

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

## SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 100003936

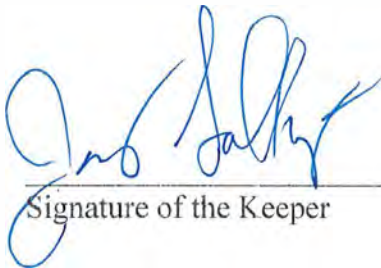
Date Listed: 5/9/2019

Property Name: Ferry, William Hawkins, House

County: Wayne

State: MI

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

5-9-2019

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

### Section 8: Period of Significance

The period of significance is hereby changed to 1964-1970. This coincides with Ferry's initial occupation of the house and the publication of his book on the architecture of Albert Kahn.

The Michigan SHPO has also supplied the following in further support of Criterion B:

Ferry lived in three locations that we know of: his parent's house at 17100 East Jefferson Avenue, Grosse Pointe, his "speculative" house, and the 1964 Ferry House. After the sale of the family home circa 1959, the art and furnishings were sold, the home was demolished (by 1965), and the property subdivided (many of these grand old mansions fell victim to the same trend - 24 such homes between 1959 and 1984). Two of Ferry's speculative houses (348 & 350? Notre Dame) have been identified, but have no evidence at this time if he lived in these, or if there are other such houses in the area. Kessler's plan for the house included an office in the northwest corner of the first floor. He is not known to have maintained an office anywhere, and, looking through research files a Feb. 7, 1965, *Detroit Free Press* article notes, "In his new residence in

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Grosse Pointe Shores, Mr. Ferry continues to work on the book which has long held his interest, a history of the architecture of Detroit.” His earliest work (lectures & exhibitions at the DIA) would have come from the cozy confines of his parent’s house. He is likely to have been active in his art and architectural history endeavors while living in the speculative house, but without knowing the exact house, we cannot address potential significance. The W.H. Ferry House is the only known, extant building with which Ferry can be associated with certainty, and the house he lived in when the most significant accomplishments of his art and architectural history career, as it were, were achieved.

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The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

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### **DISTRIBUTION:**

**National Register property file**

**Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

3936

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# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Ferry, William Hawkins, House

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 874 Lake Shore Road

City or town: Grosse Pointe Shores State: Michigan County: Wayne

Not for Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ A X B X C \_\_\_ D

<p style="font-size: 1.5em; font-family: cursive;">Susan D. Miley</p> <hr/> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em; font-family: cursive;">SHIPO</p> <hr/> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p style="font-size: 1.5em;">3/27/19</p> <hr/> <p><b>Date</b></p>
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b> _____ <b>Date</b> _____</p> <hr/> <p><b>Title :</b> _____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b> _____</p>	

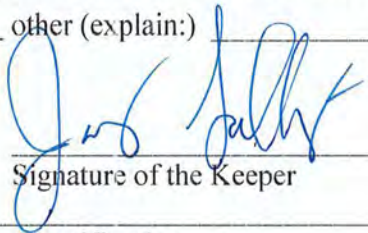
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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

  
Signature of the Keeper

5-9-2019  
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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
            
            
          

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD, CONCRETE, GLASS

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

The William Hawkins Ferry House is located at 874 Lake Shore Road, Grosse Pointe Shores, Michigan. The house is a two-story, flat-roofed, cubic-in-form, residence overlooking Lake St Clair. The house sites on a flat one-acre lot located on Lake Shore Road in Grosse Pointe Shores, surrounded by large homes of traditional styles of various periods. Constructed of precast concrete columns set on a grid with concrete floors and a steel framed flat roof, the house presents a formal street façade and side walls sheathed in vertical cypress, while an all glass façade opens to the lake. The deep roof, with seven foot-wide-overhangs, portrays a heaviness that contrasts with a floating quality of the roof provided by the slender stainless-steel supports at the top and bottom of each concrete column and a ribbon of glass encircling the house at the top of the walls. The 5,600 square foot interior is planned on a fifteen-by-fifteen-foot grid, four squares wide and four squares deep on each of the two floors, resulting in a perfect square floor plate and a cube-like volume. The second-floor floorplate is left void at certain squares in the grid to create two-story rooms on the first floor, providing views between the floors. The result is a series of cubic volumes flowing into one another, expanding and compressing as one progresses through the house. The first floor contains an entry hall, a stair hall with a spiral staircase to second floor, an office, library, den, living room, raised conversation area with fireplace, dining room, half bathroom, kitchen and two porches. The second floor contains five

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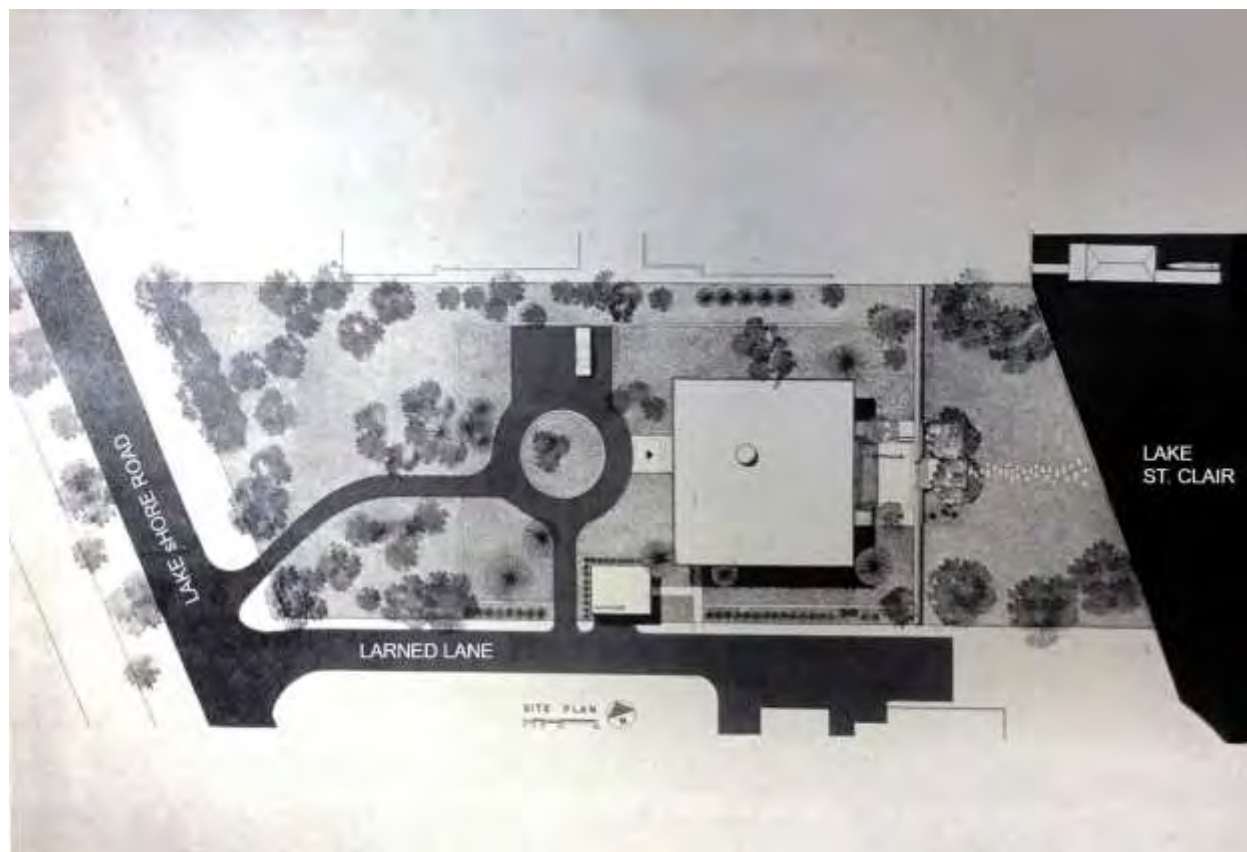
County and State

bedrooms (originally master bedroom, two guest rooms, study, and maid's quarters), three full bathrooms, a sitting room overlooking the two-story living room, and two open porches over the porches below. The house is flooded with natural light and incorporates broad plain wall surfaces as it was designed to display the original owner's modern art collection. The encircling broad overhang of the roof served to protect the artwork from direct sunlight while the large controlled glass area allows natural light to flow deep into the interior. An original garage is situated to the southwest of the house and screened by mature plantings. The garage, constructed at the same time, mimics the cubic form of the house. It has a flat roof and is sided in vertical wood siding. The house and garage have undergone very few alterations since they were constructed. The current owners have meticulously restored the finishes in the house to original specifications, and display their own modern art collection.

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## Narrative Description

### SETTING



Site plan with Lake St. Clair on the east and Lake Shore Road on the west

The William Hawkins Ferry House is located on Lake Shore Road, in the city of Grosse Pointe Shores, Wayne County, Michigan. Lake Shore Road is a continuation of Jefferson Avenue, which originates several miles south in the city of Detroit and runs through all five Grosse

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Pointes (cities of Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe Park, Grosse Pointe Farms, Grosse Pointe Woods and Grosse Pointe Shores). The house is surrounded by houses of similar scale and grandeur but built in a variety of more traditional styles over various periods. The deep lots along Lake Shore Road add to the grandeur or estate-like quality of the houses, many with gates or screening at the road side. The lot is approximately 140 feet wide and 380 feet deep running from Lake Shore Road to the shore of Lake St. Clare. The area between the road to the house is flat broad lawn that then steps gently to the lakeshore on the lake side of the house. Mature trees dot the lot and frame the house. The house is approached via a concrete driveway terminating in a circular turn-around at the front of the house. There is a parking area to the north and a two-stall wood-framed garage to the south of the circle. The garage faces away from the circle and is entered from a separate asphalt driveway along the adjacent platted thirty-foot-wide Larned Lane. The garage has a flat roof and has vertical siding that matches the house but is stained a dark color. The garage was strategically located by the architect at the south side of the lot to create the entry court and so as not to obstruct the view of the cubic form of the house. The property includes 140 feet of lake frontage. The house is situated parallel to side lot lines but is slightly off direct west to east orientation. All directions referred to here are simplified to cardinal directions.

## **EXTERIOR**

The Ferry House is a square-planned, two-story house. It presents as an elegant box secured with a massive flat roof. It is constructed as a grid pattern series of precast concrete columns supporting concrete floors and steel framed roof structure. It has west to east orientation with the main entrance on the west façade and the east façade opening to the lake.

All exterior facades are composed of four two-story bays defined by slender precast concrete columns. The concrete columns are lifted from the ground by slender stainless-steel posts and the columns are capped with identical slender stainless-steel caps supporting the roof. The thick flat roof extends broadly above and out beyond each façade. A thin continuous band of glass encircling the house below the wide overhang, together with the exposed slim stainless-steel column caps at that window-band level, makes the roof appear to be impossibly suspended or floating above the house. Each façade is approximately 62.5 feet wide.

The west, street-facing façade contains a recessed entry bay set into the second of four bays. The entry bay rises two full stories and is composed of three sections; a tall, round-arched-topped wood panel set in glass that seamlessly encompasses the door itself, and two-story fixed glass panels flanking the door panel. The view of each tall sidelight is punctuated by a centered, round-globed, white light fixture hanging from the roof overhang above. The remaining three bays of the front façade are clad in vertical cypress each with one centered window on each floor. The windows on the first floor are composed of a casement window set on a fixed glass panel below and a round arched fixed window above. The second-floor windows have the round arched window below the window instead of above, which together with the floating appearance of the roof, gives the facade a Mannerist feel.

Two of the bays on the north façade contain vertically-installed cypress with the far-left bay containing three windows on first floor and three directly above on the second floor. The



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windows themselves are the same configuration as those on the front street-facing façade. The second bay is entirely glass set in three vertical panels. The center panel contains double glass doors with glass above and two flanking panels are full two-story-height window glass. The glass doors lead from the library to the side yard. The third bay has two story vertical cypress siding and no windows, and the fourth bay houses the corner porches on first and second floors.

The less visible south façade has the same vertical cypress siding in the first three bays and the corner porches on both first and second floor in the fourth bay. Each bay is punctuated with windows lighting the kitchen and dining room on first floor and bedrooms above. The left bay contains a door to the kitchen and windows to the kitchen that are narrow vertical windows with round arched tops and bottoms. The kitchen door leads to a walkway to the one-story frame garage located on the south lot line.

The east façade facing Lake St. Clair is composed of six, two-story-tall glass panels in the two central bays with recessed open porches on the first and second floor at each corner bay. The tall glass forms the east wall of the two-story-high living room and the glass continues around each side of the living room leading to the porches. The open porches on the second-floor have simple metal railings with vertical wire balustrades which tend to disappear visually emphasizing the horizontality of the balcony slab reflecting the strong horizontality of the broad roof. Full height double glass doors open to both sides of each porch area which is reflected above in the entrances to the upper porches from the second-floor bedrooms. The first-floor porches lead out to a recessed, square terrace area centered on the living room.

The terrace is floored with mosaic designed by Detroit sculptor Glen Michaels of blue, white, and grey glazed brick pavers set in an undulating free form pattern. The terrace is recessed two steps down from the walkways from each porch while the lake facing side of the terrace is held back with a retaining wall that runs the full width of the lot. Four broad steps centered on the lake side of the terrace lead down to a low, broad bridge-like walkway flanked by planting beds. The bridge-like walkway opens to a flat lawn area and a retaining wall at the water's edge.

## **INTERIOR**

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Floorplans of the house published in *House Beautiful*, A Home for Art, September 1969

The interior of the house is laid out on a grid plan of four fifteen-by-fifteen-foot squares wide and four squares deep, forming a perfectly square floor plan. Slender precast concrete columns identical to those exposed on the exterior mark the grid and support the steel framed roof. In volume, the interior moderates between one-story spaces and two-story spaces. The tall front door leads to a two-story entry hall with two circular globe light fixtures identical to and reflecting those outside the door hanging from the ceiling. A sculptural, double-arched brace spans overhead from the door head to the opposite wall. A walnut paneled wall separates the entry hall from the stair hall in the next bay. To the south off the entry hall are coat closets, a half bath, hallway leading to the kitchen, a stairway to the partial basement and a service stairway to the maid's quarters on the second floor. To the north off the entry hall is an office.

On visual center from the front door, through the opening from the entry hall is the open stair hall with a dynamic floating circular stairway rising to the second floor with a circular ceiling inset above containing nine round skylights. The circular pattern of the staircase is emphasized in the pattern on the terrazzo floor of a dark grey circle of terrazzo beneath the stairs with radiating spokes of stainless-steel divider strips separating panels of lighter terrazzo in the remainder of the stair hall. The ceiling contains flush rectangular light fixtures radiating from the circular stairs. The thick, light colored polished terrazzo stairway treads seem to float as they spin around the center post. A curving banister of stainless-steel balustrades with a white handrail follows the curvature of the stairs. The back wall of the stair hall is walnut paneling reflecting the front entry wall.

The stair hall opens on the south to the large L-shaped living room. The living room is both one and two stories in height. The first bay of the living room off the stair hall is two stories

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providing views back and forth from the first and second floor stair halls. The two center bays of the living room are one story with one of those bays being a conversation area up two steps from, and overlooking, the living area. The conversation area has a fireplace on center of the north wall, built-in seating around the perimeter, and a walnut wood parquet treatment on the ceiling, all creating an intimate conversation area that contrasts with the surrounding spaces. The double bay living area on the east end is two stories in height with a full height glass wall overlooking the lake and glass walls on either side. Double glass doors lead to porches on either side of the two-story portion of the living room.

To the north of the stair hall is a library with access to the north lawn and to one of the two porches overlooking the lake. A series of walnut folding doors divides the library to create a den on the east end. To the south of the living room is the dining room, with access to the second porch and the kitchen. Behind the dining room is the kitchen that has been updated in the spirit of the original kitchen.

The second floor contains the master bedroom with master bath, two guestrooms with shared bath between the rooms, a study (now bedroom), a sitting room, and maid's quarters (now bedroom) with bath. The stair hall on the second floor overlooks the library on the north and the living room on the south. The sitting room overlooks the two-story section of the living room below. The master bedroom and one of the guest rooms open to second floor porches.

## **GARAGE**

A one-story, two-car, wood-frame garage is located along the south lot line, just southwest of the house. The flat-roofed garage is sided with vertical tongue and groove siding matching the house, though currently stained a darker color. The two-car garage opens with a single large door to Larned Lane. A walking door is located on the east side of the garage, leading to a walkway to the kitchen door. The garage is hidden by landscaping when viewing the house from the circular drive.

## **INTEGRITY**

The house and garage retain a high degree of historic integrity as they have remained essentially unaltered through subsequent owners. The current owners have restored the house based on original architectural drawings and specifications. A previous kitchen remodeling was corrected with a kitchen layout that matches the original layout including reinstallation of the oblong windows that had been removed but stored in the basement. Pavers from the terrace were also found in the basement and the terrace was restored based on original photographs. The finish on the exterior cypress of the house had darkened with age but has been restored to its original clear natural finish appearance.

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## 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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

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Architecture  
Social History  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
1964  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**  
1964  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)  
Ferry, William. Hawkins  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**  
Kessler, William H., architect with Meathe, Kessler and Associates  
Michaels, Glen, sculptor  
Johnson, Carl, landscape architect

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The William Hawkins Ferry House is significant at the local level under Criterion B as the home of architectural historian, art patron, and art collector, William Hawkins Ferry. Ferry, the scion of one of Detroit's prominent families, continued the family tradition of investing family energies and fortune in perpetuating and promoting the arts in Detroit. Ferry further established himself as a significant supporter of the arts and architecture in Detroit through his support of the various cultural institutions, organizations, and committees. His chief impact, however, was made through his support of the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), where he served as a long-time advisor, donor, curator, and art buyer, independently of his family. His contribution of time, money, and knowledge resulted in the DIA's outstanding collection of Modern Art. Ferry is also significant as an architectural historian documenting and advocating for the preservation of Detroit's architectural history. He is the author of several articles and books on Detroit architecture including the definitive book *Buildings of Detroit, A History* first published in 1968, and the first monograph on Albert Kahn published in 1970. The Ferry House is also significant at the local level under Criterion C as an outstanding residential design of Detroit-based modernist architect William H. Kessler. Ferry hired Kessler to design a modern house on the shores of Lake Saint Clair to serve as a home and as a gallery for his Modern Art collection. The Ferry House was the largest of Kessler's residential commissions at the time and remains one his best residential works. Kessler was recognized with numerous state and national awards during his career and was honored as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1968. The Ferry House also stands out among the few modern houses built in the Grosse Pointes during the mid-twentieth century period. Together, Ferry and Kessler created a masterpiece, completed in 1964, that served as a residence, art gallery, and center for social events for metropolitan Detroit's art community. The Ferry House was featured in numerous news articles and publications after its construction, including the cover story in the September 1969 issue of *House Beautiful*. The house also won *Architectural Record's* Award of Excellence in 1965 and was featured in their *Record Houses of 1965* publication.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **FERRY FAMILY HISTORY**

William Hawkins Ferry (1914-1988) was one of four children of Dexter Mason Ferry, Jr., and Jeanette (Hawkins) Ferry. The Ferry family was prominent in the Detroit business, philanthropic and political arenas. His grandfather, Dexter Mason Ferry (1833-1907) came to Detroit from New York state in 1854 to work at S. Dow Elwood and Co. booksellers and supplemented his income by working nights at M.T. Gardner and Company, a seed company. D.M. Ferry quickly rose to the position of partner in the renamed Gardner, Church, and Ferry Seed Company and eventually gained a controlling interest in the company and renamed it D.M. Ferry & Co in 1879.

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This company prospered and dominated the national seed market into the twentieth century. It was one of the first companies to package vegetable and flower seeds specifically selected for area and climate to be sold in retail stores. The elder Ferry invested in real estate around Detroit, served on numerous boards, provided financial gifts to churches, Olivet College, the University of Michigan, Grace Hospital which later merged with Harper Hospital to become the Detroit Medical Center, and the Art Loan Exhibit which later became the Detroit Museum of Art, and which, in time, became the Detroit Institute of Arts. D.M. Ferry served as chairman of the Republican State Central Committee from 1896-1898 and ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1900. Upon the death of the elder Ferry, Dexter Mason Ferry, Jr (1873-1959), W. Hawkins' father, took over the D.M. Ferry & Co. Ferry, Jr. oversaw the company's continued growth through its merger with the C.C. Morse Co. of San Francisco, securing continued national and international dominance in the seed market. D.M. Ferry, Jr. continued at the head of the company until 1941, and like his father, held positions on boards of prominent Detroit banks and companies while also continuing philanthropic work. Ferry Jr. became a primary benefactor of the Detroit Institute of Arts from 1913-1917. Following Ferry Jr.'s death in 1959, the third generation--his children Dexter III, W. Hawkins, Edith, and Jeanette--remained active in local business and philanthropic activities. Dexter III took over the seed company and W. Hawkins focused on art and architecture.

### **WILLIAM HAWKINS FERRY**

William Hawkins Ferry, who went by W. Hawkins or simply Hawkins, was born in Detroit in 1914. He spent his younger years in his family's mansion on Jefferson Avenue in Grosse Pointe on the western shore of Lake St. Clair. The family house was designed by New York architects Trowbridge and Ackerman, Architects and built in 1915. The Grosse Pointes (cities of Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe Park, Grosse Pointe Farms, Grosse Pointe Woods and Grosse Point Shores), and particularly the area along the shoreline of Lake St. Clair via Jefferson Avenue which turns into Lake Shore Road, became the favored location for Detroit's wealthy to build first summer houses, then substantial estates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to the Ferrys, other significant Detroiters such as Edsel B. Ford and Horace E. Dodge built residences there. Hawkins attended Cranbrook School for Boys, a private preparatory school in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, then completed an undergraduate degree at Harvard University in 1937, and studied architecture at the Harvard School of Design for two years. While the design school at that time was dominated by Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer and their modernist ideology, Ferry stated in a 1974 oral interview that he did not attend their classes as they were teaching candidates for a Master of Architecture degree and he was working towards a Bachelor of Architecture degree.<sup>1</sup>

After completing his work at Harvard, Hawkins returned to Grosse Pointe and took up residency on the third floor of his family's Jefferson Avenue home. He designed a few speculative houses in the Grosse Pointe and Detroit area, but his architectural design career was limited and instead he turned his attention to art and architectural history. Upon his father's death in 1959 and the

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<sup>1</sup> Oral history interview with W. Hawkins Ferry, 1974 Jan. 17. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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sale of the family home, Ferry moved into one of his speculative houses, which he later called his “transitional house.”<sup>2</sup> He remained there until 1964, when the Ferry House was completed.

Following the family tradition of cultural patronage, W. Hawkins became an important donor, advisor, and trustee to the Detroit Institute of Arts. Ferry served as a trustee of the Founders Society, the museum’s governance committee, from 1960 until his death in January 1988. In 1948 he joined the Metropolitan Art Association, a group that sponsored lectures at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) by artists and art historians. The group evolved into the Friends of Modern Art with Ferry serving as president from 1963 until his death. Ferry was largely responsible for the expansive friends’ program of lectures and exhibitions focused on architecture as well as art. He served as Advisor to the City of Detroit’s Arts Commission and was Honorary Curator of Architecture for the DIA. He selected, purchased, and donated classical twentieth-century art, Abstract Expressionism, and contemporary sculpture with an eye to the museum’s needs and acquired pieces specifically for the museum. His first work selected and donated to the museum in 1948 was *Red Over Black* by László Moholy-Nagy, a Hungarian painter and photographer who was an instructor at the Bauhaus, and later the New Bauhaus in Chicago, that developed into the Illinois Institute of Technology. This piece by Moholy-Nagy joined his earlier work, *Space Modulator*, already in the museum’s collection.<sup>3</sup> Writing in 1950, Virginia Harriman observed that construction of *Red Over Black* “is in itself an important item,” its plastic, paint, and screen – the products of modern invention – are presented in an “organized artistic whole.”<sup>4</sup> Later Ferry became interested in the works of Surrealist artists and then such twentieth century modern masters as Pablo Picasso and Fernand Leger as well as many others, and added their work to the DIA collection.

Pauline Sterling, writing in the *Detroit Free Press*, observed that Ferry, “a tall, reserved bachelor, who bears a very old Detroit family name, is one of this country’s greatest experts on modern and contemporary art. He is a man who has given the Institute of Arts 18 of its most important modern pieces. He is the man who has one of the most discriminating art collections in the city.”<sup>5</sup>

With his architectural training, W. Hawkins Ferry had developed a great appreciation of architecture. Understanding the importance of Detroit’s architectural history, Ferry organized an exhibition on Detroit architecture installed in the Detroit Institute of Art in 1943. The exhibition may have been an outgrowth of Ferry’s lectures at the DIA on the “Opportunities for Modern Architecture in Detroit” during the early 1940s.

The *Detroit Free Press* reported on the exhibition in an article titled *Detroit’s Past is Reviewed*:<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Virginia Harriman. “Red over Black.” *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*. Vol. XXIX, No. 1, 1949-1950, pp. 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Sterling, Pauline, “W. Hawkins Ferry, Gentleman Scholar.” *Detroit Free Press* July 24, 1966

<sup>6</sup> *Detroit’s Past is Reviewed*, *Detroit Free Press*, February 28, 1943.



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Although a Detroit architect, the late Albert Kahn, with his idea of building an entire factory under one roof, has influenced modern industrial architecture all over the world, Detroit itself has reflected many architectural influences in the years between 1823 and 1943, as the exhibition of a cross-section of Detroit architecture, opening Tuesday at the Detroit Institute of Arts, will show.

The exhibit has been arranged by Hawkins Ferry, Detroit architect, who has assembled a collection of photographs and architects' drawings which trace Detroit's architectural past.

The exhibition was accompanied by Ferry's fourteen-page essay in the March 1943 *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* in which he argued that "the already ageing structures of Detroit [are] the key to an understanding of the present."<sup>7</sup> Modern architecture, meanwhile, provided "one of the greatest promises for the world of tomorrow" as it embodied the "true outgrowth of democratic freedom" and offered a future of "limitless possibilities."<sup>8</sup>

In addition to an appreciation of past periods of architecture, Ferry was a proponent of modern design. He wrote in his essay in the *Bulletin*, "the development of new building methods in steel, concrete, wood and glass has given architecture a greater flexibility and a new beauty characteristic of our times. Today modern architecture stands ready to transform our cities and our lives."<sup>9</sup>

W. Hawkins Ferry was an instructor in Art and Architectural History at Wayne State University (WSU) and was active in the design of one of the WSU's urban campus's primary spines known as Ferry Mall and was responsible for the donation and installation of a large abstract modern sculpture by Robert Murray located at Ferry Plaza on the campus. As early as the beginning of the 1940s he wrote a series of articles on Detroit architectural styles and buildings published by the Michigan Society of Architects. One notable example is his nine-page article titled "A Suburb of Good Taste" in the March 1956 issue of the *Michigan Society of Architects Bulletin*, in which Ferry provides extensive information, analysis, and photographs of forty-five architecturally-distinctive homes in the Grosse Pointes. This work and years of meticulous research, interviews with many prominent architects, and collecting and commissioning photographs, culminated in the 1968 publication of Ferry's definitive book on Detroit area architecture, *The Buildings of Detroit: A History*. Ferry revised the book in 1980 adding the John Portman-designed Renaissance Center and other contemporary works. The book spans from Detroit's origins as a fur trading post in the early 1700s to its rise to the capitol of automotive industry and a major industrial city. The book was reprinted in 2012 with a forward by *Detroit Free Press* architectural critic John Gallagher. In a review of books on American architecture published in the *New York Times* on September 7, 1969, historian Wayne Andrews wrote:

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<sup>7</sup> Hawkins Ferry. "Representative Detroit Buildings a Cross Section of Architecture, 1823-1943." *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*. March 1943, p. 47.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

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Whether he is describing the Italian villas along the Detroit River laid out in the 1850s by A.J. Davis, Charles L. Freer's mansion with its Whistler collection, or the first Packard Factory planned by Albert Kahn, Mr. Ferry never forgets to set the stage. The candles are always lit in the drawing room and the anticipations of businessmen are always comprehended. He knows, as do few other architectural historians, that the art of architecture consists in response to the ambition of a certain instant. This is another way of saying that he is an architectural historian with the imagination of an architect.<sup>10</sup>

In 1970 Ferry published *Legacy of Albert Kahn*, the first monograph on the work of Detroit architect Albert Kahn. The book served as a catalogue for a major retrospective exhibition at the DIA tracing Kahn's significant contributions to the development of modern industrial architecture as well as his commercial, civic, institutional, and domestic work. Ferry became the DIA's Honorary Curator of Architecture and served on numerous boards and committees. In 1959 he was appointed by then-Governor William Milliken to serve on a joint legislative-executive committee to develop a plan for a new state capitol (a plan that was presented but never executed). Ferry was named a honorary member of the Michigan Society of Architects in 1954, and was awarded with a Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from Wayne State University in 1972.

W. Hawkins Ferry and his brother Dexter M. Ferry III contributed to the funding for the construction of the Grosse Pointe Central Public Library building in 1951. Hawkins personally assisted in the selection of Marcel Breuer as the architect for the building and provided funding for artwork to be incorporated into the building. He assisted Breuer in the selection of major works of art to be placed in the library, such a Wassily Kandinsky piece and an Alexander Calder mobile that hangs in the library's main reading room. The library building was dedicated on January 25, 1953, with Dexter M. Ferry III cutting the ribbon and W. Hawkins Ferry presenting the art objects.

In addition to collecting pieces for his own personal collection and display, Ferry continued to purchase works for the Detroit Institute of Arts. The art Ferry sought, purchased, and donated to the DIA was based on the needs of the DIA Modern Art collection whereas the art he collected for his personal collection was based on his personal likes and specific placement in his house. The art he had purchased for the DIA together with his personal collection included works of such artists as Pablo Picasso, Joan Miro, Franz Kline, Alexander Calder, Robert Motherwell, Robert Rauschenberg, Barnett Newman, Richard Serra, Jean Arp, Max Bill, Lee Bontecou, James Brooks, Henry Moore, and others. Professor Joshua C. Taylor of the University of Chicago wrote in the introduction of the catalogue for the 1966 *W. Hawkins Ferry Collection* exhibition held at the Detroit Institute of Arts:<sup>11</sup>

For the works (Ferry) purchased for the Detroit Institute of Art, the context has been, in a general sense, historical: the works are by major figures in contemporary art and well

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<sup>10</sup> Andrews, Wayne, *American Architecture*, *New York Times*, September 7, 1968

<sup>11</sup> The W. Hawkins Ferry Collection, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1966

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exemplify the characteristic achievements of these artists. The range is great, from Juan Gris to Vasarely and Soulages, from Moholy-Nagy (one of his earliest purchases) to Somaini. Yet the collection is made with keen discernment.

In the same introduction, Taylor goes on to describe Ferry's private collection he assembled for display in his house, which later became part of the DIA collection at Ferry's death:

The context of Mr. Ferry's private collection is, impressively, the collection itself. He has assembled a group of works within an architectural framework in such a way that they provide their own distinctive orchestration. Each painting or piece of sculpture is a theme in itself—no two are at all alike—yet each theme takes on a heightened meaning because of the nature of the encounter.

In a *Detroit Free Press* article on July 24, 1966, about the 1966 exhibition, *Free Press* art critic Morley Driver, describes Ferry as a man who "has innate taste; who doesn't buy for the name and never makes mistakes."<sup>12</sup> A *Detroit free Press* article on October 9, 1966, under the headline "Mr. Ferry, Our Leading Collector, Evaluates his Collection" boasts "a star studded guest list, traveling far to pay tribute" and goes on to state,<sup>13</sup>

The expensive art collected by W. Hawkins Ferry is very contemporary—so contemporary that some collectors in Detroit have criticized parts of his collection as too avant-garde, to "far-out" for their tastes. Much of his criticism should be stilled by the guest list of "defense witnesses" who will turn out for tomorrow night's Exhibition Preview and Testimonial Dinner.

The art collectors of America have rallied behind Ferry. Of the 18 internationally-known collectors invited, 15 will be in Detroit; those who declined did so only because of previous commitments.

They will be here to honor a fellow-collector and show their approval of his generosity in supporting 20th century and contemporary art. A look at the range of their collections will prove the value of their support.

The article goes on to describe the collections of nine art collectors from across the United States, and features ten works of art in the collection with Ferry's words on why he selected them.

One of Ferry's last public appearances occurred at the DIA in 1987 at a celebration in his honor that coincided with the second exhibition of Ferry's gifts and private art collection. In an article in the *Detroit Free Press* on May 24, 1987, that announced upcoming events to honor Ferry, art critic Marsha Miro calls W. Hawkins Ferry "one of the DIA's most prescient patrons." At the time of that exhibition, he was honored with a dinner chaired by then Governor and Mrs. James

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<sup>12</sup> Sterling, Pauline, "W. Hawkins Ferry, Gentleman Scholar." *Detroit Free Press* July 24, 1966

<sup>13</sup> The Detroit Free Press, October 9, 1966

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Blanchard, Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young, and Joseph and Jean Hudson. The DIA's Friends of Modern Art had raised over \$200,000 to purchase the sculpture "Moonmad" by Surrealist artist Max Ernst for the museum's permanent collection, a work acquired in Ferry's honor. In the catalogue for the DIA's 1987 exhibition *The W. Hawkins Ferry Collection*, Jan van der Marck the DIA curator of twentieth century art writes, "If it had not been for this one man's means and mettle, Detroiters would have stood a far lesser chance of seeing significant modern and contemporary art in their museum."<sup>14</sup> William Hawkins Ferry died in his home in January 1988. His obituary in the *New York Times* noted his accomplishments and contributions to the city of Detroit, its cultural institutions, and its artistic legacy.

In addition to his contributions and bequeaths to the DIA, W. Hawkins Ferry was a supporter of the University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA) and provided funds to establish the UMMA W. Hawkins Ferry Fund. To date the fund has made possible the purchase of 173 works "which has allowed the museum to target gaps in the collection and purchase significant works of art previously out of reach."<sup>15</sup> Notably, the Smithsonian Archives of American Art maintains a copy of Ferry's papers covering 1947-1973. The letters include correspondence and other materials from Ferry's work with Detroit cultural institutions as well as letters from dealers and artists from whom Ferry purchased works of art.

## **THE WILLIAM HAWKINS FERRY HOUSE**

Hawkins Ferry dreamed of building a house for his art collection. As he recounts in the catalogue for the Detroit Institute of Arts 1966 exhibition of *The W. Hawkins Ferry Collection*:<sup>16</sup>

As I become more involved with art, I began to think more in terms of the relationship between art and architecture. All my life I had dreamed of the house I would one day inhabit that would be the ultimate in modern architecture. There would be a two-story living room with a dramatic staircase. I had always lived on Lake St. Clair; and I pictured one side of the room being all glass, thus allowing me to appreciate the beauty of the lake in the changing moods of the passing seasons. I did not need much space for everyday living; but the house would be more than mere habitation; it would be a place where art could be enjoyed in a personal, informal setting.

Ferry had spent most of his life up to this point on Lake St. Clair. Consequently, he sought a lot on Lake St. Clair for his dream house and settled on a parcel that contained an old frame house, a grove of old spruce trees, and sweeping views of the lake. Ferry selected Detroit architect William H. Kessler to design his house. Ferry was familiar with several houses in the area designed by the architectural firm of Meathe, Kessler and Associates and knew William H. Kessler, the designer in the firm, through their joint work on the State Capitol planning committee. Kessler had already gained state and national recognition for his work and Ferry

<sup>14</sup> Marsha Miro. "The Modern Vision of W. Hawkins Ferry." *Detroit Free Press*, May 24, 1987

<sup>15</sup> Kerstin Barndt & Carla M. Sinopoli, *Object Lessons & the Formation Knowledge: the U O M Museums, Libraries & \* Collections 1817-2017*, U of M Press 2017

<sup>16</sup> *The W. Hawkins Ferry Collection*, Detroit Institute of Art, 1966

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thought he was “a man of considerable talent and sensitivity; and the drawings he produced exceeded my fondest hopes.”<sup>17</sup> Ferry may have admired Kessler as fellow Harvard graduate and artist. Kessler himself was initially set on being an artist before leaving the Chicago Institute of Design (founded as the New Bauhaus School by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and evolved into the Illinois Institute of Technology) for the Harvard School of Design. Kessler had studied under some of the very artists that Ferry admired such as Lazlo Moholy-Nagy and Marcel Breuer. Together Ferry and Kessler created a masterful showplace for display of art.

Kessler had a sympathetic client with an architectural training to work with. Utilizing his knowledge and understanding of the principals of International style modern design from Gropius together with an understanding of New Formalism gained through working in Minoru Yamasaki’s office, Kessler created a monumental, yet elegant residence that functioned well as both a museum of art and a home. Kessler’s understanding of Yamasaki’s tenant of serenity and delight as well as his earlier art training may have resulted in the introduction of the round arched windows, the circular staircase, circular skylights and variations of space as one moves through the house. Kessler designed a house that functions well for large gatherings yet offers intimate spaces for conversation, contemplation and serenity while delighting the occupants with variety in spaces, surprise elements such as the contrast between strict rectilinearity and circles, and varied vantage points for viewing the art, the architecture, and the natural beauty of the site. The house became a center for the metropolitan Detroit art world with Hawkins opening the house for benefits, parties and gatherings

Designing the house became a synthesis of architecture, art, and landscape. Kessler designed the house with vantage points for art from many directions and levels including some spaces designed with specific pieces of art in mind. The natural beauty of the lake was taken advantage of with the glass wall facing the lake. Ferry hired landscape Carl Johnson of Johnson, Johnson and Roy (JJR), to design the landscape. JJR later merged with Smith, Hinchman and Grylls as it became Smith Group. Johnson created a series of terraces descending from the Ferry House to the lake. Local sculptor Glen Michaels was commissioned to design the pavement on the prominent terrace area on center of the living room view. Michaels (1927- ) is a Detroit area sculptor who attended Yale University and received a Master of Fine Art degree from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Michaels is best known for his architectural installations including works in People Mover stations in Detroit, Michigan, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, Baldwin Library in Birmingham, Michigan, and Michigan Library and Historical Center Building in Lansing, Michigan. For the terrace at the Ferry House, Michaels designed a surface of paver bricks glazed in shades of blue to grey to white laid in an undulating abstract pattern to simulate the movement of the lake’s waves and reflection from the water. After presenting a model for Ferry’s approval, the specially glazed bricks were laid and cut to fit into place under Michaels’ supervision.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

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Historical photograph, taken shortly after Ferry moved into the house, shows the Glen Michaels-designed mosaic floored terrace, and the large colorful collage, *Trinity*, (1962) by Adolph Gottlieb on the upper wall of the living room.

As the house was under construction, Ferry continued to collect art pieces for display in special places in the house. Kessler wanted a large piece of sculpture as a focal point in the two-story space of the living room at the entrance from the stair hall. Ferry commissioned Cranbrook trained sculptor Harry Bertoia to design a piece for that space. Bertoia produced six sketches for pieces and Ferry and Kessler selected the one they wanted. When installed, the sculpture hung from the ceiling and was a sheath of brass-coated steel rods, fourteen feet in height. Some of the rods were terminated in red, turquoise and black globules that reflected light. Bertoia titled the

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piece *The Comet* and it became one of the focal points of the house until it was removed after Ferry's death.



Historical photograph taken shortly after Ferry moved into the house with the Harry Bertoia sculpture "The Comet" (1964) hanging in a two section of the living room.

Additional work displayed in the house included a sculpture by Pietro Consagra, placed at the head of the spiral staircase; a large collage by Conrad Marci-Relli, placed on a wall in the living room; and a painting by Kumi Sugai, hung in the library above Barcelona chairs designed by Mies van der Rohe.

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A work by renowned abstract expressionist painter, Adolph Gottlieb, *Trinity*, completed in 1962, was placed on the second-floor west wall of the living room, appearing as if it were a mural painted specifically for the house.

Ferry also acquired and placed Picasso's *Seated Woman* (1960) in a commanding location at the head of the dining room, with a painting by American Expressionist James Brooks on a side wall. A smaller painting by French artist Jean Debuffet was on the opposite wall. A painting by American optical artist Richard Anuszkiewicz hung in a second floor sitting room. Ferry continued to collect and display significant pieces of art throughout the house, and the pieces became part of the DIA collection upon his death.

Upon completion in 1964 the house received recognition including a feature in the *Detroit Free Press* on February 7, 1965, where noted *Detroit Free Press* writer, Lillian Jackson Braun, wrote in 1965 that the Ferry House is "architectural art of a high order... it has the simplicity that speaks genuine elegance. Its drama lies in imposing vistas. It is full of architectural surprises."<sup>18</sup> The Ferry House was also featured on the cover of *House Beautiful* magazine in September 1969, and in *Record Houses of 1965* magazine published by *Architectural Record*. An article in the *New York Times* on July 1966 titled "The Scene in Grosse Pointe, Why Go Away, We're Already Here" features a photograph of the living room of the house with Mr. Ferry seated near Alberto Giacometti's 1960 nine-foot-tall sculpture "Grand femme debut II". The house was also featured in January 1965 *Interiors* magazine in an illustrated article "A Glass House for a Bachelor Art Collector."

The Ferry House is notable as a fine example of the Modern Movement located in a set of communities notable for their classically designed homes. Indeed, the Grosse Pointes developed first as a summer retreat for wealthy Detroiters, and eventually evolved in a locus of significant estates for these individuals. At the turn of the twentieth century the Grosse Pointes featured "some of the finest examples of Tudor, Georgian, French and Italian Renaissance in the world," and designed by an array of significant architects, including Albert Kahn, George D. Mason, Alexander Trowbridge, Walter McFarlane, John Russell Pope, Robert O. Derrick, Ralph Adams Cram, Horace Trumbauer, and others.<sup>19</sup> Beginning in the 1950s, however, these massive estates began to be demolished and the land subdivided for smaller, yet still substantial residences. The most well-known example of this trend was the demise of Rose Terrace, the estate of Anna Thompson Dodge, wife of Horace E. Dodge. Rose Terrace was constructed in 1934 on a nine-acre site, and at a cost of four million dollars. The 42,000-square-foot, French-style chateau featured forty-two rooms and twenty baths. The building was ultimately demolished in 1976. Also notable, and still extant, is the National Register-listed (2015) Grosse Pointe Yacht Club in Grosse Pointe Shores. The yacht club was conceived by Boston architect Guy Lowell and completed by his associates after his death in 1929.

At the same time as these residences were slowly being demolished and the sites redeveloped, the Modern Movement challenged architectural tradition. Significant mid-twentieth century

<sup>18</sup> Lillian Braun. "High Drama Behind the Black Door." *Detroit Free Press*. February 7, 1965.

<sup>19</sup> Neal Shine. "Why the Mansions Disappear." *Detroit Free Press*. January 3, 1964.



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buildings were constructed throughout Detroit and in its metropolitan suburbs. The Grosse Pointes, however, largely held fast. Few modern buildings are found in the Grosse Pointes, collectively, today, and fewer still in Grosse Pointe Shores. Not only is the Ferry House a significant work in its own right, it stands out as an exquisitely executed example of modern architecture in a community of traditional architectural forms.

### **WILLIAM H. KESSLER, FAIA**

William H. Kessler (1924-2002) worked closely with Ferry in realizing Ferry's dream of a house for himself and his art. At the time, Kessler was the head designer at Meathe, Kessler and Associates, Architects. McClurg, McClurg, Paxton and Mikle were the structural engineers for the house and the builder was Crane Construction.

Kessler moved to Michigan in 1951 as part of the movement of young design talent to Michigan in the mid-twentieth century attracted to the growing automotive industry, modern furniture manufacturing, renowned educational institutions, and nationally recognized architectural firms. Upon graduating from Harvard School of design, Kessler was encouraged by Walter Gropius to stay and teach at Harvard but left after a year of teaching when he was recruited by Minoru Yamasaki to join his firm in Detroit as a designer. After five years with Yamasaki, Kessler ventured out with colleague Philip Meathe to establish their own Detroit based architectural firm with Kessler as the lead designer. A twenty-three-page article titled *Detroit's New Generation* published in the August 1961 issue of *Progressive Architecture*, identified Kessler as one of the rising stars among Detroit's architects. The article discusses "The Eminent Precursors" including Albert Kahn, Eliel Saarinen, Eero Saarinen, and Minoru Yamasaki and their role in attracting and training this new generation of architects. In discussing the work of Meathe, Kessler and Associates, the article stated "with a clear division of responsibilities between the two principals, the firm has been exceptionally active. It already has four national AIA awards to its credit."<sup>20</sup>

The William Hawkins Ferry House stands out in Kessler's portfolio of residential design work. It was designed at a time that Kessler's firm was growing with more commercial and institutional work and Kessler could be selective on residential commissions he accepted. By 1965 residential commissions accounted for less than one percent of the firm's work. The Ferry House was his largest residential commission at that point in his career.

A summary of Kessler's career and accomplishments, prepared by Rob Yallop of Lord, Aeck & Sargent Architecture, was included in the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for the William and Margot (Walbrecker) Kessler House in 2013.<sup>21</sup> That summary follows here:

William Kessler was born December 15, 1924, in Reading, Pennsylvania. His family lived in Wyomissing, a suburb of Reading that was originally planned by

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<sup>20</sup> *Detroit's New Generation, Progressive Architecture*, August 1961, p 93-117

<sup>21</sup> National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Kessler, William and Margot (Walbrecker) House, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, on 9/30/2013

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landscape architect and civic planner Elbert Peets. Kessler was born into an affluent family that owned a successful lumber and building materials supply business, the Central Lumber Company, in Reading. In the mid-1930s Kessler's father, Fred H. Kessler, conceived a business plan to consolidate the buying power of several large lumber companies (many of whom were direct competitors) to take advantage of the discounts and efficiencies that "group buying" would provide. He approached several companies throughout Pennsylvania and, together with James Buckley, established the Lumberman's Merchandising Corporation (LMC). LMC is still in business today with 365 stockholder companies and a sales volume of over two billion dollars a year.

Kessler attended Wyomissing High School where he developed an appreciation for art. He began painting at an early age and for several years submitted his works to the "Young America Paints" exhibition organized by the Museum of Natural History and Art in New York. While still in high school he was encouraged by one of his teachers to pursue his artistic interests and enrolled at the Chicago Institute of Design (organized in 1937 as the New Bauhaus). He entered the school intending to pursue an education in art and photography. While at school his interests were expanded to include sculpture and industrial design. Realizing that architecture combined many of his interests he switched programs. In 1942 he attended a six-week summer course at Somonauk, Illinois, where he became acquainted with the architecture faculty. This relationship is evidenced by a wonderful candid photograph of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Serge Chermayeff taken by Kessler and held in the Institute's archives. Kessler's education was interrupted when he enlisted in the army during World War II. He was stationed near Omaha, Nebraska, where he trained as a pilot. As he was preparing for duty overseas, the war ended. He was discharged from the military and shortly thereafter he married Margot Walbrecker, his childhood sweetheart, whom he had grown up with in Wyomissing.

Following his marriage, Kessler returned to Chicago to resume his education. He graduated in 1948 with a BA in architecture from the Chicago Institute of Design. According to Kessler, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Gyorgy Kepes, Serge Chermayeff, and Richard Filipowski were his primary influences while at the Institute of Design. Filipowski, of whom Kessler was particularly fond, was a sculptor who went on to teach at M.I.T. Recognizing Kessler's talents, the faculty at the Institute encouraged him to continue his architectural education under Walter Gropius at Harvard. Kessler attended the Graduate School of Design for three years, graduating with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1950. Upon graduation he was asked by Walter Gropius to stay on at the school as an instructor, which he did for about a year. While still in Cambridge he was recruited by Minoru Yamasaki to move to Detroit and join Leinweber, Yamasaki & Hellmuth as a designer. Kessler moved to Michigan and was assigned to work on the design of several new facilities for the Grosse Pointe University School in Grosse Pointe Woods.

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Yamasaki is described in Michigan's statewide context on Modernism as one of seven important "epicenters" that contributed to the advancement and dissemination of Modernism in Michigan during the mid-century. Yamasaki, who grew up and was educated in Washington state, came to Michigan from New York in 1945 as chief designer for the Detroit architectural firm of Smith, Hinchman & Grylls. By 1949 Yamasaki established his own practice with George Hellmuth and Joseph Leinweber, who had also left Smith, Hinchman & Grylls. In the early 1950s, during the time Kessler was employed by the firm, Yamasaki received several important commissions including an update to the Wayne State University master plan, the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in Saint Louis, and the U. S. consulate in Kobe, Japan.

Although it was Kessler's intention to remain in Michigan for only a few years, he stayed on with the Yamasaki firm for about five years as he wanted to see the Grosse Pointe University School project through to completion. Putting his plans to leave Michigan aside, Kessler made the decision to establish an independent practice and joined with fellow Yamasaki employee Philip Meathe to form Meathe, Kessler & Associates. Meathe, who was Director of Production for Yamasaki, brought a strong business sense and background in management to the practice while Kessler would oversee design. Initially, because Meathe was interested in pursuing design-build opportunities, Harry Smith, a residential builder and developer, was brought on as a partner in the new firm. The firm did not realize much success in this market area and Smith left after only a few years. During their first years of operation, the firm relied heavily on residential commissions with close to half (forty-one percent) of their work coming from this market sector in their first year of business. Because Meathe and Kessler left Yamasaki's firm on good terms, occasionally Yamasaki would refer clients to the small upstart firm. A number of their early residential designs received AIA citations and the firm's reputation began to grow. This resulted in the firm pursuing larger, more complex projects including commercial, education and public housing work. As work increased for the firm, staff was added by hiring employees from Yamasaki's office and by attracting young emerging talent from the University of Michigan. It was during this period of growth that Kessler designed his home on Cadieux Road. By 1965 residential commissions accounted for only 1% of the firm's work.

One of the firm's early successes was the design of the Mount Clemens Public Housing project (1960) for which they won a national AIA award. More importantly, however, the firm received national exposure and was subsequently invited to submit proposals for similar projects throughout the state and across the country. The Mount Clemens project was recognized for the "human quality" of the design and also incorporated a folded-plate or undulating roof form. The firm went on to design several other housing projects including the City of Wayne

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Public Housing complex and another public housing project in Oberlin, Ohio (1964).

In the early and mid-1960s the firm expanded its practice to include more commercial, educational and institutional work. Projects completed during this period include design of the Mount Clements Savings and Loan building (1961), and master planning and the design of several buildings on the campuses of Grand Valley State University and Olivet College in Michigan and the State University of New York, Stony Brook, Long Island. In 1968, however, the same year Kessler was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects (FAIA), Kessler and Meathe dissolved their partnership. Kessler established an independent practice, William Kessler Associates, and Philip Meathe went on to work with Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, where he would eventually become president of the firm.

Kessler's practice continued to realize success over the next several decades largely based on his reputation as a talented designer. The 1970s marked a period of transition for the firm as the practice expanded into the historic preservation market and established a niche restoring historic theaters. The firm completed historic theater restoration projects all over the country and received numerous awards for their work. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the Kessler firm designed a number of significant projects throughout Michigan including the Center for Creative Studies (1975), the Coleman Young Recreation Center (1976), the Detroit Science Center (1978), the Detroit Receiving Hospital (1980) in Detroit and the State of Michigan Library and Historical Center Building (1988) in Lansing. Outside of the state, the firm also completed major projects including design of the School of Public Health at Harvard University and the WPRI-TV building in Rhode Island. William Kessler & Associates was recognized for its design work receiving over fifty AIA awards including the prestigious Bartlet Award acknowledging Kessler's effort to eliminate barriers to the handicapped in his design of the Center for Creative Studies.

William Kessler Associates became, Kessler, Francis, Cardoza Architects (KFCA) when the firm was reorganized in 1999. Three years later, at the age 77, William Kessler passed away. The Kessler, Francis, Cardoza firm ceased operations in 2004.

Ferry, William Hawkins, House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

Ferry, William Hawkins, House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

*The W. Hawkins Ferry Collection*, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1966

Oral history interview with W. Hawkins Ferry, 1974 Jan.17, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Ferry, Hawkins, *A Suburb of Good Taste*, March 1956 Issue, Michigan Society of Architects Bulletin

Ferry, W. Hawkins, *Buildings of Detroit: A History*, Wayne State University Press, 1980

*Record Houses of 1965*, Architectural Record, 1965

*High Drama Behind the Black Door*, Detroit Free Press, February 7, 1965

*A Home for Art*, House Beautiful, September 1969

*W. Hawkins Ferry, Gentleman Scholar*, Detroit Free Press, July 24, 1966

*The Modern Vision of W. Hawkins Ferry*, Detroit Free Press, May 24, 1967

*Detroit's New Generation*, Progressive Architecture, August 1961, p 93-117

Marsha Miro, *The Modern Vision of W. Hawkins Ferry*, Detroit Free press, May 24, 1987

Virginia Harriman. "Red over Black." Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts. Vol. XXIX, No. 1, 1949-1950, pp. 11-12.

Sterling, Pauline, *W. Hawkins Ferry, Gentleman Scholar*, Detroit Free Press July 24, 1966

*Detroit's Past is Reviewed*, Detroit Free Press, February 28, 1943

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Ferry, William Hawkins, House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 1 acre \_\_\_\_\_

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 42.441929                      Longitude: -82.874625
2. Latitude:                                      Longitude:
3. Latitude:                                      Longitude:
4. Latitude:                                      Longitude:

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

Ferry, William Hawkins, House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lot 11; ASSESSOR'S GROSSE POINTE SHORES PLAT NO.1, of part of Plat of Division of P.C.276, as recorded in L. 378, P. 278 of Deeds; also part of Lots 1, 2, and 3 of Plat showing partition of Estate of Joseph Reneau, on P. C. 223 as recorded in L 818, P. 305 of Deeds; also part of P. C.'s 576, 184, 224, 656, 657, 276, 850, and 222, Village of Grosse Point Shores, Wayne County, Michigan, as recorded in Liber 67 of Plats, Page 1 of Wayne County Records.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Boundaries include the entire platted lot on which the house is built. The lot is bounded on the west by Lake Shore Road, on the east by Lake St. Clair, and on the south by Larned Lane as platted.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Brian D. Conway, State Historic Preservation Officer  
organization: Michigan State Historic Preservation Office  
street & number: 735 E. Michigan Ave  
city or town: Lansing state: MI zip code: 48909  
e-mail conwayb1@michigan.gov  
telephone: 517-373-0511  
date: 12/10/18

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Ferry, William Hawkins, House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

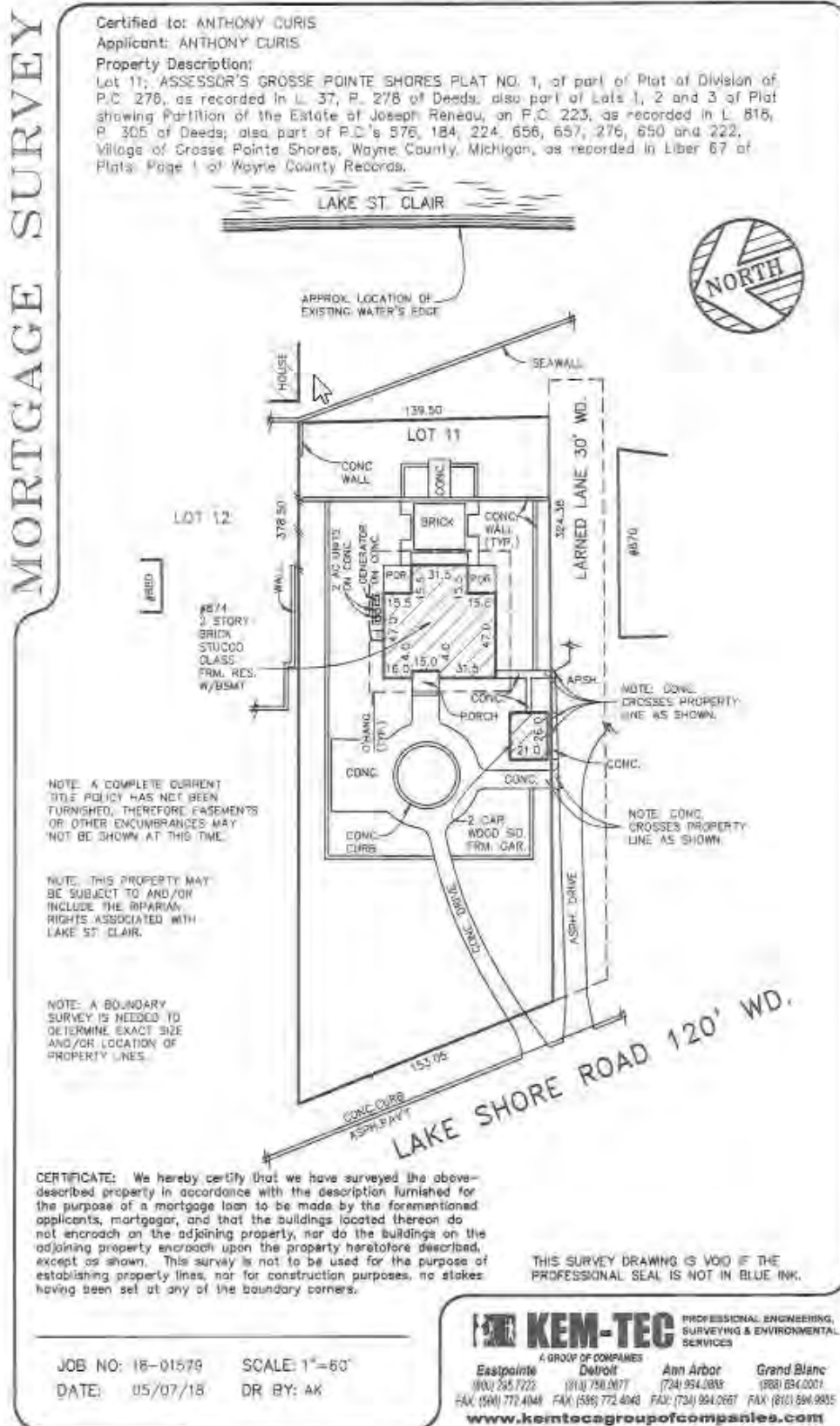
- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

Mortgage survey attached

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Ferry, William Hawkins, House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State



Ferry, William Hawkins, House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Ferry, William. Hawkins, House

City or Vicinity: Grosse Point Shores

County: Wayne State: Michigan

Photographer: James Haefner

Date Photographed: 7/5/17

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 6, 0001, View of front of house, camera facing southeast
- 2 of 6, 0002, View of front and side of house, camera facing southeast
- 3 of 6, 0003, View of lakeside of the house, camera facing west
- 4 of 6, 0004 View of living room, camera facing south
- 5 of 6, 0005, View of stair hall taken from living room, camera facing north
- 6 of 6, 0006, View from second floor stair hall looking down staircase, camera facing south

Name of Property: Ferry, William. Hawkins, House

City or Vicinity: Grosse Point Shores

County: Wayne State: Michigan

Photographer: Sal Rodriguez

Date Photographed: 2/13/16

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Ferry, William Hawkins, House

Wayne County, Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

- 1 of 14, 0007, View of entry hall, camera facing south
- 2 of 14, 0008 View of stair hall from living room, camera facing north
  
- 3 of 14, 0009, View of staircase, camera facing southeast
- 4 of 14, 0010, View towards stair hall and front entry hall, camera facing northwest
- 5 of 14, 0011, View of living room, camera facing south
- 6 of 14, 0012, View of living room towards conversation area, camera facing northwest
- 7 of 14, 0013, View of living room , camera facing north
- 8 of 13, 0014, View of conversation area, camera facing north
- 9 of 14, 0015, View of first floor office, camera facing north
- 10 of 14, 0016, View of dining room, camera facing west
- 11 of 14, 0017, View of kitchen, camera facing southwest
- 12 of 14, 0018, View of second floor stair hall, camera facing northeast
- 13 of 14, 0019, View from second floor overlooking living room, camera facing northeast
- 14 of 14, 0020, View of second floor sitting area, camera facing southeast

Name of Property: Ferry, William. Hawkins, House

City or Vicinity: Grosse Point Shores

County: Wayne

State: Michigan

Photographer: Anthony Curis

Date Photographed: 12/19/18

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 2, 0021, View of garage, camera facing southeast
- 2 of 2, 0022, View of garage, camera facing north

Ferry, William Hawkins, House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

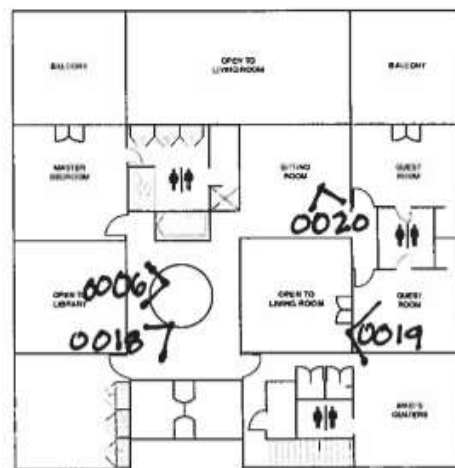
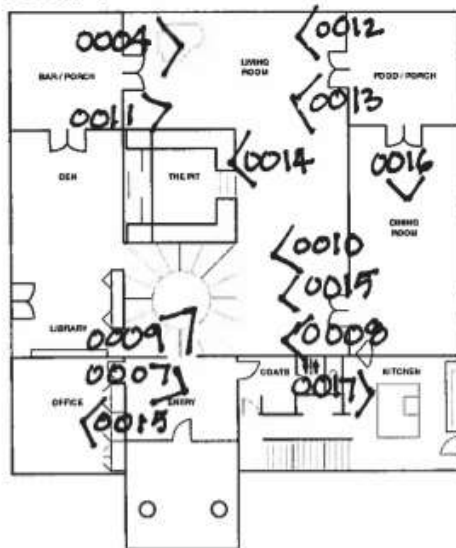
Lake Saint Clair

PHOTO KEY

0013  
V



Floor 1



Larnde Lane

Floor 2

00027

0022

0001

0021



Lake Shore Road

Ferry, William Hawkins, House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

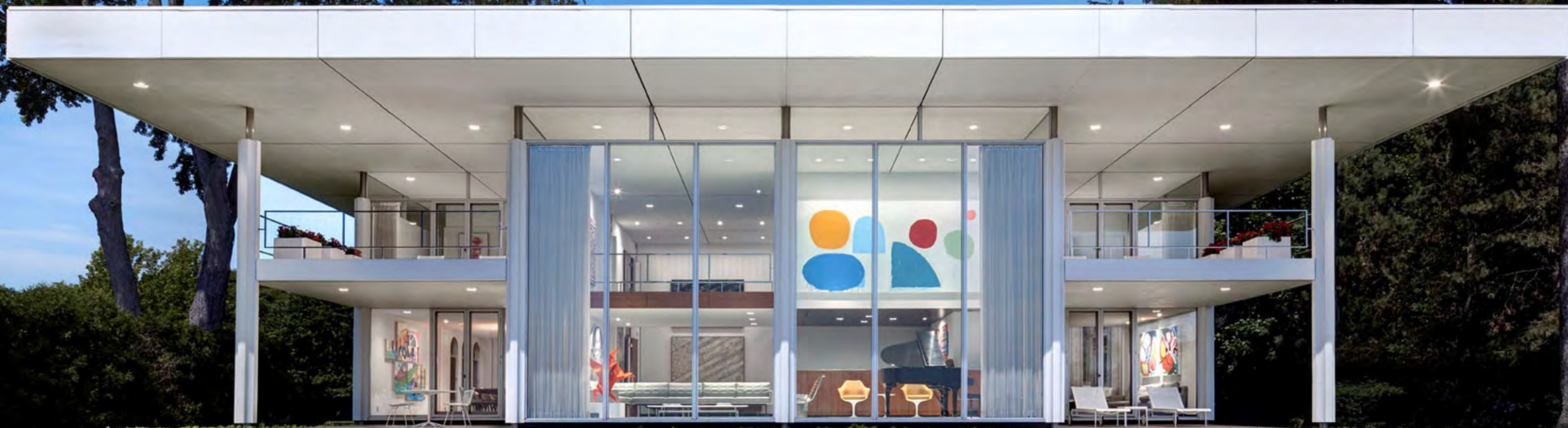
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



















































UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Ferry, William Hawkins, House

Multiple Name: \_\_\_\_\_

State & County: MICHIGAN, Wayne

Date Received: 4/3/2019      Date of Pending List: 4/22/2019      Date of 16th Day: 5/7/2019      Date of 45th Day: 5/20/2019      Date of Weekly List: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference number: SG100003936

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review: \_\_\_\_\_

X Accept       Return       Reject      5/9/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: Excellent Modernist house constructed in 1964 of noted art and architectural historian W. H. Ferry. Ferry utilized the house as office, as gallery, as meeting space as well as as his home. Overlooking lake St. Claire, the house features a terraced front yard. It is an excellent representation of Modernist design, by an architect who studies both art and architecture for a client who was both an architect and an art collector.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept / B & C

Reviewer Jim Gabbert      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
LANSING

EARL J. POLESKI  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

Ms. Joy Beasley, Keeper  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed discs contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **William Hawkins Ferry House, Grosse Pointe Shores, Wayne County, Michigan**. This property is being submitted for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This nomination is a  New Submission  Resubmission  Additional Documentation  Removal.

- 1 Signed National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (Disc 1)
- 2 Locational maps (Disc 1)
- Sketch map(s) / figures(s) / exhibits(s) (Disc 1)
- 1 Pieces of correspondence (Disc 1)
- 22 Digital photographs (Disc 2)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

- Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed.
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67.
- The enclosed owner objections do  do not  constitute a majority of property owners.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Todd A. Walsh, National Register Coordinator, at (517) 373-1979 or walsht@michigan.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Brian D. Conway  
State Historic Preservation Officer



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

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