1. NAME AND LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Ford, Sam and Ruth Van Sickle, House

Other Name/Site Number:

Street and Number (if applicable)**:** South Edgelawn Drive 404

City/Town: Aurora **County:** Kane **State:** IL

Designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior December 11, 2023.

2. SIGNIFICANCE DATA

NHL Criteria: 4

NHL Criteria Exceptions:

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing Cultural Values
5. Architecture, landscape architecture and urban design

Period(s) of Significance: 1949-50

Significant Person(s) (only Criterion 2)**:**

Cultural Affiliation (only Criterion 6)**:**

Designer/Creator/Architect/Builder: Bruce Goff/Don Tosi

Historic Contexts: XVI. Architecture

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement. We are collecting this information under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467) and 36 CFR part 65. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to evaluate properties nominated as National Historic Landmarks. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned Control No. 1024-0276.

Estimated Burden Statement. Public reporting burden is 2 hours for an initial inquiry letter and 344 hours for NPS Form 10-934 (per response), including the time it takes to read, gather and maintain data, review instructions and complete the letter/form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate, or any aspects of this form, to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Mail Stop 242, Reston, VA 20192. Please do not send your form to this address.

3. WITHHOLDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Does this nomination contain sensitive information that should be withheld under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act?

___ Yes

_X_ No

4. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Acreage of Property: 1.25

2. Use either Latitude/Longitude Coordinates or the UTM system:

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates:
Datum if other than WGS84:
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Latitude: 41.753544° **Longitude:** -88.358726°

3. Verbal Boundary Description:

The National Historic Landmark boundary for the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is the four-sided parcel corresponding to its current legal boundary. The parcel covers the entire city block bounded by Kenilworth Place on the north, South Rosedale Avenue on the east, Southlawn Place on the south, and South Edgelawn Drive on the west.

4. Boundary Justification:

The National Historic Landmark boundary for the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is the four-sided area corresponding to the original property of the Fords at the time of the house's completion. The NHL boundary has been delineated to encompass the entire city block on which is located the property's three contributing resources, the house itself, the asphalt-paved driveway, and the ornamental wall on the western edge of the property. Though the original Ford property at the time of construction only encompassed the western half of the block, the eastern half was vacant during the period of significance and throughout much of the Fords' ownership. A house was later built on the eastern property that obstructed views of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House from the street to the east. In 1996, the current owner bought the east half of the block and demolished the later house, and legally combined both halves of the block as one parcel. This reestablished views of the house from the surrounding streets and the unobstructed views from the house. Thus, the entire block is nominated because it recreates the views of the house and setting that existed when the house was built.

5. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is nationally significant as a masterwork of twentieth-century architect Bruce Goff. Its period of significance is 1949-1950, the years of its construction. Goff was a leader of the American Organic design movement, who, through his teaching at the University of Oklahoma and his design work, continues to influence contemporary architects. The house was designed by Goff in 1947-49 during a period of particular creativity and displays many of the important qualities found in his work. These include a strong underlying geometry and complex spatial variety. The house is an excellent example of Goff's creative use of materials. From the Quonset hut ribs, which give the house its basic form, to the unique coal and cullet glass wall which encloses its main interior living area, these building components show Goff's uninhibited openness to exploring new uses for materials. Goff was particularly fortunate at the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House that his design was brought to fruition by general contractor Don Tosi. Tosi had been a student of Goff's and then a draftsman in his office, working on the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House drawings. This makes the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford house an especially faithful and well-constructed example of Goff's design ideas. In addition, the house's high level of historic integrity helps to showcase its important place in both the work of Bruce Goff and twentieth-century architecture.

PROVIDE RELEVANT PROPERTY-SPECIFIC HISTORY, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND THEMES. JUSTIFY CRITERIA, EXCEPTIONS, AND PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE LISTED IN SECTION 2.

The Ford House and the Development of Western Aurora

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is located in the Country Club Estates subdivision in western Aurora, Kane County, Illinois.[1] Platted on May 22, 1926, Country Club Estates experienced little development before the end of World War II.[2] The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House site was undeveloped when the Fords purchased the northwestern portion of the block bounded by Edgelawn, Kenilworth, Rosedale, and Southlawn from Charles M. Burgess in December 1947. This parcel measured 129' east-to-west x 109' north-to-south. In September 1949, the Fords purchased the remaining 100' of the block to the south of their original purchase, creating an overall parcel of 129' east-to-west x 209' north-to-south. The house was built on the northern portion of this parcel. As Sam Ford was an avid golfer, the Fords' choice of location for their home probably was influenced by its proximity to the Aurora Country Club, one block south of this site. It is current Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House owner Sidney Robinson's understanding that Sam had a golf cart that he would drive between the house and the Country Club. [3]

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[1]Subdivision information and ownership history was taken from the plat map and tract books on the website of the Kane County Assessor's Office, http://lrs.kanecountyrecorder.net, accessed April 22, 2013. This data was augmented by information in city directories in the collection of the Aurora Historical Society.

[2]A 1939 US Department of Agriculture aerial photograph shows that a house on Prairie Street was the only house built in the subdivision south of Marseillaise Place, a block north of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House site. See the Illinois State Geological Survey, Illinois Historical Aerial Photographs, http://maps.isgs.illinois.edu/ilhap, accessed February 22, 2014, US Department of Agriculture aerial photograph, July 12, 1939, roll 1, exposure 6. A sketch made at the time of construction (in the Bruce Goff Archive) indicates that the large Colonial house on the block south of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House site was already constructed.

[3] According to Ruth Van Sickle Ford's biography, Sam Ford's ashes were cast under a tree near the entrance to the Aurora Country Club. See Nancy Smith Hopp, *Warm Light, Cool Shade, the Life and Work of Ruth Van Sickle Ford* (Aurora: Pen Works Press, 2011) 150.

During the time that the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House was being built, major institutions in the area included the Aurora Country Club to the south and Aurora College (now Aurora University) to the east. Residential development of the area was relatively contemporaneous with the construction of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, taking place from the end of World War II through the 1960s. Another noteworthy example of residential architecture in the area is the Goldman House on the corner of Prairie Street and South Evanslawn Avenue; designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Keck and Keck, it was built shortly after the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. At the time the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House was built, the boundaries of the city of Aurora were completely within Kane County. According to the 1950 U.S census, the city's population was 50,508. Growth of the city since the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House was built has largely been to the east and south, to the extent that development in those directions is essentially contiguous with neighboring Naperville to the east. Because of this physical growth, Aurora boundaries have expanded and the city now is located in four counties, Kane, DuPage, Kendall, and Will Counties. Major growth to the east and south has allowed development in the area around the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House on Aurora's west side to remain predominantly residential. Commercial growth in the vicinity of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House has been focused on West Galena Boulevard, approximately three-quarters of a mile to the north. The residential growth in western Aurora in the second half of the twentieth century indicates that the Fords' decision to build their house in that area was a typical one of that period, even as their choice of house design was not.

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House: Participants

Albert G. "Sam" Ford and Ruth Van Sickle Ford, Clients

When Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford decided to build their new home in 1947, they lived in a substantial brick house at 480 Lake Street in Aurora. Ruth Van Sickle was born in Aurora on August 8, 1897 and had lived in the Lake Street house since 1909. A graduate of West Aurora High School, she attended the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts and graduated from the Academy in 1918. She married Sam Ford of Geneva, Illinois, on January 27, 1918, while Sam was in the military. She gave birth to their daughter, Barbara, in October of that year.[4]

While Sam was a civil engineer employed by Western United Gas & Electric Company, Ruth began her career as an artist. In 1920, she returned to the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts to teach and eventually became its director and president, purchasing the school in the 1930s. Ruth continued to head the institution until selling the Academy in the early 1960s.

Ruth Van Sickle Ford was active in numerous arts organizations. In 1954, she became the first Illinois woman to be invited to join the American Watercolor Society. In 1960, she became the first professional woman artist to become a member of the Palette & Chisel Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago, and she was the first American artist to exhibit in the country of Haiti, at the island's national art museum, displaying her Caribbean watercolors. Aurora University awarded Ruth Van Sickle Ford an honorary doctorate of fine arts in 1974.

After the Fords sold their Bruce Goff-designed house at 404 South Edgelawn, they moved to a smaller house at 69 Central Street in Aurora and lived there until 1984, when they moved to the Countryside Care Center in Aurora. Sam died the night after their move. Ruth Van Sickle Ford died on April 18, 1989.

[4] Most biographical information on Ruth Van Sickle Ford comes from Hoop, *Warm Light Cool Shadows*.

Bruce Goff, Architect

Born in Alton, Kansas, on June 8, 1904, Bruce Goff lived as a child in numerous small towns in Kansas and Oklahoma, as well as in Denver, Colorado, as his family moved to follow job opportunities for his father.[5] By 1915, his family had settled in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where Goff was apprenticed to the architectural firm of Rush, Endacott & Rush in 1916, at just twelve years of age. Through publications in his employer's library, Goff was exposed to the work of architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. Young Goff wrote to these architects, receiving warm responses in both cases. This began a connection with Wright that would be significant throughout Goff's life. However, this connection has, to some extent, been misleading, by overemphasizing the relationship between the two. Despite his lasting regard for Wright, Goff's work was based on an individuality that clearly differentiates his designs from those of the older architect's.

Though Goff quickly rose to become a partner in his firm, with its name being changed to Rush, Endacott and Goff, the Great Depression forced that partnership to be dissolved in 1932. In 1934, Goff moved to Park Ridge, Illinois, to work with sculptor Alfonso Iannelli, whom he had met earlier in Tulsa. By 1935, Goff was teaching part-time at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, beginning an association with Ruth Van Sickle Ford that would culminate in his design of her house in the late 1940s.[6]

From July 1936 to the following summer, Goff was the director of the design department of the Vitrolite Division of the Libbey-Owens-Ford glass company. While Goff found the design limitations imposed on him by this position unsatisfying, his exposure to the glass products with which he worked no doubt left a lasting impression. This impression would be made manifest by the introduction of glass cullets—residue from the industrial process of making glass—into the coal wall that surrounds the main interior living area of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House.

After leaving Libbey-Owens-Ford in 1937, Goff returned to teaching at the Academy and started an independent architectural practice in Chicago. This lasted until 1942, when Goff entered the U.S. Navy. In 1943, Goff was assigned to the Naval Construction Battalion, or Seabees, and was stationed in Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska; later that year, Goff was reassigned to Camp Parks, near San Francisco. During this period, he designed a number of projects for the Navy that required him to make creative use of materials at hand. These projects included an assortment of both new and altered buildings to which Goff was able to give a sense of uniqueness. Relative to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, the most notable of these was the Camp Parks Chapel, in which Goff used the Quonset hut rib and form as the basis of his design, mitigating its tube-like form with cross-axial walls and a clerestory.

In 1945, after his discharge from the Navy, Goff opened an architectural office at 2027 Haste Street in Berkeley, California, staying there until 1947, when he left to teach at University of Oklahoma in Norman. Shortly after moving to Norman, Goff was appointed chair of the department of architecture at the University of Oklahoma. This time in Norman was an extremely productive period for Goff, both as a designer and educator; he designed not only the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, but several of his most significant built

[5] Biographical information for Bruce Goff comes primarily from David De Long, *The Architecture of Bruce Goff, Buildings and Projects 1916-1974* (New York and London: Garland Press, 1977) and De Long, *Bruce Goff, Toward Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The MIT Press, 1988). De Long's work is an invaluable basis for any study of Goff's architecture.

[6] De Long, *Toward Absolute Architecture*, 318 n. 5, indicates that Goff had joined the Academy staff by the summer of 1935. According to the book's chronology, Goff returned to the Academy in 1937 after working with Libbey-Owens-Ford in Toledo and appears to have continued teaching there until he left Chicago for service in the Navy in 1942.

projects, including the Bavinger House (1950) in Norman and the unbuilt Price Studio No. 1, designed for Joe Price in Bartlesville, Oklahoma (1953).

In 1955, Goff abruptly resigned as Chairman of the Department of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma, citing poor health. In reality, Goff appears to have been entrapped by local police for homosexual activity characterized as endangering the morals of a minor. Despite support from the university president and a large group of faculty and students, Goff chose to plead guilty to the charge, paid a fine of $500 and agreed to leave the state for one month. After returning to the state, he settled in Bartlesville, living and working in Frank Lloyd Wright's Price Tower. According to Goff's biographer, David De Long:

> Why the police acted so vindictively can perhaps only be explained by prejudicial attitudes of Midwesterners in the 1950s…. [I]n a small, highly conservative university town, the mere suspicion of homosexuality was sufficient to destroy a career, particularly of a prominent citizen…. Clearly Goff suffered the most, but, too, did the School of Architecture, which soon lost the distinction it had gained under his direction.[7]

Goff's experience can also be viewed as part of the "lavender scare" of the 1950s and 1960s which saw widespread efforts to purge LGBTQ people from positions of power or influence, especially in government agencies.[8]

In Bartlesville, Goff's commissions included the Price Studio No. 2 (designed 1956, constructed 1957-58, with additions designed by Goff in 1966, 1974). In 1964, Goff moved to Kansas City, Missouri, and then to Tyler, Texas in 1970, carrying on his independent practice in each location. He died in Tyler on August 4, 1982.

Don Tosi, Builder

When the first Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House contractor abandoned the project, young Don Tosi was brought in as general contractor. Just twenty-six years old at the time, Tosi later recalled telling the Fords, when they asked him to take on the project, "I feel confident that I can do it. I haven't had that sort of experience, but I feel confident that I know the house, I know what has to be done to create Bruce's design, and I can do it."[9] Tosi had good reason to believe he knew what needed to be done for Goff's design. He had been both Goff's student and draftsman for several years, and he had worked on the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House drawings.

Don Tosi was born in Chicago on January 20, 1923. In a 1995 interview with Sidney Robinson, Tosi related that he met Goff at the Chicago Academy of Art, which he attended after graduating from high school.[10] Tosi

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[7] De Long, *Toward Absolute Architecture*, 136-137. See also: Amanda Fortini, "The Man Who Made Wildly Imaginative, Gloriously Disobedient Buildings," *The New York Times Style Magazine* (September 10, 2018).

[8] On the "lavender scare" and its relation to the anticommunist "red scare" of the early Cold War years, see David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, revised edition 2023).

[9] Don Tosi, interview by Sidney K. Robinson, June 19, 1995, transcribed, then annotated by Tosi, January 1997, 9. Unpublished manuscript on file with the interviewer at the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, 404 South Edgelawn Drive, Aurora, Illinois 60506.

[10] In this interview Tosi shared much biographical information. Additional information can be found in Charlie Wilkins, "The Homes of Builder Don A. Tosi," *Historic Illinois* 34, no. 4, (2011): 3-8, as well as Tosi's obituary from the Naperville *Sun*, February 4, 2009, http://legacy.suburbanchicagonews.com/obituaries/stng-napervillesun/obituary.aspx?n=donald-a-tosi&pid=134161538, accessed January 16, 2013.

had originally been leaning toward industrial design, but Goff "took him under his wing," and he became more interested in architecture. For one year before going into the Army, Tosi apprenticed with Goff in his studio on Howard Street on the north side of Chicago. There, Goff introduced Tosi not only to architecture, but to painting and to Goff's other major interest—music. Tosi spoke movingly of this introduction: "[N]ever until I got to Bruce and I heard his music did I find myself completely engrossed with music—the excitement was unbelievable to me."[11] After serving in the Army from 1942-46, Tosi joined Goff, who was now living in Berkeley, California; Tosi and two other apprentices lived on the first floor and Goff lived on the second.[12] Tosi's work with Goff during this period included alterations to the Bachman House in Chicago and the proposed Kozak House in Sleepy Hollow, California.

Tosi returned to the Midwest around the time that Goff moved to Oklahoma to teach at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. He set up an office in Elmhurst, Illinois, and began to act as a contractor in "self-defense."[13] As Tosi recalled it, immediately after World War II contractors typically would build only the least complicated houses possible to maximize their profit in a market which was clamoring for new homes. Tosi became a contractor in order to build his own unusual designs. In October 1949, Tosi became the contractor of the most unusual house of his career, the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. Tosi would go on to be a respected house builder in the western Chicago suburbs, particularly Aurora and Naperville. He died on January 30, 2009.

Design of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House: Process, Form, Site and Materials[14]

Design of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House: Process

By 1947, Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford had been living in a two-story brick house on North Lake Street in Aurora for several decades. Apparently, the Fords commissioned Goff without specifying the exact type of design he should give them. Ruth wanted a "modern home" with gallery space for her paintings. According to a July 6, 1950, *Chicago Tribune* article:

> When Mrs. Ford decided a few years ago that she wanted to build a modern house, she had nothing special in mind but the amount of space she needed and the amount of money she wanted to spend. Goff had taught at the academy [the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts] for seven years, and Mrs. Ford was acquainted with his work. She asked him to design a modern home.[15]

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[11] Tosi, interview, 128.

[12] One of the other apprentices was Claude Oakland (1919-1989), who worked for Goff for seven months prior to Goff's move to Oklahoma in 1947. Oakland would later work with prolific California developer Joseph Eichler, producing designs for an estimated 3,430 Eichler Houses. For information on Oakland and his work with Goff see Paul Adamson, *Eichler: Modernism Rebuilds the American Dream* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2002), 212.

[13] Tosi, interview, 7.

[14] The narrative of the design and construction of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House was written using documentation from the Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago and information in the 1995 interview of Don Tosi by Sidney Robinson. Because Goff was teaching at the University of Oklahoma at Norman at the time the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House was being designed and built, a sizable amount of correspondence between Goff, the Fords, and Tosi exists in the Goff Archive. This is in contrast to Goff's other important house of this period, the Bavinger House, which was being constructed in Norman while Goff was living there. There is very little correspondence in the Goff Archive relating to that house.

[15] Shirley Lowry, "Critics 'Burn Up' Couple Living in House Built of Coal," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 July 1950, W-A3.

As Ruth later remembered, "I had the Academy of Fine Arts about 25 years—Goff was there eight or nine years—taught interior design—then he taught privately at home—including Don Tosi, the builder of the house, who took private lessons with Goff."[16] While it is not known exactly how familiar the Fords were with Goff's past work, Ruth probably would have been aware of his work in the Chicago area. The Elin and Rant Houses (1938) in Northfield; the Cole House (1939) and Unseth House (1940), both in Park Ridge; the Colmorgan House (1940) in Glenview, all were designed while Goff was teaching at the Academy. As discussions regarding the house began in the summer of 1947, Goff's Ledbetter House in Norman, Oklahoma, was under construction.[17] Whether the Fords knew of this building is not known, but when the agreement for architectural services was signed by the Fords and Goff in October 1947, they would have known they were going to get something out of the ordinary.[18]

On October 14, 1947, Goff sent the Fords an agreement for architectural services to be signed. In the attached letter, he said he had been "living" their house and stated, "Sometime these things have to be struggled with …and show signs of the struggle, but I believe this job will emerge clearly and beautifully and smoothly. Everything seems to naturally work out naturally [*sic*]. Of course having such understanding clients is a big help and a strong incentive. I hope…and am sure, you will like it." Regarding price, Goff wrote, "You will note that I gave you a flat rate of 10% based on your figure of $20,000. I believe that you will have to spend that much nowadays to get what you want and it does not seem that prices will come down any."[19]

On November 21, Ruth wrote, "Dear Bruce, I don't want to sound too expeditious, but how are the sketches for our 'shanty' coming along? I'm just very anxious, dear. With love, Ruth Ford."[20] Her light but clear manner indicates the level of rapport between architect and client. Goff responded on December 3, explaining that sketches for the "shanty" would come soon and making reference to a change in the lot location that required him to change the plans. Goff apparently was referring to the fact that Ruth indicated in a letter on October 10, 1947, that her husband was not able to buy the northeast corner of the block bounded by Edgelawn, Kenilworth, Rosedale and Southlawn as planned, but bought the southeast corner instead. In fact, the house was built on a northwest corner lot, purchased by the Fords in December 1947. By January 15, 1948, correspondence from Don Tosi to Goff clearly refers to a northwest corner lot as the site for the house.[21]

The plans Goff sent to the Fords were for the first of three schemes that would be created for the house. The first design consisted of a main "domed" structure created by the rotating of Quonset hut ribs around a central point. While not a true domed structure, due to the central support of the rotated ribs, the word is typically used to describe the form created by these ribs and will be used here. The central structure was divided to interior and exterior living areas. The interior living area contained the principle living spaces of the house: the kitchen, the dining area, a gallery for Ruth Ford's paintings around the perimeter of the space, and a studio for her on a mezzanine level cantilevered off the central structural support. Approximately, one-third of the main structure

[16] Ruth Van Sickle Ford interview by David G. De Long, May 21, 1974. With thanks to David De Long who shared his unpublished notes from this interview with the nomination author.
[17] These discussions are mentioned by Goff in his letter accompanying an agreement for architectural services.
[18] De Long, *Toward Absolute Architecture,* 321 n. 15, indicates that the construction contract for the Ledbetter House was signed on July 12, 1947, and the *Oklahoma City Times* reported its completion on May 1, 1948.
[19] Goff to Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford, 14 October 1947, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[20] Ruth Van Sickle Ford to Goff, 21 November 1947, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[21] There is minor confusion here, as Tosi labeled the east-west street on the north side of the lot as "Westlawn." Westlawn is in fact a north-south street three blocks east of Edgelawn.

was separated from the interior by glass walls radiating from the center, to create an exterior living area within the form of the main dome. Two smaller, partial domes were adjacent to the main domes, each containing a bedroom. Bathrooms and storage areas filled the interstitial spaces between the main dome and the partial domes.

It is the first scheme that ultimately was built. According to Don Tosi, the distinctive Quonset ribs were used because they were inexpensive, but Tosi noted meaningfully, "That was a starting point, and it gave him a shape that he felt was interesting. Bruce liked to work with shapes."[22] Goff was very familiar with the Quonset hut from his years in the Navy during World War II as a part of the Naval Construction Battalion, or Seabees, as well as for the 1945-46 projects noted above that culminated in the Kozak House in Sleepy Hollow, California.

When they received the plans at the end of 1947, the Fords liked what Goff had designed. As the July 6, 1950, *Chicago Tribune* article described:

> [Sam Ford], a gas engineer for Western United Gas and Electric company [*sic*], didn't say a word for two hours when he first was shown the plans. After studying them on the living room floor, he declared, "This will probably be the most interesting place in the world to live. Let's build it!"[23]

Sam wrote to Goff on January 13, 1948: "I like it—and a lot."[24] The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House often is referred to as the "Ruth Van Sickle Ford House," and it is assumed that Ruth was the driving force behind the selection of Goff as designer.[25] While this may be true, Sam took an active role in discussions regarding the house, typically focusing on budget and construction issues. Sam's appreciation for the design did not keep him from listing a number of cost-cutting options in the January 13 letter, including a proposal to reduce the diameter of the house from 48' to 36', eliminating the depressed area around the fireplace, and cutting out the mezzanine studio level. In the same letter Sam also suggests reducing the "garage" from two cars to one. Originally the carport space was to be enclosed with accordion doors. While discussion of the removal of these doors has not survived, it would seem likely that this was another cost cutting measure. Sam closes with, "I can assume Ruth is pretty happy about and with what you have in mind. If you please her, you will have taken care of me."

By April 16, Goff was assuring Ruth that, "Don [Tosi] should have the working drawings done very soon," though by May 12, Ruth was "a little disturbed things have not gotten started."[26] Tosi's involvement in the house was crucial from the design phase through the end of construction. His time as a protégé of Goff's before World War II, and working for Goff in California after the war, gave him a thorough understanding of Goff's design goals. According to Tosi, by the time he was working for Goff in California in 1946 the architect

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[22] Tosi, interview, 102.
[23] Lowry, "Critics 'Burn Up' Couple Living in House Built of Coal."
[24] Sam Ford to Goff, 13 January 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[25] In their 1996 interview Robinson specifically asked Tosi, "And the request came from Ruth?" Tosi responded, "Yes. I don't know how it came about, but I know when I got there [Berkeley, California] Bruce was starting the first design for the Ford House." Don Tosi, interview, 11-12. As discussed in note 26 below, Tosi appears to have arrived in California in the summer of 1946. This would have been a full year before the first discussions of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House.
[26] Goff to Ruth Van Sickle Ford, 16 April 1948, and Ruth Ford to Goff, 12 May 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

received the request from the Fords for their house. In fact, discussions of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House did not begin until the summer of 1947, while Goff was teaching at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Tosi had no interest in joining Goff at the university and may have stayed on in California through most of 1947.[27] Regardless, by January 1948 Tosi was living at his parents' house in Broadview, Illinois, starting his own design and contracting business. In a letter to Sam Ford, Goff wrote, "I am writing Don too and briefing him on several points he needs information on. Please call on him when necessary as I am sure his experience on the Bachman work in Chicago and his understanding of what we are aiming at should be of help both to you and Linder."[28] Carl Linder was a contractor acquaintance of Sam's, with whom Ford reviewed drawings. Ford also expected Linder eventually would act as contractor for the construction of the house. Clearly, by this point Tosi was Goff's *de facto* site representative. It is not clear how formally this role was stated, but on July 29, Goff wrote to Ruth that he would like Tosi to sit in on meetings with Linder.

Linder had a number of concerns about the design. Sam listed these concerns in a letter to Goff on July 20, 1948; Goff responded systematically to each of these concerns in a letter dated July 27.[29] Some items Goff recognized as matters of personal preference, and he did not resist these Ford/Linder proposals, which included the elimination of a second stair to the balcony (this remained in the final construction) and the elimination of a

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[27] This chronology is somewhat unclear. De Long, *The Architecture of Bruce Goff*, 239, n. 41, states that Goff confirmed that while he "closed" his California office "permanently" when he moved to Norman, Oklahoma, at the beginning of 1947, some later drawings carried the Berkeley address for legal reasons. Tosi stated that after moving to California he stayed there about a year and a half, which means roughly the end of 1947. Tosi further indicates that the first two, possibly all three schemes were worked on in California. If Tosi's memory was correct, it may be that while Goff's formal studio was closed at the beginning of 1947, Tosi (and perhaps others) remained and worked on Goff's projects in California.

[28] Goff to Sam Ford, 27 July 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

[29] Ford and Linder probably would have been reviewing working drawings dated July 10, 1948, copies of which are in the Goff Archive. A revised set of Scheme 1 working drawings in the Goff Archive is dated August 27, 1948. A synopsis of their concerns and Goff's responses is as follows:

1. Concern over constructability of copper skin at center pipe—Goff was confident that a competent builder should have no difficulty constructing the copper skin.
2. Eliminate the fireplace at studio level—Goff had no objection to this.
3. Eliminate second stair to studio near bedroom—Goff thought it will be more convenient with second stair, but felt this was the Fords' call.
4. Concern over strength of balcony—Goff responded with calculations.
5. Request for detail on where flues stop at roof—Goff clarifies configuration.
6. Concern that brass wire screen at top of center column will plug with soot—Goff said the holes in the screen will be large enough that they will not plug.
7. Concern over sheathing the sphere of the dome on the outside—Goff "believe[s]" this should work.
8. Concern over the sheathing of the interior of the dome—Goff stated the application of the spiral wood pattern "should present no difficulties in application." Tosi would later modify this detail as discussed below.
9. Want more detail on the top of the coal wall—Goff stated that he would provide this.
10. Question how the hemp rope is to be attached—Goff responded broad headed nails would be used.
11. Concern over design of the steps to studio—Goff wrote, "Tell Linder not to worry about the strength of the steps" and enclosed calculations.
12. Concern over detail of linoleum at balcony edge—no response.
13. Questioned whether the floor covering of the balcony was the same inside as out—Goff responded yes.
14. Think glass rail at balcony will be "terrifically expensive" and Sam does not "particularly like it, and I am sure Mrs. Ford doesn't either"—Goff advocated for the lightness it will give, but was willing to look at something else if that were requested.

fireplace at the studio level (this was not constructed). In other cases, one senses some friendly exasperation on Goff's part. Regarding Linder's questioning of the strength of the studio-level cantilever, Goff responded, "We did not guess at it, Sam! I am enclosing calculations to prove our design." In this letter, Goff emphasized his trust in Don Tosi to assist the Fords and closed, "We are responsible for a sound piece of architecture and believe me you are going to get it!"[30]

For all Goff's confidence in his responses to Sam Ford, Sam's concerns about costs were well-founded and would remain an issue throughout the design and construction of the building. The Fords' original expectation was to build their house for $20,000, but by January 13, 1948, Linder already had informed Ford that he was "sure" that $20,000 was low.[31]

In his July 29 letter to Ruth, Goff wrote:

> Now a word of advice to be patient!.... Please do not let minor questions disturb you or make you discouraged. Every building operation is grief from start to finish, but it is our job to worry about these little matters not yours. So throw it on us, please, and keep faith. We all want and are working for the same thing…a really good piece of architecture for the Fords!... And we'll [*sic*] get it! Keep your chin up and thanks again, from your friend.[32]

To address the issue of cost, the initial scheme was abandoned for a time. The second scheme used Quonset ribs in a more traditional linear form. Along one side were kitchen, bath, and bedroom on a lower level, and a studio, bath, and bedroom on an upper level. These spaces were a part of a larger, rib-covered space encompassing both interior and exterior living areas. On October 18, 1948—a full year after the initial agreement—Ruth wrote Goff:

> I am sorry I feel as I do about quansit [*sic*] huts but too I feel they are not your design. They were something conceived for war time living and gives me the same feeling as a prefabricated house does – The use of the ribs as they were in the round one was totally different and didn't suggest in any way the rather horrible (to me) quansit shape –…. I am sure as Sam said the other night "I am sure no one can give you a plan you can live with but Mr Goff." And I am sure he is right. We want simple and easy but functional living, plenty of closet room light & air….[33]

Goff took her comments to heart, because by November 19, Ruth sent Goff a telegram saying, "now plans are beautiful."[34] The third scheme jettisoned the Quonset ribs and definitely lost its linearity; in fact, it appears much less focused on a specific design idea than either of the earlier schemes—it is something of a combination of the two. The coal wall-encompassed living area of the first scheme was now covered with a sloping roof which rose up to also cover the two-story kitchen/studio/bedroom unit of the second scheme. On the opposite

[30] Goff to Sam Ford, 27 July 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[31] Sam Ford to Goff, 13 January 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[32] Goff to Ruth Van Sickle Ford, 29 July 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[33] Ruth Van Sickle Ford to Goff, 18 October 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[34] Ruth Van Sickle Ford to Goff, 19 November 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

side of this two-story unit, balancing the living area, was a screened exterior space whose configuration in no way resembled elements of the earlier schemes.

In spite of Ruth's acceptance of the third scheme, cost was still a major concern. Goff wrote Tosi on February 26, 1949:

> I can't see how the Ford House should cost more than the limit they set this time…. If we get contractors away from dilutions [*sic*] of grandeur and to really figure what is there. Do all you can to discourage Sam from trying another scheme. It is very important for us to get this house built for them and I believe we can, even if we have to substitute some materials to keep the cost down. Much as I would like to have the coal wall, it is not worth that much, so I suggest prices on clinker brick culls…. Mostly black and try some more with the coal.[35]

In an undated letter, Goff again wrote to Tosi:

> Please do all you can to keep Fords straight. Linder is naturally pulling the old contractor trick of trying to discredit the architect by bringing up "practical" matters we are supposed to be too dumb to know about.[36]

Design of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House: Form

David De Long has identified two formal types that are helpful in understanding the dynamic space in Goff's residential work. The two types are designs of geometrically distinct or determinate form and designs of indeterminate form. With the determinate form, interior spaces and their programmatic uses are very closely allied with the overall form of the enclosure of the building. In its most literal sense, it is "form follows function." With the indeterminate type, the relationship between the interior programmatic spaces and the building's exterior form is loose, sometimes to the point of clear disconnection. In Goff's 1946 Leidig House project in Hayward, California, the common areas, the bedrooms, and the bathrooms are literally islands separated by running water. The whole is enclosed by walls and roof that have little direct connection with the programmatic spaces. [37]

A part of the significance of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is that it may be considered to have elements of both these concepts. The domes clearly express a hierarchy of spaces: the common living area under the large central dome flanked by the private bedrooms under the smaller quarter-domes. Yet at the same time, the flat roofed areas that separate the domes could be considered analogous to the areas of water between the islands of the Leidig House. The interior spaces in these flat-roofed areas slide around the more determinate forms of the domes. This is especially noticeable in the entry vestibule. Here space is defined by the curves of the carport storage unit, guest bathroom unit, and the columnar screen of the main dome ribs. Environmental conditions require that between these forms, sheets of glass separate interior from exterior. One can imagine, though, that at these points Goff would have preferred no enclosure at all. This would allow the space of the vestibule to leak out beyond the confines of the building, emphasizing the contrast between the determinate forms and the indeterminate zones between.

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[35] Goff to Tosi, 26 February 1949, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[36] Goff to Tosi, n.d., Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[37] De Long, *Bruce Goff: Toward Absolute Architecture*, 80-95.

Throughout the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House Goff played with dualities such as this contrast between determinate domes and indeterminate intermediate spaces. In the form of the house itself the full, rounded, roofed domes of the asymmetrical northwest "public" side are contrasted with the open partial domes of the symmetrical southeast "private" side of the house. At the main entry the solid, opaque front door is placed within a "wall" of thin, floor-to-ceiling glass, inverting the expectation of a "wall" being solid and opaque and the door appearing to be the accessible component within that wall. All the doors to the house are opaque and are set in glass walls. The play with dualities is carried through to the conical roof above the center of the main dome. Here, over the otherwise opaque roof of the domed interior area, the cone is filled with glass to open up the interior to light. Conversely, above the exterior living area, where the curved ribs are uncovered and the space is otherwise open to the elements, the cone is covered with opaque roofing.

The clear separation of bedrooms from the main living area is likely the built manifestation of the relationship of the three original residents of the house—Sam and Ruth, and Ruth's mother, Anna Van Sickle. A number of Goff's house designs were for completely circular houses, such as the Garvey House (1954) in Urbana, Illinois, where the common living areas and private bedrooms all are within a relatively pure circular form. In Goff's spiral Bavinger House, built for a family consisting of Eugene and Nancy Bavinger and their young children, sleeping areas were actually suspended pods within the main living area. At the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, occupancy by three adults called for a greater degree of privacy in the bedrooms. This programmatic requirement is clearly expressed in the overall form of the building.

Within the approximately 1,525 square feet of the open interior of the main dome of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, Goff created a remarkable number of spatial experiences. On passing through the main vestibule, one enters the C-shaped main level of the space, which follows the coal wall around to the north and east. Here one must go left or right because the shelving unit backing the kitchen cabinets is directly forward. While the center of the dome can be clearly seen above the mezzanine, it cannot be accessed at this point, undermining the straightforward centrality of the space and enlivening the experience of it. The idea of encouraging movement around the perimeter of the dome was particularly appropriate to its original use as a gallery for Ruth Ford's painting. The screening of the kitchen area also screens one end of the C-shaped gallery from the other, allowing space to unfold as one walks around the gallery. The gallery is open to the curved ceiling of the dome above, creating a spacious open feeling with interesting views of the exposed structure beneath the central skylight. This contrasts with the experience of the space below the mezzanine. This is an intimate space with a low ceiling created by the balcony above it. Current owner Robinson has likened the experience of the lower section as being in the archetypal "cave" versus the "tent" of the main area. Yet another experience can be had on the mezzanine itself; here, light comes down from the skylight above and views are of the curved ceiling at eye level and the gallery below. As original owner Sam Ford later said, "[O]ne attractive asset: you couldn't sit in the same place—you soon realized a better place to be sitting…."[38]

While the forms of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House and their placement may appear whimsical, placement adheres to a rigorous logic. Whether all the relationships that can be found in the house were planned in advance cannot be known. What is clear is that Goff set up formal framework that allowed these relationships to occur. The main dome is located on a diagonal line that runs from the northwest to the southeast. The southeast portion of the main dome is opened to the outdoors, receiving morning south light. The glass walls that create the separation between the interior and exterior living areas of the main dome continue beyond its edges to create the glazed walls of the bedrooms, one wall going due south, the other going to the northeast. A short interior corridor follows each of these glass walls. On the opposite side of the corridors from the glass walls are enclosures for the bathroom and storage units for each bedroom. The center of the quarter-dome of

[38] Sam Ford interview.

each bedroom is placed at the corner of each unit where the short corridor enters the bedroom. In the south bedroom, the ceiling soffit that follows the south wall of the bathroom and storage unit continues to the west, outside of the bedroom dome, to create the south edge of the carport roof. The north edge of the carport is parallel to the south edge and is in line with the center of the main dome. The circular area of the carport proper is pushed to the north between the north and south edges to allow space for the main entry. The carport is an important component in the massing of the house. In breaking the symmetry of the northwest side, it gives visual interest to that side of the house, and it gives logic to the location of the entry. Without the carport, the point of entry could be (ambiguously) between the large dome and either of small domes.

Design of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House: Site

Site was not typically a decisive factor in Goff's design process, and this is true of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House design as well. As described by Christopher Curtis Mead in his book on Goff's close associate, Bart Prince:

> Goff typically produced highly internalized designs, which inhabit wonderfully spacious, often vertically soaring interior landscapes, but which remain largely divorced from the exterior circumstances of their sites. In at least one, very real sense, Goff didn't care where his buildings stood…. Prince illustrates his distance from Goff on this point by telling a story from the 1970s about visiting a site…: while Prince immediately strode off across a field, Goff remained in the car, refusing to budge and warning of "chiggers." Nature, to Goff, was something best kept at a safely tamed distance….[39]

Aspects such as forms, materials and client programs were primary in that process for Goff. The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House could be located on a relatively flat suburban block in most parts of the United States with little effect on the experience of the house.

Though Goff's decisions on the siting of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House would have been secondary to his formal choices in the designing of the structure itself, his formal choices did have implications for the house's orientation on its nearly flat, relatively featureless, suburban lot. By pulling the bedrooms out of the main dome, he created a largely bilaterally symmetrical plan that could potentially have differentiated aspects. This potentiality was taken advantage of when Goff gave one side of the plan a relatively opaque enclosure and the other a very transparent enclosure. From the north and west, proximity to the two streets that created the boundary of the property in those directions, favored a relatively opaque coal enclosure to achieve a level of privacy. This objective of privacy paired well with one of the few programmatic requirements stated by Ruth : a place to display her paintings. This place was provided on the interior of the main dome by the coal wall that encloses the central form. Correlating to the objectives on the northwest, the relative privacy of the interior of the block encouraged a much more transparent enclosure to the southeast. This also allowed the transparent enclosure to take advantage of a southeast orientation toward the sun, maximizing solar heat gain in the cooler morning and minimizing heat gain in the warmer late afternoon. Conversely the opacity of the northwest enclosure shielded the house from harsher elements of the climate from that direction. The advantages of relating house to the solar orientation gained currency in the second half or the 1940s through such publications as the 1947 *Your Solar House*, which noted, "Orientation, in the language of the architect, means the laying out of a plan in relation to specific elements, such as the position of the sun and the prevailing direction of the wind. In solar housing north of the equator, it means facing as many rooms as possible to the south to obtain the benefits of solar radiation in winter." *Your Solar House* included the designs of forty-nine architects. The book

[39] Christopher Curtis Mead, *The Architecture of Bart Prince: A Pragmatics of Place* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 153-54.

was the result of a project organized by Goff's former employer Libbey-Owens-Ford. Whether Goff was aware of this specific publication is not known, but he certainly would have been aware of the general topic.[40]

Goff's drawings for the Ford House indicate little connection to the surrounding landscape and no planting plan is known to have been created. A presentation plan does show planting in the immediate vicinity of the house. This planting is mainly of interest in how beds straddle the house's glazed boundaries in several locations on the southeast side of the house, accentuating the visual permeability of this side of the house. This permeability is likely not so representative of a connection with the surrounding landscape as is a heightening of the duality of difference between the transparent southeast side of the house and the relatively opaque northwest side of the house. Goff's elevation drawings show even less attention to the house's surroundings than the plans. The house is shown on a blank background, completely abstracted from its surroundings. A single, tall evergreen tree is located next to the front door as a complement to the overall composition of horizontals and verticals in the design of the house.

The one area outside the house where Goff did indicate clear design intent is the arrival area. A U-shaped driveway entered and exited to the west, looping beneath the carport roof. Within the area enclosed by the driveway, between the house and the street, Goff designed a nearly circular pond. On the east, the implied circular form of the pond engaged with the mendorla-shaped storage area that supported the west end of the carport roof. At the west end of the proposed pond was an ornamental wall. Though the pond was not constructed, the ornamental wall was. It appeared both on Goff's plans and his elevations. Like the enclosure walls of the house, the ornamental wall was constructed of coal. It was pierced by circular and partially circular openings. Through its use of coal and circles in its design and construction, the ornamental wall prefigures the house by using identical materials and similar geometric figures. Beyond this, its meaning is open to interpretation. It could be interpreted as an artificial ruin, or some other sort of folly. Specific references to the wall by Goff have not been found, but clearly, given its careful inclusion in his drawings of the house, Goff considered the wall an integral component of the overall design.

Historic images indicate that the Fords installed a limited amount of foundation planting around the house. On the northwest side of the house, this was primarily to the south of the entry door and on the north side of the house between the main dome and the north bedroom dome. On the southeast side of the house, the Fords installed low plantings, in locations approximating those shown in Goff's drawings, along the glass walls of the main living area and the bedrooms, as well as along the arc where the main dome's ribs meet the ground. Elsewhere on the property they installed various plantings. The degree to which their decisions in these areas were guided by Goff, Tosi or any other designer is unknown. These plantings included lines of deciduous shrubs that cannot be identified by species, along the property's north and south boundaries, at Southlawn Place and Kenilworth Place, respectively. At the northwest corner of the property was a grouping of junipers (*Juniper horizontalis*) and other shrubs, whose species has not been identified. At the base of the ornamental wall was a Mugo pine (*Pinus mugo)* and several other deciduous shrubs, species unknown. Aside from these plantings, the property, which had little significant topography, was planted with grass. Several significant specimens likely remain from early plantings. Still in the bed south of the entry door is a tall spruce (*Picea abies)* that can be seen as a small tree in early photos. The spruce approximates the vertical focal point that Goff included in his elevation drawings of the house. In the bed between the main dome and the north bedroom dome is a large yew *(Taxus canadensis)*, now taller than the house itself, which is also likely to date from early plantings. At the northwest corner of the property are juniper bushes that are likely either original plants or descendants of the originals. The scale of the plantings in this area, particularly the junipers at approximately two feet in height,

[40] See Maron J. Simon, ed. *Your Solar House*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), 19.

approximates the scale and density of the plantings seen in photos of the same area taken shortly after completion.

Design of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House: Materials

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is an excellent example of Goff's extraordinarily creative use of materials. His use of the Quonset hut rib is both an instance of this creativity and the critical first step in his development of the basic domed form of the house.

The Quonset hut was a prefabricated, utilitarian structure, developed in the months immediately before the December 1941 start of World War II. The hut was named for the aviation facility at Quonset Point, RI, where their production was first planned. As a starting point for the hut's form, its designers used the arc-shaped Nissen Bow Hut created during World War I by Peter Norman Nissen, of the British Royal Engineers. The basic concept of the Nissen and the Quonset huts was the same: they were relatively light-weight structures, composed of prefabricated, curved steel ribs covered with, and stabilized by, sheet materials on the interior and exterior. The curved ribs created a structure that was rectangular in plan and approximately semi-circular in section. The Quonset hut was deemed an improvement on the Nissen hut in ways that facilitated erection through streamlining connections, and increased comfort by insertion of insulation between the interior and exterior surfaces of the enclosure. A further improvement was development by Stran-Steel, a subsidiary of the Great Lakes Steel Corporation, through the use of an I-shaped rib composed of two lightweight steel channels tack welded back-to-back. A particular advantage of this rib was a patented nailing groove between the channels. The ability to nail materials directly to the ribs greatly enhanced ease of assembly. By the beginning of 1942, the fabrication of all Quonset hut materials had been subcontracted to Stran-Steel. By the end of the war, it is estimated that "approximately 120,000 Stran-Steel huts had been produced and shipped to almost every corner of the globe."[41] It is the Stran-Steel rib that would be used on the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House.

While living in Berkeley from 1945-47, Goff worked on several projects using the Stran-Steel Quonset rib as a basis for design and construction. Designs for the McCabe House (Berkeley, California), Wilson House (unspecified location in California), as well as prototype house designs for the Stran-Steel (all 1945) used the rib in its traditional linear configuration. Each design was made up of a main rectilinear structure, with a living room at one end, two bedrooms at the other, divided by a central kitchen/bath/utility core. Separated from the main structure by a flat-roofed entry area, an additional structure made of partial arcs paralleled the main structure. Depending on the design, the parallel structure contained a carport or carport and guest room. Goff also designed a two-story studio design using the Quonset rib. Goff's 1946 design for the Kozak House in Sleepy Hollow, California, is an important step in breaking away from the traditional form of the Quonset hut. Here Goff continued to place the ribs in a linear array, but instead of creating a complete, nearly semi-circular arc, he rotated one of components of the pair of ribs that make up each arc around the central connection, creating an S-shaped structural member. This allowed the house to be opened up on one side to a view of the surrounding landscape. None of these projects using Stran-Steel ribs were built.

With the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, Goff took an important step beyond the linear Kozak House. Goff created the house's major domed form by rotating the Quonset ribs around a central axis. In the process of rotation, Goff took a utilitarian item—used for miles and miles of wartime buildings—and completely divorced

[41] Chris Chiei, "How the Hut Came to be," in *Quonset Hut: Metal Living for a Modern Age*, eds. Julie Decker and Chris Chiei (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 24. This history of the Quonset hut is taken from *Quoset Hut: Metal Living for a Modern Age*.

it from its former associations. Ruth's strong reaction against Goff's second scheme for the house, noted above, which used the ribs in their traditional configuration, aptly points out the clear differences of both space and association between the house as built and the traditional Quonset hut. In general, Ruth Ford's confidence in Goff regarding design matters is apparent in their correspondence. She wrote in May 1950, regarding some design decisions, "I trust your judgment on these things more than anyone else's." [42]

The ribs are the defining element of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. They play this role in multiple ways. On the northwest side of the house, the 4" x 4" curved steel sections of the ribs are exposed beneath the roof, in front of the coal wall. Here a dialogue is created between the orange-painted, regularly spaced, steel ribs and the random ashlar, black coal and cullet glass wall. On the interior the ribs act as curved colonnades that one physically passes through to enter the main interior living area from the entry vestibule or exit the main space to reach the bedroom wings. The exterior living area is given form by the exposed ribs on the outside. Finally, arguably the most striking role played by the ribs is their dramatic clustering at the center of the dome beneath the skylight.

Goff continued to show his openness to alternate materials in the cladding and enclosure of the building's form. The rope that covers the flat ceilings and soffits was war surplus material. Its use may have been derived from straight corrugated metal soffits in earlier projects.[43] The curve of the soffits at the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House in both plan and section required that a material other than corrugated metal be used. The corrugated surface of the rope may therefore be an interpretation of the metal in earlier designs.

Probably the most unusual materials used in the house are the coal and cullet glass of the curved wall that surrounds the main living area. Regarding the use of coal, according to current owner Sidney Robinson, Goff preferred black backgrounds to display paintings. De Long notes that in 1947 Goff hung black shower curtains on the walls of his Norman, Oklahoma, apartment. [44] As the curved masonry wall of the gallery was to be used to display Ruth's paintings, the use of coal becomes an understandable choice. In addition to these materials, the working drawings called for the exterior surfaces of the bathrooms to be covered with purple mirror. The mirror is not mentioned in correspondence. It is not known at what point it was removed from the project. These unusual materials are a clear example of Goff's being unencumbered by pre-conceived uses for materials, using what some have called "found materials." This combination of random masonry and cullet glass—first used here in the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House—would become something of a trademark for Goff. Similar materials were used in two of Goff's other best-known works: the 1950 Bavinger House (using cullet glass set in local sandstone) and the Price Studio in Bartlesville, Oklahoma (1956, with additions in 1966 and 1974).

Striking and unexpected as the materials used in the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House may be, they are arranged in a way that is always consistent with the rigorous geometric logic of the house. The materials used on both the large and small domes are the same. Cedar shingles clad the domes' exteriors. The interior ceilings of the domes are covered in cypress clapboard.[45] At the base of each dome is a curved masonry wall of coal. The vertical surfaces of support spaces, including the storage units of the carport, the bathroom and storage units adjacent to the bedrooms, the kitchen cabinets and the storage units on the balcony, all are clad in vertical cypress clapboard. Flat ceilings (except of the circular area of red panels above the carport and the closet interiors) are covered with rope. Nowhere are the two materials used for vertical surfaces, the coal masonry and

[42] Ruth Van Sickle Ford to Goff, 15, 1950, Bruce Goff Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago.
[43] Goff proposed corrugated metal soffits in the Kozak House project, Sleepy Hollow, California (1946).
[44] De Long, *Bruce Goff: Toward Absolute Architecture*, 87.
[45] Goff's original design of one great spiral of lapped cypress boards in each dome was installed by Tosi, with Goff's approval, in a herringbone pattern, see page 18 of this nomination.

the cypress clapboard, allowed to touch. They are always separated by unframed sheets of glass that are glazed directly into those surrounding materials. Elimination of any framework around the glass in these locations minimizes the perception of the glass itself as an intervening material. This is even true at the relatively inconspicuous location where the short coal walls of the bedroom domes come close to the walls of the adjacent bathroom and storage units. Here a small piece of glass is inserted to separate the two. Goff comments on this glass, indicating that the separation of materials was intentional: "there was a small opening where I didn't want to run the coal wall into a wood wall, so I separated it with some translucent glass…. [I]t wasn't a window, but it was used to separate these materials." [46] Much of the success of the installation of the materials at the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House can be attributed to its builder Don Tosi, who, as a former student of Goff's, understood the architect's design goals.

Construction of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House

Though three schemes for the house were drawn, by May 6, 1949, Goff wrote the Fords that he was "happy to hear the contractor Mr. Morvay might be interested and wants to build our plan #1."[47] According to Tosi, it was he who connected Morvay to the Fords.[48] After returning to Illinois from California and setting up his own contracting firm, Tosi came into contact with Morvay:

> He was involved in some sort of an operation that the other fellow in my office was handling—building houses or something. At the time, then, I happened to ask him if he would be interested in bidding on the Ford House—we had the drawings in the office, and his representative came in and saw them and said, "Let me take these back to Morvay and talk to him about it." That's how he got interested, and that's what happened.[49]

While Goff may have expressed pleasure to the Fords regarding Morvay, to Tosi he wrote: "glad you have Morvay on the job. Be sure he doesn't take over the job and substitute materials without my permission and ruin our design."[50]

City of Aurora records show that a building permit was issued on July 14, 1949, to "erect metal frame wood sheathed house." The contractor was Morvay & Co., and the estimated cost was $30,000.[51] On November 8, Tosi wrote Goff, "Progressing splendidly on Ford job and hope to have Morvay in hand soon."[52] This optimism must have been short lived, as Tosi later told of the fate of Morvay:

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[46] Bruce Goff "Advancing Architecture," Philip B. Welch, *Goff on Goff: Conversations and Lectures* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 325.
[47] Goff to Sam and Ruth Ford, 6 May 1949, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[48] Morvay's first name was never used in surviving correspondence or in Tosi's recollections, but may have been Anthony A. Morvay, who was convicted in 1951 of defrauding "over 17 victims of $30,000 in a scheme to build homes which never materialized." "Jury Convicts Two in $30,000 Homes Fraud," *Chicago Daily Tribune* 10 March 1951, 9.
[49] Tosi, interview, 17-18.
[50] Goff to Tosi, n.d., Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.
[51] Charlie Wilkins, Project Assistant, City of Aurora Planning and Zoning Division, email to the nomination author, 29 March 2013. Interestingly, a second permit was issued 12 December 1950, for "additional work to interior," estimated at $23,000. Morvay Const. Co. is listed as contractor, though Morvay would have been long off the job by that point.
[52] Tosi to Goff, 8 November 1949, letter in the Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

> I think at that time he had bid somewhere between fifty and sixty thousand dollars. We had agreed to that, and so we advanced him four thousand dollars as per agreed contract. He started the building, and I came out to see how they were doing and whether they had located it properly, and so forth. I would come out about every three or four days. And finally one day I got a call from Bruce, and Bruce said, "Don, I don't know what the problem is. I'm going to be out that way shortly, but Morvay doesn't want you on the job. You're interfering." I said, "Interfering? I don't understand it. I haven't done anything but just look and check the dimensions and the location of the building. If that's the case and Mrs. Ford wants it, fine, I won't go back out." He said, "Well, wait till I get there. Don't go back. Wait till I get there, and we'll get it straightened around." Another three or four days went by, and Mr. Ford called me and he said, "Can you come out, Don?" …. [T]hey told me they had advanced Morvay another eight thousand dollars to pay for the concrete and to pay for the labor, and one thing or another, because the [union] business agent refused to send any other carpenters out or form-setters out because he hadn't paid the last workers. Morvay owed twenty-five hundred dollars on the concrete. The Fords advanced Morvay another four thousand dollars, and he disappeared. He had the one bedroom foundation in and about half of the main circle unit formed, that was it. The Fords asked me if I would take over…. He disappeared and they never did find him. The Fords never heard anything about him or found him. This was in October of 1949 that he disappeared. As I say, they had just started the outside rim and we were laying out the balance of it and continued, and to completion. [53]

Having had experience in construction while in the Army, Tosi felt confident that he could make Goff's design a reality. "Anyway, when I got to Aurora I called the business agent and went over to him. He recommended a couple of carpenters to call to get a good foreman."[54] Tosi recalled that he had no trouble getting the crew into the spirit of the job, "They were good old boys…. And then I got an old mason—all of these people that got real excited about the building were older people."[55]

Tosi's role as Goff's draftsman for the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House working drawings gave him a unique understanding of Goff's design goals. Nonetheless, as with most construction projects, certain elements of the working drawings required interpretation by the construction team. Goff had written to Sam Ford in his July 27, 1948, letter, "Please realize there are many small structural details which have to be worked out as every job progresses."[56] Tosi stated that Goff was only on site three of four times in the course of construction and that he probably did not call Goff more than a dozen times, and then only for specific aesthetic decisions. "[T]ogether with two of the carpenters, my foreman and myself and another carpenter, we elected to try this or

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[53] See Lowry, "Critics 'Burn Up' Couple Living in House Built of Coal": "Construction was begun in the spring of 1949, but bogged down with contracting problems. Abandoned for the summer, work began again with a new contractor in October. Don Tosi, a young Maywood builder who had studied with Goff at the academy, took the project." This is somewhat contradicted by a letter from Ruth to Goff in the Goff Archive, dated 9 September, making reference to a mason contracted to Morvay who was playing "prima donna." Given Morvay's subsequent actions, one wonders what the whole story was. In the same letter, Ruth commented, "Sam and I are now playing contractor's helpers as Don doesn't seem to be doing these things and I am becoming most impatient with regard to the progress."

[54] Those involved with the house according to Tosi included: Holman (copper), Chuck Arnold (steel), and Elmer Anderson (foreman). Leo Lakeman, was carpenter for a short period. "We had an Indian, though, and I can't remember his name. We used to call him 'Chief.' But he lived in the area, and was an Indian—a full-blooded Indian—and he was an excellent carpenter." Tosi, interview, 10.

[55] Tosi noted that at the time he was 26 years old, so "older" was relative. Tosi, interview, 24.

[56] Goff to Sam Ford, 27 July 1948, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

try that or try this or that. And they would get up there and fiddle around and say, 'Yes, like this, and I think maybe if we did this. What do you think about that?'"[57]

As Tosi noted, when Morvay "disappeared" roughly half the foundation was completed.[58] Tosi's earlier site visits would have given him an understanding of the state of the construction. Around the edges of the circular foundations, pockets were formed for the steel ribs to be inserted. "[W]e poured the wall with pockets for the 'H' beams, and then we set the steel on the wall and poured the pockets full with the 'H' bars in place…. There was no way I was going to try to get the 'H' beam in the form while pouring the foundation."[59] Tosi noted that the City of Aurora had its input in the construction of the house:

> Before I could get the permit, Aurora insisted on having an engineer's certification on the plans. They wouldn't accept just an architect's certificate. They wanted an engineer's certificate. The engineer questioned whether their Stran-steel was going to be strong enough to be embedded into the foundation at the base.[60]

At the city's insistence, the relatively lightweight Quonset ribs of the large dome were not embedded into the foundation, but attached to 4" x 4" structural steel columns, curved to follow the arc of the rib. These columns were curved by what Tosi called "a simple device" devised by a steel company in St. Charles, Illinois. According to Tosi, the Quonset ribs were new steel, directly from Stran-steel, as opposed to being army surplus.[61] The steel ribs were painted before being embedded in the foundation. The whole dome was given rigidity by welding steel purlins between the ribs covered by the roof. Where the ribs were exposed in the exterior living area, horizontal steel reinforcing bars are welded to them. The wood sheathing added rigidity to the structure as well. According to Tosi, "We had the inspector out several times and made a mock-up rib section, he accepted it."[62]

The coal wall of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House may be its single-most noted design element. The wall itself is 18 inches wide at the bottom and is made up of two 4-inch wythes of masonry with an air space in between. The separate wythes of masonry interlock with mesh at the top. In his 1995 interview with Tosi, Sidney Robinson noted "I haven't been in the Bavinger House, but I have been in Joe Price's house in Bartlesville, and one of the things that I really like about this wall, which is not true in either one of those later houses, is that it's all random ashlar horizontal bed. The glass is irregular, but the stone, the coal is horizontal." Tosi responded straightforwardly, "Well, I made this one. That's why." When asked if that was how Goff wanted it, Tosi said he did not know:

> I had to lay all of the glass and everything connecting to it. [The mason] wouldn't touch it. He said, "I can't do that." I said, "Why can't you do it? You've got glass here, and you've got glass on the other wall the same way so that it shines through." He said, "You do it." ….I had a tough

[57] Tosi, interview, 133.
[58] Ruth also noted in a 9 September letter to Goff that some work had been done on a mockup of the coal wall.
[59] Tosi, interview, 20.
[60] Ibid., 18-19.
[61] Goff and Tosi had worked with Stran-steel on a number of design proposals for the use of Quonset ribs, including for housing and movie theaters. See De Long, *The Architecture of Bruce Goff*, p.195, regarding a Berkeley housing proposal. Drawings and correspondence regarding the housing proposal and theaters can be found in the Bruce Goff Archive of the Art Institute of Chicago. Tosi also referenced the Stran-steel theaters in his interview with Robinson.
[62] Tosi, interview, 20.

> time with him…. The mason was set in his ways of masonry and he felt more knowledgeable about producing these walls properly—I simply had an aesthetic feeling for the end result.

Regarding the sources for the coal and glass:

> We found out Libbey Owens [Ford glass company] in St. Louis had an old plant in which they still dropped the residue onto the ground and got these big chunks…. They sent a truck down to southern Illinois to get the cannel coal and sent another truck down to St. Louis to pick up the glass culls…. I remember trying to find the marbles. That was hard. Bruce wanted green ones, clear ones. He didn't want red ones for some reason because the red wasn't the right color…. Yes, blue ones and green ones to match the culls….[63]

Among Tosi's contributions to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, probably the most significant was the final configuration of the cypress ceilings on the interior of the house. Goff's original design for the cypress was to have continuous lengths of clapboard from the bottom of the dome to the top in a spiral pattern. Tosi believed that the width of the exposed clapboard would vary so greatly from bottom to top as to be unbuildable; instead, he developed a herringbone pattern for the siding and built a section of it.

> I called Bruce and I said, "Bruce, there isn't any way on God's earth that I can use one board and get it to go all the way up." He said, "Well, can't you get wider siding?" I said, "Not wide enough to do that…. I made up a herringbone pattern, and I think it looks pretty good." He said, "Send me a picture of it and I'll let you know." I sent him a picture, and he called me back a day or two later after he had received it and said, "Fine. Go right ahead."[64]

A two-man team screwed the number one-grade cypress siding onto the ribs, block planed it in place, and finished it with a solution of copper quinolinolate with "a little bit of white added to get the bright color."[65]

> Bruce came out after we had them up. I don't think he came out any time in between. But when he came out and he looked at them, he just looked and looked and looked. He didn't say a word. He just looked and looked and looked. When Bruce was happy and pleased, he was like a little kid. He'd bounce. He'd literally bounce.[66]

The coiled rope, covering the flat ceilings in the house, was war surplus material. According to Tosi:

> They had ads in the paper all of the time for war surplus, and I singled one out and we bought a large amount, we had bales and bales and bales of it. I think we bought a truckload of the rope…. Oh, they nailed rope for a month and a half or two months, every day.[67]

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[63] Tosi notes in his letter to Goff of 8 November 1949 in the Goff Archive, "Haven't had time to contact Libbey Owens Ford yet, but will do tomorrow". According to Lowry, "Critics 'Burn Up' Couple Living in House Built of Coal," "Hard cannel coal, which is mined in large chunks in Kentucky, was selected for the walls because of its cheapness and durability. During the coal strike, Tosi kept on building because cannel coal – not usually used for fuel – could be found in any coal yard."
[64] Tosi, interview, 31.
[65] Ibid., 25.
[66] Ibid., 58.
[67] Ibid., 25.

In the kitchen, to create a consistent vertical clapboard surface, there are no horizontal drawers showing. All drawers are behind cabinet doors covered uniformly in the vertical siding. According to Tosi, "Bruce wanted all the cabinets to look that way. Mrs. Ford wanted drawers in there, so I talked to Gottlieb Sipple and we decided that the easiest way to do it was to put the doors on and then put the drawers behind it."[68] In general, Goff tended to design minimal kitchens, and Tosi remembered the original refrigerator was a small one. According to Tosi, Goff didn't "do any cooking or food preparation, and so consequently he tends to neglect these requirements."[69] As Ruth remembered, "The kitchen counter was a lovely yellow linoleum."[70]

On September 27, 1950, Ruth reported that "the glass is mostly in place…the last piece is to go in Friday."[71] Secured in place by relatively thin steel frames, the glass walls have held up remarkably well. This is particularly notable at the studio level, where the give of the cantilevered floor could have caused cracking. This is a testament to Goff's confidence in the calculations made for this floor.

The Fords moved into the house in the fall of 1950.[72] A major issue that plagued the Fords and subsequent owners was the heating of the house. On December 12, 1951, Sam Ford wrote to Goff, "[H]ouse don't heat well when 10 below zero and strong wind from the NW. Work this out, will you?"[73] The original heating system for the house was radiant heating through hot water in copper piping in the concrete floor slab. This system relies on the heat of the floor to radiate warm air up through the space. Typically reliable in a house of standard ceiling height, the high domed spaces of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House proved too much for the system in extreme weather. Also at issue was the relatively porous building envelope. From the very beginning, the roof was seen as a possible culprit. In 1954, Sam was still corresponding with Goff regarding this issue, and he wrote on January 13, "What to do?... I want something cheap—fast & effective. Please."[74] Significant changes were never made by the Fords to improve the heating of the interior.[75]

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[68] Ibid., 177. According to Tosi, a German cabinet maker in Aurora named Sipple did all the cabinet work in the house. Tosi had great respect for Sipple and called him "an excellent craftsman." There is some confusion in the Tosi interview regarding Sipple's first name. On page 26 of the transcript Tosi refers to Gustav Sipple. In his hand-written annotation of the interview on pages 177 and 178, he calls him Gottlieb Sipple.

[69] Ibid., 78.

[70] Ruth Van Sickle Ford interview.

[71] Ruth Van Sickle Ford to "Mr. Cobb," 27 September 1950, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

[72] An October 10, 1950, *Chicago Tribune* article states the Fords were to move into their house "soon." The same day Ruth wrote Goff, "We must get moved in as soon as possible." See "Mrs. Ford Will Tell College Club of Her Ultra-Modern Home," *Chicago Daily Tribune* 10 October 1950, 4.

[73] Sam Ford to Goff, 12 December 1951, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

[74] In another letter consulting Goff about heating, Ford closes the discussion saying: "Maybe your answer will be 'Do nothing and quit fretting.'" Sam Ford to Goff, n.d, Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

[75] Despite these various issues a December 29, 1955, *Chicago Tribune* article states, "The house, tested by several years of occupancy, has proved most liveable [sic,], insists Mrs. Ford." See Lucy Key Miller, "Front Views & Profiles," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 December 1955, A4. In 1994 Sidney Robinson installed a convection air system that sent air into the volume of the main domed area and improved the heating of the space significantly.

According to Tosi, the house ultimately cost about "a hundred and seven or seventeen thousand dollars," some of which he absorbed.[76] Tosi felt that Sam was aware of the total costs.[77]

> Fortunately, the Fords were so enthralled with it and so dedicated to it that they advanced the money. But they didn't want to in the beginning…. They realized that I was executing it properly, and Sam would oftentimes come and say, "Don, I don't know how you're doing it, but you're doing a tremendous job on this and that," and kept complimenting me and encouraging me to keep going.[78]

> Mrs. Ford often said, "I could have never gotten that much advertising or publicity [for the Academy of Fine Arts] with that much money." …And she had boxes of clippings from all over the world. Mrs. Ford had a clipping service that saved any article that featured this house or the academy school.[79]

Recalling his time with Goff, Tosi said:

> And this building. I just look at it and say that if I hadn't been there, I don't think it would ever have gotten built. I really don't think so…. I don't think it would have ever gotten built. And so it's my contribution, to whatever it's worth….[80]

Sam Ford's no-nonsense personality came out when he later discussed the house with David De Long:

> My opinion is that all architects have in their files the design of a round house, but few find a client nutty enough to build one—but Mrs. Ford is an artist. The house was a sort of showplace. We got awfully tired of people coming by…. [Austrian-American architect] Richard Neutra impressed me as thinking that no one had any business liking the house unless he (Neutra) liked it—he crawled under everything—seeing and asking how each piece was supported—he gave me the impression that he was "so-and-so" and I had to like anything he did. Got a $10 tip once from people in a Cadillac.[81]

Ruth Ford told De Long, "A teacher at the Academy compared the house to a Tibetan house of twigs and leather."[82] Robinson has written that the house was a "trophy" house for Ruth.[83] In time, the publicity that she gained for her art and for the Academy became too much.

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[76] Lowry, "Critics 'Burn Up' Couple Living in House Built of Coal" states, "The house has from 2,200 to 2,400 square feet of floor space and the total cost of the house and ground will be $55,000 to $60,000. It is expected the house alone will cost $42,000."

[77] In his statements to Robinson, Tosi said the bid was originally about $60,000. After discussing the final cost of the house, Robinson notes that *Life* magazine quotes the figure $64,000. See Eliot Elisofon, "The Round House," *Life*, 19 March 1951, 70-75. Tosi responded, "Yes, I know. That was the original bid we had…. And Bruce didn't want it to appear larger for much of this house has built in items that would not be included in other homes." These items included built-in and custom-built furniture.

[78] Tosi, interview, 172.

[79] Ibid., 87.

[80] Ibid., 151.

[81] Sam Ford interview by David G. De Long, May 21, 1974. With thanks to David De Long who shared his unpublished notes from this interview with the nomination author.

[82] Ruth Van Sickle Ford interview.

[83] Sidney Robinson, "Residential Masterpieces: Bruce Goff, Ford House, Aurora, Illinois, U.S.A., 1949-50," *GA Houses*

> We gave up the house because I got so I couldn't be nice to people—once when my mother was 92 and had fallen—people would look in the windows and walk in—I had to keep everything locked—a few nice people would come by—crowds particularly after the *Life* article.[84]

On a more positive note, she recalled to De Long:

> Mr. Ford and Don Tosi worked on the house—Sam (Mr. Ford) is an engineer—Don adapted the wood shape….I had pictures well placed inside; Bruce fixed a hanging rail in the wood above the coal wall….Give Goff my regards—I'm nostalgic every time I pass the house.[85]

Ownership History

In 1950, the Fords transferred ownership of the house to the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, which also was owned by Mrs. Ford. The relationship of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House to the Academy was a close one. It appears that the house was built as an extension of the Academy—it was used to display Ruth Ford's paintings, to host gatherings related to the Academy, and, in no small part, to gain publicity for the Academy. At a certain point that publicity appears to have become overwhelming, and the Fords moved to a small house in Aurora around 1960.[86]

In August 1962, the house was sold to its next owners, John and Florence Nottolini. The Nottolinis owned the house for less than two months, transferring it to Clement J. and Mary Ann Boyle in October 1962. The Boyles owned the house for five years.[87] In April 1967, A.J. and Mary Ann Armbruster purchased the house. On February 12, 1968, the Armbusters wrote to Goff to consult regarding an addition to the house; a local architect by the name of Livingston is referred to in the correspondence. A letter from the Armbrusters to Goff on May 28, 1968, indicates that drawings had not yet been begun, though they hoped to occupy the addition by fall of that year; this addition was never built. In March 1971, drawings were made by the architecture firm Kleb, Shelp & Associates for an addition to the house, but the Armbrusters did not build this design, either.[88] In May 1972, Carl and Hanni Jenssen bought the house.[89] They lived there for 4 years before selling it to Alan Krumlinde in August 1976. In January 1980 the house was bought by Donald J. and Lily Berk. It is current owner Sidney Robinson's understanding that the house was unoccupied when the Berks moved in. The Berks lived in the house for six years.

As described above, by the time they completed their house, the Fords owned two parcels of land that constituted the west half of the block on which the house was built. Subsequent to the Fords' ownership of the Goff-designed house, a house was built on the eastern half of the block. The newer house obstructed views of

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68 (2001): 64-79.
[84] Ruth Van Sickle Ford interview.
[85] Ibid.
[86] It is Robinson's understanding that there may also have been a financial motivation on the part of the Fords in selling the house.
[87] During that time another member of the Boyle family may have lived in the house with Mary Ann. In the 1963 and 1964 City Directories, Thomas Boyle is listed with Mary Ann (this may also simply be an incorrect listing).
[88] Correspondence and sketches for the first Armbuster addition project are in the collection of the Bruce Goff Archive at the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries at the Art Institute of Chicago. Drawings for the second project are in the possession of current Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House owner, Sidney Robinson.
[89] The 1971-72 Aurora City Directories indicate that a Will and Ruth Miller lived in the house in those years.

the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House from the street to the east. In October 1986, current owner-occupant Robinson purchased the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House property, then consisting of the west half of the block. In 1996, he bought the east half of the block and demolished the later house, reestablishing views of the house from the surrounding streets and views outward from the house.

Bruce Goff and the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House in the Context of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture

Organic Architecture

Bruce Goff was a leading figure in the second generation of American architects practicing Organic design.

> The cultural basis for an organic architecture was significantly broadened in the nineteenth century by such prominent Americans as Horatio Greenough. In his essay "American Architecture" of 1843, he called for an approach to form predicted on the virtually flawless accommodation of function found in the plant and animal kingdoms. Yet, it is not functionalism *per se* that identifies organic architecture. Rather, organic architecture transforms the concerns of functionalism into a search for aesthetic appropriateness, the reflection of spirit in material expression and the rigor of a controlling, but self-defining, conceptual discipline.[90]

As discussed above, through Goff's careful adherence to a defining geometry and a rigorous consistency in the application of unusual materials, the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House design manifests this statement with notable coherence.

The first generation of architects practicing Organic design, largely overshadowed by the powerful work of Frank Lloyd Wright, also included Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin, George Grant Elmslie, and William Grey Purcell, among others. These architects found a theoretical basis in the writings and work of Louis Sullivan. Sullivan's interest in the expression of the individual designer, represented by the poetry of Walt Whitman, for example, was balanced in the work of these architects who practiced Organic design by the idea that a design must grow from the needs of the user. In the quest for this type of architecture, many of these architects worked in the style known as the Prairie School.

Collectively, these architects were most prolific from the early 1900s to the mid-1910s, at which point, for various reasons the Prairie School went into decline.[91] Richard Guy Wilson has examined the apparent lack of continuity between the Prairie School's decline around 1916 and Wright's reemergence in the 1930s. In his essay, "Themes of Continuity: The Prairie School in the 1920s and 1930s," he has identified four designers in particular who continued the Prairie School tradition into the 1920s and 1930s: Elmslie, John Lloyd Wright, Alfred Caldwell and Alden Dow.[92] The work of these designers is a link between the Prairie School tradition and later, post-war architects.

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[90] Robert A. Benson, "Introduction," in *The Continuous Present of Organic Architecture*, eds. Sidney K. Robinson and Elizabeth A. Scheurer, (Cincinnati: The Contemporary Art Center, 1991), page 11.
[91] H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976), 336 ff.
[92] Richard Guy Wilson, "Themes of Continuity: The Prairie School in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Modern Architecture in America: Visions and Revisions*, Richard Guy Wilson and Sidney K. Robinson, eds. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991), 184-213.

Wilson notes that Goff's early designs from the 1920s reveal "an acknowledged debt to the Prairie School."[93] Goff would go beyond the first generation in his search for designs that were specific to each project and not tied to a specific style. While there are identifiable similarities in his various works, his goal was, as much as possible, to create "an architecture" specific to each user's request. As David De Long has noted:

> Goff's work expands the legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright, and through Wright links with ideals expressed by A.J. Downing, thus reinforcing an essential current of American architecture. Those ideals expressed an earlier expression of individual choice unfettered by concerns of taste or style….Like Downing and Wright, Goff believed such freedom essential to a humane and democratic society, and he steadfastly rejected any single, superimposed authority…. And probably no close follower of Wright went further than Goff in defining an independent expression while retaining theoretical ties.[94]

European Influences

Influences on Goff's work were not limited to American sources. Goff admired the work of Secessionist architect Josef Hoffman, particularly Hoffman's Palais Stoclet in Brussels (1905), though direct influence is noticeable only in his early work. A 1922 hypothetical study for a house shows a kinship to the Secessionist Movement in its massing and detail, but the relevance of this design to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is not its derivation from Secessionism, but as an early use of the centralized plan. The hypothetical study shows a round house with a central domed space surrounded by various living spaces including the sitting and dining areas, kitchen and bedrooms.

The Catalan architect Antonio Gaudi was a more profound source of creativity for Goff. According to Arn Henderson, Goff frequently referred to Gaudi as the "world's greatest architect."[95] Another hypothetical study for a church bears striking similarities to Gaudi's Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, Spain (1882 on). Goff's study also dates from 1922, the year he remembered first becoming aware of Gaudi. De Long appropriately tempers the impulse to draw too direct a connection between the work of Goff and Gaudi. "Goff assiduously collected publications on Gaudi's work, but ultimately the underling exuberance of Gaudi's work seems to have been more influential than any specific example."[96]

Goff enjoyed a direct connection to German American architect Eric Mendelsohn, with whose work he was also acquainted by the early 1920s. As De Long notes: "Later work by Goff would especially recall the suggestion that 'color in masses or in line, broad bands of white or black or gold outlining colored walls or crestings, as well as a studied use of metals will serve to give a still greater vitality and beauty to the new architecture.'"[97] The two architects' regard was mutual. They discussed the possibility of Mendelsohn teaching at the University of Oklahoma. Mendelsohn wrote, "Bruce's school is excellent and far superior to Berkley. Very deeply involved in 'elastic structures' and full of remarkable young people. Although it is far from the main currents of this country, one has the feeling of being at the heart of the pulsating field of force in a new epoch." [98]

Goff and Regionalism

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[93] Ibid., 211. Wilson references Kostka, Robert. "Bruce Goff and the New Tradition." *The Prairie School Review* 7, no. 2, (Second Quarter, 1970): 5-16.
[94] De Long, *Bruce Goff: Toward Absolute Architecture*, 305-06.
[95] Arn Henderson, Bruce Goff: Architecture of Discipline in Freedom (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 98.
[96] De Long, *Bruce Goff: Toward Absolute Architecture*, 13.
[97] Ibid., 14-16.
[98] Ibid., 88.

Goff's association with Organic architecture, which traces its roots to the Prairie School of the Midwest, might lead to the designation of Goff as a Regionalist. As Leland Roth and Amanda C. Roth Clark note, "Among orthodox Modernists in the 1950s and 1960s, the most derisive dismissal was called a 'regionalist.' After all, the objective of modern architecture then was to create a system of such universal validity that it could be used anywhere, for any building…" [99]

Using Kenneth Frampton's essay "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," to "regionalism," it can be seen that Goff's relationship to the term is ambiguous.[100] In the essay Frampton identifies two types of Regionalism: Populism or "sentimental" Regionalism and Critical Regionalism. Populism can "regress into nostalgic historicism," the "glibly" decorative," or "attempts to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular." The regionalism of the New England Cape Cod cottage, the adobe Spanish Colonial, or even some apparently sophisticated mid-twentieth century work that nods to indigenous work in various sections of the country, can speak to the sentimentality Frampton notes. These styles carry with them signs that are quickly recognizable to a large audience, signs that represent qualities such as, security, traditions or sophistication. Actual experience of these sorts of buildings is not necessary. The image carries the information to communicate the quality.

Frampton's Critical Regionalism may find its governing inspiration in such things as the range and quality of the local light, or in a *tectonic* derived from a peculiar structural mode, or in the topography of a given site." In addition to positioning Critical Regionalism in contradistinction to sentimental Regionalism, he contrasts it with modern avant-garde architecture, and its preference for the "tabula rasa," the blank slate that suggests, in Frampton's words "placelessness."

Using the importance of site as a determinate, Goff could not be considered a Regionalist. Designs by architects commonly referred to as Regionalist such as Fay Jones, Vladimir Ossipoff, and James Cutler, usually have a direct relationship with site, through visual or spatial connection with the exterior or the use of regional or regionally traditional materials or forms. As Roth and Clark note, it is common for Regional architects to have "a concern for buildings distinctly responsive to site and climate…."[101] As discussed above, significant connection to site is not a characteristic of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House or of Goff's work in general.

Though Goff's work may not immediately be classed as Regional, an important element of Frampton's definition of Critical Regionalism is that a building cannot fully be comprehended in any other way than actually physically experiencing it. Frampton uses Alvar Aalto's town hall at Saynatsalo, Finland (1952) to indicate that physical experience of place that is necessary to fully appreciate it. "Not only is the principal access stair lined in raked brickwork, but the treads and risers are also finished in brick. The kinetic impetus of the body in climbing the stair is thus checked by the friction of the steps, which are 'read' soon after in, contrast to the timber floor of the council chamber itself." [102] At Saynatsalo, "[I]t is clear that the liberative importance of the tactile resides in the fact that it can only be decoded in terms of *experience* itself: it cannot be reduced to mere information, to representation or to the simple evocation of a simulacrum substituting for absent

[99] Leland Roth and Amanda C. Roth Clark, *American Architecture: A History* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 556.
[100] Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Post-Modern Architecture*, Hal Foster, ed. (Port Townsend: The Bay Press, 1983), 16-30.
[101] Roth and Clark, *American Architecture: A History*, 556.
[102] Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," 28.

presences."

At the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House the unusual relationship of the main to the lower and mezzanine levels, the curving of vertical walls and the domed ceiling as well as the, at first reading, idiosyncratic choices of materials, make the structure challenging to understand, even in person. As with Aalto's Saynatsalo town hall, common simulacrums such as still photography or even video are not sufficient to communicate the changing spaces as one moves through the house, the feel of the materials used in the house or the echoes that reverberate off the domed ceiling in unexpected places. Despite its limited connection to the surrounding environment, the house provides a strong sense of "place," akin to the "collective meaning" described below in the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form for "Resources Designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma."

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House in the Post-World War II Architectural Context

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House fits into a period after World War II of wide-ranging exploration in American residential architecture. Three of its most notable contemporaries, Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House (1946-51) in Plano, Illinois, Philip Johnson's Glass House (1949) in New Canaan, Connecticut, and the Charles and Ray Eames House (1949) in Pacific Palisades, California, provide an instructive comparison with the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House.[103] Like the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, all these houses use steel in their framing, but in distinctly different ways. Farnsworth House and Glass House are essays in an elegant aesthetic that emphasizes precision of construction and transparency of envelope. The steel framing systems of both these buildings are highly articulated and though basic to the houses' rectilinear forms, the structural systems do not substantially determine the overall form and scale of the buildings or the arrangement of elements within them. The use of light-weight steel web joists at the Eames House is more closely akin to Goff's use of the Quonset rib. The web joists, like the ribs, were a prevalent industrial product of the period and came in pre-determined sizes. Despite this kinship, the Eames House's structural members were not inherently contributing factors influencing its form or the configuration of its two main elements (the house and studio buildings). As noted in the section on the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House's form below, Goff's decision to use Quonset ribs was the initiating choice in a series of connected decisions in his creation of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House design.

Beyond the strict analysis of structural systems and their connection to formal choices, the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House can be compared with these buildings in additional ways. The playfulness of the interiors that Charles and Ray Eames created within a house built of industrial components compares with Goff's playful, uninhibited exploration of the actual materials and forms of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. Eames House and the Sam and Ruch Van Sickle Ford House were also designed to be lived in full time. Conversely, as Leland Roth and Amanda C. Roth Clark have noted, "Both Johnson's Glass House and Mies's Farnsworth weekend house were ideological constructs, expressions of design ideals rather than houses to live in comfortably. [104]

[103] Farnsworth House, Glass House, and Eames House, each a National Historic Landmark, are among the most prominent and widely published post-war modern houses. Roth and Clark provide an in-depth comparison of Farnsworth and Glass House: see Roth and Clark, *American Architecture: A History*, 447-451. For Eames House see: James Steele, Charles and Ray Eames: Eames House (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1994). In recent years, Farnsworth House, Glass House, Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House and Eames House, have been found together in publications including Yukio Futagawa, *GA Houses Special: Masterpieces 1945-1970* (Tokyo: A.D.A. Edita Tokyo Co., Ltd., 2001) and Dominic Bradbury, *The Iconic American House: Architectural Masterworks since 1900* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2020).
[104] Roth and Clark, *American Architecture: A History*, 451.

That being said, the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House displays a disciplined and systematic use of forms and materials, as well as a lack of applied ornament that allows it to be compared to the Farnsworth and Glass Houses, though it is of a strikingly different aesthetic. A notable example of "minimalism" in the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House can be seen in the cypress clapboard used to cover the vertical walls throughout the house. The surface of vertical clapboard begins directly above the floor and ends immediately below the rope-covered ceilings, with no baseboards or crown moldings. Significantly, the cypress clapboard-covered doors in these walls, such as those to the bathrooms and bedroom closets are undifferentiated by framing from the walls around them. Similarly, in the kitchen area vertical cypress covers the cabinets with minimal detailing at the cabinet doors. Even where Mrs. Ford requested drawers, as noted above, the drawers are concealed behind doors of vertical, lapped cypress. This consistency of surface material and detailing is directly analogous to the detailing of millwork of the primavera core of the Farnsworth House, where cabinets and doors are unarticulated by moldings, in order to create a uniform surface. Mies and Johnson both praised the house. According to Ruth Ford, on visiting the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, Mies called it a "magnificent production."[105] Johnson considered Goff one of the ten best American architects.[106] In a letter to current Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House owner Robinson, Johnson wrote, "I've been a great admirer of his [Goff's] work most of my life, but your house turns out still to be the best one he did."[107] During a visit to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House in October 1995, Johnson noted the variety of "architectural experiences" possible in the relatively small house.[108]

A very different form of 1940s housing is manifested in R. Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House of 1944-46.[109] This round house bears a number of superficial similarities to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, including its general form and the use of materials not traditionally associated with a residential building. Like the Quonset ribs and rope of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, production of materials in the Dymaxion, such as aluminum, plexiglass and fiberglass, had been stimulated by World War II. Profoundly different from the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, though, was the goal of mass production of the Dymaxion House. Goff's use of Quonset hut ribs did not have a goal of production efficiency. It was the creative use of an unexpected material in the service of a specific design problem. As Goff himself wrote, "Mr. Fuller has suppressed individual taste in finding a 'best-for-all' solution."[110] Fuller's "one size fits all" design was in stark contrast to Goff's goal of creating an architecture appropriate to each client. The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House was designed for an artist; its form and materials are unique. Goff's former student Philip B. Welch recounted being shown the drawings of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House by Goff, then being disappointed by the garish colors he saw in the *Life* magazine photos of the house. "I went into

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[105] James Golden, "Introduction," in *The Architecture of Bruce Goff, 1904-1982: Design in the Continuous Present*, Pauline Saliga and Mary Woolever, eds. (New York: Prestel, 1995), 14.
[106] Henderson, *Bruce Goff: Architecture of Discipline in Freedom*, 96.
[107] Philip Johnson to Sidney Robinson, July 26, 1995. Letter in the possession of Sidney Robinson.
[108] Johnson's comment was related by owner Sidney K. Robinson. Johnson's visit to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House took place at that time of his appearance at Harold Washington Library in Chicago on October 24, 1995. See pages 12-13 for a discussion of spatial experiences in the house. Johnson's appreciation of Goff clearly grew over time. In a letter from Johnson to Mies dated 4 June 1951, Johnson reports to Mies on a visit to the Farnsworth House, when he subsequently stopped by the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. Johnson described the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House as "beneath contempt." Taken from a photocopy of the letter in the possession of Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House owner, Sidney Robinson.
[109] See, among others, Frederico Neder, *Fuller Houses: R. Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion Dwellings and Other Domestic Adventures* (Zurich: Lars Muller Publishers, 2008).
[110] Bruce Goff, "Dymaxion House," *Architectural Forum* 56 (March 1932), 285-88, as quoted in De Long, *Toward Absolute Architecture*, 68.

Goff's office to discuss it with him…. His replay was that this was Mrs. Ford's house and the colors fit her." On actually visiting the house Welch realized that the magazine photos were misleading.

> To my great surprise, it looked wonderful. Sited on a large lot, with green grass, trees, and blue sky, the house was as I had seen it in the drawings and sections – a beautiful dance of Quonset ribs defining wonderful, spherical spaces for living. The color that had been exaggerated in the printing process was not at all like that when seen on-site. The house had a quiet repose, with a few accents to give life and interest to the design.[111]

Reactions to Goff's Work

During Goff's lifetime, his work was considered not just to be a counterpoint to prevailing International Style design of the mid-twentieth century, but to established norms of architecture in general. Reaction by the mainstream architectural press to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House can be seen in the April 1951 *Architectural Forum.* "The house came out a fine spangling, lustrous toy and proved that an American could make a handsome dwelling place of cheese and chopsticks if he put his mind to it."[112] The power of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House to call to mind strong references was backhandedly recognized by the author, who felt the need to qualify every observation with a witty allusion. "You enter under the wide carport canopy curved like a jockey-cap visor…. In the ruddy glow of the copper stack, the burnished interior is as cozy as a samovar; yet it's a little like being in the control tower of a Hollywood space ship." The article's only un-alloyed praise is for Don Tosi: "In bending lapped cypress siding to get the dome's ceiling, young builder Tosi accomplished a near miracle of workmanlike precision and indeed his skill in handling the entire performance should win him medals."

Glib reactions to Goff's work can still be seen in 1980, Charles Jencks created an easily echoed sound bite by calling Goff "the poet of the unredeemable, the rescuer of ersatz, the Michelangelo of Kitsch." Jencks compared Goff to Wright going so far as to say,

> Goff is a better architect than Wright, "Wrightier" one is tempted to say, at least when it comes to the obsession with geometric themes and ornamentalized geometry. His spatial flow is flowier, his houses are much funnier and lighter and cozier….
> The surprising thing is that with a method of abstract design, which could be almost Modern and Miesian in its abstraction, very representational buildings result, quite by chance….The Ford House… was inevitably called the "Umbrella House" because of its explosion of quonset [sic] ribs around the central mast. But, as the usual mixed Goffian metaphor, it was also called the pumpkin, the tomato, the spider trap, hangar, Hollywood Spaceship, and fat sprout flanked by cotyledons. In short, the metaphors fixed to these strange new shapes were mostly organic, as they were with those applied to Antonio Gaudi's somewhat similar work in Barcelona 50 years earlier." [113]

But the comments that Jencks makes about other Goff-designed houses, such as, "Door, windows, and other orifices are outlined with ornamental bands or decked out with plumage of coloured glass and beads," do not apply to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House design relies completely on the strength of its form and materials to become "funnier and lighter and cozier." Despite its

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[111] Welch, *Goff on Goff: Conversations and Lectures*, 16.
[112] "Umbrella House." *Architectural Forum*, April 1951, 118-121
[113] Charles Jencks, "Michelangelo of Kitsch," eds. John Sargent and Stephen Mooring, *AD Profiles 16* 48, No. 10 (1978): 10-14.

seeming divergence from the buildings Jencks stereotypes, the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House design speaks directly to thirteen of the fourteen common characteristics in Goff's houses, outlined below in reference to the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form for "Resources Designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma."

More discerning critics, who may still have felt the need to couch their language in somewhat flippant terms, included Reyner Banham, who in 1963 wrote that Goff had "existed too long on the margins of fame, designing houses of unclassifiable originality in the Middle West….for my money, the hundred-percent pure, good-to-the-last-drop, rolled-from-the-better-leaf, American architect is Bruce Goff."[114] In 1970 Ada Louise Huxtable wrote of Goff:

> This is one of the most provocative manifestations of the American architectural genius…. If you can shed the eugenically frightening New England-Calvinist-Harvard-Bauhaus-intellectual frigidity, if you can suppress a reaction to some obvious home-grown corn, there is an artist here. There is a consistent statement of art and purpose, a sensitivity to the land, a last-stand half-triumph of the romantic individualist in a world that is forcing the architect to conform increasingly to standardized formulas and business practice…. Bruce Goff is a phenomenon, part of an indigenous American tradition of the unspoiled, romantic, land-loving loner.[115]

Since his death, recognition of his work has continued to increase. His now-destroyed Eugene Bavinger House (1950) was awarded the American Institute of Architects twenty-five-year award in 1987, only two years after it attained eligibility. In 1995, the Art Institute of Chicago mounted a major retrospective of Goff's work, "The Architecture of Bruce Goff, 1904-1982: Design for the Continuous Present." The exhibit celebrated the donation of the Goff Archive to the Art Institute and its catalog included a "reconsideration" of Goff, by his biographer David De Long and an expanded understanding of Goff to his interest in music through an essay by Sidney K. Robinson. In contemporary assessments, Goff's status as an "outsider" is embraced. The 2018 exhibit at the University of Oklahoma and its catalog, *Renegades, Bruce Goff and the American School of Architecture*, are examples of this.

The Significance of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House in the Context of Goff's Extant Work

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House holds a significant position in the work of Bruce Goff. It was designed during a period of his career that witnessed the creation of several of his most significant designs and as will be shown, it displays nearly all of the characteristics common to Goff's strongest work.

Goff's early career through 1934, took place in Oklahoma. His major extant works from this period are the Boston Avenue Methodist Church National Historic Landmark (1926) and Riverside Studio (1928), both in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Both buildings show Goff's early assimilation of outside design sources. The tour-de-force Boston Avenue Methodist, the only Goff-designed work that is currently a National Historic Landmark, exhibits a plan derived from Louis Sullivan's St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (1910-14). While its tower shows influences of German Expressionism, the Church is a seminal example of American Art Deco. The Riverside Studio is "replete with familiar icons of Modernism – flat roofs, smooth walls of stucco and windows with thin steel frames. Goff, though, was searching for a more personal idiom of expression and infused the design with unique features that transcended the familiar."[116] Of this period it has been said,

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[114] Quoted in De Long, *Bruce Goff: Toward Absolute Architecture*, 301.
[115] Ibid, 301.
[116] Arn Henderson, "Resources designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma," National Register Multiple Property

"Although some designs were quite innovative, the early work does not have the sense of continuity of ideas that characterizes buildings produced in later years."[117]

The period from 1934 to 1947 was a time of growth for Goff. It began while Goff lived in Chicago, extended through his time in the Navy, and ended with his move to Norman, to teach in the Department of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma: "From 1939, with design of the Cole House, to the 1946 proposal for the Leidig House, a remarkable transformation in Goff's aesthetic occurred."[118] As this period included the last years of the Depression and the shortages of World War II and the immediate post-War years, Goff's opportunities to build were relatively limited. However, one of Goff's most notable extant designs from this period is the Unseth House in Park Ridge, Illinois (1940). The small Unseth House contains elements of a number of characteristics that would be important in Goff's later work, including the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. These include a plan based on a strong geometric form and a central fireplace lit by a skylight.

The period from 1947 to 1956 David De Long has labeled "The Liberation of Genius."[119] This period of Goff's life, while he was teaching at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, witnessed the creation of several of his most important works, including the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House; the demolished Bavinger House in Norman, Oklahoma; and the unbuilt project for a studio for Joe Price in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. From this period other significant extant works are, aside from the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House: the Ledbetter House in Norman (1947), Hopewell Baptist Church in Edmond, Oklahoma (1948), and the Franke House in Sapulpa, Oklahoma (1955).

After moving to Bartlesville, Oklahoma, in 1956, Goff had a productive period. His constructed house designs during this period varied in the degree to which their visual interest derived their detailing, as opposed to directly from their basic geometry or structural system, two of the driving factors in the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House design. Examples of those houses that rely on dramatic detailing include:

- The Comer House in Dewey, Oklahoma (1957), is essentially a rectangular structure, whose main interest derives from its centrally placed front carport. The roof of the carport is hung from dramatically extended roof beams that project from the front of the house. The carport is further suspended by cables from ornamented masts which project from the main house roof.
- The Plunkett House in Lake Village, Texas (1970), whose plan is made up of two rectangles joined at corners to create a V. The faces of the rectangular sections are covered with compositions of semi-circular windows balanced by concentric, semi-circular rings of wood singles. Original plans show the circular stair at the inner angle of the V-shaped plan was to be topped by an onion-domed tower.

The Gryder House in Ocean Springs, Mississippi (1960) and the Struckus Houses in Woodland Hills, California (1979) are extreme examples of this type of house, which relies on striking detailing for effect, as well as being among Goff's most commonly photographed work.

- Though its walls are modulated by multiple curves, the Gryder House is a relatively simple structure built of wood frame covered with stucco. The house is given its striking character through the fanciful curvilinear extensions at eaves and corners, as if the building's materials were being stretched from its center. Windows and other openings are similarly "stretched into eccentric forms."

Documentation Form (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2000), 8.
[117] Ibid., 9.
[118] Ibid., 15. The Cole House, at 910 Hastings Street, Park Ridge, IL, has been altered beyond recognition.
[119] De Long, *Bruce Goff: Toward Absolute Architecture*, 87-138.

- The Struckus House is a four-story, circular tower. Its unusual form is highlighted by vertical wood cladding, accentuated by lines of glass tiles and capped by a conical roof whose rafter ends extend beyond the eave to create a varied roof edge. But its most arresting detail is a series of four vertically placed, round, semi-spherical windows that climb the tower's façade. To emphasize these windows, each is placed in a mendorla-shaped surround, whose plastic form projects dramatically from the more rustic appearing wood cladding.

Among the most significant extant houses of Goff's post-Norman career (which was primarily residential), are the Pollack, Duncan, and Nicol houses. Each is strongly determined by its geometry. The Pollack House in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (1957), is based on a nine-square plan, with peaked roofs over each square. The Duncan House in Cobden, Illinois (1965) has a sinuous plan, laid out along field stone walls, which curve back and forth, creating a series of separate, but related spaces. The Nicol House in Kansas City, Missouri (1965), is a purely centralized house, with a highly formalized plan, made up of a central octagonal space, surrounded by eight smaller octagonal spaces, the whole plan being contained within the shape of an octagon.

Though each of the major post-war works mentioned strongly manifests themes that are important to Goff's design work, including a plan with a strong geometric basis (Hopewell, Franke, Pollack, Nicol, Duncan), central fireplace and skylight (Nicol), and use of bold materials (Ledbetter and Duncan), only the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House brings these themes together with coherence and complexity. No other extant Goff building, aside from the Hopewell Church, uses non-traditional structural materials to such an extent and in a manner that so determines the building's form. No other extant Goff building uses such an unusual pallet of materials, materials that are not used as applied ornament, but are integral to the enclosure and finishes of the house. Additionally, no other extant Goff house was constructed by such a sensitive builder, in the person of Don Tosi, and with such supportive clients as Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford. Tosi's understanding of Goff's goals and his own high aesthetic standards, and the Fords' willingness to finance the house's construction, were integral to bringing to fruition one of Goff's most significant built designs.

Goff's goal to create unique works for individual clients can easily be seen by comparing the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House with Goff's two other most prominent built works of the period, the Bavinger House and the Price Studio. [120] Similarities among the three include plans with strong geometries, the circle of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, the spiral of the Bavinger and the triangle of the Price studio, as well as an inventive use of materials, including the masonry and cullet glass walls found in all three. Striking differences in the houses are also found, which can be traced to the lifestyles of the original owners. At the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, residency of three adults called for zones of privacy in the clearly differentiated bedrooms, while the young Bavinger family lived in a house largely composed of one continuous space. The Price Studio was the quintessential post-war "bachelor pad" with a single bedroom in one of its three short wings and thick pile carpeting throughout that encouraged bare feet and sitting on the floor. The loss of the Bavinger House and Price Studio makes the survival of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House particularly significant.[121]

[120] The importance of client input to Goff's design process is indicated by his "The hardest client to deal with is the person who won't tell you what he wants or won't tell you what he wants." Bruce Goff, "The Continuous Present in Architecture," in Welch, *Goff on Goff: Conversations and Lectures*, 215.

[121] The Price Studio was destroyed by fire in 1996. The Bavinger House was severely damaged in 2011 and access to the site has been curtailed. While a portion of its spiral walls may remain, it appears the house itself has been essentially demolished.

The National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for "Resources Designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma," provides a thorough overview of Goff's work. In the MPDF, the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is regularly cited as a powerful example of Goff's work. In Section E: Statement of Historic Contexts, Part (C) A Compositional Pattern, the MPDF lays out fourteen common characteristics of Goff's work. [122] In developing these characteristics, the MPDF reviews Goff's career as a whole, not just in Oklahoma. Therefore, the characteristics are helpful criteria for assessing the degree to which a Goff design is representative of his work. The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, demonstrating thirteen of these characteristics, is strongly representative of Goff's work.

1. Geometry as a Plan Determinant, Centroidal Plans: From Goff's first design decision to rotate the Quonset rib around a central axis, through the alignment of bedroom wings with the radial glass walls that separate the interior and exterior living areas of the main dome, to relationship of the carport to the main dome, the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House design adheres to a consistent geometry.
2. Composite Plans (the combining of more than one geometry in a plan): Due to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House design's consistent use of a geometry based off its centroidal geometry, the composite quality of the design is limited, but can be seen in the elongated form of the carport roof.
3. Open Plan: The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House's interior living area at the center of the house includes kitchen and dining areas on the lower floor, gallery and seating area on the main level and studio space on the mezzanine, all open to one-another.
4. Split-Level Spatial Organization: The main dome's three levels, with the main level approximately half-way between the lower level and mezzanine is an integral component of the space's design.
5. Spatial Modulation: The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House displays the "concern for spatial modulation and the establishment of clear hierarchies by differentiating ceiling heights according to function, as well as the close relationship between interior ceiling and exterior roof described in this characteristic."[123]
6. Built-in Furniture: Built-in furniture, specifically the dining area banquette and the shelving that backs the kitchen cabinets, screening the kitchen from the entry, is integral to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House design.
7. Fireplaces: As noted in the MPDF, "The Ford House has a major recessed area with a fireplace defining two separate zones: a kitchen, behind the fireplace, and a large conversation area with a built-in couch facing the fireplace. Goff not only magnified the importance of the hearth as a focal point, but by recessing the floor, also achieved a sense of spatial variety in the design."[124]
8. Natural Light and Views to the Exterior: The MPDF acknowledges Goff's ambivalent approach to the relationship of interior and exterior:

   > One of the characteristics of Goff's compositional pattern is a reliance on clerestories, skylights and high windows to introduce natural light into interior spaces. There is a parallel tendency to restrict views from the interior of the house to the exterior. In those houses where there is a significant visual relationship to the landscape, the view tends to be focused on a specific feature or vista.[125]

   The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House's central skylight is a dramatic example of light from above. The view to the exterior is limited to the southeast, while coal walls and dome shelter the house and restrict views in other directions.

[122] Henderson, "Resources designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma," 39-69.
[123] Ibid., 45.
[124] Ibid., 47.
[125] Ibid., 50.

9. Structural Expression: According to the MPDF, "the Ford House, with the quonset [sic] ribs painted bright red-orange and converging to a central mast, is a powerful synthesis of form and structure."[126]
10. Dominant Roof: The cedar shingle roofs of the main and bedroom domes are major elements in the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House's design. Even the flat roofs, which appear to slice through the domes, are given visual power through their contrast with the curved roof surfaces.
11. Water as a Design Element: This is the only common design characteristic that is not present in the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House as built.[127]
12. Articulated Facades: Goff used three strategies of façade organization, all of which can be found at the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. First, he established hierarchies of form by extending the service or private functions of the house beyond the primary plane defining the façade as can be seen with the flat-roofed bathroom/storage areas that link the main dome with the bedroom domes. Second, as noted above in this nomination, Goff created visual dichotomies through the dominance of contrast. Third, he generated visual interest with the presence of regular rhythms. The regularity of the Quonset ribs is a notable example of this.
13. Orchestration of Materials: According to the MPDF, "designs in the post-war years also reveal a utilization of unorthodox materials or manufactured items not intended for architectural uses as building materials. The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is particularly significant with its walls of anthracite coal and glass cullets with white mortar joints decorated with marbles, and the fascia/soffit, rounded to form a continuous curved surface, sheathed with jute rope.
14. Collective Meanings: "A major dimension of significance to Goff's architecture was his ability to fuse together discrete ideas to give greater collective meaning to a composition." The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, "reveals Goff's ability to visually link numerous elements together to create a powerful focal point. At entry level, the half-spherical perimeter is defined as a gallery-like space for the display of paintings. At the very center is a large recessed circular area surrounding a copper mast that serves several functions: it is the major structural support for the ribs of the dome; it serves as a zoning device between kitchen and conversation area; it is a fireplace; it is the armature for the cantilevered circular studio above; and it is this central mast that becomes the visual magnet. The red-orange structure, as it converges to the intersection, is revealed by the skylight as an explosion of pattern."[128]

During the 1946-56 period, certain design concepts that Goff had been developing became integrated into his work. In a 1953 talk on "The New Geometry in Architecture" at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Goff spoke of

> [O]ur increased desire to have the space inside and outside to be more continuous, more flexible, more dynamic and more active…. We are not satisfied with just a box, no matter how nice the box looks…. Some of us want [geometry] more active, alive—not just a background for activities. Some of us feel a building should be expressive of what it is, more than just geometry.[129]

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House clearly demonstrates these qualities, in such elements as the open plan of its main interior and exterior living areas and in the expression of the bedrooms in the geometric forms of the wings. Its ability to evoke allusions through its form and materials has evolved over time from the droll

[126] Ibid., 55.
[127] Design presentation drawings do indicate a pond between the carport and the ornamental wall at the west edge, but this was not constructed.
[128] Henderson, "Resources designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma," 67.
[129] Welch, *Goff on Goff: Conversations and Lectures,* 298-300.

references of Charles Jencks and the author of the 1951 *Architectural Forum* article noted above, to more thoughtful allusions. In *Organic Architecture: The Other Modernism*, Alan Hess writes, "The 1947 Ford House in Aurora, Illinois, distills many of Goff's themes. From the exterior, it presents itself as a large, circular yurt. Stepping closer, one sees that it is thoroughly modern…."[130]

Bart Prince, one of Goff's closest associates, has stated that, "The Ford house is one of Goff's most important buildings. This is especially the case since it is one of the few still standing. Goff's Price house in Bartlesville burned and his Bavinger house was destroyed…, so it's important to protect a building as important to Goff's overall work as the Ford house."[131]

In 2015 De Long placed the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House among the most significant of Goff's work:

> The Ford house is one of Bruce Goff's most important designs, and among those that survive it is easily one of his very best. It was designed during what I believe to be his most creative period, between 1946 and 1956; for most of that time he was chair of the department of architecture at the University of Oklahoma, an environment that seemed to stimulate his best efforts. The Ford house is a major example. It is significant as an example of Goff's extraordinary originality, especially its spatial complexities generated by intersecting spherical volumes. It is significant for its use of unexpected materials: masonry walls of coal and glass cullet, war surplus bomber skylights and rope added within, and a structure of creatively reconfigured Quonset hut ribs. In his manipulation of found materials, Goff created one of the most extraordinary interiors of any house in America, its dramatic volumes based on a logical resolution of functional elements and its shapes defined by those unexpected, yet quite workable, materials.... It is a house that stands as a major statement of Goff's creative genius and of his expression of essential American values.[132]

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House in the Media

Since its completion in 1950 the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House has been recognized nationally and internationally for its significance. The first press to cover the house was not professional architectural journals, but engineering, science and popular magazines. Specific examples include:

- 1950: "Like an Umbrella," *Engineering News Record*.
- 1950: "House Built in the Round," *Popular Science.*
- 1951: "The Round House," *Life* magazine widely introduced the house to the American public through 6 pages of color photographs it.[133]
- 1951: "The Umbrella House: Bruce Goff Builds It with Quonset Ribs and Coal to Raise the New Aurora," *Architectural Forum*. The first architectural press to cover the house.
- 1951: "Umbrella House, Aurora, Illinois," *Kokusai-Kentiku*. The house's first international press.
- 1958: "Bauten und Entwurfe von Bruce Goff 1935-1957," *Bauwelt* 4.
- 1963: "Pavilions on the Prairie," *Horizon* 4.
- 1970: Bruce Goff in Architecture, by Takenobu Mohri, was published in Tokyo.

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[130] Alan Weintraub and Alan Hess, *Organic Architecture: The Other Modern* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2006), 83.
[131] Email, Bart Prince to nomination author, December 18, 2020.
[132] De Long, "Revisiting the Ford House," *Friends of Kebyar Journal: Bruce Goff's Ford House, Living in Joyful Order* 30.3, no. 82 (Winter 2015): 10-12.
[133] Elisofon, "The Round House."

- 1989: "The Potential House," *Architecture and Urbanism*, by Henry Plummer.
- 2001: *GA Houses Special: Masterpieces 1945-1970*, where the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House was featured chronologically with the Eames House, Farnsworth House and Glass House.
- 2004: *Bauwelt*, the German periodical, focuses a full issue on Goff that includes an essay on the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House.
- 2006: *Organic Architecture*: The Other Modernism, a survey of American Organic architecture includes Goff's Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford and Pollack houses.
- 2007: *At Home in the Heartland*, by Robert Winter.
- 2009: "Groove Interior," Sumai no Sekkei, Japanese interiors periodical.
- 2009: *Living in Great American Houses*, with text by Atsuko Tanaka and photographs by Soichi Murazumi, is published in Japan.
- 2014: In 2014 the Institute of Visual Arts at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, hosted the exhibit "Leo Saul Berk: The Uncertainty of Enclosure." An expanded exhibit of Berk's work interpreting the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House called "Structure and Ornament" was then shown at the Frye Museum in Seattle in 2015. As noted on the Institute of Visual Arts' website, "The Uncertainty of Enclosure explores the impact of an architecturally iconic residence—Bruce Goff's Ford House in Aurora, Illinois—on the art of Leo Saul Berk."[134] Berk, a Seattle-based artist, moved into the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House with his family in 1980 when he was six years old. As noted, the Berks lived in the house until 1986. Through work such as that exhibited in "The Uncertainty of Enclosure," Berk has directly interpreted motifs taken from the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. In a broader sense Berk has stated, "I spent most of my childhood living in Bruce Goff's Ford House in Aurora, IL. This house had a profound impact on my life and aesthetic sensibility, essentially forming me as the artist I am today."[135]
- 2017: The Art Institute of Chicago, as a part of its on-going exhibit "Past Forward: Architecture and Design at the Art Institute," includes a video on the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. This is one of only five architects so recognized, the others being Mies van der Rohe, Louis Sullivan, Bertrand Goldberg and Charlotte Perriand. Penelope Dean, associate professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House owner Sidney Robinson provided contextual commentary. Dean noted:

  > In fact most of the press about Bruce Goff's work inside the Academy came out after he passed away…. He was always, I think, an under historicized figure, and I think part of the reason for that is simply because houses like the Ford House, or the Bavinger House, or the Garvey House, or other houses, couldn't be placed in a history of architecture. Now he's incredibly popular and we look at his work a lot. I think that now it has much more contemporary resonance for younger architects.[136]
- 2020: *Modern in the Middle: Chicago Houses 1929-1975*, by Susan Benjamin and Michelangelo Sabatino. The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House serves as the preeminent example of Goff's work in the Chicago area.

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[134] Institute of Visual Arts at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, "Exhibition & Program Schedule," http://www4.uwm.edu/psoa/inova/schedule.cfm, accessed March 23, 2014. The catalog for the Frye Art Museum exhibit is, Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, ed., *Leo Saul Berk, Structure and Ornament* (Seattle: The Frye Art Museum, 2015).
[135] http://www.leoberk.com/ford-house, accessed October 21, 2020.
[136] "Bruce Goff's Ford House," https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXflF3_PL_QuDX1CsCImuFA, accessed December 5, 2020.

- 2020 *The Iconic American House: Architectural Masterworks since 1900*, by Dominic Bradbury, notes: "Encapsulating Bruce Goff's enduring interest in organic design, geometry and 'found' materials, the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is often described as his masterpiece."[137]
- 2020 MAS Content, "A Dialog of Difference: Reflections on Bruce Goff's Ford House." Texts by Petra Bachmaier, Leo Berk, Assaf Evron, Grant Gibson, Sidney K. Robinson, David Skidmore, and Mary Woolever; introduction and photographs by Iker Gil. https://www.mascontext.com/tag/bruce-goff/.

Conclusion

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, designed by Bruce Goff and built by Don Tosi, is eligible for listing as a National Historic Landmark under Criterion 4, Theme III, as a masterwork of Bruce Goff. The house contains concepts that overlap with much of mid-twentieth century American architecture, but it also has an individuality that is apparent as it sits in its Midwestern suburban neighborhood

[137] Dominic Bradbury, *The Iconic American House: Architectural Masterworks since 1900* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2020), 79.

6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	1
Public-Local:		District:	
Public-State:		Site:	
Public-Federal:		Structure:	
		Object:	

Number of Resources within Boundary of Property:

Contributing		Noncontributing	
Buildings:	1	Buildings:	
Sites:		Sites:	
Structures:	1	Structures:	
Objects:		Objects:	
Total:	2	Total:	0

PROVIDE PRESENT AND PAST PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF PROPERTY
(Please see specific guidance for type of resource[s] being nominated)

Summary Description

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is a one story, single-family house on a site approximately two and one-half miles west of downtown Aurora, Illinois. The house, built in 1949-50, is an exceptional and highly intact example of Organic Design. It is immediately noticeable in its residential surroundings due to its highly unusual form and materials. The main section of the house is a dome formed by the rotation of curved Quonset hut ribs around a central axis. The dome is covered with a roof of cedar shingles. Around the base of the dome, on the northwest side of the house, its steel ribs are exposed and wrap an enclosing wall of coal and cullet (or slag) glass. On the southeast side of the house approximately one third of the dome has been opened to the exterior to create an exterior living area. Here separation between interior and exterior space is created by glass walls radiating from the center of the dome. Two smaller quarter-domes flank the main dome to the south and the northeast and enclose bedrooms. The smaller domes are structured and enclosed in a manner similar to the main dome. A carport projects to the west from the main dome. The western end of the carport's flat roof is curved in plan, complementing the round form of the domes. A U-shaped driveway curves beneath the carport roof. On the western edge of the property, between the arms of the driveway, is an ornamental wall built of coal. This wall is a contributing resource on the property. Along with coal, cullet glass and cedar shingles, other distinctive materials used on the house are vertical cypress clapboard, large sheets of plate glass, and one inch diameter rope, which covers the flat ceilings of the house. In all, these forms and materials give the house a striking visual impact. The house is in an excellent state of repair and its few alterations have been typically limited to minor finishes. Over the last thirty years the current owner has restored a number of elements that have required work as the building has aged.

Geographic Context

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House sits on a city block in western Aurora, Kane County, Illinois, bounded by South Edgelawn Drive on the west, Kenilworth Place on the north, Rosedale Avenue on the east, and Southlawn Place on the south. As noted, development in the immediate vicinity of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House has been almost exclusively residential. Directly across Edgelawn from the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is a large, approximately twelve-acre property, on which is sited a one-story, Spanish Revival house. This house was built prior to the construction of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House. To the north of this property, is Kenilworth Place. This section of Kenilworth Place, on the west side of Edgelawn, was constructed and developed after the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House was built. Land parcels here are approximately one-quarter acre, the typical size of parcels to the north of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House on both sides of Edgelawn. Without exception, the houses on Edgelawn, in the blocks to the north of the Ford House, are one-story, set back 50' from the street, and built before 1963.[138] Similar development predominates to the north of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House on South Rosedale Avenue and on the north side of Kenilworth Place. Directly to the east of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, properties tend to be somewhat larger, ranging between a half and a quarter of the blocks in this direction, similar in scale to the original four parcels of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House block. Larger properties are also typical to the south, on the block between the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House and the Aurora Country Club. The property directly to the south, across Southlawn Place from the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, is a two-story Colonial Revival house. Constructed prior to the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House, this house sits on an approximately one-and-three-quarter acre lot, larger than the one-and-one-quarter acre block of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House.

Physical Description—Site

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is sited in the northwest quadrant of its block. The grading of this area is relatively flat, though there is a rise to the northeast.[139] On the west side of the property, approximately 20' south of the corner of Kenilworth Place and South Edgelawn Drive, is the north access point of the house's U-shaped driveway which curves southeast, then curves south, under the carport, and then curves back to the southwest, to another access point on Edgelawn, approximately 60' south of the first access point. The drive is surfaced with asphalt. The drive is considered a contributing structure. Between these access points, along the western edge of the property, running north to south, is a low masonry wall of randomly laid chunks of coal with circular openings in it. The wall is approximately 35' west of the western wall of the carport and 14' east of South Edgelawn Drive. This wall, which gives a preview of the unusual materials and forms that are used in the main part of the house, can be seen on Goff's original design drawings for the house and is a contributing structure of the nominated property. The top of the wall is irregular with its highest point at approximately 6'-4" above grade. It is approximately 52' long. The three circular openings in the wall allow partial views of the house, highlighting the bright red-orange curved steel beams which support the main dome.

Planting around the house largely follows historical precedent set by the Fords. The planting bed south of the entry door with its spruce still exists, though the spruce is likely nearing the end of its life. Between the main dome and the north dome, the large yew fills the space between the two forms. On the southeast side of the house low plantings continue to be planted, the varieties used are similar in scale to the original plantings.

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[138] See https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer, accessed April 11, 2021.

[139] In a letter from Don Tosi to Goff dated January 15, 1948, Tosi indicated the property rose to the southeast (Bruce Goff Archive of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago). Either there has been a significant change in the topography since that time or Tosi was mistaken in the direction.

On the block's perimeter, along Edgelawn, south of the southern driveway curb cut, mature sumacs (*Rhus typhina*) edge the property. At the property's southwest corner is a mature apple tree (*Malus spp.*), which possibly dates from the Ford ownership. Along Southlawn, on the south edge of the property, sumacs continue for approximately 50' at which point is a cherry tree, which was in place by the time the current owner bought the property in 1986. At approximately mid-block on Southlawn is another mature apple tree. This tree marks that eastern boundary of the Fords' property and may also date from their ownership. Much of the planting on the eastern half of the block was done by that portion's prior owner, who owned that property until 1996. Along Southlawn there are river birches (*Betula nigra*) and the southeast corner of the property is marked by another mature apple tree, similar to those on the western half of the block. While the Fords did not own this half of the block, planting of the three apples on Southlawn may have been coordinated, so that this tree also dates from the period of the Fords' ownership. Along Rosedale on the east edge of the block are more river birches, a group of three toward the south end of the block and a group of two toward the north. At the northeast corner of the block low plantings, predominantly yews (*taxus canadensis*), are interspersed with small caliper fruit trees. Along Kenilworth Place, approximately at the original east boundary of the Fords' original property are four small-caliper cherry trees (*Prunus avium*), which are volunteer survivors of a large cherry tree in that location that may have dated from the Fords' ownership. Further west are small lilacs (*Syringa vulgaris*). At the northwest corner are junipers that likely descend from those plants by the Fords in this area.

On the interior of the block, to the south, is a large area of prairie, planted with indigenous ornamental grasses (mostly big bluestem *Andropogon gerardi,* coneflower *Echinacea,* false indigo *Baptisia*). The prairie was planted by the current owner in the late-1990s, unifying the two halves of the block and providing an alternative to higher-maintenance lawn. On the eastern half of the block, the prairie bed curves to the north. To the north of the prairie, in the lawn at the northeast corner of the block are a large American linden (*Tilia americana*) and a smaller oak (*Quercus bicolor*). Within the arc of lawn between the prairie bed and the house, planted by the previous owner of the eastern half of the block are a large silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*) and a locust (*Gleditsia tricanthos*). To the southwest of these trees are a redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and Norway pine (*Pinus resinosa*). In the lawn, to the southeast of the main dome, is a dwarf, weeping pine (*Pinus strobus 'Pendula'*), whose curve echoes the curve of the dome.

Physical Description—House Exterior

The house is oriented with a relatively opaque "public side" facing to the northwest. The more transparent "private side" of the house faces southeast toward the center of the block. Description of the house does not fall easily into categorization of traditional principal façade and other sides. This is a function of the Organic design of the house and its curved forms—one view flows into another all the way around the house.

From the west

From the west, the most prominent component of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is the large dome that encloses the main living area of the house. The main dome is flanked by two smaller quarter-domes to the south and northeast, both of which contain bedrooms, and is formed by the rotation of curved Quonset hut ribs around a central axis. Starting at a height approximately 6'-8" above grade, the main dome is covered with cedar shingles. These shingles curve up to the high point of the steel ribs, approximately 18' above grade, where the roof becomes nearly flat and is covered with standing seam copper. At the top of each curved rib, straight steel ribs rise to meet at the center of the dome, forming a relatively shallow, cone-shaped cap to the house that terminates approximately 24' above grade. On the north and west sides of the cone, the areas between the

straight ribs are filled with glass. At the top of this cone, flues for fireplaces in the center of the house exit the roof. Above the flues is a slender, steeply pitched, 8'-tall cone, formed by an open metal frame.

Below the eaves of the shingle roof, the curved ribs—which give the dome its form and structure—are exposed. Here the ribs are not the Quonset ribs themselves, but instead are 4-inch by 4-inch wide-flange steel beams that have been crimped to follow the curve of the Quonset ribs. On the large dome, these heavier ribs are embedded in the house's concrete foundation wall, and they are connected to the thinner Quonset ribs just above the eaves of the shingle roof. These ribs are painted red-orange to contrast them with the surrounding materials. Within the circle of steel ribs, below the roof eave, is a non-structural masonry enclosure wall made of randomly laid chunks of coal and cullet glass.[140] The use of the roughly finished coal and cullet glass for the enclosing wall contrasts with the regularity of the precisely curved steel ribs. At various locations within the wall's mortar, colored and clear glass marbles are embedded.

At the southwestern section of the main dome, the flat roof of a carport projects to the west. The north and south edges of the carport roof are parallel, located in line with the center of the main dome on the north and the center of the smaller, quarter dome on the south. The west end of the roof is curved and is held up by two steel columns that are concealed in a storage unit on the west side of the curved driveway. In plan, the storage unit has two curved sides, like an elongated football: the curve of the west side of the unit follows the arc of the carport roof above, while on the east side of the unit, the curve follows the driveway as it goes beneath the carport roof. The storage unit is covered with vertical cypress clapboards. This material is used consistently for all the opaque vertical walls of the house, aside from the coal walls. The ceiling of the carport is largely made up of 4' x 8' composition panels, painted red, whose joints are covered by dark wood battens. [141] The panels are circumscribed by a circle approximately 13' in radius. This circle shares a center point with the arc of the curve of the west side of the west carport storage unit. At the center of the panels is a light fixture. The portions of the carport ceiling outside the circle of red panels are covered with rope approximately one inch in diameter. This rope wraps around the circle of red panels and continues up the carport's curved soffit to the roof edge. The surface treatment of rope is consistently used for all flat ceilings and soffits in the main spaces of the house. The wood joist structure of the carport roof is held from above by two steel beams whose western ends rest on the steel columns concealed in the west storage unit. The enclosures of these beams project above the roof and can be easily read. To accentuate their presence, the ends of the beam enclosures are extended beyond the west edge of the carport roof by copper forms that curve slightly upward. The eastern ends of the beams are supported by columns that are concealed in a crescent-shaped, cypress-covered storage unit. This unit is integrated into the enclosure of the main dome. At the north, the cypress unit is joined to the dome's coal wall by a single sheet of glass. This relationship is typical throughout the house—nowhere do coal and wood touch, as they are always joined, or separated, by a sheet of glass.

To the south of the carport's east storage unit is the main or "front" door to the house. This entrance is sheltered under the south edge of the carport roof. The door itself is covered with vertical cypress clapboard and is set in a wood frame. On either side of the door are full-height sheets of glass that serve as sidelights and separate the door from the cypress-covered storage unit to the north and a curved cypress wall on the south, which encloses a bathroom and storage area adjacent to the south bedroom. The glass to the south is cut and turns approximately 45 degrees to meet the curved bathroom wall at a 90-degree angle. The bathroom wall curves around to the east, where it becomes straight and intersects with the quarter-dome of the south bedroom.

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[140] Don Tosi referred to the type of coal used as cannel coal, a duller, more compact coal than anthracite coal. Tosi, interview.

[141] The panels are labeled "Transite" on the working drawings. Transite was an asbestos-cement product produced by Johns-Manville Corporation. While this is likely the material that was installed, this has not been confirmed.

The bedroom dome displays all the components seen on the main dome, but with slight variations. Because the dome is only one-quarter around, the skylight at the center is actually sliced on two sides and, therefore, is much more complex than the conical skylight on the main dome. From the southwest, the skylight appears as a quarter-circle-shaped sheet of glass sloping down to the southwest from a high point above the center of the dome. The curving lower edge of the glass sheet sits on a copper-sheathed collar. This collar, in turn, sits on the standing seam copper roofing that covers the nearly flat top of the dome. Below the copper sheeting, cedar shingles follow the curve of the dome to a termination point approximately 2' above grade. As on the main dome, the smaller dome's ribs are exposed between the roof and grade; the difference here is that actual, lighter-gauge Quonset ribs are embedded in the foundation wall, instead of being carried on heavier ribs, as they are on the main dome. Like the main dome, the ribs of the smaller dome are painted red-orange, and behind them is a curved wall of coal. While this short wall does not have cullet glass used in its construction, it does have glass marbles embedded in its light-colored mortar.

From the southeast

As noted, the house has an axis of symmetry running from the northwest to the southeast. Viewing the house from the southeast, this symmetry is clearly visible. In the center of the view is the main dome. On either side, to the south and the northeast, are the quarter domes containing bedrooms. Connecting the three domed sections are flat roofs that shelter secondary spaces.

As described in the view from the west, the main dome derives its form and structure from Quonset hut ribs rotated around a central axis. As viewed from the southeast, the ribs are completely exposed. Here approximately one-third of the dome's enclosure has been removed to create an exterior living area within the form of the dome. From the southeast, the transition from the heavier, wide flange ribs at the base of the dome to the lighter Quonset ribs above is clearly visible. In order to give the exposed ribs lateral (horizontal) support, half-inch-diameter steel reinforcing bars have been welded to the exposed ribs. These horizontal bars also reinforce the sense of enclosure to the exterior living area provided by the vertical ribs.[142] The inner walls of the exterior living area are made up of planes of glass placed along lines that radiate from the center of the dome. The left glass wall is on a line that extends due south from the center of the dome. The right glass wall runs to the northeast. At the center of the dome, the concrete slab drops down 2'-7". This circular area, with a radius of 14'-6", creates a lower-level space that continues into the interior of the house. Also at the center of the dome, the steel structure that supports the interior ends of the Quonset ribs is encased in a copper enclosure. This enclosure also contains fireplaces in both the sunken exterior and interior living areas. In front of the fireplaces, raised concrete hearths cantilever from the central structure. Against the vertical wall at the drop of the concrete slab, a curved built-in cypress bench faces the exterior fireplace. On either side of the bench, next to the glass walls that radiate from the center, are wood steps connecting the two slab levels. Continuing the symmetry of the space, cypress-covered doors are placed in the glass walls on either side of the exterior fireplace hearth.

Above the sunken portions of the exterior and interior living areas is a round, cantilevered balcony that radiates from the center of the structure. This balcony has the effect of providing a sheltered intimacy to the sunken areas below it. The copper enclosure containing the central structure and chimney flues continues up above the balcony level, narrowing in radius as it rises. At the balcony level on either side of the copper enclosure, and separated from it by narrow sheets of glass, are rectangular cypress-covered storage units that project outward from the planes of glass. Adjacent to the storage units are cypress-covered doors giving access to the interior of the balcony.

[142] Early photographs show that metal insect screen originally covered the ribs of the exterior living area.

The glass walls between the interior and exterior living areas of the main dome are held in place by steel mullions. Formed by stock T-shaped sections, these mullions are extremely narrow interruptions in the planes of the glass walls. The transparency of the glass walls is accentuated by the extension of interior finishes into the exterior space, such as the cypress clapboard that covers the interior of the dome, or the rope-covered ceiling and soffits below the cypress. At the top of the exterior space, the Quonset ribs converge to be supported by a steel collar at the center of the dome. Clearly visible above this are the undersides of straight ribs that create the conical roof at the top of the dome. Over the exterior living area on the southeast, the conical roof is opaque, unlike the skylight section that may be seen above the interior space viewed from the west.

The glass walls that divide the interior and exterior living areas of the main dome continue to the south and northeast to create the exterior walls of the two smaller domed bedrooms. In the bedrooms, the glass walls span vertically between floor-level sills and flat, rope-covered ceilings. The ceilings are 6'-8" above the floor level. The glass walls are interrupted horizontally by cypress doors that allow access to the bedroom wings from the exterior. At the outer edges of the house, the glass walls terminate at the curved edges of the smaller domes. As with the main dome, finish materials straddle interior and exterior. The low coal walls at the perimeter of the small domes, the cypress clapboard of the domes' ceilings, and the horizontal planes of the flat, rope-covered ceilings all can be easily read on both the interior and exterior of the house. At the outside edges of the house, the flat roofs are boldly accentuated, cantilevered several feet beyond the domes on either side of the house.

Above each bedroom—between the lower, flat roofs and the curved, upper roofs—vertical planes of glass create clerestory windows. The pie-shaped geometry of the quarter-domes creates two straight clerestory surfaces that meet at a 90-degree angle at the center of each dome. Above the clerestories, the upper ends of the ribs of each dome meet at quarter-circle steel collars. These collars are held in place vertically by angled steel struts that interrupt the planes of the clerestories and rest on the flat roof decks of each bedroom. Because the bedroom domes are not complete circles, their skylights are more complex than that of the main dome. The vertical pieces of glass that meet at the centers of the domes between the struts are connected by vertical butt joints. These pieces of glass rise above the curved roofs of the domes to carry the glass of the skylights. The top edges of these vertical pieces are angled to allow sloped pieces of laminated glass to sit on top of them. The laminated glass is held to the vertical pieces by adhesive and metal clips. The sloping of the top pieces of glass allows for the shedding of water, but it also accentuates the verticals at the centers of the domes.

From the north

From the north, the house appears almost wholly sculptural. There are no doorways or windows in the standard sense. Viewed from this direction, the main dome and the bedroom dome to the northeast appear as fully-rounded forms. At the base of both are coal walls with the curved, red-orange ribs exposed in front of them. In the smaller dome, the length of rib is reduced significantly, as is the gauge of the ribs, emphasizing the difference of scale between the two domes. Above the coal walls, the curve of each dome is covered by cedar shingles; above the shingles, standing seam copper covers the curves at the tops of the ribs. Each dome is capped by its skylight. The differences between the two skylights are clear in this view: the main dome's skylight is the full cone shape and the smaller dome's skylight is the complex quarter circle. One way in which a sense of scale can be gained from this direction is by means of the horizontal line of the flat roof that cuts across the view at intervals. Starting on the left, with the cantilever of the roof at the bedroom, this line terminates at the right with the roof of the carport.

Physical Description—House Interior

Main interior living area

Entering the main level of the house at grade from the west, through the main entry door, one is brought into a vestibule created by a number of curved forms. On the immediate left and right are curved volumes covered with vertical cypress clapboard; on the left is the storage area adjacent to the carport, and on the right is the bathroom adjacent to the south bedroom. Directly ahead is a columnar screen created by the convex curve of the dome ribs. Beginning at the left edge of this screen, the coal enclosure wall begins to wrap around the base of the dome, creating the exterior enclosure of much of the "gallery," which surrounds the interior living space at the main level. The space of the vestibule "leaks" out to the left and right between the cypress-covered forms and the dome ribs. On the left, the nominal "interior space" terminates at a sheet of glass that closes the gap between the curved storage area and the curved coal wall, though the view in this direction continues unimpeded through the narrow gap to the lawn beyond. On the right, the space between the cypress-covered volume of the bathroom and the curving columnar screen narrows but never completely disappears, as it skirts the main interior living area on its way to the entrance to the south bedroom. The vestibule's rope-covered ceiling is the interior continuation of the carport ceiling. Its relatively low height and dark color help accentuate the difference between the vestibule and the main living area, which can be seen ahead through the columnar screen of the dome ribs.

Just beyond the ribs, the rope-covered ceiling curves upward to form a soffit that follows the curve of the dome in plan. At this point, the vestibule opens up dramatically to the main living area under the large dome. Straight ahead is a shelving unit that screens the view to the center of the dome. This shelving unit is critical in diverting one's path from going directly to the center of the house; instead, one must go left or right, following the space around the curve of the dome. The path to the right terminates after a short distance at the glass wall which separates the interior and exterior living areas. At the base of the glass wall, the floor slab stops short of the glass to allow for a rectangular planting area. In this location, fig and rubber plants have been planted, which now cover much of the glass wall. Along the glass wall leading to the northeast are rubber plants (*Ficus elastica*). Along the glass wall to the south are both rubber and fig plants (*Ficus lyrica*). Turning right in front of the plants leads to the south bedroom; turning left leads toward the center of the dome. In this direction, one can either ascend a flight of stairs along the face of the glass wall to the balcony or descend four steps to the kitchen area. The kitchen is screened from the entrance by the shelving unit.

Returning to the vestibule and turning left, the space follows the exterior coal wall around the main level of the interior living area. This allows for a 9'-wide gallery that curves around the perimeter of the dome. At a point approximately straight west of the center of the dome, the shelving unit that screens the kitchen ends. This visually opens the space at the lower level to the gallery. The gallery terminates at the glass wall separating the interior and exterior living areas. Like at the south end of the gallery, large plants grow in front of the glass wall. Also mirroring the other end of the gallery, in front of the plants one can either turn left to enter the northeast bedroom, or right to go up to the balcony or down to the lower living area.

The lower space originally was the dining area, and an upholstered banquette is built against the wall at the change of floor elevation. At the center of the lower space, in the copper enclosure of the house's structural core, is a fireplace with a raised hearth, similar to the fireplace and hearth in the exterior space. Like the lower area on the exterior, the lower interior space gains a sense of intimacy thanks to the cantilevered balcony above it. On the balcony level, the copper enclosure of the central structure diminishes in diameter as it rises. On both sides of this enclosure is a cypress clapboard-covered storage unit and adjacent door to the exterior balcony, as described on the exterior. As it rises, the copper enclosure is interrupted by the steel collar that supports the ends of the Quonset ribs where they converge in the center of the space. Above this, the copper enclosure continues to the top of the space, to the collar which supports the upper ends of the straight ribs that rise from

the tops of the Quonset arcs. The spaces between the straight ribs are filled with glass to provide light to the balcony area, which originally was intended to be an artist's studio.

Below the skylight, the inner face of the dome is covered with cypress clapboards laid in a herringbone pattern. The cypress continues down the curve of the dome to the top of the coal wall, where it terminates behind a cypress valence which caps the wall. Behind this valence is a continuous band of neon lighting, which can wash the surface of the dome. Behind the lighting, between the exterior face of the coal wall and the interior face of the cypress ceiling, is a horizontal surface with hinged flaps that originally gave access to air vents. Now closed and insulated, these vents originally worked in tandem with still-functioning exhaust fans located in the upper part of the cypress ceiling. The valence above the coal wall terminates at the curved soffits of the rope-covered ceilings of the vestibule and the area leading to the northeast bedroom. Beyond the transition points between the valence and the soffit, the coal wall ends. Both ends of the wall have a noticeable batter as they rise from the floor to the flat ceilings. As at the vestibule, the steel ribs are exposed at the northeast end of the gallery, creating a columnar screen through which one passes to reach the northeast bedroom.

As noted, the kitchen is in the south portion of the lower section of the main living area. The space is partially screened from the adjacent lower dining area and the front entrance by cabinets. The kitchen cabinets are faced with vertical cypress clapboard. To maintain consistency of finish, the cabinet units with drawers are covered with cypress-faced doors which open to reveal the drawers behind them.

Bedroom wings

As described on the exterior, the dome of the main living area is flanked by quarter-domes to the south and the northeast, which contain bedrooms. While the domed bedrooms are practically identical, the areas which link/separate them to/from the main living area are slightly varied to allow for somewhat different programmatic uses. Between the main living area and each bedroom is a cypress clapboard-covered volume that contains a bathroom and closets for utilities and storage. Oblong in plan, one short side of each of these volumes is semi-circular in form. In both volumes, the circular ends extend outside of the building enclosure to be read as additional curved forms on the exterior of the house. The halves of these volumes, which end in curves, enclose bathrooms that connect with the bedrooms. In the case of the south bathroom, there is a door to the main living area, allowing that bathroom to act as guest bathroom for the main space. The interiors of the bathrooms are finished with cypress clapboard. The rectilinear ends of the bathrooms are fitted with three-sided mirrors. The curved ends are filled with oval tubs made of black terrazzo. The bathroom ceilings are covered with rope; above the tubs, at the center point of the curved wall's radius, is a round skylight. In each bathroom, the original toilet, sink and overhead lighting fixtures remain, in full working order. Adjacent to the bathrooms, at the square ends of the cypress clapboard-covered volumes, are the closets for storage and utilities. In the south volume, off the main living area, is a utility closet containing the hot water heater for the radiant heating pipes in the house's floor slab. In the northeast volume is a closet for a washing machine and another for the domestic hot water heater. The other closets in both volumes open off the bedrooms for use as clothes closets.

The quarter-circle bedrooms are reached through a short corridor between the square ends of the cypress-covered volumes and the glass walls that extend from the center of the house. In these corridors, interrupting the glass walls, are cypress-covered doors to the exterior. The flat ceilings of these corridors extend into the bedroom areas, but quickly stop at curved soffits that follow lines just inside the straight clerestory windows above. Similar to the ceiling of the main dome, the ceilings of the bedrooms are covered by cypress clapboard in a herringbone pattern. These ceilings follow the curve of the domes down from the central skylights to a height approximately 2' above the floor. Below that, knee walls of coal follow the perimeters of the quarter-

domes. On the sides of the rooms that are glazed, the coal knee walls project outside beyond the glass walls. At the other ends, the knee walls are separated from the cypress-covered volumes by small sheets of glass.

Statement of Integrity

The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House has been altered relatively little over its history, and the building maintains a very high degree of integrity. Alterations that have occurred typically have been limited to minor finishes and furnishings. The banquette in the lower interior living area was reupholstered in a naugahyde-like material that does not match the original, which appears from early photos to be a yellow, linen-like material. Goff designed a glass-top dining table for the lower-level dining area. It is the current owner's understanding that this piece is still in the Ford family. Early photos also show round seating pieces in the main living area, one of which was suspended from the dome ceiling near the entry. These were removed by a previous owner and have not been replaced. The original yellow linoleum counters of the kitchen were replaced with multi-colored mosaic tile by a later owner; this tile subsequently was replaced in the early 1980s with a less conspicuous terra cotta-colored laminate by yet another owner. Original appliances in the kitchen have been replaced by similar, though not identical models.

Since purchasing the house in 1986, current owner Robinson has restored or repaired several major elements. Beginning in 1991, a new composition roof was installed on the flat roofs and new cedar shingles were installed on the domes. During the following year, the central skylight was reconstructed.[143] In 1993, the skylights over the bedrooms were replaced; Goff's original design had butt-joined glazing in these skylights, which, unfortunately, did not hold up and were replaced with framed joints. At the time of the 1993 restoration, advances in glazing techniques allowed the original skylights to be recreated with butt-glazing; the only addition needed was the clips that hold the sloped top pieces of the skylights in place. By 1996 the Quonset hut ribs in the exterior living area had badly corroded where they met the heavier curved steel ribs. To repair this, the bottom 18 inches of each Quonset rib in the exposed area was removed and replaced with sections of heavier, wide flange steel to match the base ribs.

In 2002, the curved cypress bench of the exterior living area was restored, and deteriorated rope on the southwest-facing soffit of the carport was replaced. In 2008, deteriorated cypress clapboard on the west face of the west carport storage unit was replaced by reclaimed old-growth cypress. The cedar shingles of the domes were replaced and the flat roofs were recovered with ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) rubber membrane roof in 2011. At the same time, in an effort to increase the energy efficiency of the building envelope, additional insulation was installed beneath the shingles, and the vents at the bottom of the main dome roof were closed permanently and insulated.

The original war-surplus "bomber blister" skylights of the bathrooms were replaced with flat pieces of

[143] To address this issue, owner Sidney Robinson enlisted the aid of three Chicago consultants: sheet metal contractor Al Wagner, architect John Vinci, and architectural historian Tim Samuelson. A significant point of discussion was the bottom termination of the triangular segments of glass that formed the cone-shaped skylight. The goal was to raise the bottom edge of the glass to create a drip edge on the exterior. This location had been a significant site for leakage. The bottom edge would be adhered to the substrate below it, but would not be framed, allowing it to move as required when the building moved. To achieve a drip edge and to minimize potential leaks that might arise from snow buildup, Wagner wanted to lift the glass as high as possible. Countering Wagner's goal was Samuelson, who was concerned that shimming between the straight steel ribs of the cone and the frames of the individual lites would create something of a tunnel effect from below, minimizing the overall transparency of the skylight. The creation of a 1-½" curb at the bottom of each lite eventually was agreed upon.

plexiglass under the ownership of Don and Lily Berk (1980-86). The Berks' son Leo, who grew up in the house, is now a visual artist, and he fabricated skylights to the original specifications of the bomber blisters. These skylights were installed on the weekend of February 22-23, 2014. In October of 2014 the exterior of the coal masonry wall surrounding the main dome was repointed using a carefully formulated lime-based mortar. At the same time the ornamental wall, which had for several decades been covered by shrubbery and experienced some deterioration, was restored.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

_x_ Previously listed in the National Register (fill in 1 through 6 below)
__ Not previously listed in the National Register (fill in **only** 4, 5, and 6 below)

1. NR #: 16000056
2. Date of listing: March 8, 2016
3. Level of significance: National
4. Applicable National Register Criteria: A__ B__ C_x D__
5. Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__
6. Areas of Significance: Architecture

__ Previously Determined Eligible for the National Register: Date of determination:
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark: Date of designation:
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: HABS No.
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: HAER No.
__ Recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey: HALS No.

Location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office:
Other State Agency:
Federal Agency:
Local Government:
University:
Other (Specify Repository): Bruce Goff Archive, Ryerson & Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago

8. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: John H. Waters

Address: 4250 N. Marine Drive, #306
Chicago, IL 60613

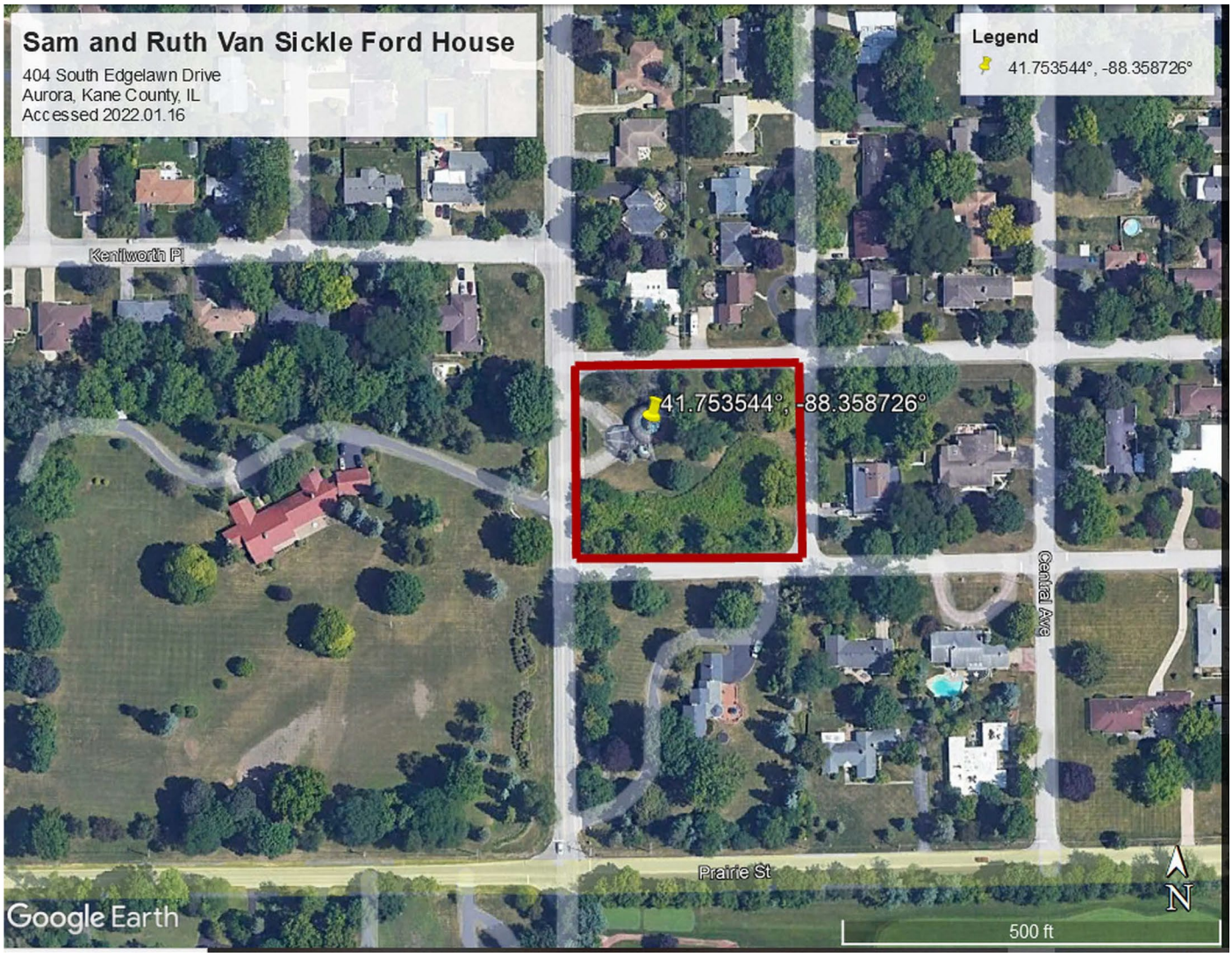
Telephone: 773.871.7226

E-mail: john.h.waters@gmail.com

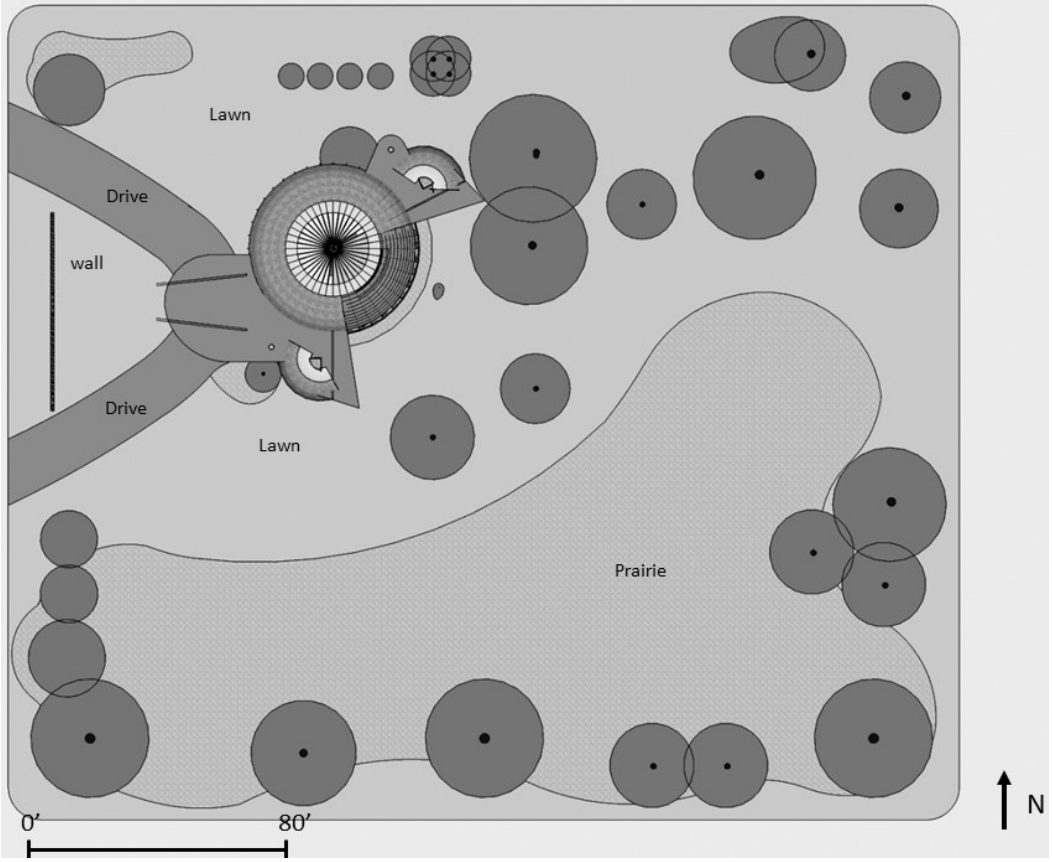
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Edited by: Alesha Cerny
National Park Service, Midwest Region
National Historic Landmarks Program
Midwest Region
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, NE 68102

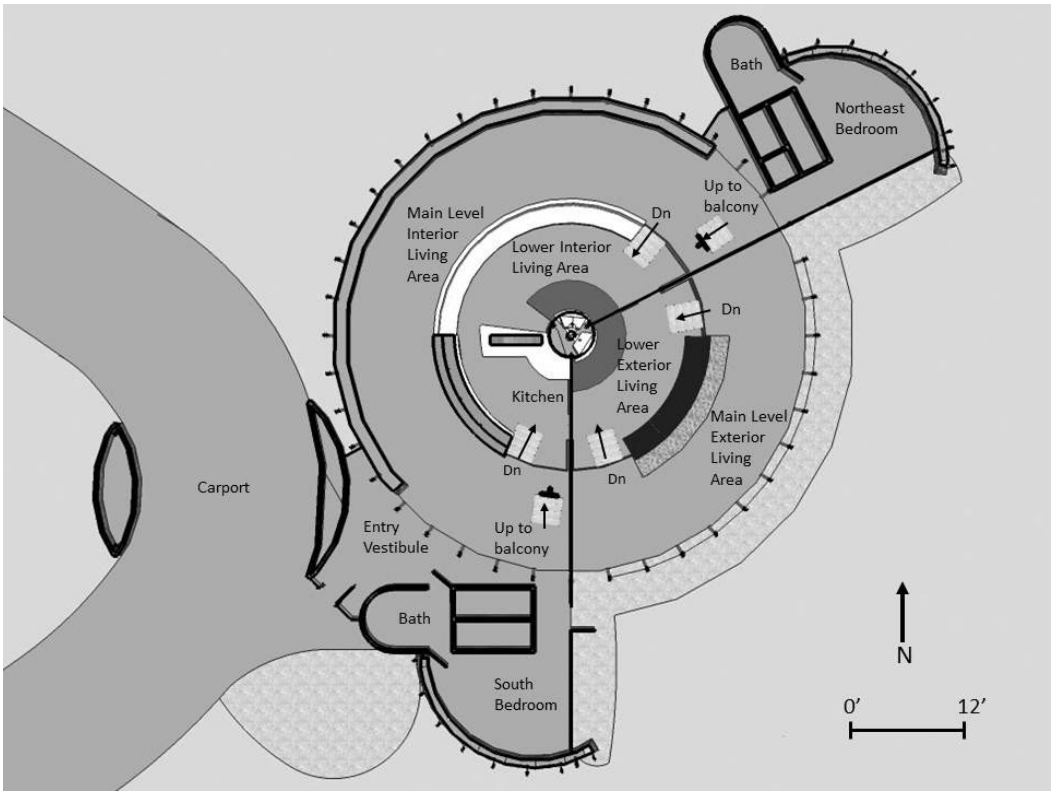
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National Park Service, Washington Support Office
National Historic Landmarks Program
Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240



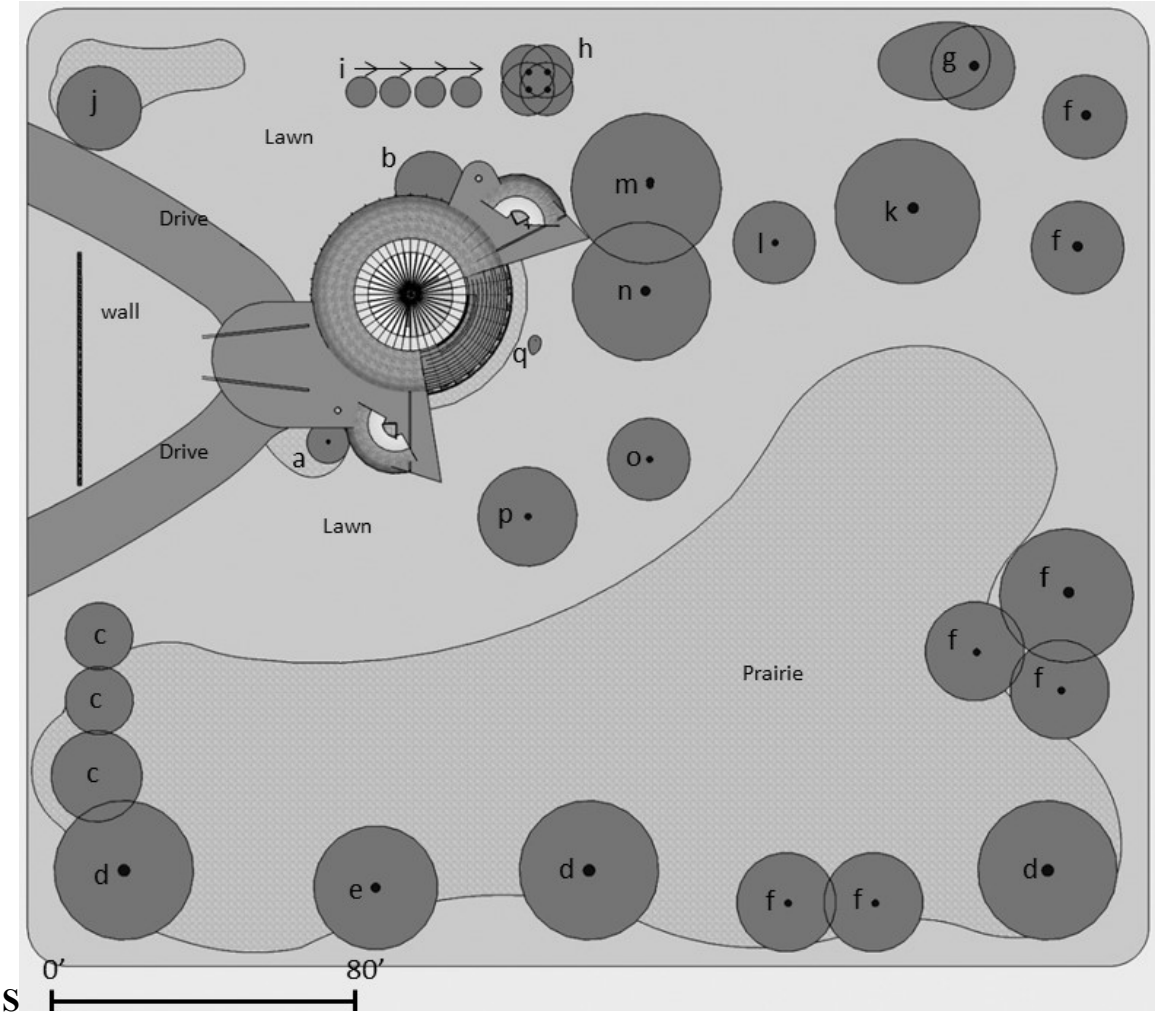
Proposed NHL Boundary



Site Plan

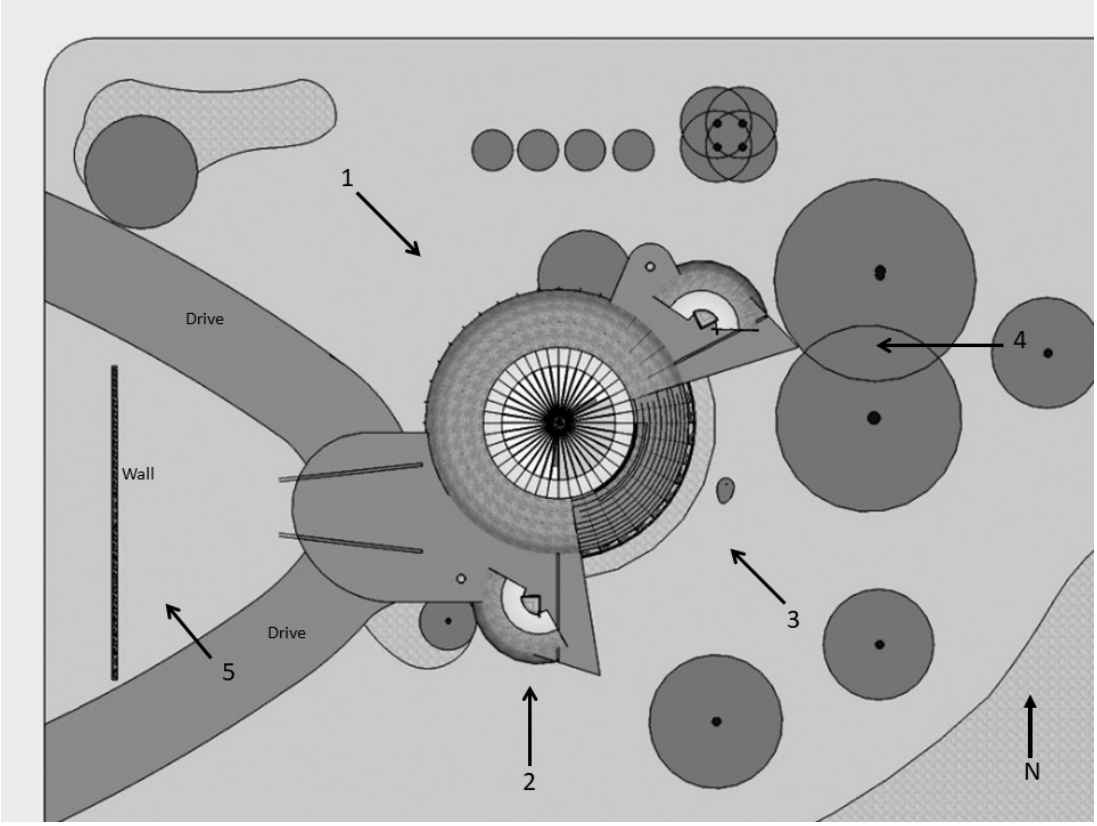


Floor Plan

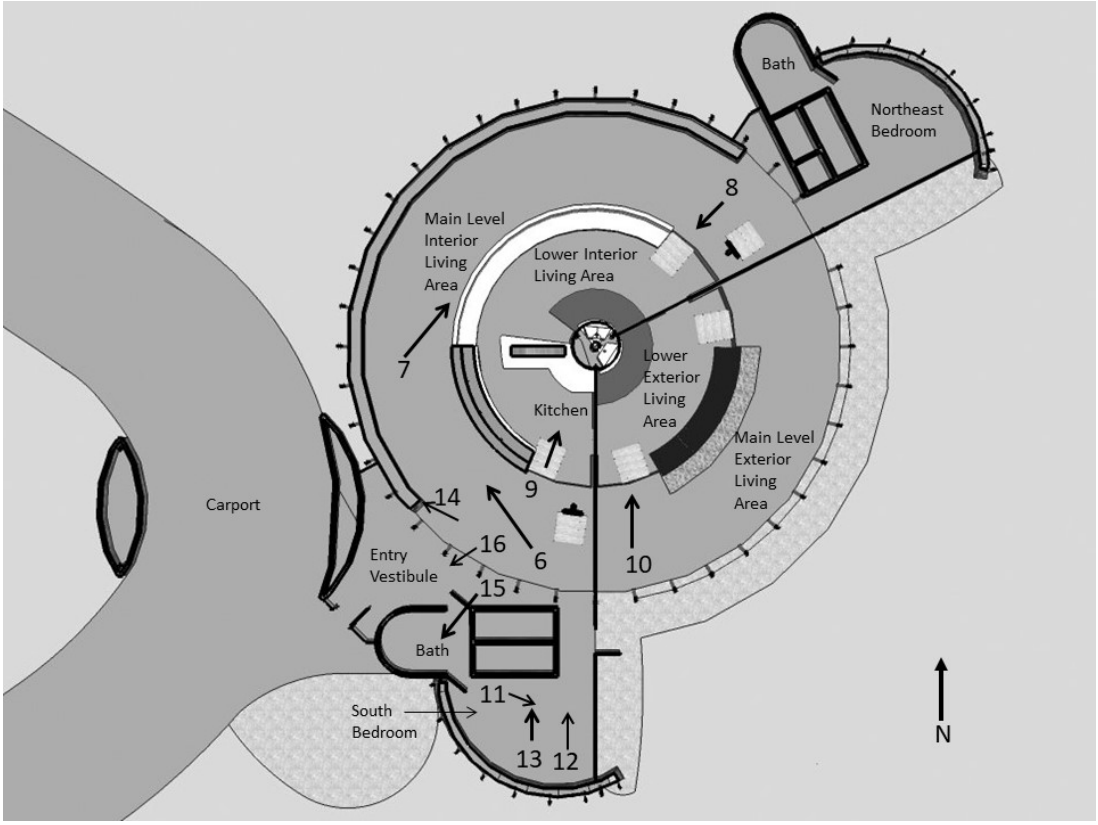


Planting Key:

a. Spruce
b. Yew
c. Sumac
d. Apple
e. Cherry
f. River Birch
g. Yew bed with volunteer fruit tree
h. Volunteer Cherry
i. Lilac
j. Juniper
k. Linden
l. Oak
m. Silver Maple
n. Locust
o. Red Bud
p. Norway Maple
q. Weeping Pine



Exterior photograph locations 1-5



Interior photograph locations 6-15

Photo Log

Name of Property: Ford, Sam and Ruth Van Sickle, House

City or Vicinity: Aurora

County: Kane State: Illinois

Photographer: John H. Waters/Sidney K. Robinson

Date Photographed: 23 April 2014, except 5 of 16 taken 19 November 2014, 14 of 16 taken 12 June 2014 (taken by John H. Waters) and 11 of 16, taken 23 August 2020 and 16 of 16, taken 23 December 2020 (taken by Sidney K. Robinson.).

1 of 16: House, camera facing southeast

2 of 16: House, camera facing north

3 of 16: House, camera facing northwest

4 of 16: House, camera facing west

5 of 16: Site, view of contributing wall camera facing northwest

6 of 16: House, view of Interior Living Area camera facing north

7 of 16: House, view of Interior Living Area camera facing northeast

8 of 16: House, view of Interior Living Area camera facing south

9 of 16: House, view of Kitchen area, camera facing south

10 of 16: House, view of Exterior Living Area camera facing north

11 of 16: House, view of South Bedroom, camera facing southeast

12 of 16: House, view of South Bedroom, camera facing north

13 of 16: House, view of South Bedroom skylight and clerestory, camera facing north

14 of 16: House, view of end of coal wall showing coal, cullet glass, rope soffit and cypress clapboard ceiling, camera facing northwest

15 of 16: House, view of South Bathroom, camera facing southwest

16 of 16: House, view of Entry, camera facing southwest



1 of 16: House, camera facing southeast



2 of 16: House, camera facing north



3 of 16: House, camera facing northwest



4 of 16: House, camera facing west



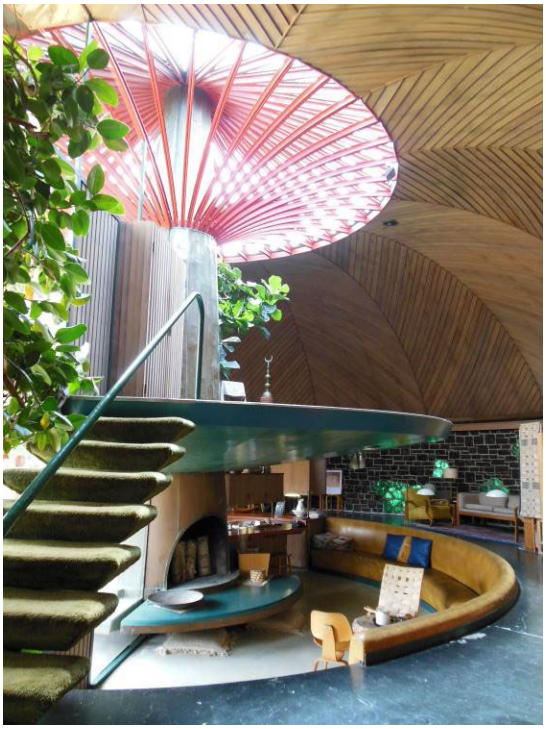
5 of 16: Site, view of contributing wall camera facing northwest



6 of 16: House, view of Interior Living Area camera facing north



7 of 16: House, view of Interior Living Area camera facing northeast



8 of 16: House, view of Interior Living Area camera facing south



9 of 16: House, view of Kitchen area, camera facing north



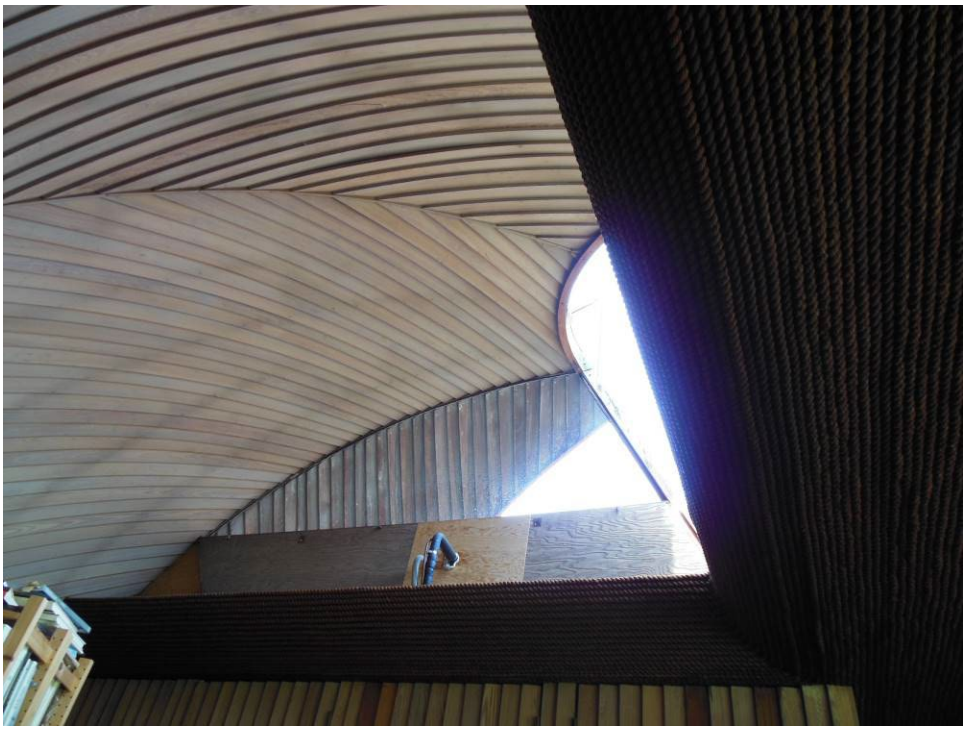
10 of 16: House, view of Exterior Living Area camera facing north



11 of 16: House, view of South Bedroom, camera facing southeast



12 of 16: House, view of South Bedroom, camera facing north



13 of 16: House, view of South Bedroom skylight and clerestory, camera facing north



14 of 16: House, view of end of coal wall showing coal, cullet glass, rope soffit and cypress clapboard ceiling, camera facing northwest



15 of 16: House, view of South Bathroom, camera facing southwest



16 of 16: House, view of Entry, camera facing southwest

Early Photographs (from the collection of current owner Sidney K. Robinson):



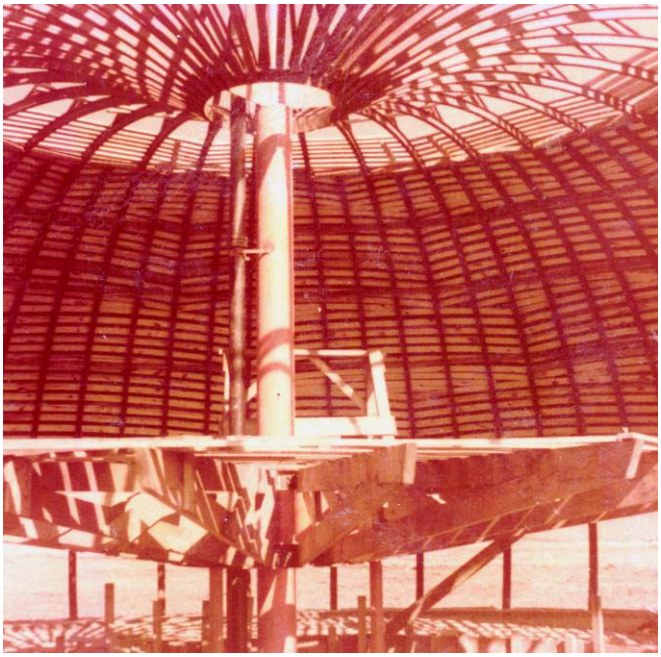
Photograph of construction from north, winter 1949-50.



Photograph of construction of northeast bedroom from north, fall 1949.



Photograph of construction of south bedroom from southeast, winter 1949-50.



Photograph of construction showing central support and mezzanine framing, from southeast, late winter/spring 1950.



Photograph of construction of porte cochère southwest, November 1949.



Photograph of construction of coal and glass from masonry wall adjacent to northeast bathroom June 1950.

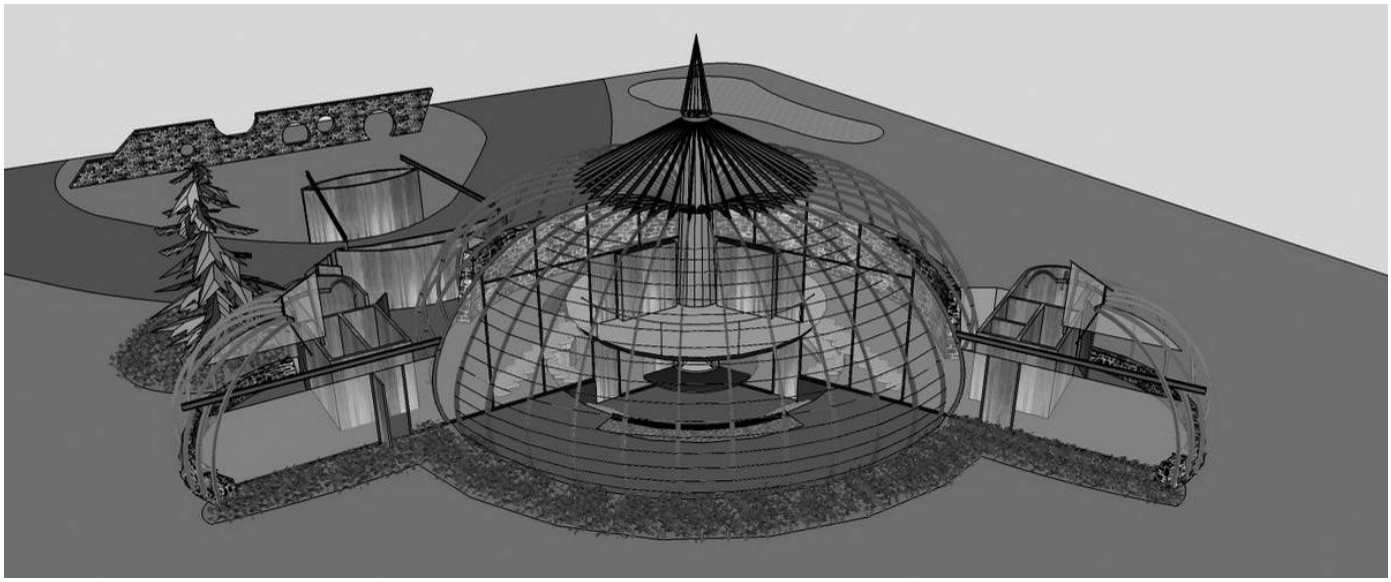


Porte cochère from southwest September 1950

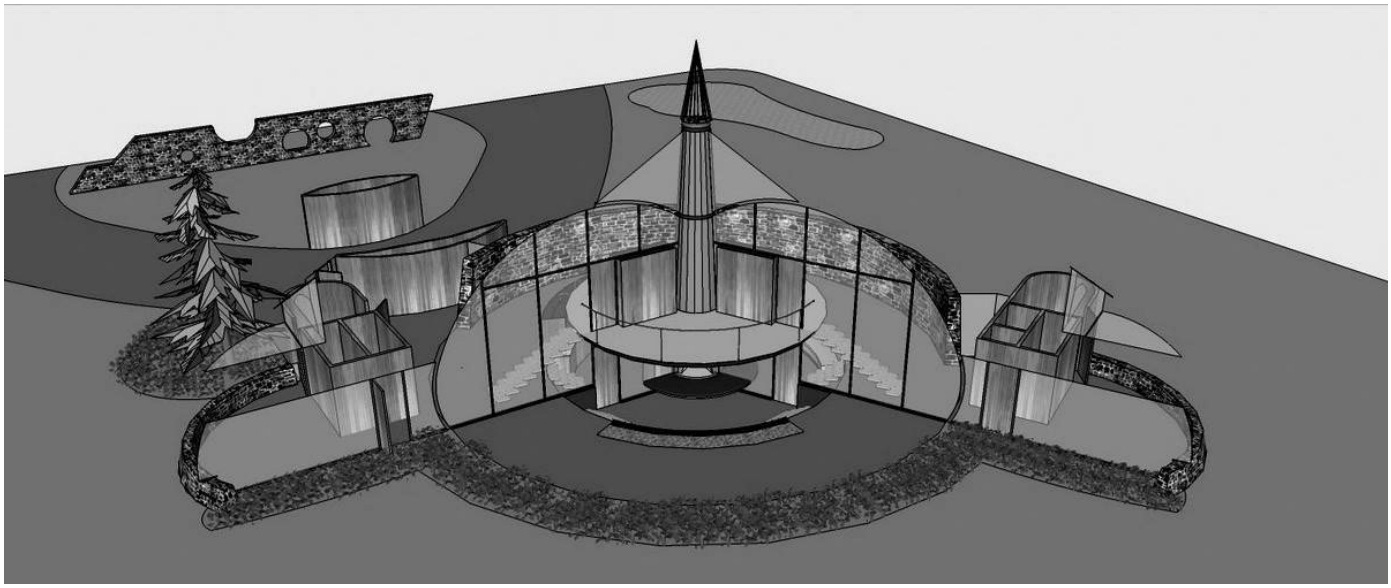


Ornamental wall and porte cochère from southwest September 1950.

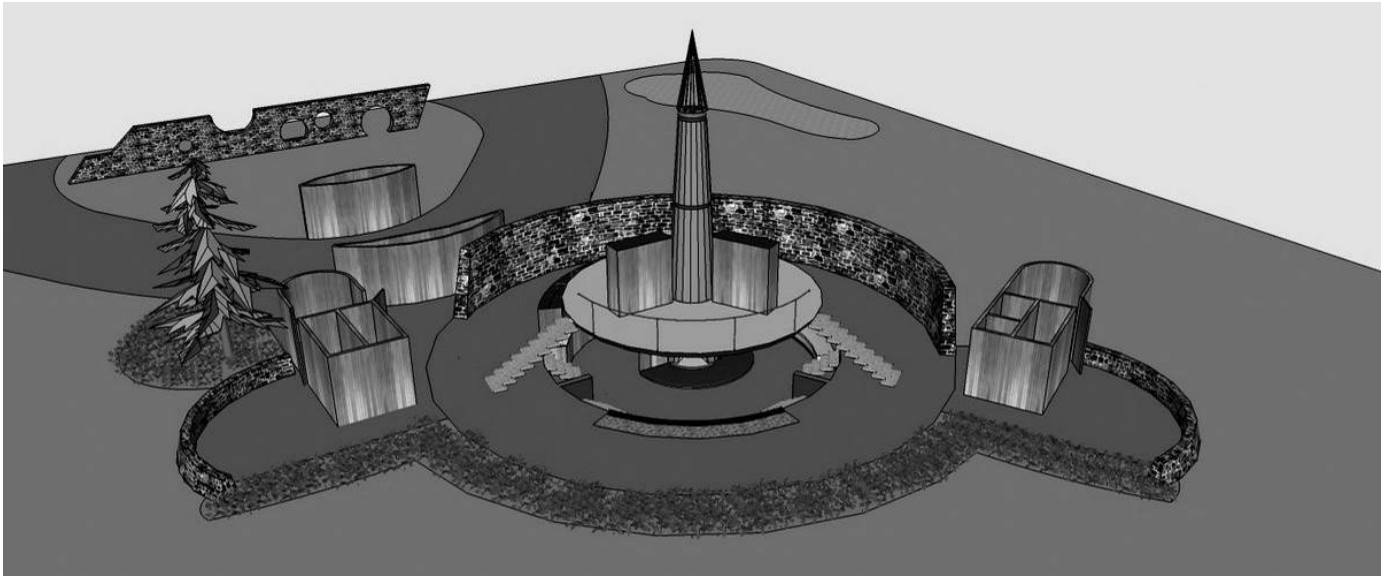
Three-dimensional model showing Ford House building components:



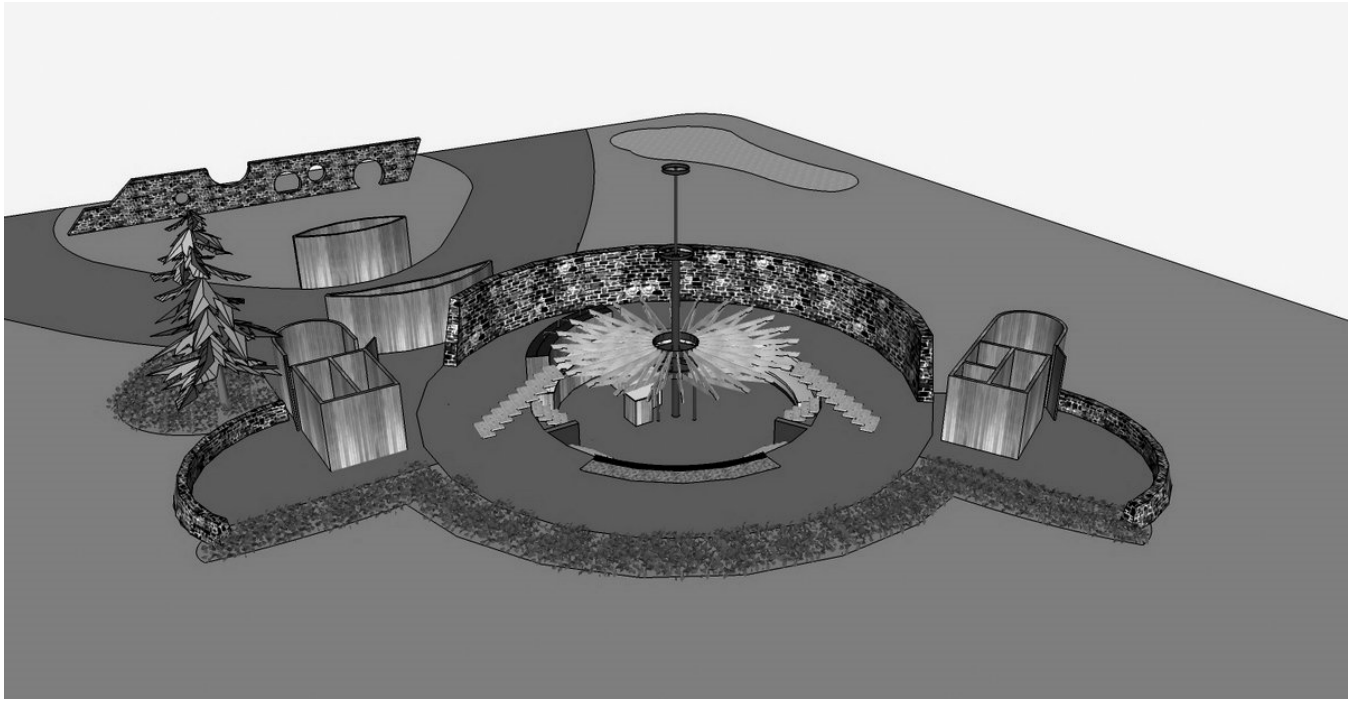
Roof removed showing Quonset rib structure



Quonset rib structure removed showing glass surfaces.



Glass removed showing central balcony and core, and masonry and wood walls.



Sheathing of central balcony and core removed showing central column and cantilevered balcony.