NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Murphy, Joseph and Ann, Residence

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 7901 Stanford Avenue [n/a] not for publication

city or town University City [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis code 189 zip code 63130

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 [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [x] locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Mark A Miles — MARCH 16, 2010

Signature of certifying official/Title — Mark A. Miles / Deputy SHPO — Date

Missouri Department of Natural 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

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

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.
[ ] removed from the National Register
[ ] other, explain see continuation sheet [ ].

5.Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		contributing	noncontributing	
[x] private	[x] building(s)	2	0	building
[ ] public-local	[ ] district			sites
[ ] public-state	[ ] site			structures
[ ] public-Federal	[ ] structure			objects
	[ ] object	2	0	total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A .

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0 .

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

Current Functions

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

MODERN MOVEMENT

see continuation sheet [ ].

Materials

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other

see continuation sheet [ ].

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet [x]

8.Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

[ ] 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.

[X] 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

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

ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance

1938-1962

Significant Dates

1939
1950
1962

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Murphy & Wischmeyer, arch.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic 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 67) 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:

[x] State Historic Preservation Office

[ ] Other State Agency

[ ] Federal Agency

[ ] Local Government

[ ] University

[x] Other:

Name of repository: Murphy Archive

10.Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	15	Easting	731 252	Northing	4282 693	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
C. Zone		Easting		Northing		D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] 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 Michael R. Allen/ Director

organization Preservation Research Office date December 2, 2009

street & number 3517 Connecticut Avenue telephone 314-920-5680

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63118

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 Vincent and Caroline DeForest

street & number 7901 Stanford Avenue Telephone

city or town University City state MO zip code 63130

Summary

The Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence is located at 7901 Stanford Avenue in University City, Missouri, about 2.1 miles west of the city limit of the City of St. Louis. Designed by Joseph D. Murphy through his firm Murphy & Wischmeyer, the two-story brick Murphy House was completed in 1939 and expanded in 1950 and 1962. Also on the site there is a one-story brick garage and studio with a sloped shed-roof dating to 1950 and also designed by Joseph D. Murphy. The site slopes downward toward the north, so that at the south the first floor is below grade while at north it is directly at grade. The house has no basement. The central section is two stories with a hipped-roof. On the west side is the flat-roofed one-story living room wing, which has a large window ribbon that wraps the corner. This section connects to the flat-roofed foyer enclosure that dates to 1962. On the north elevation is a concrete wing dating to 1950 that contains bedrooms on the second floor with an open first floor that shelters a patio. On the west elevation is a sun room addition from 1950. Inside of the house, the foyer leads to a landing. Stairs lead down into the spacious living room. The rest of the first floor contains the kitchen, dining room and other functional rooms while the private bedrooms are all located upstairs. In exterior treatment and layout the house embraces the design tenets of the Modern Movement. The Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence makes use of asymmetry in both floor plan and elevation arrangement, employs wide use of large window ribbons to open the house to the outside world and has a basic horizontal orientation.

Site

The Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence is located in a wooded residential neighborhood of moderate density. When Murphy built the house, Stanford Avenue was recently subdivided and the land to the north and west was completely undeveloped (see figure #6). Later, Murphy purchased vacant land to the east of the residence, but Murphy's children sold that parcel after his death and that part of the site is now developed with a two-story house. Homes on Stanford Avenue are all one or two stories, of masonry construction and substantially set back from the street. Most of the homes to the east are two stories, and most to the west one story. Stylistically, many are in popular mid-twentieth century revival styles. A few homes are in the Modern Movement, including the Hudson Residence (1940) located directly across the street and also designed by Murphy & Wischmeyer. To the north, the area developed in a similar suburban pattern, although most houses there are one story in height. The surrounding neighborhood is well-maintained.

Exterior

The exterior walls of the house consist of recycled brick with structural tile backing. The house uses an irregular modified stretcher bond with headers spaced within every seventh course. However, the texture of the recycled historic brick is evident and gives the walls a mottled appearance. Additionally, the design employs deft treatment of brick patterns surrounding walls and doors that express the brick work further. Unless otherwise noted, each window opening has a sill course of slightly projecting headers. From the street, the house appears to be a split level home when in fact it is a conventional two-story arrangement. Due to the slope of the lot, which Murphy retained, the entrance is above floor level. Hence, the entrance foyer is at a level between the first and second floors. The L-shaped two-story section with its shingle-clad hipped roof is partly obscured by the living room wing, diminishing the horizontal orientation somewhat. A small chimney rises from the center of the house.

The front elevation is thus divided into three sections: the living room section, the two-story body of the house and the later foyer addition (see photographs #1 and #2). The flat-roofed living room section is largely glass on the front; a full-height window ribbon is divided with wooden muntins into seven vertical sections with two more wrapping the corner. Each section consists of tall casement windows under fixed transom windows. A metal canopy projects over the ribbon. Across the top of the canopy is a partly-recessed soldier course; up the side is a recessed column of headers. The parapet wall over the living room is clad in copper. The two story section offers window openings at the first (partly obscured by the foyer) and second floors carrying groups of four casement windows each. The first floor window has a concrete sill, and the second floor window's sill is part of a slightly projecting continuous course that wraps around to the east elevation. Above the living room, facing south, is a dormer clad in wooden weatherboard. This dormer contains a door opening carrying a single wooden door with large center pane that opens onto the living room roof. Next to the door is an exhaust vent with wooden louvers. At ground level, the foyer addition is flat-roofed with brick walls. Wooden fascia board runs on the outer sides under copper coping. The opening contains an aluminum-framed window ribbon divided vertically into seven fixed panes. On the east side, significantly recessed, the wooden front door is flanked by aluminum-framed sidelights. The left sidelight contains leaded stained glass. The recess exposes part of the first floor wall. The downspout descends in the recess, with a skylight centered on the roof deck above.

On the south end of east elevation, there is a second floor window opening carrying two casement windows (see photographs #1 and #4). The masonry detailing around this and all other windows on the house is the same as the front elevation. The wall steps out to the north of this opening. On the north section of this wall are two window openings with two casement windows each centered over a small first floor window opening also containing two casement windows. The

first floor opening has a soldier course header. This elevation then extends northward as part of the bedroom wing, described later.

On the west elevation at the second floor is a window opening containing four casement windows (see photograph #3). Below the second floor is the flat-roofed sunroom addition, which has wooden fascia and a metal gutter running on all three sides. The north and south faces have window ribbons consisting of casement windows arranged four high and three wide. On the south face is an additional column of colored glass panes that miters with the column of casement windows on the west elevation. Four additional casement windows at the top row continue to the end of the wall, with only the top row mitering with the ribbon on the north elevation. The corner pane in this ribbon on the north elevation also is made of colored glass. To the south of the sunroom is the large chimney of the living room, which has recessed corners and decorative masonry work at its base. The chimney is flanked by downspouts. South of the chimney is the return of the living room window ribbon.

The north elevation is now dominated by the bedroom wing constructed in 1950, but the original elevation is mostly visible (see photograph #6). On the first floor under the addition are two openings: a large window opening containing four casement windows and a small opening higher on the wall containing a single casement window. To the west of the addition on the rear elevation, there are three window openings on the second floor containing paired casement windows. On the first floor, just west of the addition, a shed roof projects to shelter the rear door of the house and extends into a projecting section of the kitchen. The door opening that leads to the kitchen carries a wooden door with large center pane of glass; to the left (east) of the door is a raised brick planter box. Above the kitchen door, the eave steps up toward the bedroom addition and an applied wooden ornamental detail is present on the fascia. On the projecting kitchen bay, a continuous ribbon of casement windows wraps all sides. The fascia of the shed roof extends to meet the sunroom addition. In between the kitchen bay and the sunroom, a ledger board runs on the house and several joists connect it to the fascia board. Under this structure on the wall is the dining room window, consisting of a center pane flanked by two casement windows.

The flat-roofed concrete bedroom addition consists of a second floor supported by three exposed concrete columns and a large chimney (Flemish bond) at the northeast corner (see photographs #4 and #5). The second floor shelters a patio that is mostly paved with brick with some concrete sections. At the base of the chimney is an open hearth, surrounded by asymmetrically stepped masonry work. Stamped into the underside of the second floor deck are several religious patterns as well as round, tapered metal lights. Brick steps lead up from the patio to the driveway at the eastern side of the house. On the second floor are window ribbons running on the east and west sides that are divided by muntins into six divisions. The western ribbon is mitered to the north elevation, where the ribbon continues with one division and a sidelight. The eastern ribbon wraps

each corner with similar sidelights. All windows save one on the western side are wooden double-hung one-over-one windows. Plain concrete forms knee walls under the window ribbons, which are recessed. the brick chimney extends through the wall; between it and the window ribbon on the north elevation is wooden weatherboard. The roof extends over the windows to provide shade. There are copper gutters and a downspout that runs down the chimney.

Interior

Inside of the foyer, the subfloor is concrete covered by slate tiles currently removed for renovation work. The brick west wall currently is exposed but was partially covered by an art wall. The foyer opens onto the original entrance landing, where one encounters the stairs that connect the first and second floors. The stairs are finished hardwood, and the balustrade consists of a varnished wooden handrail supported by simple, narrow round polished steel balusters. A wall separates the flights. On the west side, three window openings filled with glass block illuminate the stairwell; these are visible on the exterior only from the living room roof. Between the living room and the stairs is a large stained glass screen designed by Robert Harmon and constructed by the Emil Frei Art Glass Company. The screen terminates well below the ceiling, emphasizing the open nature of the living room.

The spacious living room has a high ceiling and mitered room-height windows on the south and west elevations, providing a sense of connection to the rest of the house as well as to the world outside (see photograph #8). The floor is hardwood. The walls are plasterboard, with a furring system devised by Murphy applied over them. Under the stained glass divider is a row of custom-designed built-in cabinets that extends to the south wall (see photograph #9). On the west wall is a fireplace, offset within its projecting wooden surround. The fireplace opening is surrounded by marble. To the north of the mantle is a section of custom-designed built-in cabinets. With the exception of the mantle, cabinets and baseboard, which are stained, all millwork in the living room and throughout the first floor is painted. On the north wall of the living room, the entrance to the dining room has a large wooden hood.

In the dining room, the ceiling height drops to the level of the rest of the first level. The dining room has a symmetrical north wall with picture window flanked by two floor-to-ceiling, custom-designed built-in cabinets. On the west wall is the entrance to the sun room, in which the walls are painted brick and the floor is a concrete slab (with embedded radiant heat) under tile (see photograph #10). On the east wall is the entrance to the kitchen, which has a tile floor. In the kitchen, library and laundry room, there are wooden slab doors and one-part trim. The library, laundry and hallway also have concrete subfloors with embedded radiant heat. The hall and laundry have tile over the subfloor, while the library has a hardwood floor.

The second floor is articulated as private space. The rooms share common treatment: walls are plaster over plasterboard, doors are plain slabs, and millwork is a one-part design. The doors and millwork are painted (see photograph #11). Floors in the original section of the house are hardwood, while the addition's rooms are carpeted. There are five bedrooms, with three in the original house and two in the addition. There are also two bathrooms. In the hallway in the original section, a curved set of steps leads up to the doorway that leads out onto the roof over the living room. A small door on the east wall at the top of these steps opens into the attic. The bedrooms in the addition are ringed by a window ribbon, providing much light and wide views of the outdoors (see photograph #12). The first of these bedrooms is open to the hall path, with the brick wall of the original house exposed and painted. The bed rooms all have closets with built-in wooden fixtures.

Garage and Studio

The one-story garage and studio is built on a concrete slab. The wooden-structured roofed slopes heavily from the high south elevation to the north (see photograph #7). The walls are recycled brick and laid in a Flemish bond. On the south elevation at the west is a recessed glass wall that partly wraps the corner; the wall is divided by wooden members that define transom and knee wall sections. To the right (east), a brick return to the wall plane is located adjacent to the entrance. A door opening carries a wooden door with porthole window; above the door is a transom. This transom aligns with a ribbon of six windows that run across the rest of the brick wall plane. On the east elevation is a car opening carrying two wooden hinged doors. Above the door header level, this wall is clad in wooden siding with vertical seams. The north elevation has a few small windows in openings high on the wall. Inside, the garage is divided into the large unfinished section at east and the finished studio room at west behind the glass wall.

Integrity

Overall, there have been few changes to the physical condition of the Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence since the architect completed his last alteration in 1962. Even the windows are historic. Unfortunately, in summer 2009 a tree fell on the house during a storm and caused some water infiltration. The water damage led to removal of the ceilings throughout the house. However, none of the defining architectural characteristics of the house were affected, and restoration is underway. Overall, the Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence strongly retains integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, workmanship and association and reflects its historic appearance.

Summary

The Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence in University City, Missouri is locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture. Designed by prominent St. Louis architect and educator Joseph Denis Murphy (1907-1995) for his own residence, the house was built in 1938-1939 but expanded in 1950 and 1962. Built in the same year that Frank Lloyd Wright published his vision for the Usonian house in *Architectural Forum*, the Murphy Residence demonstrates Murphy's contemporary and unique vision of residential architecture. While Murphy's residential program has clear parallels to Wright's, Murphy developed it simultaneously rather than subsequently. In 1938, few Modern Movement Houses had been built in the St. Louis area, although within twenty years Modern styles would dominate suburban residential construction. Newly arrived in St. Louis and serving on the faculty of the Washington University School of Architecture, Joseph D. Murphy's career was at its start when he designed his own home. The house was one of the first small Modern Movement houses to attain national publication, and it contributed to wide interest in Modern houses in the St. Louis area. Murphy went on to become Dean of Washington University's School of Architecture during its transition from Beaux-Arts to modernist practice, and also embarked upon a renowned architectural career that produced some of the region's most significant Modern designs. The Joseph and Ann Murphy House is a significant benchmark in the development of Modern Movement residential design in St. Louis and in the progress of a significant local architect's career. The period of significance covers the period of architectural development of the house, starting when construction began in 1938 and running through completion of the last addition in 1962.

Joseph D. Murphy

Joseph D. Murphy was one of the leaders in a generation of architects who introduced St. Louis to Modern architecture. Born in Kansas City in 1907, Murphy started his architectural work while still in high school. The precocious young designer then attended Rockhurst College, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In 1929, Murphy won the coveted Paris Prize, earning a long study in Europe where he first encountered modernist architecture.[1] Upon returning to Kansas City in 1933, he worked in the offices of Alonzo H. Gentry, where he aided with the design of the Art Deco Kansas City Municipal Auditorium, Murphy then worked for the firm of Keene and Simpson before accepting a faculty position at the Washington University School of Architecture in 1935.

In St. Louis, Murphy would rise to the top of the architectural profession. According to Mary Reid Brunstrom, "his influence was widespread, through teaching, private practice and

[1] Mary Reid Brunstrom, "Joseph D. Murphy: Architect and Teacher" (St. Louis, Missouri: Unpublished essay, dated 2008; collection of Vincent and Caroline DeForest), p. 10.

community service."[2] Murphy served the School of Architecture as associate professor from 1935-40, as professor from 1940-52 and as dean from 1949-1952 (after a one year stint as acting dean). Although a product of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Murphy championed Modern architecture as dean, boosting faculty efforts that preceded his appointment. Additionally, Murphy's nomination to the American Institute of Architects Fellowship commends the dean for "increasing integration of the practicing architect, city planner, landscape architect, artist and engineer in the design and other courses at the school."[3]

Murphy remained active as an architect, and eventually left full-time teaching duties to devote his attention to professional practice. Murphy was a principal in the firm of Murphy & Wischmeyer from 1938-1945, in Murphy & Mackey from 1946-1968 and in Murphy, Downey, Wofford and Richman from 1968 through the early 1980s, when the architect retired from active practice. In these partnerships, Murphy and Mackey shared staff and the firm name but did not collaborate on designs. Murphy also served on public planning commissions. Joseph Murphy was a member of the Plan Commission of University City from 1945-1956 and chairman from 1948 through 1956, and also served as a member and chairman of the St. Louis County Planning Commission from 1951-53. At the School of Architecture, Murphy taught urban planning and advocated that governments around the St. Louis region adopt modern planning practices.[4]

Some of the region's most renowned Modern architecture came from the plans of Murphy. An early project was the minimalist classical shelters of the Municipal Opera (1938), designed with partner Kenneth Wishmeyer. A devout Roman Catholic, Murphy was a favorite architect of the St. Louis Archdiocese. Murphy used this position to design an outstanding body of Modern religious architecture. Through Murphy & Mackey, Joseph Murphy designed Resurrection Church (1951) and Bishop DuBourg High School (1953) in St. Louis city as well as St. Ann's Church (1952) and St. Peter's Church (1955) in St. Louis County. Murphy supervised restoration of the old St. Louis Cathedral. Murphy & Mackey also designed key buildings from the postwar era including the Olin Library at Washington University (1956-62), the St. Louis Art Museum Auditorium (1959), the geodesic Climatron at the Missouri Botanical Garden (1960), Queeny Tower at Barnes Hospital (1965) and the Loretto-Hilton Center at Webster University (1966). Murphy, Downey, Wofford & Richman's works before Murphy's retirement include the Illinois College Library in Jacksonville, Illinois (1970) and Temple Shaare Emeth in St. Louis County (1974).

---

[2] Brunstrom, p. 1.
[3] Nomination of Joseph D. Murphy, Advancement to Fellowship (St. Louis, Missouri: Collection of the American Institute of Architects, St. Louis Chapter).
[4] Brunstrom, p. 13-14.

While stylistically as diverse as the uses these buildings served, all of Murphy's later works are Modern buildings of regional significance. Many were published in architectural journals and magazines. Beyond the Murphy and Hudson residences, however, there are few known built residential works by Joseph D. Murphy. Murphy's residences show his first attempts at articulating building forms largely devoid of traditional ornament as well as his interest in the expressive use of masonry. Many of his later works would use brick masonry walls even as other wall materials -- concrete and metal being most prominent – came into fashion. The Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence's use of the prominent mitered window on front elevation predate Murphy's use of ample fenestration on later buildings like Resurrection Church and the Olin Library, both of which present ample glazing on their formal elevations. Murphy, however, largely abandoned residential design and any use of hipped or gabled roof forms.

Murphy's peers recognized his achievements throughout his career. Murphy served the St. Louis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects as Secretary (1942-46), Vice President (1947-48) and President (1951-52). In 1957, Murphy was made a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and in 1983 he received the St. Louis chapter's first Gold Medal.[5] Later in his career, starting in the 1970s, Murphy provided timely support to the effort to recognize African-American historic sites as National Historic Landmarks. Murphy's drawings of sites around the country helped persuade the Department of the Interior to make such designation a priority.

Modern Movement Houses in St. Louis County, 1930-1940

Prior to 1930, few Modern residential works were built in the St. Louis area. When the Murphy Residence was built, modernist residential architecture in the St. Louis area was relatively isolated but on the brink of wide acceptance. Architects were still experimenting with forms that had not found wide acceptance, and thus a range of styles and forms were employed. Few clients were willing to fully embrace Modern design as the Murphys did, so the early Modern Movement homes from the 1920s and 1930s display many traditional characteristics. Frank Lloyd Wright influenced St. Louis architects, but his Usonian houses had not yet been published.

Esley Hamilton's *Mid-Century Modern Architecture in St. Louis County: Outstanding Examples Worthy of Preservation* is not a comprehensive list, but it provides a reliable guide. Hamilton lists only one house built prior to 1930, the Louree-Watts House at 7915 Park Drive in the Hampton Park subdivision of Richmond Heights.[6] Built in 1929 and designed by Jesse Bowling and Isadore Shank, the large house makes use of eclectic detailing, an irregular shape,

[5] Nomination of Joseph D. Murphy, Advancement to Fellowship.
[6] Esley Hamilton, *Mid-Century Modern Architecture in St. Louis County: Outstanding Examples Worthy of Preservation* (Clayton, Missouri: St. Louis County Historic Buildings Commission, 2007), p. 6.

asymmetry, abstract brick patternwork and mitered windows.[7] The Louree-Watts House may well be the first Modern Movement residence built in the St. Louis area. Hamilton's survey lists only 14 Modern buildings whose construction started between 1930 and 1940, of which 13 are residential.[8] Certainly in this period there was construction of some Modern houses in the city of St. Louis, particularly in the St. Louis Hills neighborhood. Much early employment of Modern design was in commercial, industrial and institutional design.

In 1932, the Museum of Modern Art opened the widely influential *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* curated by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock. This exhibition introduced a generation of Americans to the Modern architecture of Europe, especially the streamlined International Style. The first St. Louis building showing the direct influence of the International Style was Harris Armstrong's Shanley Building (NR 9/20/1982) at Maryland and Bemiston in downtown Clayton, built in 1935. Residential design was slower to embrace the influence. The modernist school of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School, to which the Murphy House is more closely tied than to the International Style, had not given rise to any noted residence in St. Louis County before the Murphy Residence, although there had been a few such residences built in Illinois near St. Louis.

Armstrong's 1935 Cori House at 1080 N. Berry Road in Glendale, Missouri (NR 10/02/1986) was the first Modern house in the St. Louis area to receive national press, appearing – albeit unnamed and unattributed – on the cover of *American Painter and Decorator* in September 1938 with the caption stating that the house was "said to be the first modern design and execution in a St. Louis County home."[9] Who made the statement reported on the magazine cover is unknown, and the exaggeration was not true – but it was not far from the truth. Armstrong gave the Cori House a cubist, International Style design that was revolutionary for St. Louis County. While other architects were anchoring their Modern homes to traditional styles and details, Armstrong plunged unabashed into Modern design.

However, architects did not dictate house design as much as clients. One year after Armstrong's Cori House was built, he completed a house at 423 Miriam Avenue in Kirkwood and the Walker House at 20 Overhills in Ladue. Both were strongly traditional in massing, fenestration and form,

---

[7] Michael R. Allen, Driving Survey of Pre-World War II Modern Movement Homes in St. Louis County. 11 November 2009.
[8] Hamilton, *Mid-Century Modern Architecture in St. Louis County*, p. 6.
[9] Esley Hamilton, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Cori House* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1986), p. 8.3.

and the architect in fact later removed the house on Miriam Avenue from his office files.[10] Likewise, celebrated modern designer Charles Eames designed several homes in St. Louis in the late 1930s, such as the Dinsmoor House at 335 Bristol Road in Webster Groves (1936), that employed traditional revival styles. Eames' Meyer House at 4 Deacon Drive in Huntleigh, completed in 1938, attempts to join the mansion form to emerging Modern trends.[11] Use of asymmetry, mitered windows, a low-slung hipped roof and general avoidance or ornament are all Modern features, but the overall appearance is eclectic rather than defiant.

More typical of mid-1930s modernism in the St. Louis area are two neighboring houses designed by Nagel & Dunn (figure #2). The Thomas Sherman and Arnold Maremont houses, located at 306 and 312 DeMun Avenue respectively, both date to 1938. While the low-pitched gables of the Maremont House and the flat roof of the Georgian Revival Sherman House are unique, the fenestration somewhat irregular and the ornament stylistically abstract, the overall effect of these two homes is eclectic like the Meyer House. Nagel and Dunn have not "rejected the popular historical styles of the time", as Hamilton states of early modernist architects, but instead created a pastiche of those styles.[12]

There is one obvious contemporary to the Murphy House: Armstrong's Office and Residence for Dr. Henry E. Hampton at 1751 Laclede Station Road in Richmond Heights (1941, figure #3). Compact in layout, the Hampton House has a strong horizontal orientation, makes use of recycled brick, possesses an overhanging hipped roof and makes use of wide, large windows. Furthermore, the Hampton House places the garage inside of the home and otherwise has no basement. The slope of the house partly conceals the first floor, so that the house appears as a one story building from the south. The house also makes use of set back and uses the chimney to divide sections of the exterior massing, just as the Murphy Residence. The Hampton House uses some of the ideas originated in the Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence.

Murphy's "Sunshine and Fresh Air" House and the Usonian House

In the 1930s, many American architects were working on developing ideas about Modern houses. With modernism on the rise in America amid the Great Depression, many American architects endeavored to create affordable small house designs that would advance Modern design principles. Joseph Murphy delved into the national architectural discussion on houses early, and

[10] Andrew Raimist, "Harris Armstrong's Traditional House Designs: The House at 423 Miriam" (*Newsletter of the Society of Architectural Historians, Missouri Valley Chapter* vol. 15 no. 2A, Summer 2009), p. 4-5.
[11] Esley Hamilton, "Charles Eames in St. Louis" (*Newsletter of the Society of Architectural Historians, Missouri Valley Chapter* vol. 14 no. 3, Fall 2008), p. 5.
[12] Hamilton, *Mid-Century Modern Architecture in St. Louis County*, p. 1.

published his first Modern house prototype ahead of Frank Lloyd Wright's widely influential publication of his "Usonian" house. Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian House would become the American standard for the small, affordable Modern house, but Murphy had already provided his own prototype when Wright first published his ideal.

According to Brunstrom's unpublished biographical essay on Murphy, the young architect entered a house designed for "sunshine and fresh air" into the Flat Glass Industry Architectural Competition of 1934.[13] Murphy's design was published in *Pencil Points* as well as the *Kansas City Star*, in whose pages a reporter described the model house as "decidedly modern" (see figure #1). Murphy's house had an open floor plan in the living area, simple use of the easily-available materials of fieldstone, reinforced concrete and glass, and maximized flow of light, air and circulation between interior and exterior. According to Brunstrom, Murphy's model house devoted 75% of external wall area to glass.[14] Furthermore, the size of this new house was fairly small. The house sat close to the front of its lot to give back yard a wide space and the rear windows an expansive view. Harmony with natural surroundings was emphasized in Murphy's plan.[15] The house was never built. Murphy echoed elements of the earlier house design in "Design for a Doctor's Residence," his submission to the Suntile Architecture Competition that was published in *Pencil Points* in August 1937 (see also figure #1).

Murphy's published small house prototype was followed four years later by Wright's January 1938 publication of the first Usonian house in *Architectural Forum*, the proposed solution to what the architect identified as the "small house problem" of the United States. Wright had just completed the Herbert Jacobs I House in Madison, Wisconsin (NR 7/31/2003). Decidedly modernist, with a 1,340 square feet plan and with a budget of $5,500, the house demonstrated Wright's ideas for developing a modern home affordable to the American middle class and appropriate for the suburban locations sought by the middle class. In the article, Wright discusses making "simplifications" to construction so that the Jacobs family could afford their house: off-site pre-fabrication to keep materials and labor costs down, reduction of the floor space common for a family house by consolidating the living room and dining room and placing all living space on one floor sitting on a concrete slab, use of many operable windows to help with heating and cooling and radiant floor heating.[16]

Foremost, Wright sought to eliminate redundant residential features in the design of the Jacobs House. The house was laid out on a 2-foot-by-4-foot grid pattern to accommodate pre-fabricated

[13] Brunstrom, p. 10.
[14] Ibid., p. 11
[15] Ibid.
[16] John Sergeant, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses: The Case for Organic Architecture* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1976), p. 16.

materials. The materials were limited to widely-available wood, concrete, glass, brick and some metal. At the Jacobs House, structure and exterior walls were revealed, and large roof overhangs shaded the windows. Services were hidden under the concrete slab floor. Wright explained that "it would be ideal to complete the building in one operation, inside and out."[17] Hence, like Murphy, Wright aimed for balance with the natural surroundings of the Jacobs House. The site grade was not disturbed. Wright proclaimed the Jacobs House to be the model for a new type of middle-class American home, the Usonian House. If Wright had encountered Joseph D. Murphy's "sunshine and fresh air" design, the architect made no mention of it in his article.

According to historian John Sergeant, the following characteristics are common to Usonian houses: slab foundation, sloped flat roofs, open planning in the living room, zoning of uses; maximizing the feeling of spaciousness; small bedrooms with built-in closets; construction on a grid; use of materials that did not require finishing or decoration; placement of the kitchen exactly between the bedrooms and the living room; and L-shaped plan.[18] Usonian Houses are generally around 1,500 square feet, although the grid system makes expansion easy (a possibility Wright foresaw and encouraged). Joseph Murphy would employ some, but not all of these characteristics in his own residence. Murphy's papers indicate the architect's interest in the Prairie style and in Wright's career, but also demonstrate the young architect's interest in making an original contribution of his own.[19]

While Wright influenced Joseph Murphy, Murphy's contribution to residential design and the particular issue of the small house would be as singular as the more famous architect's. Thus Murphy's philosophy and Wright's Usonian form are complementary contemporaries, with key similarities and significant differences. Murphy's foray did not win national acclaim, but it was regionally significant. Furthermore, even after building his own home, Murphy continued to lecture and write about his residential ideas. According to Brunstrom, Murphy believed the small house to be "one of the major responsibilities of the architect."[20] In 1946, he told a radio audience during a program entitled "The House of Today" that "[t]he use of good design is cheap at any price."[21] Clearly, Murphy applied as much thought to the small house "problem" as did Wright, and was influenced by the more famous architect. Yet Murphy sought a program less bound by the formulas of form, style and cost.

In 1939, 1940 and 1941 the national publication Architectural Forum devoted much space to new houses and small houses in particular. The monthly "Houses" feature usually published

[17] Ibid.
[18] Sergeant, p. 12.
[19] Murphy Archive. St. Louis, Missouri.
[20] Brunstrom, p. 13.
[21] Ibid.

photographs and plans of five or six new houses chosen by the magazine editors as exemplary new designs. In this period, the range of styles is wide, with many period revival styles like Georgian and Cape Cod interspersed with Modern houses. The October 1939 issue had a large section on "101 New Houses," making note of houses that addressed the "small house problem." Among the 101 houses were three in the St. Louis area: an International Style house for Dr. H.M. Roebbner in Bonne Terre, Missouri, by Hari Van Hoefen; a Colonial Revival House for A.J. Timmerberg in Brentwood by John C. Dryton. Jr.; and Harris Armstrong's house for himself. While not Usonian, Armstrong's house certainly employs key Usonian traits, including central location of an open plan living and dining area and interior functions clearly differentiated on the exterior. The hipped gable roof is a notable similarity to the Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence. In May 1940, Architectural Forum's monthly "Houses" feature included a small, one-story house in St. Louis County by Murphy & Wischmeyer. This house was a one-story, mostly Usonian hipped-roof house with large percentage of its walls given over to fenestration. This was not Murphy's only small house to receive attention in the architectural press.

The Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence

In 1938, Murphy purchased a large lot on Stanford Avenue in the western end of the inner-ring St. Louis suburb of University City. At the time, this section of University City was only recently being developed, and the area immediately north and west of the lot was not yet subdivided (see figure #6). The site sloped northward to a wooded area. At the time, Benlou Avenue ran north into the property; this street was later vacated and became part of the property. On this lot, Joseph D. Murphy aimed to build a modest-sized, fully Modern house for his family. Coincidentally, earlier in the year, Frank Lloyd Wright had published his article on Usonian houses.

Dated September 12, 1938, the blueprints for the residence list "J.D. Murphy & K.F. Wischmeyer" as the architects. This was just a courtesy to the partnership, since Murphy was fully responsible for the design. Here was Murphy's first chance to apply his philosophy of residential design to a relatively small house (approximately 2400 square feet) that would actually be constructed. In some ways, the Murphy Residence maintained traditions. The use of red brick was conventional for the period, as was the entrance with its masonry pilasters, wooden ogee cornice and two-panel door. However, in almost every other respect the home was fully modernist and allowed Murphy to demonstrate the principles that Wright had articulated to the nation.

All of the features in plan, site placement and design can be traced to the vision that Joseph D. Murphy articulated in both the 1934 "sunshine and fresh air" house and the 1937 doctor's residence plans. The basic plan for the house was a two-story hipped-roof section with a prominent flat-roofed living room on the front elevation (see figure #4 and photograph #1).

Although laid out on two levels, the house nonetheless had a horizontal orientation reinforced by the downward slopes of the roof. The house lacked any traditional ornamentation beyond the cornice over the entrance, instead relying on linear masonry patterns around doors and windows to produce subtle variation in depth of the wall plane. The living room's large mitered window ribbon was a break from convention, and a type of fenestration found both in Wright's Prairie School architecture and the more austere International Style. Here, the use of the large window echoed back to Murphy's 1934 prototype design with its large glass walls. The living room would have ample natural light and ventilation to cut energy usage. All other window openings were wide and carried casement windows in groups to allow for variation in natural air intake.

Another interesting and environmentally sensitive feature of the residence was the incorporation of the site slope into the design. In doing this, Murphy had to place the entrance to the house at a half-level between the two levels, a placement almost unknown in St. Louis residential architecture at the time. This placement provided the basic zoned layout of the house, which matched the layouts Murphy had used in his earlier published house planss. The entrance opened onto a staircase that buffered the private realm of the upstairs, with its small bed rooms and narrow hall, from the large open plan living and dining area on the first floor (see figure #5). The open living space enjoyed not only the large windows but a central fireplace and built-in cabinets. The views from inside of the living space were expansive and deliberately chosen to draw the natural and domestic realms into visual connection. On the east end of the first floor, separated by the kitchen, was a hall connecting to a library and laundry room. Due to the site slope, the laundry room was almost completely below grade, and the library was at grade with views of the yard.

There is definite correspondence of the Murphy residence and the principles of Usonian architecture espoused by Wright. Yet the difference between Murphy and Wright is clear. For instance, Murphy's use of a second floor was a major difference and one that necessitated partial use of forced air heat. Heating on the first floor was provided by a radiant system installed in the floors, while the second floor had a forced air system. Thus, there was ductwork to conceal. While outer walls had plaster applied directly over backing tile, the interior ceilings and partitions were made of plasterboard over studs, concealing elements like the roof deck that Wright would have kept exposed. Murphy clearly did not rely on mass-produced materials or a strict grid system in construction, preferring custom details to articulate his design. The $10,000 cost of the house—out of the Usonian range—reflected that choice. Like Harris Armstrong chose in his residential designs from this period, Murphy built the house out of reclaimed brick. At the time, the riverfront was being cleared for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial and reclaimed brick was in abundance in the region.

While he did not launch a national movement with his own home's design, Murphy gained some recognition in the national architectural press. The Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence found

publication in Architectural Forum's "81 New Houses" feature in April 1941. In fact, the residence was one of two Murphy & Wischmeyer houses included, showing the early recognition of Murphy's work. (Also included from the St. Louis area was a Modern house on Sappington Spur near Kirkwood designed by Harris Armstrong.) Murphy & Wischmeyer's other home was a U-shaped one story Modern residence with a much more separated layout (see figure #7). However, the photograph of the house shows the retention of an old-growth wooded setting around the house – true to Murphy's desire to balance Modern design with an existing natural setting. Of Murphy's own home, the *Architectural Forum* noted that "the plan of the two-story residence is ingenious, making excellent use of the entrance at the half level."[22]

In 1950, Murphy expanded the home by adding a sunroom and bedroom wing. Expansion was a planned trait of Usonian houses, so the addition further relates Wright and Murphy's ideas about houses. However, the additions largely departed from the stylistic vocabulary of the original house. The sun room at the west side was in keeping with the original design, but the large bed room addition built over a covered patio introduced new ideas. The shed-roofed garage and studio built at this time was in keeping with the original house in terms of material, massing and fenestration. For some reason, Murphy chose a Flemish bond for this outbuilding.

The bedroom addition provided two needed rooms for Murphy's growing family. (Later, one of the rooms was divided into two rooms.) However, Murphy did not undertake a straightforward expansion. Instead, the architect designed a concrete structure supported by exposed columns, with a massive brick chimney. The sheltered patio was a unique feature, while the second floor was more conventional. At the second floor, concrete knee walls and an overhanging flat roof surrounded long window ribbons that let abundant light and air into the new bedrooms. Overall, the addition's streamlined form, flat roof and fenestration had more in common with the International style than the Usonian movement. However, the addition maintained a horizontal orientation and embraced a plain expression of materiality typical of houses influenced by the Prairie School. The later foyer addition from 1962 shows Murphy deftly making use of aluminum-framed glass, a newer glazing system that was being widely used by that time. The foyer made a significant change to the residence by obscuring the original entrance and placing the front door on the east elevation so that it was not visible from a head-on-view.

The Murphy Residence thus stands as a key predecessor to the wave of Modern residential architecture that would be built in St. Louis, especially in St. Louis County, between 1940 and 1960. The influence of Murphy's residential vision can be seen in scores of subdivision homes whose histories have not yet been written. Many significant Modern houses employ the qualities that Murphy expressed in his own home: the consolidation of the basement and first floor, the arrangement of a large, open living and dining area buffered from the house's private areas by a

[22] "81 Houses" (*Architectural Forum* vol. 74, no. 4, April 1941), p. 273.

kitchen, the use of large windows, a central hipped roof, the asymmetry and the banking of the house in a sloped site.

Architect Isadore Shank's own residence at #4 Graybridge Lane (1940) employs many of these characteristics, notably the use of a sloped site. Like the Murphy residence, the Shank residence reconciles Usonian principles with some traditional tendencies in masonry and wall and ceiling finish. Later Modern houses in St. Louis County would take up more explicitly Wright's bolder Usonian ideals, including exposed roof decking and radiant heating. Wright's own Ruth and Russell Kraus House at 120 North Ballas Road (1951-55, NR 1/31/1997) and the Harry Hammerman House at 219 Graybridge Road (1952, NR 3/20/2008) are examples of full embrace of the small-house philosophy Murphy advanced in St. Louis and Wright articulated to a national audience.

The Joseph and Ann Murphy House stands as one of the earliest examples of Modern Movement residential design in the region. In his history of modern architecture in St. Louis, Eric Mumford writes that "by the mid-1950s, modern architecture had become the norm in St. Louis."[23] The majority of entries in Esley Hamilton's guide to notable Modern architecture in St. Louis County are from after World War II. This boom fits the national trend noted by author Michael Webb in *Modernism* reborn: "in the 1950s, most progressive architects took modernism for granted—it was the way you built, a basic syntax…."[24] Within a decade in St. Louis, architects would explore the International and Prairie styles as well as the Usonian form, with many architects continuing to work on larger residences. Murphy's additions to his own home embraced the shifts in architectural development of modernist ideas. The Modern small house, Modern residential architecture in St. Louis County and the career of Joseph Murphy all developed greatly in the decades following construction of the Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence.

[23] Eric Mumford, *Modern Architecture in St. Louis: Washington University and Postwar American Architecture, 1948-73* (St. Louis: School of Architecture, Washington University, 2004), p. 52.
[24] Michael Webb, *Modernism Reborn: Mid-Century American Houses* (New York: Universe Publishing, 2001), p. 11.

Bibliography

"101 New Houses." *Architectural Forum* vol. 71 no. 4, October 1939.

"81 New Houses." *Architectural Forum* vol. 74, no. 4, April 1941.

Allen, Michael R. Driving Survey of Pre-World War II Modern Movement Homes in St. Louis County. 11 November 2009.

---. *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Harry Hammerman House*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 2007.

Brunstrom, Mary Reid. "Joseph D. Murphy: Architect and Teacher." St. Louis, Missouri: Unpublished essay, dated 2008; collection of Vincent and Caroline DeForest.

City of University City Building Permit Records.

Gill, McCune. "Joseph D. Murphy." *The St. Louis Story*. St. Louis, Missouri: Historical Record Association, 1952. p. 996-998.

Hamilton, Esley. "Charles Eames in St. Louis." *Newsletter of the Society of Architectural Historians, Missouri Valley Chapter* vol. 14 no. 3, Fall 2008. p. 4-6.

---. *Mid-Century Modern Architecture in St. Louis County: Outstanding Examples Worthy of Preservation*. Clayton, Mo.: St. Louis County Historic Buildings Commission, 2007.

---. *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Cori House*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1986.

"Houses." *Architectural Forum* vol. 75, no. 5, May 1940.

Mackey, Eugene J., III. "A Journal of Discovery." *20 Fellows: Paths Taken, Lessons Learned*. St. Louis: American Institute of Architects St. Louis, 2007.

Mumford, Eric. *Modern Architecture in St. Louis: Washington University and Postwar American Architecture, 1948-73*. St. Louis: School of Architecture, Washington University, 2004.

Murphy Archive. St. Louis, Missouri.

Murphy, Joseph D. "Design for a Doctor's Residence." *Pencil Points,* August 1937.

Nomination of Joseph D. Murphy, Advancement to Fellowship. St. Louis, Missouri: Collection of the American Institute of Architects, St. Louis Chapter.

Raimist, Andrew. "Harris Armstrong's Traditional House Designs: The House at 423 Miriam." *Newsletter of the Society of Architectural Historians, Missouri Valley Chapter* vol. 15 no. 2A, Summer 2009. p. 4-6.

Rice, Patricia. "Joseph Murphy Dies." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 13 January 1995.

Sergeant, John. *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses: The Case for Organic Architecture*. New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1976.

Webb, Michael. *Modernism Reborn: Mid-Century American Houses*. New York: Universe Publishing, 2001.

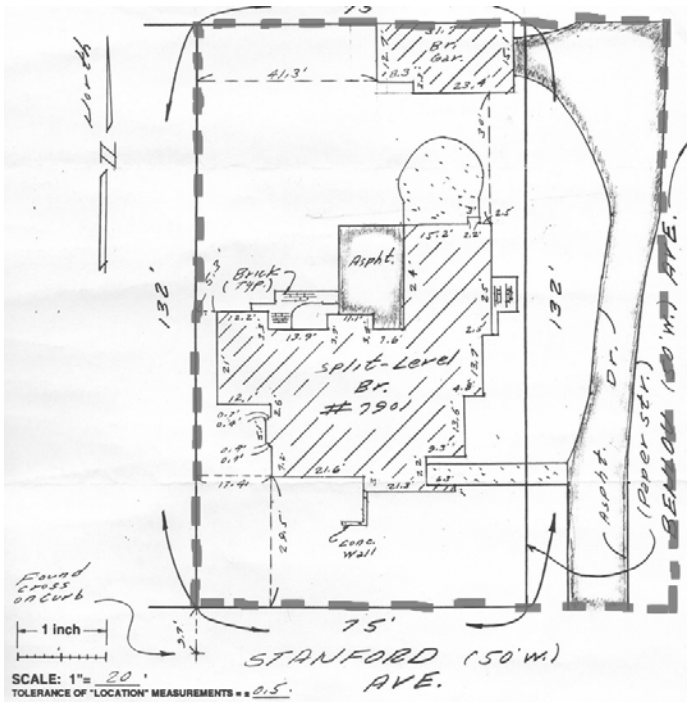
Boundary Description

The nominated site is part of the parcel located at 7901 Stanford Avenue in the city of University City, county of St. Louis, Missouri. That parcel is legally known as Central Suburbs Lot Part 39 and Part Vacated Benlou Avenue / West University Number 3 Block 4 Lots 14 and 15 and Benlou Vacanted Part Resubdivision Lot A. The nominated site is indicated by a dashed line on the accompanying map entitled "Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence Boundary Map."

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all of the land historically associated with the Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence. The parcel's eastern boundary was truncated when the Murphy family subdivided the original parcel.

Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence Boundary Map
Source: Nicolas C. Pappas, Land Surveyor, 1996.



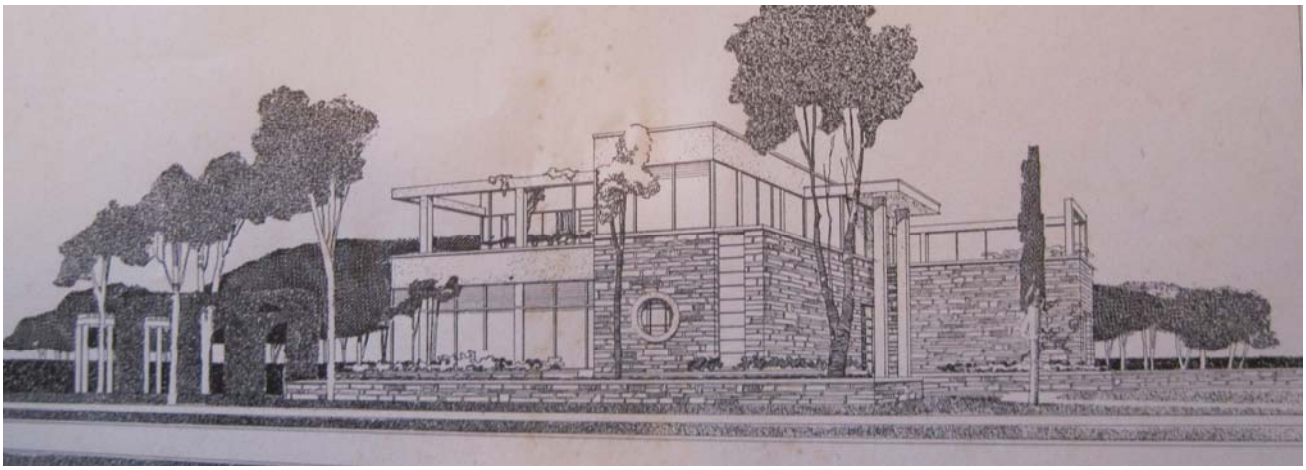
Unless otherwise indicated, the following is true for all photographs submitted with this nomination:

Joseph D. Murphy House
7901 Stanford Avenue
University City (St. Louis), Missouri
Photographer: Michael Allen
November 2009
Digital source files in the collection of the Preservation Research Office.

The descriptions of each photograph number are:

1. View of the residence looking northwest.
2. View of front elevation looking northeast.
3. View looking northeast at western elevation of residence.
4. View of house looking southwest.
5. View toward addition looking east.
6. View of rear elevation looking south.
7. View of garage and studio building looking northeast.
8. Looking south inside of the living room.
9. View slightly southeast toward entrance, inside of living room.
10. View southwest inside of sun room.
11. View southeast inside of second floor bedroom.
12. View east inside of second floor bedroom.

Figure #1: Renderings of Joseph D. Murphy's submission to the 1934 Flat Glass Industry Architectural Competition (top) and the architect's submission to the 1937 Suntile Architectural Competition. (Source: Murphy Archive.)



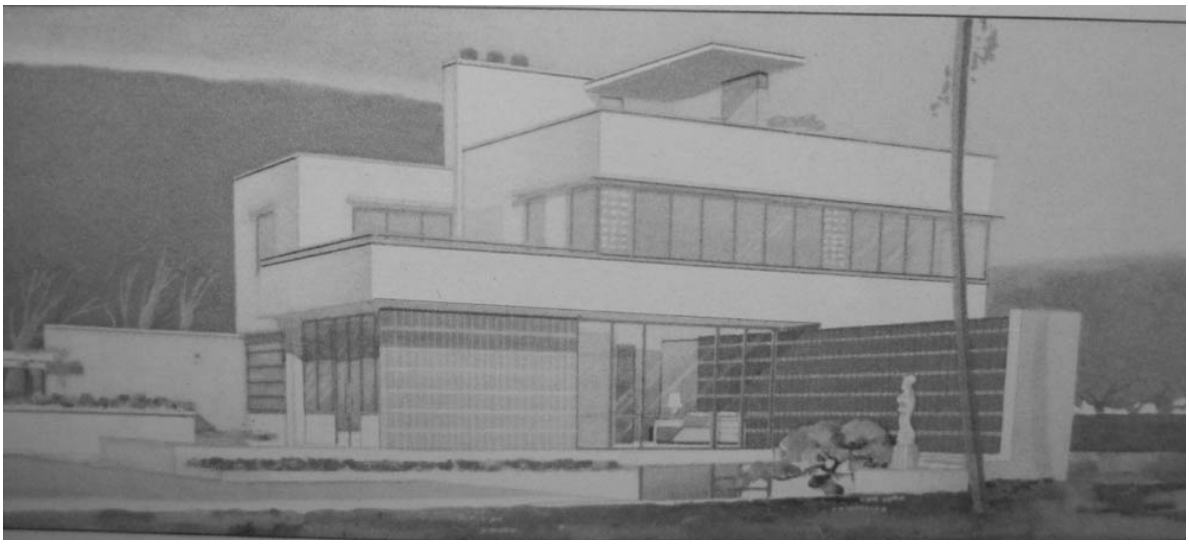
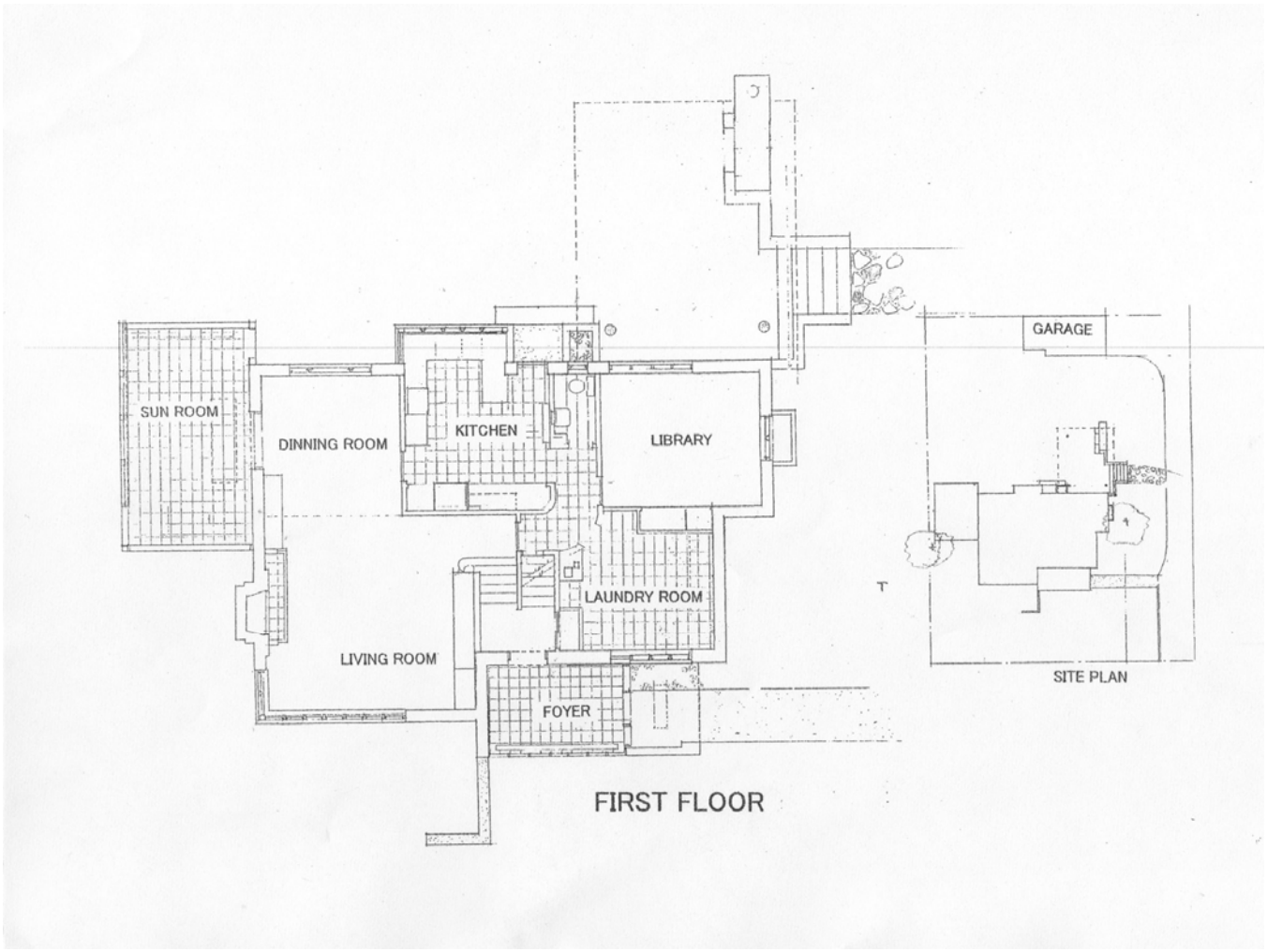


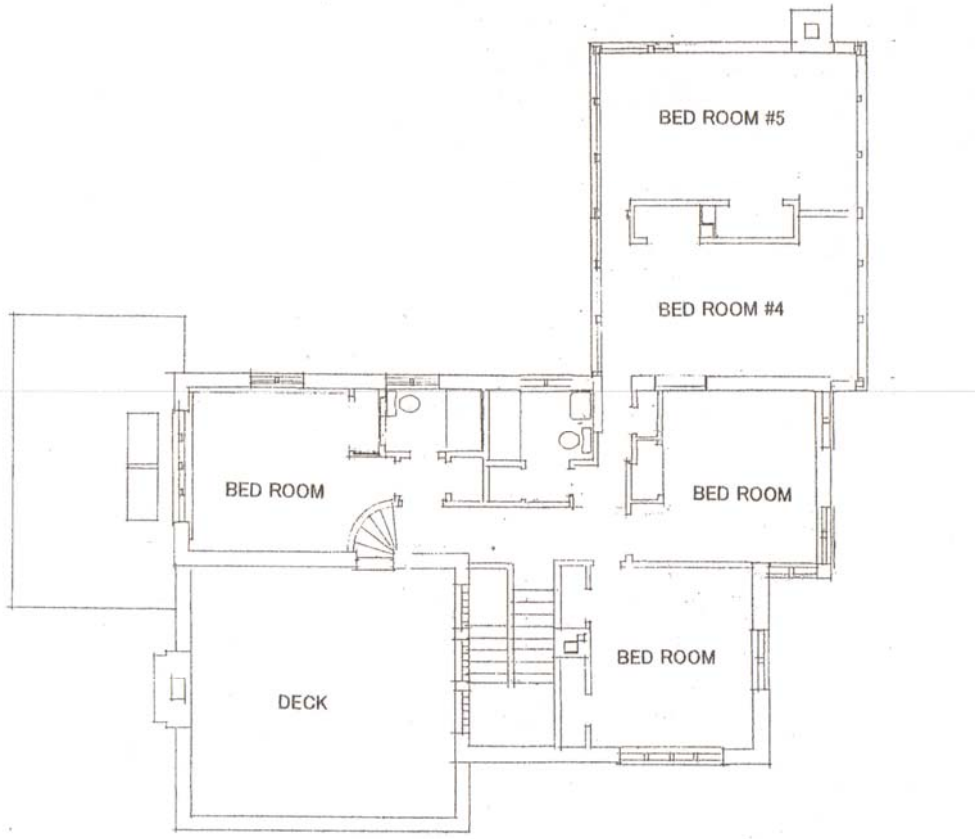
Figure #2: Photographs of the Sherman and Maremont Houses. (Source: Photograph by Michael R. Allen.)

Figure #3: Photograph of the Dr. Henry E. Hampton House. (Source: Photograph by Michael R. Allen.)

Figure #4: Photograph of the Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence that appeared in the April 1941 issue of *Architectural Forum*. (Source: Murphy Archive.)

Figure #5: Floor plans for the Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence. (Source: Collection of Vincent and Caroline DeForest.)





SECOND FLOOR

Figure #6: The Joseph and Ann Murphy Residence viewed from the west, 1939. (Source: Murphy Archive.)

Figure #7: The other Murphy & Wischmeyer house published in Architectural Forum, April 1941.

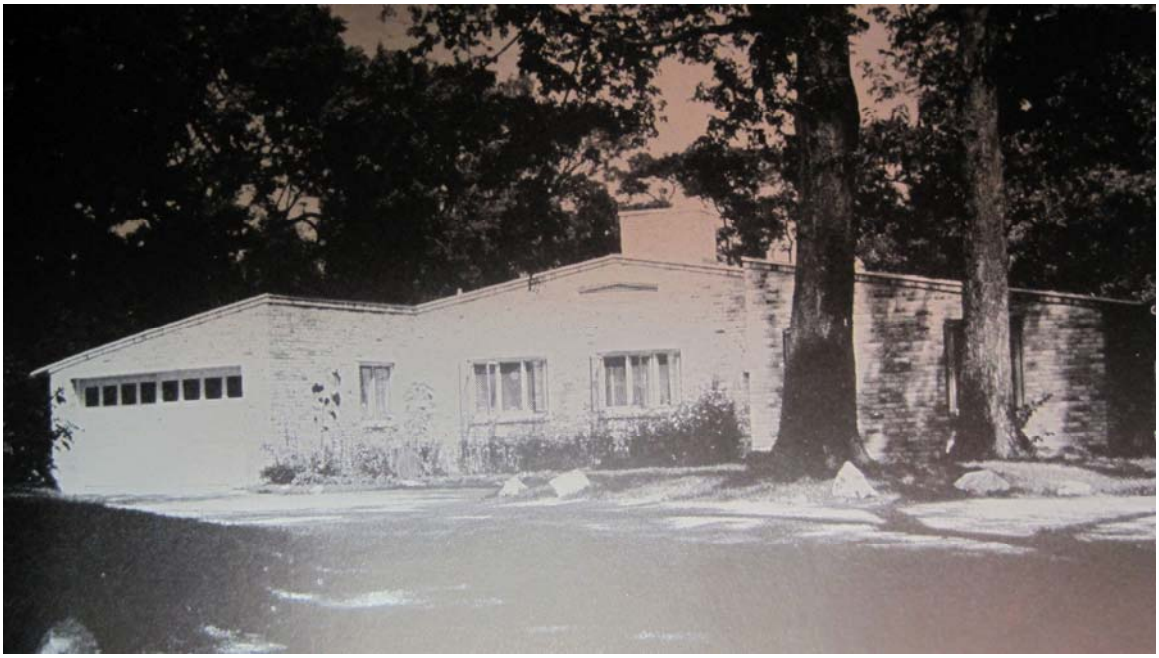
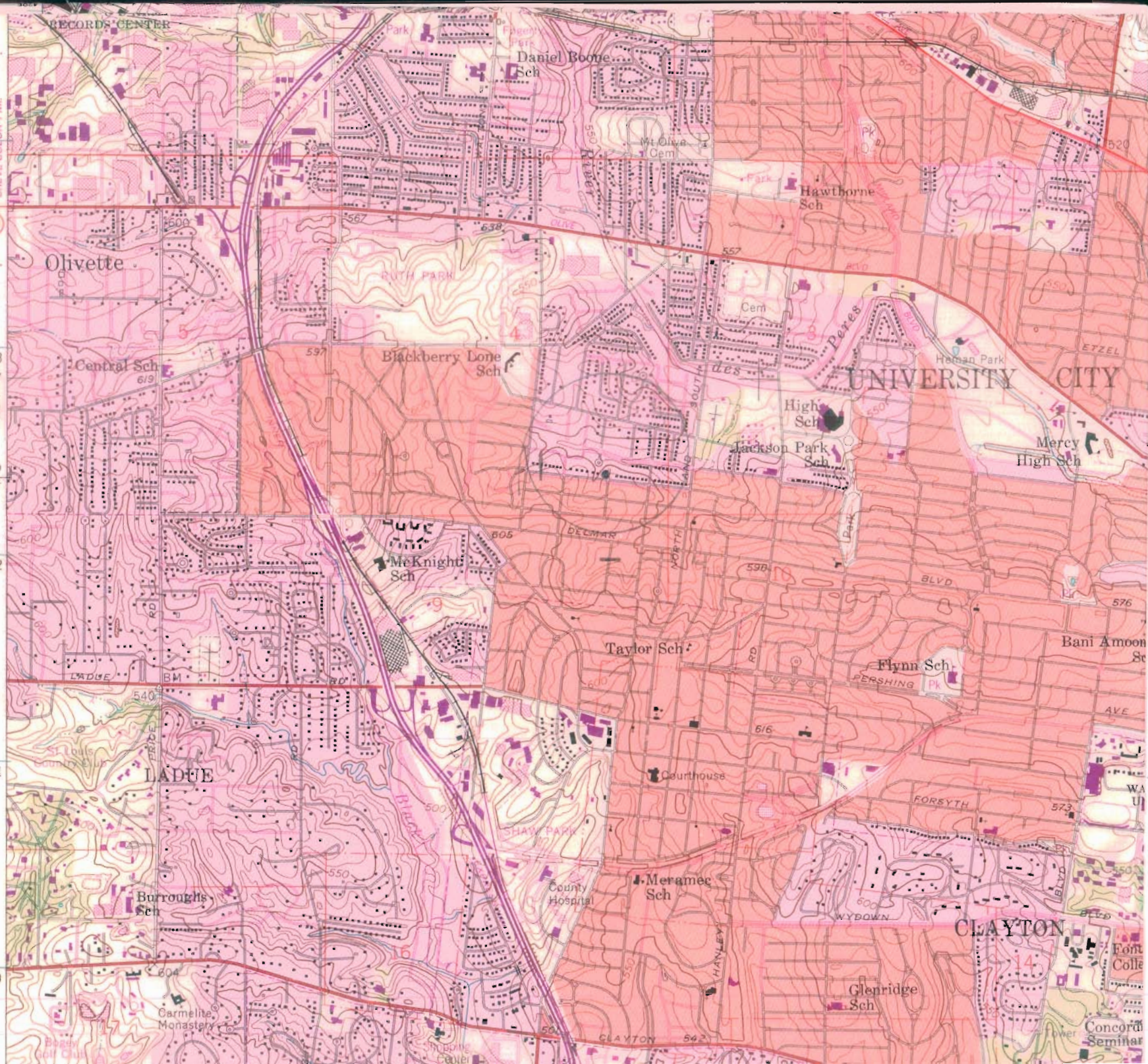


Figure #8: Joseph D. Murphy and Frank Lloyd Wright, 1957. (Source: Murphy Archive.)

Murphy, Joseph & Ann Residence
St. Louis County, Mo
15/731252/4282693*

*from ARC Reader GIS Software