Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: **Wisconsin**
COUNTY: **Dane**
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE: **JUL 24 1974**

1. NAME

COMMON:

AND/OR HISTORIC: **Jacobs, Herbert A., House**

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: **441 Toepfer Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN: **Madison**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: **Second**

STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

COUNTY: **Dane** CODE: **025**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☒ Building	☐ Public	Public Acquisition:	☒ Occupied	Yes:
☐ Site ☐ Structure	☒ Private	☐ In Process	☐ Unoccupied	☐ Restricted
☐ Object	☐ Both	☐ Being Considered	☐ Preservation work in progress	☐ Unrestricted
				☒ No

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☐ Park	☐ Transportation
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☒ Private Residence	☐ Other (Specify)
☐ Educational	☐ Military	☐ Religious	☐ Comments
☐ Entertainment	☐ Museum	☐ Scientific	

RECEIVED JAN 21 1974 NATIONAL REGISTER

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: **Jerome S. Schmidt**

STREET AND NUMBER: **441 Toepfer Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN: **Madison**

STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: **Register of Deeds**

STREET AND NUMBER: **210 Monona Ave.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Madison**

STATE: **Wis. 53709** CODE: **55**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: **Wisconsin's Historic Preservation Plan, Vol. II: The Inventory**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1973** ☐ Federal ☒ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: **State Historical Society**

STREET AND NUMBER: **816 State Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Madison**

STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: **Wisconsin**
COUNTY: **Dane**
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER: **JUL 24 1974**
DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☒ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)		(Check One)			
	☐ Altered	☒ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In plan the Jacobs house consists of an "L"-shaped building folded around a brick chimney mass, which serves as the unifying, central vertical element. A small house, it has only two bedrooms in the east wing, and then a "study," which, presumably, could serve as a third bedroom. There is one bathroom and the cooking, dining, and living areas are integrated into one space visually divided by the chimney mass and a brick wall.

The "L" shape wraps around an exterior "garden" which is located on the far side of the house as viewed from Toepfer Avenue. Both sides of the "L" facing the garden are glazed from floor-to-ceiling. The facade facing Toepfer, on the other hand, was designed for privacy. It consists predominantly of horizontal boards. The flat roof soars well beyond the walls on all sides of the house, and under the eaves facing Toepfer is a narrow ribbon of windows which floats the roof above the boards below and allows a sense of spatial extension from within the house.

A one-car carport was included on the left side of the Toepfer facade, and entry to the house is gained by walking through the carport and entry, and turning right to the main entrance.

A heavy emphasis was placed on horizontality in the design of the house. Horizontal boards, raked joints in the masonry, and soaring, flat roof planes combine to create this dramatic effect.

The present appearance is much like the original, though the house is in need of maintenance and minor repairs.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

- ☐ Pre-Columbian
- ☐ 15th Century
- ☐ 16th Century
- ☐ 17th Century
- ☐ 18th Century
- ☐ 19th Century
- ☒ 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)* 1937

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

- ☐ Aboriginal
- ☐ Prehistoric
- ☐ Historic
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☒ Architecture
- ☐ Art
- ☐ Commerce
- ☐ Communications
- ☐ Conservation
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Industry
- ☐ Invention
- ☐ Landscape Architecture
- ☐ Literature
- ☐ Military
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Religion/Philosophy
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Sculpture
- ☐ Social/Humanitarian
- ☐ Theater
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Urban Planning
- ☐ Other *(Specify)* _____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

From the time of the construction of Wright's Allen house of 1917 in Kansas until the Wiley house of 1934 in Minneapolis, Wright did no buildings in the Midwest except for those at Taliesin. When his practice began to take hold anew, America was emerging from the national depression which began in 1929. It was logical that many felt the nation's housing problems required new tactics and that many looked to prefabrication as the answer. Wright's interest in the house for the common man also was piqued, though he, as other Prairie School architects, was used to relatively wealthy clients. Wright's answer was not complete prefabrication, but a mixture of simplicity and some ingenious new construction methods. The "Usonian" house was born, and was termed by Wright a manifestation of the "spirit of democracy." His first opportunity to build such a house came when Madison, Wis., newspaperman Herbert A. Jacobs and his wife visited Taliesin in the autumn of 1936 to offer Wright "a sort of challenge." Wright accepted the proposal, later writing, "The house of moderate cost is not only America's major architectural problem, but the problem most difficult for her major architects. As for me, I would rather solve it with satisfaction to myself and Usonia than build anything I can think of at the moment." The resultant Jacobs house in Madison was the first Usonian house built in the United States.

Including architect's fee, the house cost $5,500 in 1937, and it received more reader response than any other of Wright's houses when The Architectural Forum devoted its January, 1938, issue to Wright's work. So many people asked for "something like it" that Wright eventually designed some forty such houses. On August 18, 1939, for example, Loren Pope wrote to Wright from Falls Church, Virginia, saying, "We like the Herbert Jacobs house, both for myself and for the price, and we think it would fit well on our lot." As a result the Popes built a similar house in 1940, and it is now owned and preserved by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.

The Usonian house grew out of the Prairie School, using the same horizontal lines, earth colors, and natural materials. Yet it tried new things in the interest of economy. The attic and basement were eliminated, and the house was set onto a concrete slab without the usual footings. Instead of normal balloon-frame walls, Wright designed walls in a sandwich fashion with a plywood core lined with building paper on both sides and faced on the exterior and interior with wooden siding screwed tightly to the core. The wall sections, assembled in advance, were joined together at the corners. The roof

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wright, Frank Lloyd. The Natural House. (New York, Horizon Press: 1954)

Jacobs, Herbert A. Frank Lloyd Wright: America's Greatest Architect. (New York, 1965).

National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Pope-Leighey House. (Washington, D.C.: 1969).

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. In the Nature of Materials. (New York: 1942).

Scully, Vincent. Frank Lloyd Wright. (New York: 1960).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY						OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"						
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	N 43	03	31	W 89	26	29
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

RECEIVED JAN 21 1974 NATIONAL REGISTER

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Jeffrey M. Dean, State Preservation Planner

ORGANIZATION: State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE: Nov. 19, '73

STREET AND NUMBER: 816 State Street

CITY OR TOWN: Madison

STATE: Wisconsin 53706

CODE: 55

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☐ Local ☐

Name James Morton Smith
James Morton Smith

Title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Date January 11, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 9/24/74

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date 1-14-74

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Form 10-300a
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Wisconsin	
COUNTY	
Dane	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	JUL 24 1974

(Number all entries) Jacobs, Herbert A., house

[8. Statement of Significance.]

was flat, instead of gabled or hipped, to keep down the cost of its construction. New architectural techniques also were tried to give the Jacobs house both a sense of protected, enclosing and private shelter, and a sense of expansive, outward-reaching space.

The Jacobs house, along with the Eugene A. Gilmore house and the First Unitarian Society Meeting House, both of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, form perhaps the greatest trio of Wright buildings in the Madison metropolitan area. Its significance is held to be "national" because of the importance of Wright's architectural career and the pioneering significance of this particular house in the development of one of Wright's most important stylisms.