

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

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

For NCRS use only  
received AUG 13 1980  
date entered OCT 22 1980

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

**1. Name**

historic

and/or common Wright Morris Boyhood <sup>House</sup> ~~Home~~

**2. Location**

street & number 304 D Street \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Central City \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district Third

state Nebraska code 31 county Merrick code 41

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> museum</span>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> park</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> religious</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> scientific</span>
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> transportation</span>
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> other:</span>

**4. Owner of Property**

name Barbara A. Gorgen

street & number 1818-16th Avenue

city, town Central City \_\_\_ vicinity of state Nebraska

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Merrick County Courthouse

street & number 18th Street

city, town Central City \_\_\_ vicinity of state Nebraska

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Nebraska Historic Building Survey has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

date On-going \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln \_\_\_ vicinity of 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 boyhood home of author Wright Morris is situated in a residential neighborhood one block north of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks in Central City (1970 pop. 2803), the county seat of Merrick County. W. C. Kerr, owner of the Kerr Investment Company, which handled real estate, loans, and insurance, built the house in 1893.

The vernacular house is a frame, one-story, T-shaped dwelling with three bays across the front and a centered doorway. The truncated hipped roof is highlighted by a paneled cornice and centered gabled wall dormers on each side of the front and rear portions of the house. The gablets are repeated in the window and door trim. Pilasters are placed at the corners. There are two enclosed, rear porches.

The basic floorplan remains unchanged; certain interior features such as the pine woodwork, sliding doors, window seat, and leaded glass transom window are in excellent condition. The colonnades separating the living and dining rooms have been removed.

The Lone Tree Literary Society plans a restoration of the property as a museum in honor of Wright Morris.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1893; 1910–1919 **Builder/Architect**

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Wright Morris Boyhood Home is significant to the literary heritage of Nebraska and the nation, as it symbolizes the noted author's examinations and reexaminations of his Nebraska childhood, in his fiction, essays, and photographs.

Central City, Nebraska (originally named Lone Tree, the name which Morris has used in his fiction), appears in several of Morris's most important works (Field of Vision and Ceremony at Lone Tree) and possibly disguised in other works. His use of the community can be compared to Willa Cather's use of her childhood home, Red Cloud, Nebraska, though the name of the town and even the stage of its location changes from work to work. Like Cather, Morris believes that the years of childhood are seminal to the artist. On 23 May 1978, the author wrote:

The house in which I spent my childhood, and remains the center of all my boyhood impressions, is on the southwest corner of B and D, across from the Baptist Church. I confess I feel a great attachment for it. (Wright Morris to Barbara Gorgen)

In his works, the author returns not only to the town of his childhood, but broadens his examination to include not only Nebraska but the Northern Plains. But his use of the town and the region is not a matter of "scenery", as he is interested in the effects of such places on his characters, many of whom, like Morris, spend a great deal of time in similar retrospection. This examination extends to the meaning of the "frontier experience" and its importance to 20th century America, an importance often detrimental. His doubts about the overall effect of "moving West" are rare in contemporary literature.

Wright Morris was born 6 January 1910 in Central City, Nebraska, to William H. and Ethel Grace (Osborn) Morris. His mother died shortly after he was born. In 1919, Morris moved with his father to the urban environment of Omaha, and six years later to Chicago.

Morris is regarded as one of this country's most gifted writers. He received the National Book Award in 1956 for his novel, The Field of Vision. He has published extensively and has received three Guggenheim Fellowships. From 1962–1975 he was Professor of Creative Writing at San Francisco State University.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

# 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Central City West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	4	5	8	1	6	6	0	4	5	5	2	0	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing			

C 

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

Lot 1 and East 3 feet of Lot 2, Block 19, Old Town of Lone Tree, Central City, Merrick County, Nebraska.

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barbara A. Gorgen, President (Edited by NSHS staff)

organization The Lone Tree Literary Society date August, 1980

street & number 1818 - 16th Avenue telephone 308-946-2269

city or town Central City state Nebraska

# 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 Marvin D. Knott date 8/7/80

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*for* Paul Stone Reed date 10/22/80  
Keeper of the National Register

*for* Paul Stone Reed date 10/22/80  
Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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Continuation sheet

Bibliography

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