple living. However, the Walter house was begun in 1948 and completed in 1950, and was built not for a client of average income, but for one of means. In the Walter house, the building materials chosen were in many cases more costly than owners of the Depression years could have afforded; the house was larger; and it had a large site with natural features of beauty beyond the means of Usonian owners.

The importance of the Walter house as an example of Wright's work lies in the fact that, with a spacious and beautiful site to build on and a liberal budget for construction, Wright showed that the Principles of design which he had followed for the minimal Usonian houses for Americans of average income had a wider validity, that they applied as well for more spacious and more expensively appointed houses for Americans of somewhat more than average income. Thus the Walter house was a testing of the rule and a kind of culmination of one of Wright's important midwestern house types.

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**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Page One

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National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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Page One

Boundary Justification. The boundary described below contains 11.5 acres and consists of the Walter House and outbuildings and its surrounding acreage. In its entirety the property reflects Frank Lloyd Wright's design for living in harmony with nature.

Boundary Description. As indicated in red on the accompanying map [U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, Quasqueton Quad., 1973], a line beginning on the southern edge of the right-of-way of Buchanan County Road W35 and extending southward approximately 2,500 feet along the eastern edge of a private dirt road and the eastern edge of a rounded hill to the north bank of the Wapsipinicon River; thence westward approximately 200 feet along said riverbank to the western edge of a rounded hill; thence northeastwardly approximately 2,600 feet following the contour of said hill and the western edge of a private dirt road to the southern edge of the right-of-way of Buchanan County Road W35; thence eastwardly approximately 15 feet along said right-of-way to the point of beginning.

830 00215
SEP 30 1988

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Lowell Walter House
other names/site number Cedar Rock

2. Location

street & number NW of Quasqueton off SR W35 | | not for publication
city, town Vicinity of Quasqueton | | vicinity
state Iowa code 19 county Buchanan code 019 zip code 52326

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u>1</u> Total
Name of Related multiple property listing: <u>Iowa Usonian Houses by Frank Lloyd Wright</u>		Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register <u>2</u>	

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet, section _____ page _____.

James E. [Signature] DSHPO
Signature of certifying official
Bureau of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

September 23, 1988
Date

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet, section page

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet, section page

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture - Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Wrightian

Materials
(enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick, Glass

roof Concrete

other Steel

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See continuation sheet, section 7 page 2

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

Areas of Significance
(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1948-50

Significant Dates

1948-50

Cultural Affiliation

N.A.

Significant Person

N.A.

Architect/Builder

Wright, Frank Lloyd

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

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CFN-259-1116

Description:

The Lowell E. Walter house was the first of the Iowa Usonian houses designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Of the seven Iowa Usonian houses, the Walter house was originally the richest and most lavish. Its design was certainly the most extensive, and its site the most spectacular.

The Walter House was constructed between 1948-1950 on a knoll overlooking the Wapsipinicon River. It provides an uninterrupted view of the river and valley. It is a long spreading structure firmly set on the hillside. The house has a living-dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms, utility room, two bathrooms, entrance hall, and a carport separating the maid's quarters from the main house. It is in a secluded location about 1/3 of a mile from the main road.

Wright designed the house to take advantage of the view, give the feeling of being outdoors while yet having the sense of shelter, and to provide year round comfort. Floor to ceiling windows are used extensively throughout the living room and bedrooms. Clerestory windows in every room release hot air and bring in added light.

The flat concrete roof extends considerably beyond the walls and turns up on the ends. Where it extends over the windows, there are large openings giving the overhangs a large-scale trellis appearance. Vines grow to these openings, providing shade during the summer.

All furniture, down to the lampshades, were designed by Wright. He selected the style and color of curtains, upholstery, rugs, and paint. Paneling throughout the house, along with much of the other wood, is walnut. He designed bookshelves, doorknobs, and latches for the windows and doors.

The house was designed for simple living. One room serves several functions and the furniture serves the requirements of both rooms. The furniture and architecture are more closely integrated than in almost any other Wright house. There is no attic or basement. Well planned storage space within the house is provided as a convenient alternative.

A boathouse located along the river was also designed by Wright. The same concepts used within the house were applied with the boathouse.

The Walter house is located in rural Buchanan County, near the small town of Quasqueton, in eastern Iowa. It is set on a limestone bluff overlooking a bend of the Wapsipinicon River. Amid woods and fields, the house and accompanying boat house are secluded and private. From the road, only the Wright-designed gate is visible. Beyond the gate, a rough, narrow lane runs the length of a field and winds through native woods before reaching the house in its landscaped clearing.

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While isolated from the road and purposely difficult to reach, the Walter house is open to the river and is a landmark on the Wapsipinicon. The common name for the Walter house and grounds is Cedar Rock, a name adopted from the site's great rock outcropping at the river's edge. This place had long been a local attraction before the Walters developed it. Steeped in Indian legend, it is a beautiful place that was favored for picnicking and fishing. The Walter River Pavilion now spans the namesake rock.

The plan of the Walter house, with its open living-dining area "head" and the bedroom wing "tail," well illustrates the polliwog metaphor. The ordering system, the construction techniques, the handling of the materials, and the details are consistent with Usonian ideals. Furthermore, the relationship of the house to its site is an excellent realization of Wright's Usonian philosophy. The house seems to grow out from its site, its low, horizontal profile and earth colors in sympathy with nature. Wright, himself, on a visit to the Cedar Rock site, with plans in hand, determined the proper positioning of the house.

The views at Cedar Rock were especially important to both the client and the architect. The Walter house is firmly set in the side of a hill which rises to the north where it is wooded and quickly falls off to the south where it is open to the river below. The river and its valley are viewed through the garden room's south-facing and west-facing glass walls. The views from the northerly oriented bedroom wing are of the wooded hill.

The Walter house is a small house which combines intimately scaled spaces and a secure, sheltering character with a sense of openness and communion with nature. The house is open to the commanding views of the Wapsipinicon River valley, open to the sun and the breeze, and directly open to the outdoors through numerous pairs of glass doors. The house was well suited to its owner, an avid outdoorsman.

With fine materials, skillfully crafted, the Walter house is an uncompromised example of the Usonian house. Mr. and Mrs. Walter consulted Mr. Wright on every detail of this house, and it appears that no expense was too great. The Walters were determined to have a masterpiece in every respect, from the site and main structure to the fire irons and lampshades. The Walter House is a very exceptional house due to the wealth of the original owners; here expense was not the limitation that it was for most Usonian clients.

Starting from the ground up, the foundation of the Walter house is specified on the 1946 working drawings as Wright's simple system of reinforced perimeter grade beams built upon a continuous 18" to 24"-deep gravel-filled trench, with a sloped 4" farm-type drain tile at the bottom of the trench. According to the drawings, the concrete grade beams are located just below finished grade. Where walls are of floor-to-ceiling glass, the concrete beams are capped with a visible brick course, specified in the

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drawings as a "Rollock Mat Edge." The effect is quite wonderful--this continuous brick edge extending beyond the glass walls beautifully defines the grade-level base from which the house is built up.

The Walter house was planned on a 5'-3" x 5'-3" grid, with the grid of the bedroom wing shifted 30, from the grid of the entry and garden room. All dimensions in the plan of the house are measured from this grid. The floor throughout the house is composed of precast concrete tiles, approximately 2'-7" x 5'-2", laid in a basketweave pattern following the 5'-3" x 5'-3" grid. These floor tiles are an integral deep red color. They are specified on the drawings as 1-1/2" thick, thicker at their edges, laid over a layer of broken stone, with small concrete footings at their corners. Over the years, areas of the floor have settled so that floor height varies as much as 1" at some tile joints. Tiles are omitted in the center of the garden room at the planting area. Here the floor is simply of soil.

The heating system in the Walter house is Wright's system of radiant heat, or "gravity" heat. A boiler in the utility room heats water which is then circulated through pipes laid in the layer of broken stone beneath the floor of concrete tiles. The original heating system is still in use in the house. In the working drawings the pipes are indicated as 2" diameter wrought iron laid 18" on center. The system is zoned, with one thermostat in the garden room and another thermostat in the master bedroom at the north end of the house.

All exterior walls in this house are either brick masonry walls or glass walls supported by 2-1/2" x 3" steel "T"s. The steel "T"s are exposed, painted deep red. They are spaced 5'-3" on center and extend below into concrete footings (thickened areas of the perimeter grade beams) and above into the concrete roof where they are fastened to steel reinforcing. These vertical steel supports are amazingly slender. The wide fixed windows of the Walter house are held to the steel "T"s with thin walnut stops; there is little obstruction of view with these walls.

The exterior brick walls, originally planned as only one brick depth in thickness, with exposed horizontal bands of steel reinforcing, are instead double constructed. The dark red bricks are laid in running bond. Characteristic of a Wright design, the horizontal joints of light-colored mortar are raked, the vertical joints are finished flush with a red mortar. Where brick walls extend above the roof, they are capped with a rowlock course.

The primary roof of the Walter house is a monolithic reinforced concrete slab, 6" to 8" thick, with gracefully curved edges. It extends beyond the exterior walls approximately 5'-6", sweeping out more than 10'-0" from the entry and at the carport. Beyond the walls of the garden room, square cut-outs in this roof create a trellis for summer vines. The leafy vines shade the garden room's glass walls in summer, dying

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back in winter when direct sunlight is desired. The bottom surface of this main roof is 7'-3" above the finished floor of the house. The roof is drained by simple 2" diameter penetrations widely spaced in the perimeter of the slab.

A continuous clerestory over the bedroom wing is roofed with a second reinforced concrete slab, supported by steel "T"s anchored in the lower, main roof. Floor-to-ceiling height here is 9'-5". A clerestory in the garden room is similarly roofed; this clerestory roof is pierced with nine 2'-0" x 2'-0" skylight openings. Finally, there is a continuous roof slab over the kitchen, utility room, and portion of the entry, with a skylight over the entry area and another over the kitchen-utility space. Ceiling height is 11'-0". The undersides of these secondary roof slabs and of the main roof slab were each finished with one coat cement primer and two coats oil paint, with sand blown into the final coat of paint.

The roof slabs of the bedroom wing and garden room clerestories extend approximately 10" beyond the clerestory walls and the downward-curving edges are covered with an embossed copper fascia.

When the Walter house was featured in the January 1951 issue of The Architectural Forum, Wright noted that "The entire roof is to be covered with peat moss and black earth. Grass and ground cover will be grown there, a pleasant grass terrace when seen from the hill above." A wonderful idea, but never built. The slabs were instead sealed and insulated more conventionally with "what appears to have been 3/4's of an inch of fiber insulation and multiple plies of organic asphalt materials, flashings and gravel," which, at this writing, are being replaced with new built-up roofing. (p. 83)

On the interior of the Walter house, the floor and ceilings are of concrete and concrete tiles, as described above, and the walls are of brick, wood, and glass. Where the exterior walls of the house are of brick construction, the finished interior surfaces are of brick as well. Interior walls enclosing the kitchen-utility "core" and dividing the entry and living space are also brick. The interior partition walls in the bedroom wing are of wood construction finished with horizontal walnut board and batten. The walnut in the Walter house is from Missouri, specially selected for its color and grain, one of the more extravagant features of the house.

Missouri walnut is the only finish wood in the Walter house. Every door is a flush, walnut veneer door; folding closet doors are made of walnut boards joined with continuous brass piano-type hinges; every window and glass door sash is of walnut; and all of the furniture, shelves, and built-ins in the house are of walnut or walnut veneer plywood. Regarding finishes, the working drawings specified that all wood surfaces be "treated with (one) light coat of one part white shellac to one part denatured alcohol followed by a coat of Johnson's paste wax, buffed to a dull gloss." More durable clear sealers were specified for the exterior wood of doors and windows and for the wood surfaces in the bathrooms.

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In adherence to the "Opus 497" design, the 1946 set of working drawings for the Walter house specified and detailed metal doors and windows with double glazing: "All sash doors and fixed glass panels to be glazed with Twindow. . . . Twindow shall be two 1/4" polished plate glass with 1/4" hermetically sealed airspace between with entire edges encased in stainless steel channel." As built, the windows and glass doors are wood framed with single sheets of 1/4" polished plate glass. The single pane glass has allowed for another of Wright's characteristic details, the mitered glass corner. Floor-to-ceiling mitered glass corners occur in the garden room, master bedroom, and maid's room.

By employing glass walls, continuous clerestories, and numerous skylights, natural light is well provided for in the Walter house. The control of light in the garden room is particularly masterful. The light which would seem to be overwhelming in this space is greatly softened by the deep roof overhangs with their curved edges, and mellowed by the warm colors of the ceilings, walls, and floor. The low 7'-3" high ceiling around the perimeter of the garden room reduces the amount of entering light and also works to give this large room an intimate scale. At the room's center, the clerestory windows are set back 38" to 48" from the interior edge of the 7'-3" ceiling, forming a deep shelf, or deck, which renders indirect the light from these upper windows. Operable clerestory windows and six pairs of doors opening to the outside catch the breezes which are the primary source of cooling for the house. Similarly, in the bedroom wing, clerestory windows, doors to the outside, and floor-to-ceiling glass bring natural light and ventilation to each room.

In the kitchen-utility area, the high 11'-0" ceiling was designed to allow heat and odors to rise and escape through the operable skylight. The very high ceiling also gives this area the feel of a much larger space. Small and enclosed, this space feels open and airy. The wall separating the kitchen area and the utility area is a lower wood partition wall, approximately 7'-6" high.

The darkest rooms of the house are the entry and the gallery hall of the bedroom wing. In dramatic contrast to the open, well-lit garden room, the entry is close and dimly lit. In the same manner that the enclosed entry enhances the effect of the open garden room, the dark, narrow gallery makes the adjacent small bedrooms feel much larger in contrast. Special cast concrete units which sandwich a single pane of glass form the continuous top course of the gallery's exterior wall. The light admitted through this narrow window band is soft and subtle. These special window units were also used in the exterior wall of the entry closet. In the gallery, the effect of the soft natural light is appropriately restful.

Throughout the house, incandescent and fluorescent lighting is built into the structure, not merely adhered to it. The lighting is very simple: fluorescent lights installed out of view on the ceiling decks provide indirect lighting which supplements the down lighting of incandescent lights recessed in the ceiling. At the entry, by the fireplace, again by the dining area, and outside in the tool room wall and in the wall

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of the entry approach, the masonry has been laid with openings for special concealed lighting. The light fixtures are here in the cavity of the wall. Decorative chunks of colored scrap glass rest on the ledges formed by these brick grilles.

All of the furniture in the Walter house was specially designed for this house by Mr. Wright. Upholstery, curtains, and carpets were all selected by Wright; even the decorative accessories, dinnerware, and house plants were selected by the architect.

The furniture in the Walter house was skillfully crafted of walnut and walnut veneer plywood. Sturdy, low, and geometrical, it is very fine furniture designed for beauty and versatility. In the garden room, built-in seating, cabinets, and shelves are combined with a collection of tables, chairs, benches, and hassocks. This large, open room is partially divided by the planting area and the built-in couch, cabinets, and shelves at the center of the room, perpendicular to the fireplace.

The dining table in the Walter garden room is particularly versatile. It is actually two hexagonal tables which can be joined together with triangular leaves to create a table of approximately 4'-0" x 8'-0". Separately, the two hexagonal tables are made to join with built-in cabinets and buffets. Echoing the distinctive curved edge of the concrete roof slab, tables and shelves throughout the house have wide, beautifully curved edges. In the case of the dining table, one section has the typical convex edge, the other a concave edge for perfect fit.

In the bedrooms, wardrobes, dressing tables, and shelves are all built-in. Moveable pieces include the Wright-designed beds, nightstands, and chairs. In the gallery, a low walnut counter with shelves above and cabinets below runs nearly the entire length of the exterior wall. Near the entry are shallow closets which were specially designed for Mr. Walter's guns and hunting equipment. At the end of the gallery there are two linen closets.

Behind the piano-hinged doors of cabinets and wardrobes throughout the house, clever sliding trays built of walnut organize the storage space and keep every item accessible. It seems there was no detail overlooked in storage convenience. The kitchen is no exception. Here divided drawers and lazy susans, in addition to sliding trays, help to organize the cabinets.

In the bathrooms of this house, so beautiful with their dark walnut walls and soft clerestory light, and so very small, Wright experimented with a new product of the time: the "Stan Fab Unit Bath." This plumbing novelty combines a tub, toilet, and swiveling sink in one streamlined white porcelain unit. The Walter house is the only Wright-designed house known to have these units. They are here located in the two full baths of the bedroom wing and in the bathroom of the maid's room.

The same nubby cotton and rayon blend fabric was used throughout the Walter house for all upholstery, bedspreads, and drapes. Most of these fabrics have never been

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replaced and are now faded white with age. The original color of the fabric in the garden room was beige with accent pillows in cherry red, olive green, and chartreuse. The same beige fabric was used in the master bedroom; in the two smaller bedrooms the fabric was originally chartreuse. Beautiful metallic gold threads are woven into this course-textured fabric. The original brown floor rugs of the Walter house have been lost and are now replaced by light gold-colored rugs. The lighter replacement rugs and old sun-bleached fabrics significantly change the intended character of the interior; in comparison, the original colors were richer, warmer, and more somber.

The only painted surfaces in the Walter house are those of the concrete ceilings of the clerestory roofs, the concrete ceilings and exterior soffits of the main roof, and the fixed glass concrete masonry units of the gallery and entry closet. The main roof ceilings and soffit, the kitchen-utility ceiling, and the special masonry units are generally painted a pinkish terra cotta. This paint has likely faded some from its original color. Clerestory ceilings are painted a yellowish off-white.

Finally, the beautiful fireplaces in this house must be described. These fireplaces, one in the garden room and one in the master bedroom, are simple in both material and design. Built of the same red brick as the walls, with brick hearths, they are an integral part of the structure. Their cantilever design is clean and strong. The brick hearth of the garden room fireplace steps down two steps and can accommodate five-foot logs. The open brick hearth of the master bedroom fireplace is continuous with the finished floor.

Building at the secluded Cedar Rock site was, as mentioned above, a difficult task. Nature had to be manipulated to achieve the integral fit of house to site. The topography was changed and retaining walls built to create a level area for the house. Soil was brought in to cover the site's bare rock. Lawns were established. A sprinkler system was installed. And, to landscape the site with trees and shrubs, holes had to be dug in the rock with pick axes.

From the north doors of the garden room there is a terrace which is on grade. Retaining walls on the east, south, and west sides of this room bring the ground up to the level of the floor and create an area for planting. The entrance walk and auto court areas are also held up by retaining walls. The auto court and drive are surfaced with crushed rock. The entrance walk and garden room terrace are of the same precast concrete tiles as inside the house, following the same grids, laid in the same basketweave pattern.

The second Wright-designed building at Cedar Rock is the Walter River Pavilion. The River Pavilion was designed in 1948 and its construction was simultaneous with the house. This two-story structure provides boat storage below with a guest room/retreat/office above. While the overall composition of this structure is much more dynamic and sculptural, the materials and detailing of the Walter River Pavilion

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are identical to those of the Walter house. The pavilion was used for entertaining and served as Mr. Walter's office. The frame of metal pipe on the deck just outside the upper level retreat-office originally supported screening.

The walk down from the house to the River Pavilion is along a natural stone ridge which joins the Cedar Rock boulder at the river's edge. Along the path are special Wright-designed lights made of metal pipe standards with light shields fashioned from the concave circular cutters of an abandoned disk harrow found near the site.

Other Wright-designed features on the grounds of Cedar Rock are the front gate, the Council Fire, and a fountain. The front gateway is composed of low brick walls with a decorative wrought iron gate. The brick walls follow an asymmetrical plan; on one side the wall is graced with a large plant urn cut from a block of granite. The Walters' name is carved in the stone urn.

The Council Fire is located up the hill a short distance from the house. The 11'-0" diameter base of concrete and brick is partially wrapped by a low brick wall with cantilevered concrete seat. This brick wall has its back at the edge of the bluff. A pivoting grate at the center of the Council Fire was designed for cooking. The fountain, located down the hill from the house, is approximately the same diameter as the Council Fire, with similar brick walls. Its concave basin is of concrete. The fountain is no longer operable. The circular theme is repeated on the grounds of Cedar Rock with the arcing auto court retaining wall and a quarter-circle-shaped flower bed which adjoins the garden room terrace.

The only other building on the grounds is a wood structure, known as "the green cabin," which was the Walters' temporary dwelling before completion of the Wright-designed house. The cabin has been moved to the edge of the woods, beyond the top of the hill, where it is used for storage. When Mr. Wright could not convince the Walters to have it removed, he compromised, designing a new roof for it and having it moved to its out-of-sight location.

Although it was never significantly altered by the Walters, over the past 35 years Iowa's harsh climate, combined with improper maintenance, have caused damage to the house and other structures of Cedar Rock. Fortunately, a program of restoration has begun which will return Cedar Rock to its original beauty. The first priority has been to restore the roofs of the house where poor maintenance has caused extensive damage to the built-up roofing, the skylights and clerestory windows, and to the masonry walls which extend above the roof. At this writing, the roofing, the skylights and clerestory windows, and the masonry above the roof either have been or are now in the process of being reconstructed. After the house has been made watertight, the next priority will be to clean and restore interior surfaces and to rebuild windows and doors whose frames and sashes have rotted. An exciting project just begun is the replacement of all the upholstery, curtains, and bedspreads in the house. The company which wove the original fabrics is currently weaving matching samples for the approval

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of the museum staff. New fabrics and rugs in the colors originally selected by Wright will make a significant impact on the appearance of the rooms and in the value of the house as a museum.

On the grounds, damage to the neglected River Pavilion has been more severe than to the house. The front gate is also badly deteriorated, and the fountain and Council Fire require repairs.

Because the primary tenets of the Iowa Conservation Commission are to conserve and manage Iowa's natural resources, steps have been taken to acquire for public use additional land and wilderness areas adjacent to the 11-1/2 acre Cedar Rock property. Eighteen acres of land have been purchased across the river from Cedar Rock and 188 acres have been purchased between the house and the main road. Plans exist for the acquisition of yet more land and the eventual development of interpretive nature trails, a prairie reconstruction, and, to accommodate visitors to Cedar Rock, a visitors center and parking lot. Of the seven Iowa Usonian, the Walter house has suffered the most extensive damage, but because it is a prized architectural landmark, with maintenance supported by a generous trust fund, reconstruction of this house will closely follow Wright's original design.

In 1983, the Lowell E. Walter House was entered in the National Register of Historic Places. Although this house is less than 50 years old, it is considered to be of exceptional architectural significance at both the state and national levels.

The importance of the Walter house as an example of Wright's work lies in the fact that, with a spacious and beautiful site to build on and a liberal budget for construction, Wright showed that the principles of design which he had followed for the minimal Usonian houses for Americans of average income had a wider validity, that they applied as well for more spacious and more expensively appointed houses for Americans of somewhat more than average income. Thus the Walter house was a testing of the rule and a kind of culmination of one of Wright's important midwestern house types.

The Walter house displays Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian design richly carried out to the last detail.

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Significance:

The Walter House was entered in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. Although less than 50 years old, this property has been recognized for exceptional architectural significance at both the national and state levels. The following is taken from the Lowell E. Walter House National Register of Historic Places inventory--Nomination Form.

The Lowell Walter House, despite being less than 50 years of age, possesses exceptional significance both to Iowa and the nation. It was the first of seven houses in Iowa that Frank Lloyd Wright designed according to his Usonian principles. Also, it is the only executed design by Wright of its type and construction, using brick masonry and upturned reinforced concrete roofs. This upturned roof profile became widely accepted for commercial buildings in particular and a very familiar form in modern architecture. The Walter House is also important because it exemplifies Wright's best thought in the 1940's as to what a home for the typical American family should be. The plans were originally made on commission from the Ladies Home Journal for a major article by Wright. The site itself has significance because it figures in Indian legends about two star-crossed lovers, Wapsipinicon and Chief Quasqueton, who are said to have leaped from a rock here to their deaths. It is believed that the Walter House is the only Wright design in which concern for treating an already famous site influenced the design and placement of the buildings.

Lowell Walter was a native of Quasqueton. As a young man in the mid-1910's he moved to Des Moines, Iowa, and soon founded the Iowa Road Builders Company, which he and his wife operated until 1944 when they sold the company and began investing in Buchanan County farmland. The Walters eventually acquired 18 farms in Buchanan County, totaling more than 5,000 acres. They built the house at Cedar Rock to be nearer their farms. The couple generally resided at this house from spring until late fall, spending winters in Des Moines.

Mr. Walter first contacted Mr. Wright in January of 1945 requesting the architect's services in the design of a dwelling for the Cedar Rock site. In his letter to Wright, Mr. Walter described the site, included photographs, and made a sketch of a possible simple floor plan. The Walters required a small, year-round residence which would be "something quite nice but, of course, not too extravagant," preferably in a price range of \$10,000 to \$15,000. Wright replied a week later with a characteristically brief note which read:

My dear Mr. Walter: We will design a dwelling for you. Send further details. There will be no basement nor any attic.

With this, an exceptional building project which would span six years and eventually cost an estimated \$126,000 was begun.

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The design of the Walter house is directly adapted from a design proposal which Wright completed for the Ladies Home Journal. Wright called that design "Opus 497." It was "a crystal house, for town or country," and was published in June of 1945 as part of a series the magazine was presenting on economical, architect-designed postwar houses. The Walters saw "Opus 497" and knew that it was their house.

"Opus 497" was a radically modern house, and it was a Usonian house: a one-story house of less than 2,500 sq. ft., no basement, no attic, no garage; planned on a 5'-0" grid with combined living and dining area, centrally located kitchen and utility room, and a long bedroom wing with a narrow gallery; all to be built of glass, metal, concrete, and brick; with "gravity heat" and natural light and ventilation. The most spectacular features of "Opus 497" were the reinforced concrete roof slab with its gently upturned edges, and the 30'-0" x 30'-0" open "garden room." The garden room of "Opus 497," like the actual garden room of the Walter house, was a spacious glass-walled room which combined the living and dining spaces. The name was derived from the indoor planting area at the center of this room.

In 1951 when The Architectural Forum featured the completed Walter house in a special January issue dedicated to Mr. Wright's work, they included this stealthy note about the house:

In this river-sited house, Wright uses more glass than is usual in his residential work. It is almost as if he had taken the proposition of the glass house about which we have heard so much lately and turned in one more example of his lifelong endeavor to show how the sense of space can be introduced without loss of the sense of shelter--an example made very plain for those who may have missed the point before. (p. 83)

The plan of the Walter house as built generally varies from the "Opus 497" plan only in the configuration of the entry room and the width of the entry walk; in the addition of a second full bathroom adjacent to the master bedroom; in the addition of storage along the exterior wall of the gallery; and in the addition of a tool room and maid's quarters replacing a kennel structure which, in the "Opus 497" plan, supported the far end of the carport roof. With regard to materials, the Walter house as built is basically similar to "Opus 497," varying most significantly in the use of wood for door and window frames rather than stainless steel.

The working drawings for the Walter house were completed by November of 1946. Each sheet was initialed by Mr. Wright. While the war halted virtually all private building activity during the mid-1940s in the United States, including the Walter house, further design and revisions of the Walter house continued until 1948 when construction of the house finally began. Minor redesign continued throughout the construction phase until the house was completed in 1950.

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The initial cost estimate for construction of the Walter house was \$25,000, well below the final cost. The clients, of course, were primarily responsible for increasing the scope of the project, but whether the initial estimate was exceeded by as much as five times because Wright was indulging Walter or because Walter was indulging Wright is difficult to know. Factors which certainly forced a higher construction cost were the rising prices of building materials after the war and the remoteness and difficulty caused by the Cedar Rock site.

Wright charged the Walters his standard fee of 10 percent of the total construction cost for this project. During construction, John DeKoven Hill was Wright's on-site representative in charge of supervision. Hill, then a Taliesin fellow, moved to Quasqueton and was paid directly by Mr. Walter. The general contractor for this project was Kucharo Construction Company of Des Moines.

The construction of the Walter house is well documented. Prints of the original working drawings of the house and files of Mr. Walter's correspondence with the architect, contractor, and suppliers are all kept in the State Archives of Iowa and are available for study. The description of the Walter house in the previous section is based upon on-site inspection of the house, review of the archival documents, and information from the staff of the Iowa Conservation Commission which now owns the house.

The Walter house has been recognized with one of Frank Lloyd Wright's initialed tiles. The red ceramic tile is grouted into the exterior brick wall of the bedroom wing, under the carport roof at the steps of the entrance walk. An initialed tile marks only the best Wright works, those which were completed to the architect's satisfaction.

Before the initialed tile was awarded, Wright insisted that certain minor alterations be made to the Walter house. These alterations included the addition of baseboard heaters along the glass walls of the garden room and along the built-in room divider, and also in the entry, master bedroom, and maid's room. The additional heaters warm the glass walls and reduce vapor condensation on the glass. For the water vapor that does condense and run down the glass doors and windows, Wright designed a small, copper "condensation gutter" to be installed at the base of the glass. The final change Mr. Wright made to the Walter house was to the color scheme of the lower 7'-3" ceilings in the garden room and master bedrooms. These ceilings had at first been the same off-white color as the clerestory ceilings; Wright had them repainted the same terra cotta color as the exterior soffits. The terra cotta color inside and out emphasizes the monolithic quality of the concrete roof slab, and the darker color enhances the intimate scale of these spaces under the low 7'-3" ceilings.

Today Cedar Rock is publicly owned. When Lowell Walter died in 1981, Cedar Rock was left to the Iowa Conservation Commission along with a trust fund which supports the perpetual maintenance of the property. Since 1982 Cedar Rock has been managed by the

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Conservation Commission as a museum open to the public free of charge. The house is open from April until November, with all tours guided by museum staff. The Walters were the only family to live in the house and they left it virtually unaltered. Because it was relatively well preserved, and because it represents such a complete design, this house serves well as a museum of the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. The Walter house was built as a showpiece, and it continues as such today.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet, section 9 page 2

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

- Primary location of additional data:
- State historic preservation office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other

Specify repository:
University of Washington

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 11.5

UTM References

A	1 5	6 0 0 8 5 0	4 6 9 5 5 2 0	B	1 5	6 0 1 3 7 0	4 6 9 5 2 0 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 5	6 0 1 5 0 0	4 6 9 6 2 5 0	D	_ _	_ _ _ _ _ _	_ _ _ _ _ _

See continuation sheet, section _____ page _____

Verbal Boundary Description See continuation sheet, section 10 page 2

Boundary Justification See continuation sheet, section 10 page 2

11. Form Prepared By

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David Swain, "Recommendations for the Preservation of the Lowell Walter, Cedar Rock Facility" (Study prepared by Brown Healey Bock P.C. Architects/Planners, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1985), p. 3.

Lowell E. Walter House Collection, State Archives, Iowa State Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa. (Collection originally compiled by the Iowa Conservation Commission.)

Frank Lloyd Wright, "A Four-Color Portfolio of the Recent Work of the Dean of Contemporary Architects" The Architectural Forum, January 195, p. 83.

From prints of the original architectural drawings for the Lowell E. Walter House, in the Lowell E. Walter House Collection.

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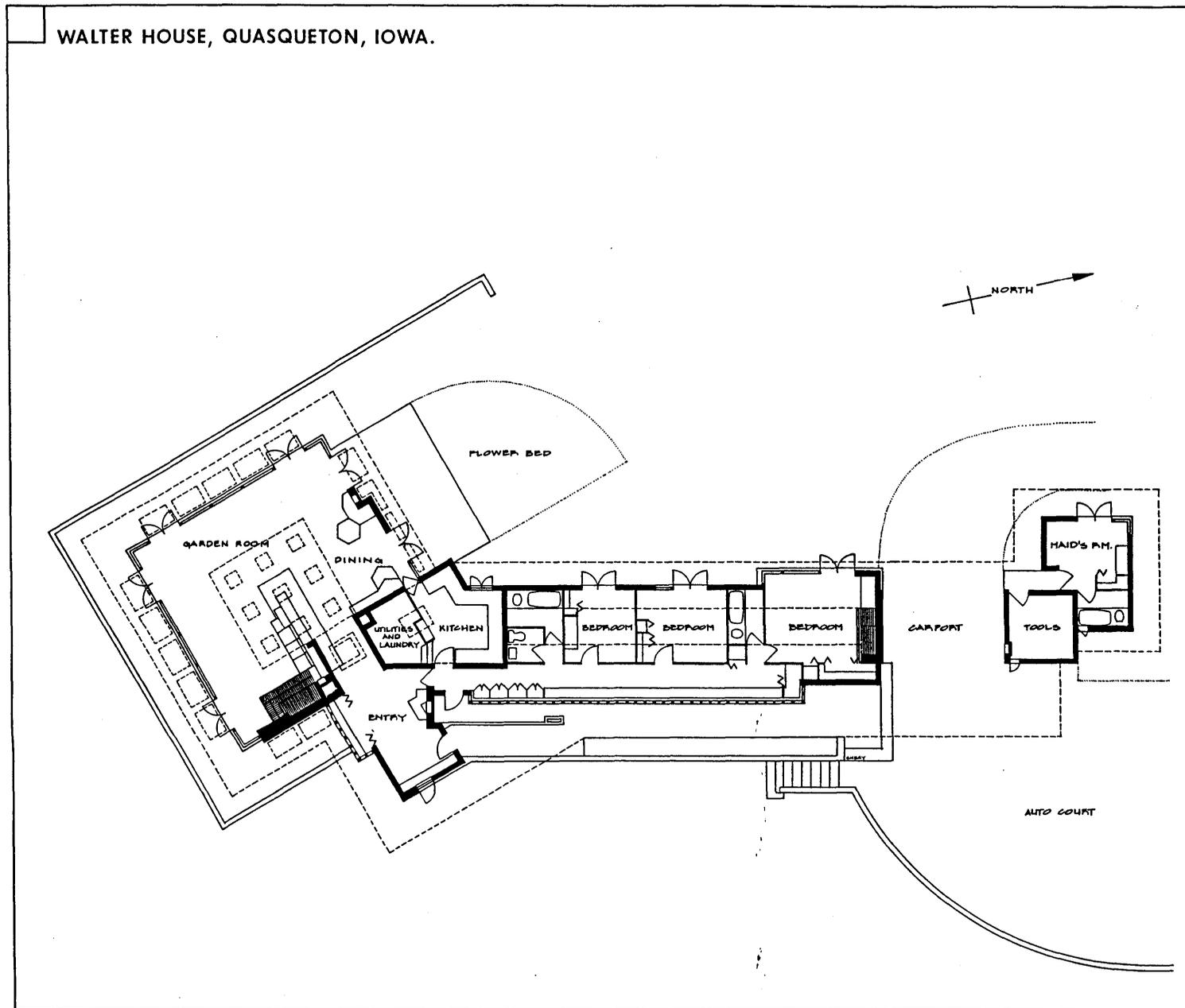
Verbal Boundary Description

As indicated in red on the accompanying map [U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, Quasqueton Quad., 21973], a line beginning on the southern edge of the right-of-way of Buchanan County Road W35 and extending southward approximately 2,500 feet along the eastern edge of a rounded hill to the north bank of the Wapsipinicon River; thence westward approximately 200 feet along said riverbank to the western edge of a rounded hill; thence northeastwardly approximately 2,600 feet following the contour of said hill and the western edge of a private dirt road to the southern edge of the right-of-way of Buchanan County Road W35; thence eastwardly approximately 15 feet along said right-of-way to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundary described above contains 11.5 acres and consists of the Walter House, its outbuildings, and surrounding acreage. It is being nominated in its entirety because site was an integral part of usonian design in terms of Wright's philosophy of living in harmony with nature.

WALTER HOUSE, QUASQUETON, IOWA.



from Frank Lloyd Wright's Iowa Usonian
University of Washington Master's Thesis
by Cheryl Peterson