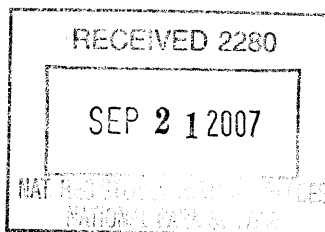


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



114

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1001 N.E. 2nd Street N/A not for publication

city or town Fort Lauderdale N/A vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Broward code 3311 zip code 33311

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Barbara C. Mattick / DSHPO 9/10/2007
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

11.1.07

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)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	total

Name of related multiple property listings

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

SECONDARY STRUCTURE/Detached Carport

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

SECONDARY/Detached Carport

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN/Lustron Prefabricated House

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Metal: Enameled Steel

walls Metal: Enameled Steel

roof Asphalt Shingle

other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1950

Significant Dates

1950

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Blass, Roy and Beckman, Morris

Blder: Craftsman Home Corporation

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State Agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of Repository

#

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	5	8	6	6	6	0	2	8	8	9	7	7	0
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
4															

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Pat Garbe Morillo, Preservation Planner III/Carl Shiver, Historic Preservationist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date September 2007

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (850) 245-6333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Marjorie and LaRue Van Meter

street & number 116 North Payne Street telephone (703) 519-0393

city or town Alexandria state Virginia zip code 22314

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 amend 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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1 LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE
FORT LAUDERDALE, BROWARD COUNTY
DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The Alfred and Olive Thorpe Lustron House, located at 1001 NE 2nd Street in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, is a one-story, side gabled, Ranch style house constructed of porcelain enameled steel panels bolted to a steel frame and anchored to a concrete slab. It is an example of the two-bedroom Westchester Deluxe Model prefabricated residence manufactured by the Lustron Corporation and assembled on its present site in 1950. The side-cut entrance porch and bay window on the main facade give this house its distinct appearance. The fenestration consists of aluminum frame casement windows, four of which have fixed “picture panels” in the center. There are two steel and glass panel entrance doors— one providing access to the living room from the corner porch and one connecting the kitchen with the rear yard. The interior of the house features a semi-open plan, with the living, dining, and kitchen areas accessible by “cutout” openings without doors. There are two bedrooms and the one bathroom. All of the original components of the house—except the aluminum frame casement windows—were constructed of enameled steel. Some changes have been made to the kitchen and bathroom, and all of the original exterior (blue with yellow trim) and interior(tan) surfaces have been painted white. The only major alterations made to the house were the replacement of the original steel roof tiles with composition shingles and the construction of a semi-detached one-story masonry carport, a noncontributing resource.

SETTING

The house is located at the northeast corner of 2nd Street and 10th Avenue in a suburban residential neighborhood of Fort Lauderdale. The front yard is planted with trees and well-manicured hedges and shrubs, and a sidewalk constructed of pavers set in concrete leads from the incised porch to the sidewalk. The city has a population of 170,823, is the county seat of Broward County, and forms a part of the South Florida metropolitan area that includes Miami, Miami Beach, and the larger Miami-Dade County area.

DESCRIPTION

Exterior

The 1,085 square foot, rectangular plan enameled steel house measures 31 feet x 35 feet at the base and is a Ranch¹ style one-story, side gabled residence erected on a concrete slab.² The house is sited on a double corner lot measuring 70 feet x 95 feet. The main facade faces south on a corner lot (Photo 1). The two-bedroom Westchester Deluxe Model is distinguishable from other Lustron houses by the 6-foot x 12-foot incised main entrance porch located at the southwest corner of the main facade (Photo 2). The exterior of the house contains

¹ These houses were advertised by the Lustron Corporation as “Ranch” style because of their open interior floor plan; however, they do not very much resemble the houses to which we would apply that term today.

² The house is attached to the concrete slab foundation by anchor bolts.

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Section number 7 Page 2

LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE
FORT LAUDERDALE, BROWARD COUNTY
DESCRIPTION

very little ornamentation. The exterior walls are surfaced with 2-foot X 2-foot porcelain-enameled steel panels. The gable ends (Photo 3) have 1-foot wide panels placed vertically. The fenestration consists of aluminum frame casement windows that are operated by small hand cranks. All of the original window surrounds and lintels are extant. There are two original entrance doors with central glass panels.

Four of the windows have "picture window" central panels flanked by narrow, four-light casements that can be opened with hand cranks (Photo 4). All of the other windows in the house are double-leaf, three-light casements, except for the bathroom which has a single-leaf, three-light casement window (Attachment 1). The living room has a "bay" picture window that projects out from the main facade. All of the other windows are flush with the wall. The roof is surfaced with composition shingles that replaced the original steel tiles (Photo 5) and features a steel-paneled chimney (Photo 6) that served as an exhaust vent for the original oil furnace that was contained in the narrow attic space. Most windows have been fitted on the exterior with aluminum awnings to reduce the amount of bright South Florida sunlight entering the house. The house is connected to a one-bay, flat-roofed, brick carport bay a brick and decorative concrete privacy wall (Photo 7). There are no other structures on the property.

Interior

The major interior spaces of the house (Attachment 2) consist of a 14 X 16-foot living room area, a 9 X 10-foot dining area, a 12 X 12-foot master bedroom, a 10-foot, 6-inch X 14-foot guest bedroom. There are also a kitchen, bathroom, and utility area. The interior walls and ceilings are also covered with porcelain enameled steel panels, and the original cabinets, doors, bookshelves, and bedroom dressing table were all constructed of enameled steel.

The living room area features the main entrance (Photo 8) and a built-in bookcase (Photo 9) on the east wall that separates the living area from the master bedroom. The mirror that supposedly once occupied the center of the living room bookcase is no longer extant; however, it is unclear whether such a mirror was even installed (Photo 10).³ The living and dining areas flow into one another (Photo 11), and the dining area is separated from the kitchen by china cabinet with shelves and drawers on both sides (Photo 12). The doorway between the dining area and kitchen does not contain a door. The kitchen features a sink flanked by a kitchen counter that contains storage cabinets below. The original enameled steel cabinets above the kitchen counter have been replaced with wooden ones. The rear doorway to the house (Photo 13) is located near the entrance to the utility area. The utility area next to the kitchen (Photo 14) is also open and was intended to hold laundry appliances, a hot water heater, storage cabinets, and access to the attic furnace. Short hallways lead to the bathroom and the two bedrooms (Photo 15). These areas feature closets and storage cabinets. All of the original closet and

³ It is uncertain if this house had an original mirror in the center of the bookcase. See the photograph from a Lustron House promotional brochure.

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LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE
FORT LAUDERDALE, BROWARD COUNTY
DESCRIPTION

storage cabinets have bypass sliding doors.⁴ Similar doors for the two bedrooms were replaced with vinyl accordion doors. The two bedrooms lie across the hall from each other. The master bedroom (Photos 16) retains its original mirrored vanity which is flanked by closets and storage cabinets above. The guest bedroom features closets and cabinets but no vanity (Photo 17). The single bathroom (Photos 18-19) retains its original mirror, lamps, walls and ceiling, but the toilet, sink, and original stamped steel bathtub have been replaced with newer appliances. The original floor covering throughout the house was asphalt tile, but this material has been covered by carpet in the living room, dining room, and bedrooms, and new tile floors have been laid the bathroom and kitchen.

Because of the durability of the enameled steel, most of the original features of the house have been preserved. The most significant alterations have been the replacement of the steel tile roof with composition shingles because of rainwater intrusion that had caused rusting and warping, the painting of the exterior (originally blue) and interior (originally tan) panels with white paint, and the replacement of the original steel kitchen cabinets with wooden ones. These changes and the construction of the carport was also were undertaken around 1994. The original heating system has been removed. It consisted of a small generator and furnace supplying heat through a plenum chamber in the attic that radiated heat into the interior of the house by heating the ceiling panels.

⁴ Bypass doors are hung from a track, which is installed below the head jam of the door opening. The track is hidden by a piece of decorative trim. Another track or guide is typically installed in the bottom of the door opening to guide the bottom of the doors.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 1

LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE
FORT LAUDERDALE, BROWARD COUNTY
SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The Alfred and Olive Thorpe Lustron House is significant at the local level under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of the Westchester Deluxe model home which was manufactured by the Lustron Corporation. The Lustron house was touted as the most technologically advanced solution to critical civilian housing shortages in the immediate post-World War era. The all-steel Lustron manufactured home was considered one of the most economical and efficient ways to meet specific needs, such as low cost, quick production, and the use of materials available. The production of the houses involved the manufacture of porcelain enamel coated steel panels attached to a steel frame on all major surfaces on both the exterior and interior of the home. The Lustron Corporation promised wide-spread availability, low cost, rapid construction and assembly, sturdy construction, and a virtually maintenance-free environment. The Westchester Deluxe Model 2 house was the most popular of the models produced by the Lustron Corporation. Nearly all of its components were manufactured of porcelain enamel coated steel—except the windows which were made from aluminum. The houses were offered for sale in several pastel colors with complementary trim.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although the Lustron house represented the total industrialization of the house manufacturing process, it was not a complete novelty. Prefabricated building elements had been used in house construction since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, and factory-made metal houses dated to the early 19th century. But metal housing in the mid-19th-century did not find favor. Traditional houses employed sufficient factory-made components, including doors, windows, and millwork, to keep prices for wooden construction down. Factory-made houses, by contrast, were perceived as insubstantial, suitable only for specialized and impermanent structures like railroad and logging camps and other sites involving temporary work.

During the early decades of the 20th century in America, a number of architects and engineers offered proposals for prefabricated metal housing that were largely ignored by both the public and builders as being “sterile” and too “industrial.” Buckminster Fuller attracted public attention with his first Dymaxion House (1927), a factory-made steel pod-like “livable dwelling unit” that never reached full production. In Germany, the Mueche-Paulick steel house (1926) featured a Bauhaus design with enameled steel wall panels and rubber gasket joints; the Hirsch house (1931) was a copper-faced structure with interior copper panels. These German prototypes remained at the testing stage, however, and were curtailed by the Depression of the 1930s.

A number of American companies had ventured into selling prefabricated homes in the early 20th century. The best known of these were offered by Sears Roebuck & Company which sold about 100,000 kit homes between 1908 and 1940 for from \$650 to \$2,500. These prefabricated residences, however, were constructed of traditional building materials and exhibited familiar styles. As long as traditional houses were available and reasonably priced, the prefabrication of metal houses remained an emergency, stop-gap measure. By the middle

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LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE
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SIGNIFICANCE

of the 1930s, housing starts in America had dropped 84 percent and even the cheapest house was beyond reach of 79 percent of American families. Faced with a potential shortage of affordable housing, several American corporations built experimental prefab houses that employed steel in both the frame and the enveloping membrane, but marketing found little success.

At the outbreak of World War II, the American military services faced a desperate need for prefabricated housing and other construction. One form of prefabricated metal building that fulfilled this need was the Quonset Hut. A Quonset hut is a lightweight prefabricated structure of corrugated steel having a semicircular cross section. The name comes from their site of first manufacture, Quonset Point, at the Davisville Naval Construction Battalion Center in Davisville, Rhode Island. The most common design created a standard size of 20 by 48 feet, with a 10 foot radius, allowing 720 square feet of usable floor space, with optional four-foot overhangs at each end for protection of entrances from the weather. Other sizes were also manufactured, including 20 by 40 foot and 40 by 100 foot warehouse models.⁵

The flexible interior space was open, allowing for use as barracks, latrines, offices, medical and dental offices, isolation wards, housing, and bakeries. Between 150,000-170,000 Quonset huts were manufactured during World War II. After the war, the U.S. military sold the surplus Quonset huts to the public for \$1,000 each. Many are still standing throughout the United States, primarily used for commercial buildings. Many were also used for temporary postwar civilian housing, such as Rodger Young Village in Los Angeles, California, and Michigan State University's Quonset Village in East Lansing, Michigan.⁶

When the war ended, the civilian housing crisis exploded, exacerbated by the building hiatus of the Great Depression and the war years. The government estimated that three million homes were needed in 1946 and 1947 and another 12 million over the next decade. Faced with this crisis, Congress voted in 1946 to fund research and help subsidize the production of prefabricated housing. The Veterans Emergency Housing Act of 1946 granted decommissioned war plants to prefabrication firms, and promised government loans through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). The production of prefabricated housing became a peacetime priority.

The Reconstruction Finance Corporation was established during the administration of President Herbert Hoover (1929-1933) with the primary objective of providing liquidity to, and restoring confidence in the banking system. Under President Franklin Roosevelt its powers were expanded significantly to make loans to assist agriculture, housing, exports, business, local governments, and for disaster relief. The scope of RFC activities was expanded further during World War II to purchase and fund corporations making important contributions to the war effort. After the war, the agency's activities were limited primarily to making loans to businesses that

⁵ Quonset Hut, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quonset_hut.

⁶ Ibid.

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LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE
FORT LAUDERDALE, BROWARD COUNTY
SIGNIFICANCE

helped stimulate the economy. RFC lending ended in 1953, and the corporation ceased operations in 1957, when all remaining assets were transferred to other government agencies.

Under the stimulus of government support, nearly three hundred firms entered the prefabricated housing industry in the late 1940s. Of these, three were chosen to receive direct federal loans; two of these—General Panel Corporation (1942-1951) and the Lustron Corporation (1946-1950)—were subsidized to produce steel houses. General Panel, established in 1942, produced the Package House designed by German immigrants Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann. The house used interchangeable, standardized parts that led to a variety of designs. But by 1946, despite professional acclaim and government funding, only a few Package Houses had been built. Design and production changes plagued the project. Without a return on the investment, financing dissolved and the firm was liquidated in 1951. In six years, the company built fewer than two hundred houses.

Lustron Corporation 1946 - 1950

The development of the Lustron Corporation began with industrialist Carl Strandlund. Born in Sweden in 1888, Strandlund came to the United States as a child and studied engineering through a correspondence school. By the 1920s, he had embarked on a successful career in industry; business journals credit him with several innovations in agricultural machinery during his years as president of the Oliver Farm Equipment Company. By the 1930s, Strandlund was an executive with the Chicago Vitreous Enamel Product Company, which produced enameled steel panels for use in products ranging from refrigerator doors to storefronts. As vice-president of the firm, Strandlund traveled to Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1946 to request material for the production of five hundred enameled steel gas stations for Standard Oil of Indiana.

The Civilian Production Administration⁷ found little appeal in steel gas stations. Steel houses, Strandlund was told, would be viewed favorably. Chicago Vitreous agreed, and hoped the venture might recoup some of the business lost with the postwar curtailment on nonresidential building. Three months later, Strandlund returned to Washington with plans and drawings for a house built of enameled steel panels to be produced by an affiliate, Porcelain Products Company. The name was soon changed to Lustron Corporation as a contraction of “luster on.” Lustron was also derived from “Lusterlite,” a type of frit⁸ which Chicago Vitreous manufactured and the Porcelain Products Company applied to iron.

⁷ Replaced the War Production Board established in 1941 to control production and conservation efforts during World War II. The CPA was phased out in 1947.

⁸ Treated and finely ground sand, glass, and flint used for glazing bricks and other ceramics.

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LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE
FORT LAUDERDALE, BROWARD COUNTY
SIGNIFICANCE

The plans for steel houses were well received. Housing Expediter Wilson Wyatt⁹ called the concept a “sensationally good” idea and backed Strandlund’s request for government financing. Wyatt also promised the huge wartime Dodge plant in Chicago and a guarantee to cover the cost of the first 15,000 homes produced by the firm. By 1947, Strandlund’s initial \$52 million loan request had been trimmed to a more modest \$15-1/2 million, and the Dodge plant had been given to Preston Tucker (for the ill-fated Tucker car) and Wyatt had resigned under the pressure of a new Republican Congress. But when the deal was closed, Lustron received the giant Curtiss-Wright aircraft plant in Columbus, Ohio, and the most massive financial commitment ever made by the federal government to a civilian housing firm to that time.

The Columbus plant, on 107 acres of land, had 1 million square feet of floor space and 23 acres of presses, welding machines, and furnaces. The Columbus factory was slow to equip, slow to start up, and was short of steel. The delays were expensive and caused Lustron to miss the peak of the housing crisis. Not until the summer of 1948 did the first enameled steel emerge from the ovens of the plant (it was used to produce promotional ashtrays bearing Strandlund’s signature). The first house was not completed until November. Steel was delivered by rail and either cut into framing sections and welded on the assembly line or cold stamped into panels that were then enameled and fired. Custom-designed trucks traveled through the factory and were loaded with the 12-1/2 tons of parts that composed a single house. The parts were packed in a manner that enabled on-site workers to unload them in the proper sequential order and assemble them according to Lustron plans. A fully equipped trailer would roll through the factory doors every seven minutes. Each trailer was then trucked to a building location where it served as an on-site warehouse until the house was assembled. The complete package was composed of 3,000 parts including clips for mounting wall decorations, a front door key, and an owner’s operating manual.

In 1949, the company hired Carl Koch and Associates to design a luxury model with a more flexible interior plan, a fireplace, and an attached garage. Other plans called for establishing a market for used Lustron parts and creating a system of built-in furniture. The corporation hoped one day to assemble the houses at regional warehouse-assembly plants located across the county. However, these future plans remained on the drawing board. The immediate challenge was to build houses to meet existing demand and to get those houses to building sites. Designing such a house, of course, was not a typical architectural project. Although Blass and Beckman worked on the original plans, a staff of stylists—many drawn from the ranks of automotive designers—was primarily responsible for the finished look of the house.

By fall 1948, as the first houses finally rolled from the factory, the company had 20,000 unfilled orders and closed its books for the year. Lustron attempted to fuel enthusiasm for their houses with glossy advertisements in Life and other magazines, a series of model homes were featured in 100 eastern and Midwestern cities, and

⁹ Former mayor of Louisville, Kentucky, appointed by President Harry S. Truman December 1945 in the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion to deal with the acute housing shortage faced by returning war veterans and civilian workers.

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LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE
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SIGNIFICANCE

the company even established the first tentative dealer network. By 1949, infused with over \$37 million in government loans, Lustron houses were being produced on a regular, if still insufficient, basis, climaxing with 268 units in July. Although far short of the stated goals for the year (17,000 houses), the press proclaimed Lustron a success. It was the first real demonstration of the seductive theory that houses can be turned out like automobiles according to Architectural Forum. The expectations for future success, however, were short-lived; Lustron never stopped losing money—up to \$1 million a month. By 1950, the Lustron Corporation was forced to declare bankruptcy.

Congress had begun an investigation, and the RFC had foreclosed on its loans. Shortly before the corporation was sold at auction in June 1950, it had shipped fewer than 2,500 houses. Lustron made several business decisions that more seriously undermined the firm's potential success. First, the company underestimated the time and money needed to achieve mass production; secondly, it never established the proper distribution system to handle high volume sales. By the time Lustron was producing homes on a regular basis, the national housing crisis had largely passed and the house was competing in a rebounded traditional construction market. Moreover, the cost of each house steadily escalated. Soon, the proposed \$6,000 selling price increase to \$11,000—a price greater than that of many traditional small houses. Also, because Lustron sold houses on an individual basis through franchised dealers, the company never achieved the sales volume that characterized the large scale residential developments that soon were booming across the nation.

Competing in the arena of traditional housing, Lustron had little real chance for success. Conservative financial institutions were leery of granting mortgages for nontraditional houses, especially before the house had arrived at the lot. Local building codes varied from city to city and, because they were based on specifications rather than performance standards, often prohibited features of Lustron's innovative design. Chicago's building code, for example, banned steel houses altogether. Moreover, the construction industry viewed metal prefabrication as a threat to on-site craftsmen and established suppliers of building materials. As a result, Lustron found little support within the very industry on which it depended for local assembly.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE—ARCHITECTURE

Lustron's first house—a two-bedroom prototype called the "Esquire," (Attachment 3)—was produced at a plant in Cicero, Illinois, under the auspices of Chicago Vitreous and erected at Hinsdale, Illinois, in 1946. The prototype was designed by architects Roy Blass and Norris Beckman. It was the last house Strandlund built for nearly two years. Panels for the exterior and interior walls were produced by the Chicago Vitreous Enamel Products Company, the parent of the Lustron Corporation until Lustron became a separate entity in November 1947. Built-ins, like the vanity and kitchen/dining room pass-through, were mocked up in wood and covered with enamel paint to simulate the look of enameled steel.

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LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE
FORT LAUDERDALE, BROWARD COUNTY
SIGNIFICANCE

The exterior panels were blue and yellow. The derivation of this striking color scheme is not known, but it is perhaps not coincidental that it echoes the colors of the flag of Sweden, the homeland of Lustron founder Carl Strandlund. This became the standard color scheme for the demonstration homes. Harvey Gunderson, the director of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, later recalled that the blue and yellow houses looked “a little like hotdog stands.” The mass-produced for-sale houses adopted a more neutral palette of pastels: surf blue, maize yellow, desert tan, and dove gray.

The Esquire design was the prototype for the Westchester Deluxe Model 2 (Photo 20). The main change between the two models was the rear wall, which was set back by the bathroom and bedroom in the Esquire and ran straight across in the Westchester. This added a little square footage and was easier to manufacture and assemble. When the factory began limited production in October 1948, the Westchester became the archetypal Lustron home. It was, in essence, the production version of the pilot “Esquire” model. Because it was highly visible and was manufactured throughout the company’s brief life, it ranks as the most popular model. The two bedroom design is distinguished by a recessed corner porch at the entryway, a feature that does not appear on the three bedroom Westchester Deluxe Model 3 (Photo 21), which is completely rectangular in plan.

The Newport and the slightly larger Meadowbrook houses (photos not available) appeared late in 1949. Smaller and therefore less expensive than the Westchester, the Newport had only two windows per side. Like the Westchester, the Newport and Meadowbrook came in both two bedroom and three bedroom versions. None of these models came with the indented porch that distinguishes the two-bedroom Westchester. Another distinguishing feature of the Newport and the Meadowbrook houses was their orientation: the gable end faced the front rather than the sides. Another difference was the heating system. The Newport came with a forced-air furnace that utilized vents and ducts, rather than the Westchester’s unique plenum. Heated air was circulated directly into rooms. Instead of mounting the furnace on the ceiling, as it was for the plenum system, it stood on the floor. To cut costs, Newports came without the dishwasher/clothes washer, built-in vanity, bookcase, and china cabinet pass-through.

The Lustron house was decidedly modern in appearance as well as in construction, durable and filled with middle-class amenities. In the Westchester models, twenty percent of the wall space was devoted to such built-ins as cabinets, dressers, and closets, manufactured as complete units and plugged into the house at the building site. Pictures could be hung with screws set in the plastic sealing strips between the interior panels. If you did not like the picture in one spot it was easy to remove the screw and put it in another place. Sliding, pocket doors were employed throughout the house, and the floor was covered with easy to maintain asphalt tiles. The permanence and durability of the house were also key selling points. Walls could be hosed down with water and was advertised as never requiring painting. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. The ceramic enamel surface was subject to chipping from a number of reasons, allowing the steel to be exposed to the elements and rusting. Many Lustron houses have been repainted on the exterior and resurfaced with vinyl and even faux brick siding. In postwar America, newly conscious of comfort and convenience, the Lustron house

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SIGNIFICANCE

was decidedly up-to-date. Garages, porches and breezeways were also available and could be added to the Lustron house at any time. Since the enameled panels did not fade, these additions would always match the color of the Lustron home. These "accessories" however, did not feature the steel frame offered by the houses; the enamel steel panels were attached to a wood frame structure. ✓

Lustron Houses in Florida

Lustron sales records indicate that sixteen houses were shipped to the state of Florida by February 28, 1950. All but two of these were the Westchester Deluxe Two-Bedroom type. The others were Newport bedroom type. The Lustron Locator Internet site¹⁰ identifies thirteen houses for Florida—two of them in Fort Lauderdale—but, surprisingly, the list does not include the Thorpe House at 1001 NE 2nd Street or the home at 1890 NE 6th Court, at Sunset Key Boulevard,¹¹ which brings the number of identified properties to fifteen. The other two—at 108 and 110 Hendricks Isle Street are listed as demolished. These two Lustrons were the less popular Newport model that did not have the cut out or the built in dining pass-through and master bedroom vanity. The location of the sixteenth house, if it still exists, has not been identified. The Craftsman Home Corporation in Fort Lauderdale, purchased the property at 1001 N.E. 2nd Street upon which the Lustron house now sits, from L. S. and Mildred Remsberg on September 30, 1949. The Craftsman Home Corporation was the distributor in the Fort Lauderdale area for the Lustron Corporation, and they appear to have assembled the present house in 1949-1950. In March 1951 Alfred J. Thorpe and his wife Olive M. Thorpe purchased the house and property. The Thorpes occupied the house until Olive passed away in 1970. In 1994 title was passed to Vivian Shields by the executor for the estate of Mrs. Thorpe and the deed was transferred to LaRue and Majorie Van Meter of Alexandria, Virginia, in the same year.

¹⁰ Lustron Locations across the County, <http://home.earthlink.net/~lustronlocator/index.html>.

¹¹ This main facade of this house was severely damaged when it was struck by a motor vehicle, and the facade wall was replaced with masonry.

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LUSTRON HOUSE, ALFRED AND OLIVE THORPE
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The Thorpe House is located on the northeast corner of NE 2nd Street and 10th Avenue, Stranahans Subdivision, 3-115 D 2-50-42 Lot 1 S 70.2 S 70 BLK H

Boundary Justification

The above described property contains all of the historic resources associated with the erection of the Thorpe Lustron House constructed in 1950.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Alfred and Olive Thorpe Lustron House
2. 1001 N.E. 2nd Street, Fort Lauderdale (Broward County). Florida
3. Pat Garbe-Morillo
4. 2007
5. Pat Garbe-Morillo
6. Main (South) Facade, Looking North
7. Photo 1 of 21

Numbers 1-5 are the same for the remaining photos except where indicated.

6. Main (South) Facade, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 2 of 21

6. West Elevation, Looking East
7. Photo 3 of 21

1. Westchester Deluxe Model House
2. Address Unknown, Oak Park Michigan.
3. Lustron Connection, Lustron Homes from across America.
4. 2007
5. <http://home.earthlink.net/~ronusny/photolist.html>
6. Main Facade and Porch Elevation, Viewing open Casement Windows
7. Photo 4 of 21

1. Westchester Deluxe Model House
2. Address Unknown, St. Louis, Missouri
3. "Lustron Homes Part 1," [The Old House Web](http://www.oldhouseweb.com).
4. 2007
5. <http://www.oldhouseweb.com/stories/Detailed/12270.shtml>
6. Detail of 21 Steel Tile Roof
7. Photo 5 of 21

6. North and East Elevations, Looking Southwest
7. Photo 6 of 21

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6. Main (South) Facade and East Elevation, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 7 of 21

6. Interior, Living Room, Looking Southwest toward Main Entrance
7. Photo 8 of 21

6. Interior, Living Room, Looking Southeast toward Bookcase
7. Photo 9 of 21

1. Westchester Deluxe Model House
2. Not Applicable, Promotional Photo, Lustron Corporation
3. Historic American Building Survey
4. 2007
5. "Lustron Homes Part 1," [The Old House Web](#)
6. Interior, Looking toward Built-in Bookcase
7. Photo 10 of 21

6. Interior, Dining Area, Looking Northwest from Living Area
7. Photo 11 of 21

6. Interior, China Cabinet Divider, Looking Southwest from Kitchen
7. Photo 12 of 21

6. Interior, Rear Door, Looking Northeast from Kitchen
7. Photo 13 of 21

6. Interior, Utility Room Closet, Looking Southwest from Kitchen
7. Photo 14 of 21

6. Interior, Bedroom Hall, Looking East
7. Photo 15 of 21

6. Interior, Master Bedroom Vanity, Looking Southwest.
7. Photo 16 of 21

6. Interior, Guest Bedroom, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 17 of 21

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6. Interior (Detail), Original Bathroom Mirror and Light Fixtures, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 18 of 21

1. Westchester Deluxe Model House
2. Not Applicable, Promotional Photo, Lustron Corporation
3. Historic American Building Survey
4. 2007
5. "Lustron Homes Part 1," The Old House Web
6. Interior, Bathroom Showing Original Contents
7. Photo 19 of 21

1. Westchester Deluxe Model House
2. Not Applicable, Promotional Photo, Lustron Corporation
3. Historic American Building Survey
4. 2007
5. "Lustron Homes Part 1," The Old House Web
6. Main Facade and Porch, Direction Unknown
7. Photo 20 of 21

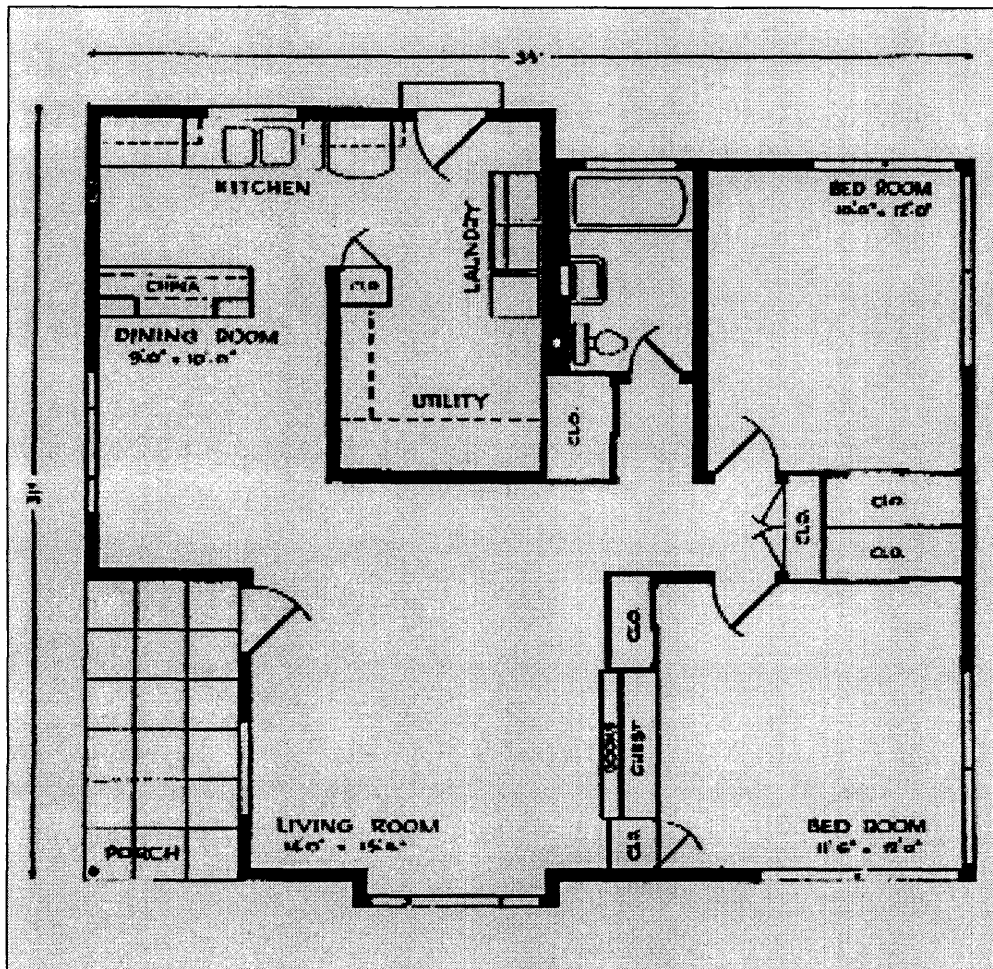
1. Westchester Deluxe Model 3 House
2. Street Address Unknown, Chesterton, Indiana
3. Historic American Building Survey
4. 1994
5. "Lustron Homes Part 1," The Old House Web
6. Main Facade and Porch, Direction Unknown
7. Photo 21 of 21

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ATTACHMENTS



ATTACHMENT 3, FLOOR PLAN OF ESQUIRE MODEL LUSTRON HOUSE