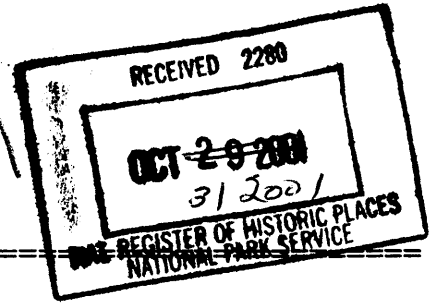


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1354
450
Not



1. Name of Property

historic name Bavinger, Eugene, House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 730 60th Ave., N.E not for publication
city or town Norman vicinity
state Oklahoma code OK county Cleveland code 027 zip code 73071

=====
3. State/Federal Agency Certification
=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bob Blackburn 10-23-01
Signature of certifying official Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====
4. National Park Service Certification
=====

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register _____
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register _____
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register _____
- removed from the National Register _____

other (explain): _____

Carl D. Shull 12-13-01
Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

=====

5. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 1 </u> buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) Resources Designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Organic

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____

roof Plastic

walls Sandstone

Glass

other Metal: Stainless Steel

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

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

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

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

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

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1950-1955

Significant Dates 1950

1955

=====
8. Statement of Significance (Continued)
=====

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Goff, Bruce, Architect

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

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: University of Oklahoma

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property 7.6 Acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>649810</u>	<u>3986040</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Professor Arn Henderson, FAIA

organization College of Architecture, Univ of Okla. date Jan 20, 1999

street & number Gould Hall telephone 325-3868

city or town Norman state OK zip code 73019
=====

Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

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

name Nancy Bavinger Trust, Nancy Bavinger Trustee

street & number 730 60th Ave., N.E. telephone _____

city or town Norman state OK zip code 73071
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Summary

The Bavinger house is located in a primarily rural area of Norman, Oklahoma at 730 60th Ave., N.E. The size of the property is 7.5 acres with a dense growth of native trees and a creek near the house. The multi-level house is characterized by the spiralling wall made of rubble stone with inset glass cullets. Immediately surrounding the house is a multi-level garden constructed of flagstone terraces with stone defining randomly shaped ponds of water, planters and pathways leading to the house. A natural spring-fed creek, located close to the house, fills the ponds with water. The house spirals 50 feet into the air with the primary entrance on a lower terrace underneath the extended roof covering the entry. An additional entry is located at an intermediate level with access provided by a wooden, suspended cable bridge spanning the creek in the front of the house. The windows are all fixed-glass set in irregular openings in the walls and some employ the use of saplings as mullions. Another unique feature of the house is the pattern of circular platforms for specific functions arrayed within the larger spiral space and the cable-suspension system connecting the warped-plane roof to the central mast. The Bavinger House is one of the best and most original Goff designs, and retains a very high degree of integrity.

Description

The Eugene Bavinger House is located on a 7.5 acre wooded site several miles east of Norman, Oklahoma. The plan geometry of the house is a logarithmic spiral built of rubble sandstone inset with blue-green glass cullets with irregular glazed openings. The spiral wall appears to emerge from the earth and wrap around a central mast over fifty-feet in the air. Built next to a stream that was dammed to create a small pond, the house is set into the side of a low hill. The approach to the house is from the rear along a winding path of irregular flagstone steps leading to a terrace below overlooking the stream. This flagstone terrace continues inside the house to define the floor at the lower level. An angled plate glass wall, detailed with a pivoted door and minimal mullions, separates exterior from interior space.

The roof of the house is a warped plane suspended from the central mast, defining the locus of the spiral geometry, by stainless steel airplane struts. A tapered finial, extending several feet above the collar attaching the struts, terminates the central structural element. This mast, a six-inch-

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diameter steel pipe, is actually an oil field drill stem that was purchased as a surplus item, as were the struts. The roof is framed with two-by-six wood joists in a radial pattern and extends beyond the spiral wall. Each joist is supported by the taut struts. The roof itself is not visually connected to the wall but rather its perimeter is defined by a continuous skylight. A suspension bridge also attached to the mast, crosses the stream to connect an intermediate level of the house to a dense grove of trees on the opposite side. The composition is further enriched by a glass cylinder, with mullions of saplings emerging through the spiral stone wall above the bridge. Attached to the glass cylinder, in a radial relationship, is a smaller cylinder sheathed in copper. The smaller element, a storage unit, is two-stories tall and is also connected to the bridge. As one moves around the curved stone wall, in a counter-clockwise direction from the bridge, another set of cylinders is evident. These units also project through the enclosing wall but are positioned three-feet lower. Moreover, the larger cylinder emerges only slightly through the stone wall and the storage cylinder is now only one-story tall. Moving further along the curve still another copper-covered cylinder, three-feet below the previous one, emerges through the spiral wall. But it is an element that engages the enclosing wall at its mid-point, for it is half-inside and half-outside. The pattern formed by all of the paired elements projecting through the spiral wall, at different heights and of varying depth, foreshadows the interior arrangement.

On the interior the pattern is clarified for each of the paired elements are suspended within the larger volume in a fixed radial relationship to the central mast. They are arrayed at regular intervals in both plan and section and they are all the same size. They define a space within a space, but on the interior they are modified so the larger cylinder becomes simply a circular platform, bulging at the bottom and covered with an ochre-colored carpet, with an attached opaque cylinder serving as a closet. There are five of these elements. The lowest one, set several feet above the floor and near the entry, is defined by built-in seating and functions much like a sunken conversation area except it is poised above the floor. Access to the first platform, and all the others as well, is by a circular stair with hand-rubbed walnut treads that wraps around an interior portion of the spiral wall. Like the platforms, it too is suspended. The next highest platform functions as a parents bedroom with the bed, covered with a carpet spread, recessed into the floor of the platform. Walls are of fishnet with sheer curtains inside that can be pulled for privacy. The next two platforms, higher still, served as a child's bedroom and a play area. The highest platform, projecting through the curved stone wall above the bridge almost in its entirety, is a glass-walled

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painting studio for Eugene Bavinger. The pattern of forms defining the house is thus a composition of two related but different geometries: the larger one enclosing the volume, the logarithmic spiral, is asymmetrical while the smaller circular pattern defining individual spaces is symmetrical. But both originate from a common point and both can be defined mathematically. The centrality of the mast, as a point of origin of the two geometries, is further emphasized on the exterior by the web-like pattern of radiating stainless steel struts.

Contrasting with the precision of the two geometries, the interior is enriched by a collage of plants and pools of water defining the lower level. The curved wall, excavated into the side of the hill, is terraced on the interior to create a series of irregular stepped planters. Climbing plants, attached to the rock-faced wall, extend upward toward the ribbon skylight at the perimeter. Other planted areas are set in the floor itself with meandering flagstone paths weaving between lush plants, terraces and goldfish pools. Much of the lower level of the cave-like house is treated as a naturalistic garden with "rooms" floating above. There is little else in the space: there is no conventional furniture and even a dining table is built-in; there are few artifacts; and the kitchen with a bathroom above at a higher level, is concealed by the converging rock wall wrapping around the mast.

Alterations

The only alterations to the Bavinger House has been replacement of the roofing membrane and elimination of one of the interior goldfish pools at the floor level. The original roofing material on the warped surface was sheet copper with redwood battens which eventually deteriorated and was replaced, The material currently enclosing the roof is a heat-sealed plastic roll-roofing, and although it is lighter in color than the original the form of the roof remains unaltered. On the interior of the house one of the goldfish pools was converted to a planting area because of excessive humidity. Another studio was constructed in later years. Built in the form of a small geodesic dome, the detached wood building is sited in a densely forested area away from the house. Despite these alterations, the Bavinger House retains the highest degree of architectural integrity.

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Summary

The Bavinger House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as a significant work of the master architect, Bruce Goff. It relates to the post-World War II buildings historic context of "Resources Designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma" (Section E). Designed in 1950 and completed in 1955, the Bavinger House has been a subject of many articles and books on modern architecture for several decades. The Bavinger House is considered one of the masterpieces of Goff and includes all of the characteristics defining his compositional pattern. The Bavinger House has a high degree of originality and is considered as a major contribution to American organic architecture. Some of the characteristics of the Bavinger House that are also present in his other designs are a reliance on geometry as a design determinant, a centroidal plan organization, unusual combinations of building materials, a harmonizing site relationship, an expression of structure, built-in furniture, and a multi-level spatial organization. The combination of the features resulted in a highly individualized design that also illustrates Goff's ideal of an architecture of the "continuous present." The Bavinger House has a high degree of architectural significance as the work of the master architect Bruce Goff. It reflects all of the characteristics of his mature architectural expression.

The Bavinger House is of exceptional architectural importance at the national level as a premier example of organic architecture. It is regarded by architectural historians and architects as Goff's finest work. The house illustrates with enormous clarity the roles of both client and site as determinants of design. And the design reflects all of the characteristics of Goff's pattern of composition. The Bavinger House is eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion G.

Historical Background

Eugene Bavinger, an art professor at the University of Oklahoma, and his wife, Nancy, commissioned Goff in March 1950 to design their house on a wooded site several miles east of town. At the time they were living in a conventional tract house and told Goff they disliked the arrangement of small rooms with little connection to the exterior. They wanted a house they could build themselves with a large open space to accommodate their interest in growing indoor plants.

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Drawings were prepared by mid-summer 1950 and construction was initiated. Bavinger purchased an outcropping of surface rock on a farm about three miles from the building site and with the help of a group of architecture students--and dynamite, sledge hammers and a flat-bed truck--the rock was broken up and hauled. Known locally at "ironrock," it is a very hard and dense sandstone containing crystals of barite. Building the rock wall was a monumental job for it was ninety-six feet long and required 200 tons of rock. Designed as a cavity wall with steel reinforcing required placing the rock on both surfaces and the height of the curved wall required extensive scaffolding. Bavinger personally laid all the rock although he was assisted by architecture students who mixed the mortar and helped with other phases of work. The house required five years to build and is as much a testament to Bavinger's endurance as it is to Goff's creativity.

Upon completion of the house the Bavingers held an open-house for visitors charging a dollar for admission. The house was featured in the September 19, 1955 issue of Life magazine in an article entitled "Space and Saucer House" and mentioned they had already collected \$4,000 dollars in admission fees. For the next several years the house was open on Sunday and they eventually made more money from sightseers than they had spent on construction.

Nancy Bavinger continues to reside in the house. It is probably the best-know design of Goff and had been included in many articles and books on architecture. In 1987 the house was awarded the prestigious Twenty-Five Year Award of the American Institute of Architects in recognition of its contribution to American architecture.

Architectural Significance

The Bavinger House represents, in part, a synthesis of ideas from two earlier unbuilt projects, the 1945 Gillis project and the 1946 Leidig project. Both the geometry and materials of the enclosing wall of the Bavinger House recall the Gillis project for both had a rough-faced rock wall in the shape of a logarithmic spiral. And like the Leidig project, the floor of the interior of the Bavinger House is a collage of plants and pools of water. There are also conceptual similarities in the juxtaposition of circular elements defining specific activities within the larger space. In the Leidig design these elements of varying size were on a single level in a random pattern but in the Bavinger House they are arrayed at different levels in a repeating pattern and they are all the same size.

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Two projects by other architect may also have influenced the Bavinger design: Paul Nelson's Maison Suspendue and Vladimir Tatlin's 1920 Monument to the Third International. Nelson's proposal for a prototypical house, 1936-38, featured rooms defined as separate units suspended within an open cage-like enclosure and connected together with ramps. But it was the earlier Tatlin design that has a more obvious reference for it too had geometric elements suspended within an enclosing form, a spiral with exaggerated verticality. Goff recalled in later years that both of these projects were influential and important to him.

Although all of these influences may be present in the Bavinger design, collectively they represent only an inspirational point of departure for Goff's imagination. His interpretation is unique and in several ways extends the precepts of organic expression. The Bavinger House provides one of the best examples of Goff's ability to give each of the components of the design a sense of independence and autonomy as elements of a larger composition. There is enormous clarity of expression of wall, roof and structure as discreet elements but the composition is also enriched by visualization of a separate geometric pattern for specific activities. Goff created formal hierarchies with the series of circular elements for those fixed activities within a space that was fluid and continuously modulated. One is drawn into the composition by the sense of spatial movement defined by the spiraling form. The direction of the flow of space is powerful as the relationship between walls, floor and ceiling is constantly changing. As the walls merge closer together, the distance between floor and ceiling expands. Projecting into this space, the circular platforms form an intriguing pattern. They spiral upward, consistent with the direction of the enclosing form, but they are static in their relationship to the central mast. Each is spaced an equal distance apart and each is the same size. As the spiral wall wraps tighter around the mast, the platforms approach the wall and eventually break through it. With this design strategy of two independent but sympathetic geometries, Goff created a dynamic space and a composition of enormous visual tension--one of solid anchoring elements growing from the earth and contrasting with light, frail elements floating in space.

Even though there is a mathematical logic in the precision of these two geometries and their relationship with one another, the specific translation of form into architectural reality is critical. With Goff, the translation is unmistakably clear. With its walls of rough natural stone thrusting upward out of the earth in a setting of woods and stream, it is an architecture of nature. Even the glazed openings in the spiral wall are very irregular and

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suggest a geological formation with natural voids like the entrance to a cavern. In fact, it foreshadows the interior of the house for it too, with its own landscape of plants and water, has a cave-like quality with a profound sense of mystery. And the expression of nature is pervasive. Even the details, such as the mullions of saplings in the glass-walled studio, sustain this expression. Moreover, the adaptation of unorthodox materials in the design also reflects a commitment to organic expression for it was an effort to address specific problems of economy, structure and aesthetics. An oil field drill stem was utilized as the central mast because it was a surplus item and could be purchased inexpensively. Similarly, the stainless steel airplane struts were surplus items and they too, addressed the structural problem. But their greater purpose, as a suspension system, was to sustain Goff's aesthetic ideals: the warped roof plane became an independent element of the composition; the web-like quality further magnified the illusion of light and delicate elements belonging to the realm of the sky; and the reflectivity of those components, amplifying their linearity, provided still another dimension of contrast with the massive walls of rock. In the same way the blue-green glass cullets, incorporated as clusters in the curved rock wall, fulfilled multiple purposes. As a by-product of glass manufacturing, they were waste material but for Goff pregnant with potential. The cullets could be purchased inexpensively; they approximated the size and form of rock for masonry walls; and their translucency and brilliant blue-green color provided a reflective counterpoint with the dark, matte finish of the rock.

The Bavinger House represents a major achievement of American organic architecture. Although it is unlike in appearance any building of Sullivan or Wright, it is a rich echo of those principles of expression. The design reflects the needs and desires of the client. It projects a powerful sense of relatedness to the landscape. And all the parts fit together in an harmonious whole, nothing can be added nor can anything be taken away. There is a strong sense of continuity with natural elements of plants and water on both the interior and exterior. And the rock wall, on both outside and inside surfaces, magnifies this aspect of visual continuity. Even the furnishings are integral with the design. But the house is also a composition that manifest Goff's own creativity and individuality, which is another major underlying theme of organic expression that he embraced very early in his career. In the Bavinger House this imperative found expression not only as a duality of anchoring and floating elements, but also as an expression of the notion that architecture is involved with a passage through space and time in a composition without a beginning or ending. Goff later wrote:

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The past is gone, the future is not here, but the present is continuous...The Bavinger house, earth-bound as it is...is not "back-to-nature" concept of living space. It is a living with nature today and every day [in] continuous space, again as part of our continuous present..

The Bavinger House is one of the premier designs of Bruce Goff. It is eligible for inclusion on the National Register under Criterion C, as a work of a master architect.

Criterion Consideration G

Although this building is not yet 50 years old, it is an exceptional example of the work of Bruce Goff, an architect who has achieved international importance for his contribution to the American modern architectural movement and development of organic architecture. The house has been published extensively in both books and journals on contemporary architecture in the United States, Europe and Japan.

Jeffery Cook, in The Architecture of Bruce Goff (New York; Harper & Row, 1978), illustrates the conundrum fo analyzing the Bavinger House: "It is probably the best known of Goff's houses, but although published frequently in both the popular and professional press, it may be the least understood because of the difficulty in documenting a spatial continuity. The interior defies photographic capture..."(46). Saliga and Woolever note in their book also entitled The Architecture of Bruce Goff (New York: Prestel, 1995), that "The Bavinger House combines all of the innovations Goff developed in his lifetime..." (14).

The Bavinger House represents the finest extant example of the mature work of Bruce Goff. The house epitomizes his philosophical committment to organic architecture. The design is a paramount expression of the natural world with its response to the wooded site, a predominant use of native stone, and a fluid continuous space defined by a spiralling geometry reaching to the sky. The Bavinger House has been prominently featured in all the major publications on Goff by David DeLong, Pauline Saliga and Mary Woolever, Takenobu Mari, Jeffrey Cook, and Global Architecture. The House has been included in architectural journals in the United States, England, Germany, and Japan and in portfolios published by the Architectural League of New York and the Yellowstone Art Center.

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The Bavinger House has also been recognized as a masterpiece of contemporary architecture by the American Institute of Architects with its prestigious Twenty-Five Year Award in 1987. The citation notes that "It spirals joyously into the Oklahoma sky, cut loose from the earth by a mind as free as the prairie landscape, a celebration of the spirit of man and nature united in architecture." This award is given to the most significant designs of the previous quarter century.

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March, Lionel. "Bruce Goff and 'The Architecture of Happiness'." Architectural Design, 48, no. 10 (1978): 7-9.

McCoy, Esther. "Bruce Goff." Arts and Architecture, 2, no. 3 (1983): 44-47.

Mooring, Stephen. "Buildings and Projects by Bruce Goff." Architectural Design, 48, no. 10 (1978): 16-49.

Mooring, Stephen. "Bruce Goff: An Ornamental Link." Architectural Design, 48, no. 10 (1978): 63-66.

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Sergeant, John. "An Introduction to Bruce Goff." Architectural Design, 48, no. 10 (1978): 3-5.

Sergeant, John. "Bruce Goff, the Strict Geometrist." Architectural Design, 48, no. 10 (1978): 55-62.

Newspapers

Ferguson, Loy. "Bavinger Home Resembles Medieval Castle." The Oklahoma Daily, Norman: The University of Oklahoma, Wednesday, May 25, 1955, pp. 1&4.

Interviews

Eugene Bavinger, home owner. Interviews with Arn Henderson, Norman, Oklahoma, November 1989, April 1992 and June 1995.

Other

Henderson, Arn. "Common Themes on the Buildings of Bruce Goff." Paper presented at the "Bruce Goff: Toward Absolute Architecture Symposium." University of Oklahoma, September 30, 1989.

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Henderson, Arn. Bruce Goff in, "Architecture in Norman, Oklahoma." Documentary Film, Norman, Oklahoma, 1981.

"The House that Gene Built." Sooner Magazine, 28, no. 1, September 1955, pp. 5-9.

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The Britannica Encyclopedia of American Art. New York: Chauncleer Press, Inc., 1973, p. 240.

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Verbal Boundary Description

"Part of the NE/4 Sec 25 T9N, R2W, Beginning at N875' of Sec/C of the NE/4,
N 805' W420' S805' E420' to POB.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the Bavinger House.