

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Darwin D. Martin House

and or common

2. Location

street & number 125 Jewett Parkway not for publication

city, town Buffalo vicinity of

state New York code county Erie code

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name The State University of New York/School of Architecture and Environmental Design

street & number 3435 Main Street

city, town Buffalo vicinity of state New York 14260

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Erie County Court House

street & number

city, town Buffalo state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

See Continuation Sheet  
title Historic American Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1973  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>1904</u>

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Darwin D. Martin House, located on two large corner lots on Jewett Parkway between Woodward Avenue and Summit Avenue, was designed and constructed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1904. One of the best preserved of the Prairie Style Houses this house used the T-shaped open ground plan thirty years before it became popular in America.

Construction records identify the contracting firms and note that fifty men worked for ten hours, six days a week for two years. They were paid \$2.00 per day. The State University of New York at Buffalo has the original blue prints and some of the original drawings.

The two-story house is 150 feet by 72 feet and is set on a projecting stone foundation. The walls are made of orange Roman brick backed by common brick. All of the wooden trim was painted green. Stone string courses serve as lintels and window sills. A system of brick piers supports floors of reinforced concrete. The driveway passes beneath a projecting, open, porte-cochere which is located to the west and acts as an extension of the south facade. An elevated, open porch to the east has a large, low hipped roof. All steps and walkways are covered by the overhanging eaves. The unit room windows were large picture windows flanked by narrow stained glass casements. The famous geometric tree of life design windows are now only on the second floor. Several were sold at auction a few years ago.

The interior was described by Grant Manson who interviewed Mrs. Darwin Martin in 1940:

The entrance hall bisects the house. To its right is the great unit-room, its separate functions flowing imperceptibly into each other and suggested only by truncated partitions and portieres. The central portion, with an enormously wide fireplace, is the living room advancing toward the glazed doorways leading to the porch. The two flanking spaces are a library and a dining room; these are well-lighted by long rows of casements, but the living room is dark, its source of daylight over-shadowed by the roof of the porch. As an afterthought, a small skylight was inserted through the floor of the bedroom gallery overhead, but it is inadequate, and the room remains cavernous. To the left of the hall are the "south room," a secondary living room, Mr. Martin's private office, wardrobes, lavatories, and the kitchen premises. (Wright apparently had no qualms about locating the kitchen at a considerable distance from the dining room and detached from it by the hall.) The main staircase is typical of Wright's treatment of the spaces of vertical circulation in a house; in its web of spindly balusters and rectangular newels, it surrounds a large square well, dimly skylighted. Disseminated strategically throughout the plan are six extraordinary features: rectangular areas devoted to an archaic form of radiant heating.... The bank of radiators within each is covered at shoulder-height by perforated oaken boards, and into the space remaining under the ceiling little groups of leaded casements open

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1904

Builder Architect

Frank Lloyd Wright

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Darwin D. Martin House, built four years before the Robie House in Oak Park, is one of the finest remaining examples of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie style, (1900-1920)--the first great productive period of his practice. His philosophy is expressed in this style, where there is spatial unity with the interior and exterior flowing together as well as consistency of the use of materials both on the outside and inside of the houses. Most important, was the compatibility of the structure with its surroundings.

Wright's Prairie Houses seemed to grow out of the earth - a revolutionary concept in 1900. Materials were "honest;" there was flowing, interlocking space, and no shadowy areas allowed privacy. These structures demanded a great deal of the people who commissioned and lived in them. The Martin House furnishings were also designed by Wright to carry on the sense of harmony within. Some of the pieces from this house became prototypes used in later houses.

Darwin Denice Martin worked with Elbert Hubbard as a Director of the Larkin Company in 1892. It was Hubbard and John Larkin who, as enlightened businessmen, added greatly to the architectural heritage of the city of Buffalo. Hubbard went on to establish the Roycroft community in East Aurora. Martin met Frank Lloyd Wright in Oak Park, Illinois in 1902 while visiting his brother William. When they saw Wright's Oak Park House and Studio, William commissioned Wright to build a house in Chicago and the following year Martin asked him to design the Buffalo house and the world famous Larkin Administration Building (demolished in 1950). Other Larkin Company associates had Wright-constructed houses, namely, W. R. Heath, 1905, (Mrs. Heath was Elbert Hubbard's sister), and Walter V. Davidson, 1908, also a Larkin Director. Wright also designed Martin's summer home "Graycliff," on Lake Erie in the mid-1920's. (Wright had many financial problems between 1910 and 1923 and Darwin Martin helped Wright to manage his publications and convinced the architect to incorporate himself in order to pay his many debts).

The original complex, on a much larger site, included an earlier Wright house (1903) for Mrs. George F. Barton, who was Martin's sister. When the Martin house with its appendages was complete, the maze of tiled roofs resembled a Japanese Temple compound. It included the Barton House, greenhouse, gardener's cottage, conservatory, and the garage which had living quarters, washhouse, and a mushroom cellar. Wright also designed the gardens in early 1905; the plans still exist in the University archive. Some original plants remain -- two Gingko trees and Japanese peonies. According to the original plan, only yellow and gold flowers (Autumn) were to be put into the sidewalk beds and the large shallow urns on the porch were to be filled with lantana. Today, some of the outbuildings, the conservatory, pergola, and garage, have been demolished. Several windows were sold in a New York Gallery in 1968.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .574

Quadrangle name Buffalo

Quadrangle scale 1:62,500

UTM References

A 

1	7	6	7	6	1	5	0	4	7	5	5	2	2	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn Pitts

organization National Park Service History Division date

street & number 1100 "L" Street NW telephone (202) 343-8172

city or town Washington state DC 20013-7127

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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from the various adjoining rooms. From the hall, a concealed stair descends to the ball room in the basement, roughly corresponding in floor area to the unit-room above it; it is a fantastic place, seemingly filled with piers and chimneys of Roman brick whose deeply-notched profiles form the chief decoration as well as the only boundaries, of the room.<sup>1</sup>

The Martin family lived in the house from 1904 to 1937 but it stood empty from 1937 to 1946 when the City of Buffalo acquired the house for back taxes. It remained empty until 1954 when a local architect purchased the land and converted the main house into two apartments, his residence and office. In 1967, the State University purchased the house for the President's residence. Today it is being returned to its former beauty as a study-center and museum of Frank Lloyd Wright's work.

<sup>1</sup>Grant Carpenter Manson. Reprint pamphlet: The Darwin D. Martin House, 1904  
(from Frank Lloyd Wright, to 1910; The First Golden Age). Reinhold  
Publisher: New York, 1958.

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The commission from Darwin Martin was particularly important to Wright at a time when his financial affairs were at a low ebb. Martin imposed no financial limit on Wright. The interior design was one of the most intricate he ever executed for a private client.

There are two large interior fireplaces faced with Roman brick and the mortar joints between were gilded with gold leaf. There are large bronze fireboxes also designed by Wright.

When originally furnished, the house contained many pieces designed by Wright. It is known that nearly all of the custom Furniture that went into the Prairie houses was made by the Matthews Brothers Furniture Co. of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Several pieces of furniture are contained within the University collection. The Seth Thomas case clock located on the stair landing was designed by Wright. The University owns items from the Heath House (Wright, 1905) and they are exhibited in the Martin House. Most of the original furniture from the first floor has been returned to the house. The Wright barrel chair and two sofas with storage areas for ash-trays are part of the collection. Many bookcases were designed for the house; Wright designed a special case for the Encyclopedia Britannica. Wright purchased a series of Japanese prints for the house. He selected vases in Japan (1905) and approved the style of dishes. Other items designed by Wright for this house included a piano and bench, lighting fixtures, and the outside clothes pole.<sup>1</sup>

The furniture was usually made of fumed oak as was much of the door and window trim. The stained glass made the rooms glow with iridescence.

The Darwin D. Martin House is one of the several remaining examples of Wright's invention: a uniquely American house, modern in concept and functional and unified in an idealistic way. The Martin house was designed and built on a grand scale before the Robie House, Unity Temple and other expressions of the Prairie Style in the mid-west.

<sup>1</sup>Historic American Buildings Survey. National Park Service, 1973. Data Pages p. 11.

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Keeper of the National Register

Chief of the Division

DATE

DATE

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Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY

All THAT TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND situate in the City of Buffalo, County of Erie and State of New York, more particularly bounded and described as follows:

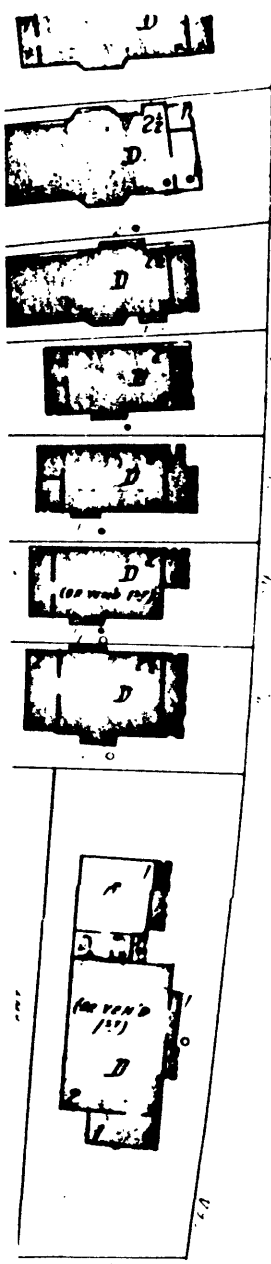
BEGINNING at a point located at the intersection of the westerly boundary line of Summit Avenue with the northerly boundary line of Jewett Parkway; running thence northerly along the westerly boundary line of Summit Avenue, being a curve having a radius of 2717.35 feet, as it curves to the left 115.00 feet to a point, said point being 145.0 feet more or less distant southerly as measured along the westerly line of Summit Avenue from the northerly line of Lot 66, Township 11, Range 8, of the Holland Land Companies Survey; thence westerly along the division line between the property of William F. and Jacob J. Brach (reputed owners) on the north and the property of said party of the first part on the south, said division line also being parallel to the northerly line of said Lot 66, 192.84 feet to a point; thence southerly at right angles to the last mentioned division line and along the division line between the property of William F. and Jacob J. Brach (reputed owners) on the west and the property of said party of the first part on the east, 164.17 feet to a point located on the aforesaid northerly boundary line of Jewett Parkway; thence easterly along the said northerly boundary line, being a curve having a radius of 1075.2 feet, as it curves to the left 174.89 feet to the point of beginning, being 0.574 acre, more or less.

TOGETHER with all the right, title and interest, if any, of said party of the first part in and to the bed of Summit Avenue adjoining the said premises on the east, and the bed of Jewett Parkway adjoining the said premises on the south to the respective center line thereof.

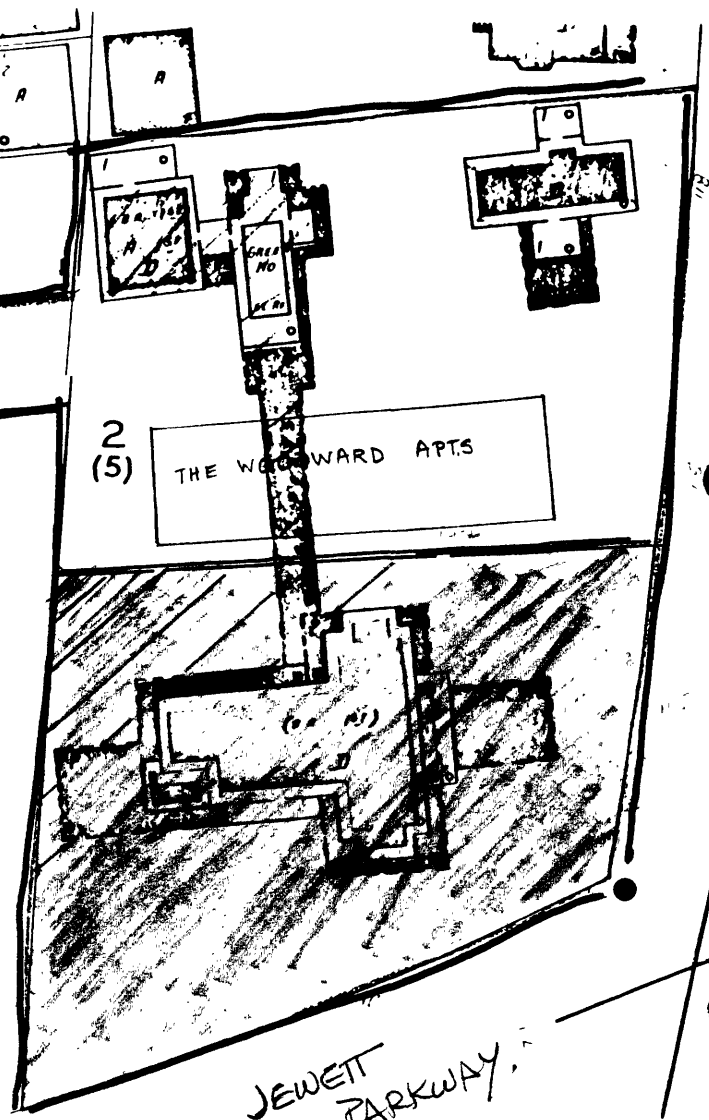
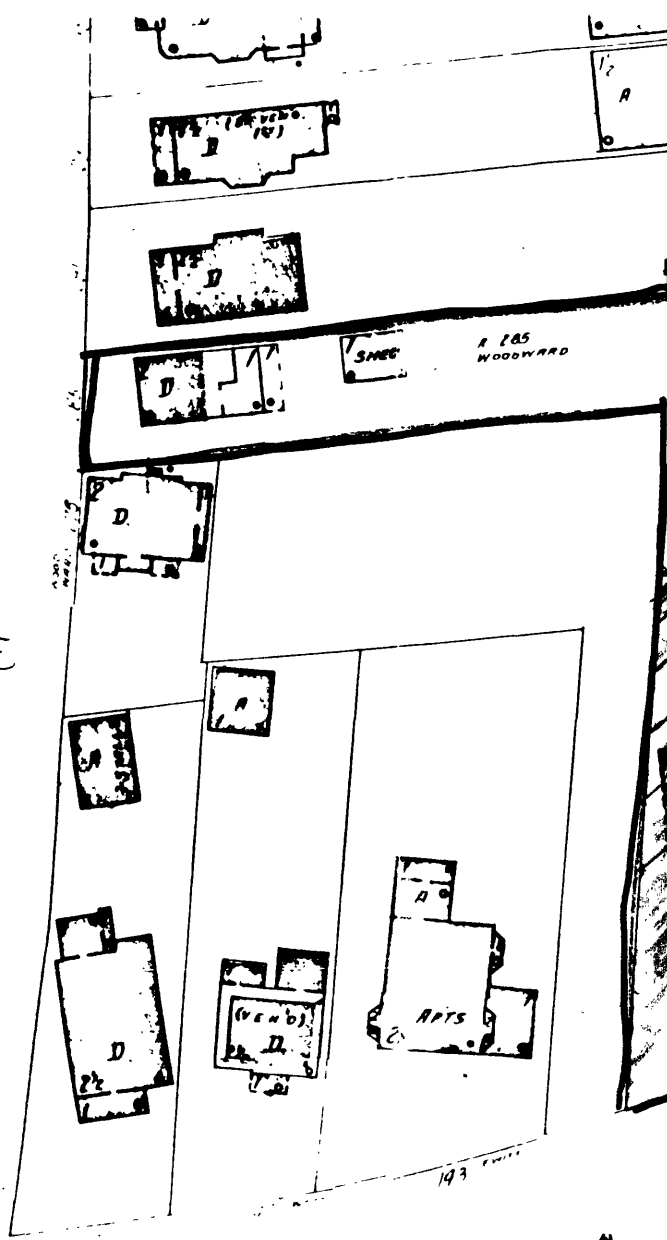
The above description of the boundary is recorded in the Eric County Clerk's Office in Liber 7332 of Conveyances, page 87.

The boundary is that parcel which contains the original house.





WOODWARD AVE



JEWETT PARKWAY  
NH2 BOUNDARY  
SHADED

