1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House)

Other Name/Site Number:

Designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior October 16, 2012

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 62 Oak Road Not for publication:__

City/Town: Katonah Vicinity:__

State: NY County: Westchester Code: 119 Zip Code: 10536

3. CLASSIFICATION

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing		Noncontributing	
buildings	6	buildings	0
sites	0	sites	0
structures	0	structures	0
objects	0	objects	0
Total	6	Total	0

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 6

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

__ Entered in the National Register
__ Determined eligible for the National Register
__ Determined not eligible for the National Register
__ Removed from the National Register
__ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

Current: Recreation and Culture Sub: museum

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals: Dutch Colonial Revival

Materials:
Foundation: stone
Walls: wood
Roof: asphalt
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Introduction

Stepping Stones is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with Alcoholics Anonymous, the recovery group whose mission is to assist alcoholics in finding and maintaining sobriety and under NHL Criterion 2 for its association with William Griffith (Bill) Wilson and Lois Burnham Wilson. Along with Dr. Robert (Bob) Smith, Bill Wilson was a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the author of four books, including the best seller, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939). Wilson disseminated the idea of alcoholism as a disease among the general public and his Twelve Steps program became a model for the treatment of addiction. Through the Twelve Steps program, AA has enabled, and continues to enable, millions of people around the world to achieve and maintain permanent sobriety. Wilson and Smith also helped significantly alter the public's perception and understanding of alcoholism and alcoholics. Although AA promoted and continues to promote the idea of anonymity, Wilson—or Bill W. as he became known to AA members—became both the public face of AA and an inspiration for millions of struggling alcoholics. Lois Wilson, Bill Wilson's wife, was the co-founder of Al-Anon Family Groups, the self-help group for family members of alcoholics, and the founder of Alateen, a group for the children of alcoholics. Like AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen have also grown to include an international membership, with chapters in 115 countries.

Historic and Present Physical Appearance[1]

Stepping Stones, the home of Bill and Lois Wilson from 1941 until 1988, is located at 62 Oak Road in the village of Katonah in the town of Bedford in northern Westchester County, New York. The property consists of five lots of land that total 8.1 acres. The suburban setting is hilly and wooded, and a small stream winds its way through a valley in the northeastern section of the property. Neighboring houses are widely spaced, and the setting is one of privacy and quiet. The buildings are accessed by asphalt and gravel driveways and are connected by flagstone and gravel walkways.

The property contains six buildings, all contributing: the main residence, pump house, and 1920s garage, which were all extant when the Wilsons acquired the property in 1941; the studio and 1950s garage, which were constructed by Bill Wilson; and the early-1980s building that contains office space, the foundation archives, and an apartment. The main house is furnished and decorated exactly as Lois Wilson left it upon her death, with the Wilsons' belongings still in place. Areas of lawn and planted gardens remain around the main house, 1950s garage, and studio.

The buildings vary in size and construction; the original structures are wood-framed, whereas the Wilson additions are constructed of concrete masonry units. All are finished with similar materials and colors to create a unified appearance: shingle siding painted chocolate brown, white-painted casings and trim, and doors painted a bright blue. The office/archives/apartment was constructed of materials designed to match the main house. The property is virtually intact from the period of significance.

Main House (contributing building)
The main house was constructed ca. 1920 as a summer residence in the Dutch colonial style. It is set back from the road and accessed via a long asphalt drive. The one-and-a-half story house is rectangular in plan, with porches appended to the front (north) and rear (south) façades. It is built into a hillside, and a portion of the cellar is exposed on the north and east elevations. It has a fieldstone foundation and the front porch foundation is constructed of concrete masonry units. The wood-framed walls are finished with wood shingles painted

[1] Margaret Gaertner, "Stepping Stones," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2003), Section 7.

brown. The window openings have plain board casings, sills, and drip caps and six-over-six double-hung wood sash all painted white. Most of the windows have aluminum, triple-track storm, and screen units. The gambrel roof has flared eaves and is finished with asphalt shingles. The rake is finished with a plain fascia board and a simple shingle molding. The eaves are finished with plain fascia boards, and the rafter ends are visible underneath. All are white, as are the aluminum gutters and leaders. A large, off-center stucco-finished chimney penetrates the ridge.

The main, or north façade, has four bays. The flared eave of the gambrel roof extends to form a porch over the entrance door—a fifth bay—at the center of the façade. A second door at the east end leads to the kitchen. Four shed-roofed dormers with six-over-six double-hung sash are evenly spaced across the gambrel roof. The pitch of the upper roof extends and forms the dormer roofs; the faces of the dormers are recessed into the lower roof plane. The white dormer faces and cheeks contrast with the brown shingles on the roof. At the eave, white painted rafter ends and white aluminum gutters are visible.

The west elevation is dominated by the gambrel profile and flared eaves of the gable end. Fenestration consists of evenly spaced, six-over-six double-hung sash—four at the first story and two at the second story—and a four-light octagonal attic window.

A wood-framed, screened-in porch at grade dominates the south elevation. The gambrel roof has four recessed shed-roofed dormers with six-over-six sash on this side as well.

The east elevation has a large raised fieldstone foundation as this side is where the ground slopes away from the house. The main part of the house is wood-shingle siding with four six-over-six double-hung sash windows on the first floor and one six-over-six double-hung sash window centered in the middle of the elevation on the second floor. As on the west elevation there is a four-light octagonal attic window.

The first floor is divided into thirds. A large living room occupies the entire center portion. The entrance door in the north wall leads to the front porch and French doors in the south wall lead to the screened-in back porch. A large stone fireplace on an interior west wall dominates the room. The ceiling has wood beams. A winding stair in the east wall leads to the second floor. In the eastern third, a kitchen occupies the north corner and a bedroom the south corner. The kitchen contains a 1930s gas stove, a 1920s sink, a 1950s dishwasher, a ca. 1980 refrigerator, a Hoosier cabinet, open as well as closed cabinets, and a porcelain-topped table with three chrome chairs. The bedroom is known as Helen's Room, after Bill Wilson's half-sister, who lived in the house. It contains a small elevator, installed in the early 1980s to help Lois Wilson access the second floor. Between the two rooms is a bathroom. The western third of the house contains two bedrooms with a bathroom in the middle. These rooms are raised slightly from the living room, with two steps at their doors.

Most of the second floor is a large room that the Wilsons used as a library. A winding stair in the middle of the room is enclosed with a railing and leads down to the first floor. Lois's elevator stands to the south of the stair railing. A large stone fireplace occupies the interior west wall while dormer windows in the north and south wall provide daylight. At the west end of the second floor is Bill's and Lois's bedroom. The east wall is dominated by the rear of the central fireplace. The Wilsons added a small shower room under the eaves and later a small bathroom with a toilet and a small tub.

When the Wilsons acquired Stepping Stones in 1941, it was an unfinished summer house. There was no furnace and the second-floor rooms were not even painted. Bill Wilson installed a salvaged coal furnace in the cellar and a holding tank for water in the attic, because the pump provided inadequate pressure. Lois applied her decorating talents to refinishing floors, installing linoleum, painting walls, stitching window coverings and slip covers, and reupholstering furniture. Later work included adding a bathroom and a shower to the second-floor bedroom, and an elevator to assist Lois in reaching the second floor.

The entire interior of the house today is furnished exactly as it was upon the death of Lois Wilson in 1988. It includes many antiques acquired from both of their families, household items such as glassware and china, and various personal items including large collections of photographs and printed materials relating to their lives.

"Wit's End (studio) (contributing building)
Bill Wilson's studio, known as "Wit's End," was built in the late 1940s by Bill and an AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) friend. It is a small, one-story building constructed of concrete blocks, with a shed-roofed addition on the west elevation. Vents near the bottom of the walls suggest that it is built upon an inaccessible crawl space. The studio has a shallow-pitched, standing-seam metal roof and vertical board siding on the gable ends on the north and south elevations. The south elevation contains the entry door and a three-light steel casement window. Windows dominate the east elevation; a pair of steel casement sash flanks a large picture window. A chimney constructed of concrete blocks runs up the north elevation with a window on either side of the chimney. The colors of the studio—white, brown, and blue painted sash—mimic those of the main house.

The interior of the studio consists of two rooms: one in the main body of the structure and one in the addition. The main room has paneled walls and a carpeted floor. Bill Wilson's desk, bookshelves, and a daybed are still in place.

Old Garage (contributing building)
The "old" garage (ca. 1920) is a small, wood-framed structure with a shallow-pitched gable roof. The structure has concrete masonry unit foundations, wood-shingled walls, and an asphalt shingle roof. Simple shingle moldings on plain fascia boards trim the gable ends and eaves. There is a large door in one gable end wall and a small window opening in the other; both openings have been filled in with plywood. The shingled walls are painted brown, the trim is white, and the concrete foundation is unfinished. The 1920s garage was standing when the Wilsons acquired the property in 1941 and relates to the old driveway. After the Wilsons acquired adjacent property, they rerouted the driveway and constructed the "new" garage.

New Garage (contributing building)
The "new" garage, built by Bill Wilson in 1951, was a two-bay, concrete block structure with wood-shingled gable ends. The roof is asymmetrically pitched and finished with asphalt shingles and plain fascia boards at the gable ends and eaves. The shingles and concrete blocks are painted brown, the trim and roll-up garage doors are white and the board and batten door is a bright blue. A small, shed roof addition has been appended to the west wall; this space apparently was used to store tools. The addition has a dry-laid, fieldstone foundation, wood-shingled walls, and a shallow-pitched, asphalt-shingled shed roof. The front or north façade is dominated by the asymmetric gable end and contains a pair of roll-up, paneled garage doors with glazing and a small opening to access the loft attic. A large pair of board and batten doors occupies the north elevation of the addition. The east elevation has two window openings with three-light, steel casement sash. A chimney built of concrete masonry units runs up the south wall. The interior of the garage is now an open area which serves as an exhibit area and a gathering space.

Pump House (contributing building)
The pump house is a small, one-story structure with a shallow-pitched roof. The building is finished with wood shingles on its walls and roof, and plain fascia boards at the rakes and eaves. There is a board and batten door in one gable end and a window opening, which is boarded up, on the other. The wall shingles are painted brown, the wood trim is white, and the door is bright blue. The pump house was standing when the Wilsons bought Stepping Stones in 1941. It houses a pump that supplied water from a spring up to the main house.

Caretaker's House/Archives/Office (contributing building)
The 'Caretaker's House' structure was constructed with Lois Wilson's guidance in 1984. Its purpose was to accommodate office space, the archive, and a caretaker's residence—all of which it does today. The building has an L-shaped plan and stands on a concrete foundation. The gambrel roof, wood shingle siding, and exterior details complement the Main House.

The public entrance to the archives is on the north façade (which faces the road) at the basement level. To the right of the north façade is a front porch and private entrance into the living room of the apartment. The public entrance to the office is on the east side of the house. Immediately upon entering the hallway, visitors have the option of going to the right and downstairs to the archives, straight ahead to the caretaker's residence, or upstairs to the studio/attic office. The office is the hub of activity for the administration of Stepping Stones and currently contains two desks, computers, and a conference table as well as office supplies and five years of foundation files. The public restroom for staff, office visitors, and researchers is in the attic office.

The basement archive serves as the research headquarters for the institution and is designed to contain a room within a room. The inner room stores the Wilson's manuscript materials. It has no windows, is locked, alarmed, and temperature and humidity controlled. The main room of the archives has typical basement half windows as well as the entrance door leading out to the north façade.

The caretaker's apartment on the first floor of the building contains 2 bedrooms, 1.5 bathrooms, a kitchen, six closets, and a main room which serves as the dining room and living room. There is no second floor to the main room which has exposed beams where the ceiling would otherwise be and a two-story fireplace which is the room's centerpiece. This room and the kitchen have skylights which were intended to resemble the second-floor windows of the main house at Stepping Stones. A sliding glass door on the south side of the living room looks out toward Wits End. There is a second private entrance to the caretaker's house which leads directly into the kitchen on the south side of the building.

The caretaker's house utilizes the same telephone utilities as the main house. Stepping Stones has even preserved the Wilson's telephone number, which rings today in the office.

The buildings and grounds are in very good repair and retain a high level of historic integrity; little has changed since Lois Wilson's death in 1988. The Wilsons themselves made many modifications to the grounds and buildings during their ownership. Their tenure at Stepping Stones brought major changes including the addition of three of the six buildings and expansion from 1.5 to 8.1 acres. As the Wilsons acquired additional land they rerouted the steep driveway, added stone walls and the 1950s garage. Later, Lois Wilson replaced the gravel driveway with cement. The area Bill Wilson had described as wooded became more of a typical lawn. The lawns, gardens, and some of the trees are the result of Lois's love of gardening. She ultimately added a potting shed to the garage.

Bill Wilson described the property in a letter to Robert H. Smith (co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous):

> …So besides giving you the news and some other food for thought I want to make this letter the most urgent possible invitation for you and Annie [Smith's wife] to come down here right away, with the idea of staying at least one month. I won't listen to anything less.
>
> At first blush this program may not make sense to you—not until I have told you about our new house at Bedford Hills, a small village in beautiful rolling country about 40 miles north of New York in Westchester County.

> This place is going to be a godsend for Lois and me and for you and Annie too if you will only have it so. To begin with it is a real retreat well away from all this AA business. Our house stands on a hill in the woods well back from the main road. The plot of ground is about two acres with no uncomfortably near neighbors. We can't get over the peace and quiet of the place. It is a rather large house the feature of which is a living room 30 by 35 with a nine-foot fireplace at one end and a balcony overlooking the room at the other end. From anyplace in this living room you may look out over the treetops on a swell view of rolling wooded country. The side of the living room toward the view is made of glass French doors which open on to a porch affording a wonderful breeze through the place in the warmest weather. The other side of the house has for its yard a pretty little grove surrounded by a stonewall interspersed with flower beds. Still another side of the house looks down on a rock garden covering most of the steep slope of the hill up to that side of the house.
>
> Besides the large living room the ground floor has a kitchen, 3 bedrooms and two complete baths. Upstairs there is a very large master bedroom with a swell view and next to it another very large room with a large fireplace in it. On this upper floor there is a shower bath and suitable plumbing.
>
> Lois and I see now why we kept all of the contents of 182 Clinton St. for we have just moved the whole works to this Bedford Hills house. There is gas and electricity and three springs with a reservoir and pressure pump which supply fine water. Another thing which appeals to me is that the woods come almost up to the house so there is no lawn problem. In short, it is one of the choicest spots I have ever seen, and I've gone into all this description in order to lure you and Annie out here right away to live in it awhile. There is every convenience, everything is set to go, the stores will deliver you anything you want. Neither of you need move off the front porch. You can have all the company you please, or none at all. I can't picture a spot where you will recuperate better….
>
> I'm sure this set up sounds fantastic and I guess that about describes it. An artist lady, a person of large means whose husband died of alcoholism some years ago, and whose best friend has been revived by our Jersey group, has let us have this place on unbelievably easy terms. I suppose she spent $25,000 on it originally and we have bought it for $6500. But the laugh comes when I tell you how we bought it. We are paying her $40.00 a month, plus taxes and insurance which amount to only $100, and our monthly payments apply on the purchase price. We do not even have to pay any interest this year. Next year interest will start on the unpaid balance of it. Since we have been paying the warehouse $20.00 a month storage, we're not behind the eightball a great deal more than we were before we took the place…[2]

Today Stepping Stones continues to inspire great enthusiasm in its visitors:

> In the house, with its mahogany antiques handed down from Mrs. Wilson's family, it seems as if the couple were still alive. In the master bedroom a can of PermaSoft hair spray still sits on Mrs. Wilson's vanity, along with a single bobby pin…While the desk in Mr. Wilson's office was the one on which he wrote the Big Book, it belonged to a friend who had lent him an office in Newark for the project. The desk was eventually moved to Stepping Stones, and Mr. Wilson wrote later works in the studio office here, including "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions."

[2] Bill Wilson to Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith, 23 April 1941. Stepping Stones Foundation Archives.

> There was a faded copy of that book on the desk, along with a first edition of "Alcoholics Anonymous." Jean Z.'s sponsor, Louise, touched the books as Jean took her picture. 'What a gift,' she said. 'I could almost cry.'[3]

In 2007 Stepping Stones adopted a master preservation plan, which included plans to preserve and restore the historic site in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for historic house care. Stepping Stones has made no alterations to the house which would change its historic character since Lois Wilson's death in 1988. The Stepping Stones Board of Trustees and its Conservation Treatment Planning Team determined that the best course of action was to bring the house up to the last period when one of the Wilsons was in control and currently, the historic home is interpreted based on its appearance upon Lois's death.

Stepping Stones has recently restored two of the historic structures, the main house and the 1951 garage. For the main house, the foundation renovated the windows, the roof, replaced gutters with old-fashion copper gutters, painted and made other structural improvements, all in keeping with the house's original look from the end of the period of significance. This work was performed as part of a grant from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. Careful consideration and approvals were given for each choice of materials and colors. These restorations involve undoing period-inappropriate changes made between 1988 and 2007, including incorrect roof colors and materials.

In 2010, Stepping Stones turned the garage at the center of the site into a Welcome Center. The original garage building was retained, up to and including the very garage doors that Bill Wilson built himself. The front of the garage, the façade that the public sees when entering the property, has been left almost exactly as it looked originally; the alterations are barely noticeable. The inside of the Welcome Center now serves as an exhibit area and a gathering space and offers handicap-accessible space and bathrooms. Through permanent and rotating exhibits offering information on the history of AA and its significance in social and cultural history, the visitors' experiences are enriched. At the Welcome Center, visitors are able to view materials from the Stepping Stones archives consisting of the Bill and Lois Wilson collection which is filled with AA and Al-Anon historical materials as well as materials relating to the history of the Wilsons. Many of these archival materials have never before been presented to the public. Exhibits include personal memorabilia from Bill and Lois that illustrate how they lived and what AA meant to them. Stepping Stones also has plans to improve its existing parking, making a visit to Stepping Stones easier for the visitor and minimize the impact that visitors have on the neighborhood.

Stepping Stones offers guided tours, makes its archives accessible to researchers, and offers educational programming. The tours take visitors through the history of Bill and Lois's life, including their role in the founding and nurturing of AA and Al-Anon.

The Stepping Stones Foundation maintains the historic home exactly as it was left at Lois Wilson's death and continues to interpret the site based on its original intent. In addition, the foundation seeks to restore the landscape as closely as possible to its original layout, which included wooded areas and walking paths that reflected the Wilsons' love of the outdoors and use of walking as a form of meditation. The Stepping Stones Foundation is committed to preserving the site in keeping with its period of historic significance, 1941–1988.

[3] *New York Times*, July 6, 2007, B1.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:__ Locally:__

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A X B X C__ D__
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G X
NHL Criteria:	1 and 2
Criteria Exception:	8
NHL Theme(s):	I. Peopling Places 2. health, nutrition, and disease II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements 2. reform movements
Areas of Significance:	Social History; Health and Medicine
Period(s) of Significance:	1941–1988
Significant Dates:	1941, 1951
Significant Person(s):	William (Bill) Griffith Wilson Lois Burnham Wilson
Cultural Affiliation:	N/A
Architect/Builder:	Unknown
Historic Contexts:	XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements B. Temperance and Prohibition

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary

Stepping Stones is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with Alcoholics Anonymous, the group whose mission is to assist alcoholics in finding and maintaining sobriety and under NHL Criterion 2 for its association with William Griffith (Bill) Wilson and Lois Burnham Wilson. Under the NHL Thematic Framework, Stepping Stones reflects NHL Theme 1, *Peopling Places* and NHL Theme 2, *Creating Social Institutions and Movements*. Along with Dr. Robert (Bob) Smith, Bill Wilson was a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the author of four books, including the best seller, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939). Wilson disseminated the idea of alcoholism as a disease among the general public and his Twelve Steps program became a model for the treatment of addiction. Through the Twelve Steps program, AA has enabled, and continues to enable, millions of people around the world to achieve and sustain permanent sobriety. Wilson and Smith also helped significantly alter the public's perception and understanding of alcoholism and alcoholics. Although AA promoted and continues to promote the concept of the anonymous or faceless addict, Wilson—or Bill W. as he became known to AA members—became both the public face of AA and an inspiration for millions of struggling alcoholics.[4] Lois Wilson, Bill Wilson's wife, was the co-founder of Al-Anon Family Groups, the self-help group for family members of alcoholics, and the founder of Alateen, a group for the children of alcoholics. Like AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen have also grown to include an international membership with chapters in 115 countries.

Since its founding, AA's "philosophy and principles [have] heavily shaped most modern alcoholism treatments" but AA's impact on American society has not been limited to alcoholics and their families. The emergence of the halfway house movement evolved, in part, from the efforts of AA members. Additionally, the organization has played a significant role in shaping peer-based treatments for other forms of addiction and a variety of diseases. [5] Moreover, AA has not only been a driving force in the emergence of peer-assisted network organizations, it has also been viewed as the premier organization for addicts of all types. William L. White, a leading scholar of AA, has pointed out that while "many people in the early days of their recovery require a program that recognizes the distinctiveness or specialness of their drug choice," the need for such a narrowly defined program dissipates over time. As this need shifts, addicts, even those who have no history of alcohol addiction, often turn to AA, an organization which is seen as more mature and more capable of assisting addicts of any and all types. AA has, as a result, become not only an organization which has influenced other recovery organizations, it has also become an organization which often serves addicts of all types.[6]

As an organization, AA has always prioritized and promoted its history and AA members know and are encouraged to know this history.[7] In 1979, Lois Wilson created the Stepping Stones Foundation which has as its mission the preservation of materials related to this history. Five years later, in 1984, Lois built a separate building at Stepping Stones that houses an archive, office, and apartment.[8] Following her death in 1988, this property was turned over to the Stepping Stones Foundation which now operates it as a museum. Today,

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[4] Susan Cheever, "Bill W: The Healer," *Time*, June 14, 1999.

[5] William L. White, Pathways: From the Culture of Addiction to the Culture of Recovery (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1996), 230.

[6] Ibid., 448.

[7] For a discussion of the "widespread knowledge among members of Alcoholics Anonymous of many episodes in AA history," see Ernest Kurtz, *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1991), 18.

[8] In 1941, when the Wilsons moved to Stepping Stones, only the main house, the 1920s garage, and the pump house existed. By 1951, when Lois started Al-Anon, the Wilsons had bought most of the 8.1 acres included in the present property. They had also built a new garage and work studio.

thousands of people associated with AA and other Twelve Steps programs from all over the world make pilgrimages to Stepping Stones both to commemorate and study the work of the Wilsons and AA each year.[9]

The period of significance for this property is from 1941 when the Wilsons moved into Stepping Stones until 1988 when Lois Wilson died. During the forty-seven years that Bill and/or Lois Wilson lived on the property, AA grew exponentially, spreading within and outside of the United States, with Bill Wilson serving as the unofficial leader of the movement. After Wilson's death, Lois became the custodian of both Wilson's memory and the organization itself.

Because AA has had an extraordinarily significant impact on American society as well as the treatment and understanding of alcoholism and addiction, the property qualifies under Criterion Exception 8 as a property whose period of significance is less than fifty years that possess extraordinary national significance.

Alcoholics Anonymous and its Significance

The twentieth century saw the rise of innumerable self-help groups. Defined as "voluntary organization[s], usually of peers, who have come together for mutual help and support, in satisfying common need[s] [and] overcoming a common handicap or life-disrupting problem," these groups have flourished, with the majority of these organizations emerging after World War II.[10] Requiring a sophisticated and educated public, these groups were, in some sense, a reaction against the growing power of the medical profession and scientific authority.[11] Alcoholics Anonymous, which dates its founding to Bill Wilson and Bob Smith's first encounter in 1935, is widely viewed as the prototype for many of these self-help groups and the organization has served as an inspiration for groups which specifically address addiction, such as Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Bulimics Anonymous, Sexaholics Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous.[12] The Twelve Steps program, which was developed and disseminated by Bill Wilson, has become such a staple of American culture that it is no longer confined to organizations which assist people with addiction; in fact, the concept of Twelve Steps has become so widespread that it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace its dissemination across not only America but across the world precisely because it is so ubiquitous.[13] In the more than seventy-five years since AA's founding, stock phrases associated with the organization such as "one day at a time" "a higher power" and "My name is _____ and I'm an alcoholic" have entered into and become a part of mainstream culture.

Even as Alcoholics Anonymous has spread across the globe, the organization is, in the words of Ernest Kurtz, a historian of AA, "as American as baseball, apple pie, hot dogs and the Fourth of July."[14] As a self-help

[9] Approximately three thousand people visit Stepping Stones annually.

[10] Stephen Lock, "Self-Help Groups: The Fourth Estate in Medicine?" *British Medical Journal* 293 (December 20-27, 1986): 1596.

[11] The twentieth century saw the emergence and growth of medical authority. See for example, Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 137.

[12] Lock, "Self-Help Groups", 1596. See also Stephen Miasto, Mark Galizo, and Gerard Joseph Connors, *Drug Use and Abuse*, (Cengage Learning, 2007), 366. Wilson and others have cited a variety of different experiences and encounters as being central to the founding of AA, making it difficult to provide a definitive date for the founding of the organization. Ernest Kurtz argues that there were four founding moments of AA. However, Kurtz argues that "until Wilson arrived at the explicit realization that whether or not he wanted to, he needed to work with other alcoholics to maintain his own sobriety, Alcoholics Anonymous was yet only coming into being." The latest date for these founding dates is 1935. This was the year when Smith and Wilson first met and it is the date of Smith's final drink. Kurtz, *Not-God*, 21, 33, 35.

[13] John Samuel Tieman, "The Origins of Twelve Step Spirituality: Bill W. and Edward Dowling, S. J.," in "Social Activism," special issue, *U.S. Catholic Historian* 3, no. 13 (Summer 1995): 122. By 1948, Alcoholics Anonymous had already grown to include non-American members. See for example, "Alcoholics Anonymous," *The British Medical Journal* 1, no. 4552 (April 3, 1948): 664. Kurtz, *Not-God*, 192.

[14] Kurtz, *Not-God,* 37, 187.

organization, AA is very much a reflection of twentieth-century American popular culture which has prioritized the power of the individual and the ideas of rationalism and control.[15]

Yet AA is more than a self-help organization. AA grew, in part, out of the Oxford Group, a non-denominational Christian group which emphasized the idea of confession and conversion, and surrendering to God. While Wilson split from the Oxford Group in 1937, AA retained the idea of confession and conversion, replacing the idea of surrendering to God with the vaguer and more palatable idea of an alcoholic surrendering simply to a "higher power." "Religious and spiritual experiences ha[d] been the genesis of sobriety long before the founding of AA and modern addiction treatment" but widespread use of AA as a method of treatment for addiction, along with its clear emphasis on spirituality and its historic ties to a Christian group, have meant that the organization occupies an uneasy place at the intersection of religion and secularism.[16] Recent court rulings have held that while AA is not a religious organization, its use of terms such as "prayer" and" God" "are so imbued with religious meaning that they undeniably favor a religious interpretation." AA does not, however, advocate or promote any specific religious belief and the group has traditionally been welcoming to agnostics, atheists, and members of an array of different organized religions.[17]

Both the history and current mission of AA have sparked ongoing debates and discussions among medical professionals, historians, sociologists, psychologists, addicts, and laypeople as to the nature of addiction, the power of self-help organizations, and the most effective methods of treating addiction. For scholars, AA has raised questions regarding the relationship between socially constructed definitions of disease and the overall nature of substance abuse and addiction as well as the broader applicability of therapies for alcohol addiction to other forms of substance abuse. The organization's peculiar position as a secular organization with a religious tinge has also put it at the nexus of debates and discussions about the nature of the organization, the roots of its success, and the ways in which government or public institutions can collaborate with quasi-religious groups.[18]

The Public Face of AA

Bill Wilson and Bob Smith, the co-founders of AA, saw the organization as a community in which members, as exemplified by Wilson and Smith, seek to control their addictions through religious and spiritual principles, specifically, morality, service, and a reliance on a power greater than oneself (a "higher power"). Wilson and Smith reworked these basic principles into twelve simple statements and then developed a program in which those suffering from addiction partner with and assist others suffering from the same addiction. Since its founding, AA has grown to include millions, many of whom publicly identify themselves as members of AA,

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[15] See for example, Stephen J. Whitfield, "Characterizing America," *The History Teacher* 21, no. 4 (August 1988). This trait is most commonly associated with the idea of improving one's socio-economic status but as Whitfield points out through discussions of Emerson, Franklin and others, the idea of self-help or self-reliance was and has had a broad appeal in American culture and has often been a characteristic that foreigners, whether correctly or not, equate as uniquely American. In his study of temperance in the Deep South, Douglas Carlson has discussed the connections between this emphasis on self-help, entrepreneurship, alcohol, alcoholism, and temperance. Douglas Carlson, "Drinks He to His Own Undoing: Temperance Ideology in the Deep South," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 675.

[16] William L. White, Pathways: From the Culture of Addiction to the Culture of Recovery (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1996), 166.

[17] Griffin v. Coughlin, 88 N.Y.2d 674, June 11, 1996.

[18] See for example, Griffin v. Coughlin, 1996. This court case occurred when an inmate in a New York State correctional institution "was informed that his eligibility to participate in an expanded family visitation program (the Family Reunion Program) was contingent on his attendance at the facility's Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment Program (ASAT Program). This was the sole substance abuse program available at Petitioner's correctional facility. The curriculum of the ASAT Program drew many of its principles, including a significant amount of religious-oriented principles, from Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.)." The prisoner, an atheist, argued that his forced participation in the ASAT Program violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The prisoner prevailed. Summary, Griffin v. Coughlin, 88 N.Y.2d 674. See too, works such as Charles Bufe, *Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?* (Florence, KY: Sharp Press, 1998).

Al-Anon, and other Twelve Steps programs. Today AA's success and Bill Wilson's connection to AA are so well-known that the popular magazine, *Time*, named Wilson as one of the most influential people of the twentieth century. *Life* also characterized Wilson as one of the most significant people of the twentieth century.[19]

"We are average Americans," Bill Wilson wrote in reference to AA members.

> All sections of this country and its many occupations are represented, as well as many political, social and religious backgrounds. We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us friendliness, and an understanding which is incredibly wonderful. We are like passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in harmonious and brotherly action…Of necessity there will have to be a discussion of matters medical, psychiatric, social and religious. We are aware that these matters are, from their very nature, controversial. Nothing would please us more as to write a book which would contain no basis for contention or argument. We shall do our utmost to achieve that ideal.[20]

Bob Smith described Bill Wilson as "the first living human with whom I had ever talked, who knew what he was talking about in regard to alcoholism from actual experience…he talked my language."[21] Like Smith, Wilson believed that only another alcoholic could truly understand the tangled emotions evoked by the power of an addiction. This idea—that addicts shared a common language and understanding—is central to AA's philosophy of having addicts help each other. In AA meetings, the sharing of one's personal triumphs and setbacks with alcohol and addiction during and outside of group meetings is intended to ensure that alcoholics understand that they are not alone and recovery is possible. By offering understanding and inspiration to one another, rather than the judgment and guilt that can drive alcoholics to seek comfort in alcohol, AA encourages members who lapse and have a drink to see their actions as a temporary setback rather than a failure. Proponents are also taught that their struggle with alcohol will be a life-long one and they typically attend meetings long after they have stopped drinking.

Although Wilson and Smith emphasized the idea of the faceless or anonymous alcoholic and although the group's name would seem to imply that anonymity is a cornerstone of the organization, many members of AA have publicly identified themselves. Wilson himself attempted, at least on the surface, to remain anonymous, even going so far as to refuse to appear on the cover of Time with his back turned toward the camera. However, Wilson and his story quickly became well-known and today many members of AA have become comfortable identifying themselves publicly.[22]

Understanding Alcoholism as a Disease

In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America, many people viewed alcoholism as a moral weakness and alcoholics were typically seen as lacking willpower. While the idea of alcoholism as a disease was not unknown, late nineteenth-century physicians often maintained that "the will of the individual was…the central component in treatment." Even those who espoused treatments such as gold cures, strychnine injections, opium, and cold water baths admitted that affecting a cure also required "a change in the alcoholic's

[19] "100 Persons of the Century," *Time*, June 14, 1999.
[20] *Alcoholics Anonymous* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Service, 2001), 20.
[21] Ibid, 180.
[22] Cheever, "Bill W: The Healer." See also, David Colman, "Challenging the Second A in AA," *New York Times*, May 6, 2011.

character."[23] Wealthy alcoholics might retire to a private sanitarium for "drying out," while their poorer counterparts might be confined to either jail or a state hospital for the same purpose. Fundamentally, responsibility for a cure rested not with physicians but rather with the addict himself or herself. For Bill Wilson, this failure of the medical profession would prove to be the impetus for changing both perceptions of and treatment for alcoholism.[24]

Throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, drinking had a strong association with the saloon. Because "respectable" men and women typically steered clear of the saloon, serious concerns were raised about the drinking habits of working-class Americans who visited these places. To address this problem well-organized temperance groups dominated by middle- and upper-class reformers began to agitate for reform. Most of these organizations, most notably the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), called for total abstinence. Many of these organizations also encouraged alcoholics who had found sobriety or were seeking sobriety to take a pledge to abstain from alcohol. The first of these organizations to focus primarily on the idea of the individual alcoholic turning away from alcohol as opposed to advocating for public education about the dangers of alcohol and political reform was the Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society. Founded in 1840, the group was actually located in Baltimore.[25] In the wake of the Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society, other similar mutual aid organizations also emerged but none of them had the impact that the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment had, at least initially, on Americans' drinking habits. Between 1919 and 1922, Prohibition was actually fairly effective but by 1925, widespread violations of the law had become common.[26] By the 1930s, the demise of Prohibition had "left most people bored with the topic of alcohol." Organizations such as the Research Council on the Problems of Alcohol (created in 1937) were an anomaly, with even social workers expressing a lack of interest in the problem of alcoholism.[27] Despite Prohibition, there were few resources and few options for alcoholics during the late 1920s and 1930s.

Born in Vermont in 1895, Wilson was raised by his maternal grandparents. In 1917, following his commissioning as a Second Lieutenant, Wilson encountered alcohol in what he later came to describe as one of his most seminal experiences. When he and his fellow officers were invited into an upper-class home, Wilson relieved his awkwardness by accepting a cocktail from a "haughty…socialite." Freed from his social inhibitions, Wilson felt an "overwhelming joy." In the years that followed, Wilson found himself seeking, again and again, that "elusive—and ultimately illusive—sensation of freedom" that he had found in his first drink.[28]

Following his release from the army and his marriage to Lois Burnham, Wilson became a stockbroker. Despite Prohibition, Wilson, like many Americans, continued to have access to alcohol and throughout the 1920s, drinking became a way of life for him. For Wilson, drinking remained a positive and liberating experience throughout much of the 1920s but by 1929, when the stock market crashed, his approach to alcohol shifted. Now he was "drinking to numb the pain, to forget." Between 1929 and 1934, Wilson entered into an "alcoholic

[23] Mariana Valverde, "Slavery from Within: The Invention of Alcoholism and the Question of Free Will," *Social History* 22, no. 3 (1997): 252.

[24] Lock, "Self-Help Groups, 1596. Lock provides several factors, among them the failure of the medical profession, as the impetus for self-help organizations. Alcoholics Anonymous is cited as the first group of this type.

[25] For a full discussion of these groups, see Jack S. Blocker, David M. Fahey, and Ian R. Tyrell, eds. "Alcoholic Mutual Aid Groups," *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003): 25.

[26] J. C. Burnham, "New Perspectives on the Prohibition Experiment of the 1920s," *Journal of Social History* 2, no. 1 (1968): 58.

[27] Ernest Kurtz, "Alcoholics Anonymous and the Disease Concept," in A*lcohol Problems in the United States: Twenty Years of Treatment Perspective*, ed. Thomas F. McGovern and William L. White (New York: Routledge, 2003), 8.

[28] It is unclear whether this truly was a turning point or a story Wilson used to illustrate the dangers of drinking. The idea of drink being presented to him in the form of an attractive upper-class woman may simply have been used as a means of underscoring the element of danger associated with drinking. Kurtz, *Not-God*, 25-27.

hell" as he lost control of his alcoholism. Between 1933 and 1934, he entered the Charles B. Towns Hospital, a facility specifically designed to treat addicts, four times.[29]

There, Wilson met William Duncan Silkworth, a physician who argued that alcoholism was a somatic illness, basically similar to an allergy. Despite his strong views about the nature of alcoholism, Silkworth, like many doctors, had had only marginal success in treating alcoholics; he admitted to a success rate of two percent. Ultimately, Wilson's repeated lapses and his multiple return trips to Town Hospital led Silkworth to tell Lois that she had three choices: she could lock Wilson up, watch him descend into insanity, or watch him die. Wilson's case was, Silkworth believed, a hopeless one and the possibility of a cure was unlikely given Wilson's history.

In late November 1934, Wilson met a friend who had been, like him, a hard drinker. When the friend—Ebby Thacher or Ebby T. as he became known in AA circles—declined a drink, Wilson was dumbfounded. Thacher explained that he had found sobriety through the Oxford Group, a non-denominational religious group which emphasized the importance of self-assessment and confession of one's sins. An agnostic, Wilson was skeptical of Thacher's experience and purported cure but after a drinking binge brought him, once again, to Towns Hospital, he experienced a conversion experience or what Silkworth called a "psychic upheaval." For Wilson, this became a pivotal moment, causing him to recognize that he had hit rock bottom. Hitting bottom was, he came to believe, the first step required to ultimately lead him away from alcohol. Reflecting back on this experience in the weeks that followed, Wilson became convinced that the root of this change rested on his encounter with Ebby Thacher, that moment "when one alcoholic began to talk to another" and he "envisioned a chain reaction among alcoholics, one carrying this message and these principles to [the] next."[30] Wilson also became convinced that his role in life was to serve and assist his fellow alcoholics in turning away from alcoholism.

Founding of Alcoholics Anonymous

While the early years of Wilson's life served as a warning note of the dangers of alcoholism, his conversion moment and meeting with Dr. Bob Smith signaled his transformation. Told and re-told in countless places, the story of the meeting between Smith and Wilson became a central trope in the founding of AA, taking on a symbolic importance on a par with Wilson's encounter with Thacher.

Because the story of this first meeting has played a significant role in the history of AA and because recounting personal stories is a central component of AA culture, it is, perhaps, best to relate the story of this encounter as it was told in an AA newsletter intended for members. The following version was written in 1971, some thirty-five years after the events described occurred. As was typical with AA's "personal stories," this version provided a nod to AA's practice of anonymity by referring to Wilson and Smith by their first names alone (although most AA members knew who Wilson and Smith were). It was circulated in the AA newsletter *The AA Grapevine* and the story became, and remains, well-known among AA members:

> An unsuccessful business deal took Bill to Akron, Ohio, in the spring of 1935. Another Wall Street bubble had burst and on a Saturday evening Bill found himself in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel, depressed, discouraged, filled with self-pity, and weighing the possibility of a trip to the hotel bar for "some ginger ale." Unaccountably, he panicked. Instead of heading for a first drink, he found a pay telephone, thus initiating what was soon to become one of AA's most important and effective devices: telephone therapy.

[29] Kurtz, *Not-God*, 25-27.
[30] Alcoholic Anonymous Comes of Age, 64.

Knowing of no alcoholics to call, Bill chose, at random, the name of a clergyman from the Akron telephone book, explained his problem, and asked for his names of some local drunks he might talk to. One can imagine what was going through the pastor's mind while he listened to Bill! But he came up with a list of ten people who, he thought, might either be drunk themselves or know someone who was. Bill tried calling them all. The last person on the list—reached on Bill's tenth call—was a nonalcoholic lady known for her good works and words, Henrietta Seiberling. Like the clergyman, she seemed to understand what Bill wanted. She invited Bill to her house, where she informed him that she had found "just the man" for him: one Dr. Bob, an Akron surgeon. The good physician, she reported, had been none too secretly drinking away his life and his career and had in recent years made many futile attempts to sober up, using both medical and religious means, with little success.

Henrietta called Dr. Bob's wife, Anne, on the telephone, only to be discouraged with the news that Bob was celebrating Mother's Day and had just brought home a potted plant that required his attention. As Bill subsequently explained, 'what Anne didn't say was that the plant was on the table and that Bob was under it, so potted he couldn't get up." The meeting was deferred until the next day.

Late in the afternoon, the shaky Akron surgeon met the Wall Street broker at Mrs. Seiberling's house. They talked late into the night. The unseen catalytic agents that had brought about this first fully successful 'AA meeting' were few but powerful. Both men were 'hopeless' alcoholics who had tried 'everything' to stop drinking. Both were middle-aged (although Dr. Bob was fifteen years older than Bill) and respectably married. Neither was the stereotyped skid-row caricature of the town drunk generally accepted at the time. Both were professional men with intelligence, skill, and drive. Both were also individuals with enormous potential spiritual resources. Both—here coincidence merges into fate—were from the state of Vermont, and therefore the empathy they achieved was rooted in the soil of their birthplaces and the idioms they spoke.

Bill moved into Dr. Bob's home for the time being, and the latter miraculously stayed sober—for nearly a month. Dr. Bob had one more drunk left in him. He started at a medical convention in Atlantic City and ended back in Akron. Then came the news that the surgeon was needed at his hospital in three days to perform a difficult operation. Under the ministrations of his wife and Bill, Dr. Bob was brought to the edge of sobriety by the familiar process of tapering off.

On June 10, 1935, Bill and Anne drove Dr. Bob to the hospital where the operation was to take place. In an act of charity, understood best by any alcoholic coming off a drunk, Bill handed Bob a bottle of beer "to steady his nerves so that he could hold the knife." Dr. Bob drank the beer, performed the operation, and did not take another drink throughout the remaining fifteen years of his life.

With that gesture, Bill turned the personal misfortune of two broken and miserable alcoholics into the beginning of the organizational history of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Fellowship was born that day in kindness—the special sympathy of one alcoholic for another. And it grew from one tiny incident in Akron to a continuing process of near-global proportions, but always in the same spirit. How ironic that this kindness was first sanctified by, of all things, a bottle of beer![31]

[31] Bill W., "AA Grapevine," March 1971, 24-26.

During Wilson's time with Smith, there was, Smith said, "hardly a night that we didn't sit up until two or three o'clock talking." These conversations led the two to explore what Smith came to describe as "the basic ideas [for AA] though not in terse and tangible form."[32] The Twelve Steps were not developed during these conversations but Smith later maintained that these early discussions laid part of the foundation for what would ultimately become the Twelve Steps.

Speaking about Smith, Wilson said,

> As he often put it, 'I just loved my grog.' By the time I met him, this compelling love had almost done him in. His surgical skill was still recognized, but few colleagues or patients dared to trust him. He had lost his post on the staff of Akron's City Hospital and barely existed through a precarious and dwindling general practice. In debt up to his ears, he was only one jump ahead of the sheriff and his mortgage payments. Anne verged on a nervous crack-up and their two children of course were greatly upset. Such was the payoff of twenty-five years of alcoholism. Hope was a word they had come to avoid.
>
> In our first conversation I bore down heavily on the medical hopelessness of Dr. Bob's case…Though Bob was a doctor this was news to him, bad news…What really hit him hard was the medical business, the verdict of eventual annihilation. And the fact that I was an alcoholic and knew what I was talking about from personal experience made the blow a shattering one…. You see, our talk was a completely mutual thinking. I had quit preaching. I knew that I needed this alcoholic as much as he needed me. This was it. And this mutual give-and-take is at the very heart of all of AA's Twelfth Step work today. This is how to carry the message. The final missing link was located right there in my first talk with Dr. Bob…
>
> Still worried about Dr. Bob, Anne invited me to come over and live with them at their home at 855 Ardmore Avenue. How well I remember our morning meditation, when Anne would sit in the corner by the fireplace and read from the Bible, and then we would huddle together in stillness, awaiting inspiration and guidance.[33]

Wilson and Smith decided to develop and continue the practice of one alcoholic talking to another. This was a method that Wilson had found effective in talks with Dr. William D. Silkworth, the physician who had treated Bill for alcoholism at Towns Hospital; it had also been central to his experiences with the Oxford Group. Wilson and Smith began visiting hospitals in Akron, looking for patients who had entered the hospital in an attempt "to sober up." Reflecting the biases of the day, they spoke only to male patients, telling each man who agreed to talk to them that he had a fatal disease of the mind and body and that he had little chance to recover on his own. They also recounted their own stories of drinking and recovery. They then invited those who were interested to join them at the Akron Oxford Group meetings; these were informal meetings that occurred at Smith's house.

By the time Wilson was ready to go back to New York in late August of 1935, a few recovering and sober alcoholics were meeting regularly at Smith's house where Wilson was still staying. Smith's wife, Anne, made coffee for each meeting and members of the group spoke informally about their own struggles with drinking and recovery.

Upon his return to New York and his wife, a now sober Wilson hoped to spread word of his experiences and the success he and Smith had had in controlling their alcoholism. He planned to do this through a book which

[32] Smith quoted in The Oxford Group and Alcoholics Anonymous: A Design for Living, 10.
[33] Alcoholic Anonymous Comes of Age, 70.

would be a narrative which highlighted the stories of one hundred alcoholics who had used the six simple steps for recovery that he and Smith had developed in Akron. But while working on the book in 1938, Wilson became convinced that the six steps should be expanded to twelve.

While writing this book, Wilson gained the support of the nation's wealthiest and most prominent teetotaler: John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Wilson had used family connections to contact the director of Rockefeller's charitable foundation and he and Smith originally hoped that Rockefeller would provide their organization with $50,000 seed money. Rockefeller, however, had refused to provide the sum, believing that the organization would be best served by a smaller fund which would force it to be creative in establishing itself. Rockefeller did, however, provide $5,000, a not inconsiderable sum at the time, to assist Wilson and Smith. This money allowed Wilson to focus on writing as did an advance from his publisher. [34] After months of writing and circulating the manuscript among early members of Wilson's and Smith's groups, Wilson's book, *Alcoholics Anonymous,* was finally published in 1939. Among AA members it came to be known simply as "The Big Book."

By the fall of 1939, "Alcoholics Anonymous had come into a clear existence of its own." The fledgling organization, which Smith and Wilson had created and which now had strong roots in Akron and New York, formally adopted the title Alcoholics Anonymous as its official name. It split from the Oxford Group and when a new group was established in a new city without the direct action of either Wilson or Smith, it became evident that the organization was self-sustaining.[35]

Spreading the Gospel from Stepping Stones

During the twenty-three years that followed their marriage in 1918, the Wilsons had moved numerous times. Part of Lois's valiant efforts to keep Wilson away from alcohol entailed traveling. This, combined with their precarious finances, meant that they lived in a series of apartments in New York and Canada. When Wilson's drinking during the 1930s and the Great Depression left him unable to find regular employment, the couple moved into Lois's girlhood home at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn Heights. In 1939, following a foreclosure on the Clinton Street house, the Wilsons were evicted. The couple then spent 1939 and 1940 as guests of relatives and AA friends, or living in the AA Clubhouse. During that period they relocated, by Lois's count, fifty-one times.[36]

Through the help of an acquaintance, Bill and Lois purchased and moved into the house in Bedford Hills that became known as Stepping Stones on April 23, 1941.[37] The Wilsons moved into Stepping Stone with the contents of their former home at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn, New York. Included with the move was the kitchen table from their Clinton Street home; this was the table at which Wilson developed the Twelve Steps. The couple lived at Stepping Stones for the rest of their lives, Bill until his death in 1971 and Lois until her death in 1988.

Stepping Stones was the Wilsons' first permanent home and it was from this location that they made many of their important contributions to the recovery movement.[38] Lois founded Al-Anon Family Groups in the library of the Main House in 1951. Many of the Wilsons' friends and acquaintances through their work with AA and Al-Anon visited or stayed with them at Stepping Stones. Their thousands of visitors over the years included royalty, politicians, actors, and prominent business people.

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[34] "Medicine: Alcoholics Anonymous," *Time*, February 19, 1940. Kurtz, *Not-God*, 84.

[35] Kurtz, *Not-God*, 101.

[36] Lois Wilson, Lois Remembers: Memoirs of the Co-founder of Al-Anon and the Wife of Co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (New York: Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, 1979), 126.

[37] Ibid., 134.

[38] Robert Thomsen, *Bill W.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 284.

Although Wilson often steered clear of using the term "disease" to explain alcoholism "because he wished to avoid the medical controversy over the existence or non-existence of a specific 'disease-entity'," his frequent use of terms like "illness" and malady reinforced the idea of alcoholism as a disease, a view many Americans now hold. "The widespread diffusion of the 'the disease concept of alcoholism' was," Ernest Kurtz has argued, "largely due to Alcoholics Anonymous."[39]

This shift—toward seeing alcoholism as a disease with a very real cause and effect—reflected a broader change in American culture. During the late nineteenth century, as more and more Americans came to embrace germ theory, laypeople's understanding of disease and its causes had shifted. Pointing out that this shift "offered at least the possibility of disconnecting disease from its historic associations with sin, moral turpitude, and idleness," Allan Brandt and others have argued that this new understanding of disease was behind the eagerness with which "the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous…seized upon the notion that alcoholism was a disease. It was not so much a desire to medicalize the phenomenon of habitual alcohol consumption as it was to free those with the habit from moral stigma, to 'remoralize' the behavior."[40]

To promote these ideas, Bill Wilson anonymously authored four books on alcoholism: Alcoholics Anonymous (1939), Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (1953), Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age (1957) and As Bill Sees It: The AA Way of Life (1967).[41] Alcoholics Anonymous, known as the Big Book, included the Twelve Steps and numerous autobiographical stories contributed anonymously by recovering alcoholics. Wilson wrote the first eleven chapters and edited the autobiographical chapters, including the chapter famously titled "To Wives." Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions established the guidelines for AA that ensured its long-term success; these principles are still used by AA groups and the General Service Organization.

In 1949, Wilson built a small shack on a hill within the boundaries of Stepping Stones. Called "The Shack" by Wilson and "Wit's End" by Lois Wilson, this small space was meant to serve as a private writing studio. There, Wilson told his mother, he planned to spend the rest of his life writing about the AA way of life. Much of Bill's writing, including three of his four books, took place in his studio, nicknamed "Wit's End" or The Shack" by Bill and Lois Wilson, behind the main house. (Bill Wilson had devised the 12 Steps and written *Alcoholics Anonymous* at the home on Clinton Street in Brooklyn.) He devised and wrote the Twelve Traditions—the framework that ensured AA's long-term success—in the library at Stepping Stones. He wrote *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, a series of essays and the second most popular AA text, in the studio. Wilson also wrote hundreds of articles for "The Grapevine", the monthly magazine for AA, many of which became the basis for other books such as *The Language of the Heart* and *As Bill Sees It*.

During this period, Wilson found, somewhat to his chagrin, that much of his time was occupied not with writing about the "AA way of life," but rather responding to letters from grateful and suffering alcoholics and their family members. Between 1941 and 1971, Bill and Lois Wilson sacrificed their personal comfort and well-being to follow and promote the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. This included their reaching out to help other alcoholics and being available whenever anyone, anywhere, called upon them for help.

Alcoholics Anonymous, Wilson's first and most famous book, sought to explain why alcoholics drink through an unbiased scientific investigation as opposed to facile character judgments. The book also provided a practical treatment program and a community of support that has helped millions attain and maintain lasting sobriety. In recognition of this, the American Public Health Association presented the Lasker Award to Alcoholics Anonymous in 1951 "in recognition of its unique and highly successful approach to that age-old public health

[39] Kurtz, *Not-God*, 35.

[40] Allan Brandt, "Just Say No: Risk, Behavior, and Disease in Twentieth-Century America," in *Scientific Authority and Twentieth-Century America*, ed. Ronald G. Walter (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 85.

[41] "Bill W. of Alcoholics Anonymous Dies," *New York Times*, February 15, 1971.

and social problem, alcoholism… In emphasizing alcoholism as an illness, the social stigma associated with this condition is being blotted out."[42] As of 2009, an estimated 30 million copies of the book have been sold, ranking it among the one hundred bestselling books of all time.[43]

Obviously, without Bill Wilson, there would be no AA as we know it today but Lois Wilson also played a central role in both the shaping of Bill Wilson and the organization of AA. Evidence from both their childhoods reveals patterns of alcoholism and co-dependency which are familiar to AA members. Moreover, both Wilsons wrote extensively while at Stepping Stones; their writings offer a compelling example of Wilson as a model alcoholic who finds hope for sobriety and goes on to live a successful and productive life by practicing the principles of AA.

The Growth of Alcoholics Anonymous

In its early years, Alcoholics Anonymous was a word-of-mouth program. From 1935 to 1939, it grew modestly, with groups meeting in Akron and New York and, soon after, in Cleveland. Although the group remained very much a grassroots organization—in fact, its origin and success were based on the belief that Alcoholics Anonymous *needed* to be a grassroots organization if it were to succeed—the organization had received the support of John D. Rockefeller Jr. very early on when Rockefeller assisted in the publication of Wilson's ground-breaking book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Rockefeller, a famous life-long teetotaler himself, also promoted Alcoholics Anonymous in other ways; in 1940, for example, a dinner which Rockefeller hosted received attention in the press because "several of Mr. Rockefeller's guests were members of 'Alcoholics Anonymous,' a widespread publicity-shy group of one-time guzzlers who have cured themselves." [44] Wilson and Smith were in attendance at the dinner but publicity for the organization remained limited and Rockefeller still remained reluctant to provide the organization with any real money. He did, however, put them in touch with his publicist. Throughout 1940, the group grew slowly, with its message being carried to a variety of cities including Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Boston, and Miami.[45] Scattered articles in the press, ranging from pieces in *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland) to *The Chicago Daily Times* led directly to the creation of AA groups in a range of cities but word of mouth, "the chain" of alcoholics speaking to one another which Wilson had first envisioned while at Towns Hospital, remained crucial to the organization's growth.

Medical practitioners and institutions as well as the police, who were often tasked with dealing with alcoholics, also provided the fledgling organization with crucial support. In 1940, for example, *The Illinois Medical Journal* had also characterized the organization as "a miracle." At Philadelphia General Hospital, John F. Stouffer, the chief psychiatrist, also waxed enthusiastic, noting that Alcoholics Anonymous was "the greatest thing we have been able to offer" alcoholic patients. As groups sprang up in various places, these endorsements often meant there was enthusiastic cooperation between the medical profession, the police, and AA, with the police and physicians steering alcoholics directly to AA. Still, growth remained slow during these early years, in part because Wilson and Smith primarily saw the organization in terms of its identity as a self-help organization; funding and organizing needed to be self-generated if the organization was to succeed. Physicians and the police might, in other words, promote the organization but if AA were to flourish and survive, local

[42] Alcoholics Anonymous, 571.

[43] While the title of the book is actually *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the members of AA refer to it as the Big Book. This is the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous, AA's text on how to stay sober. "And this year is also the 70th anniversary of the publication of A.A.'s Big Book, which has sold nearly 30 million copies since 1939." "AA's Big Book Celebrates 70 Years," *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 11, 2009.

[44] "Medicine: Alcoholics Anonymous," *Time*, February 19, 1940.

[45] Kurtz, *Not-God*, 109, 113.

chapters would need to be organized by alcoholics themselves, as opposed to members of the medical profession or the police.[46]

In 1941, AA received a dramatic boost when *The Saturday Evening Post* did a cover story on the fledgling organization. Titled "Alcoholics Anonymous: Freed Slaves of Drink, Now They Free Others," the article was written by Jack Alexander. Both Alexander and Judge Curtis Bok, the owner and publisher of the *Post,* had originally been skeptical of the organization but after meeting with Wilson and Smith, traveling to Akron, and visiting both the new alcoholic ward at St. Thomas Hospital (in Akron) and Towns Hospital (in New York), the reporter became a convert. Alexander was especially impressed by the diversity of the group's members which ranged from bartenders, vagrants and manual laborers to executives.[47] The article, which was published a month before the Wilsons' move into Stepping Stones, triggered an explosion of growth for AA, with membership quadrupling in the last ten months of 1941.[48]

The Wilsons' move to Stepping Stones became possible in part because AA was now on a firm footing as an organization and because Bill Wilson had his alcoholism under control. Although the organization's headquarters was in New York, the nature of alcoholism meant that the Wilsons' daily and personal lives were, even after he had become sober, colored by Bill's alcoholism. As AA grew and Wilson's story became known to millions of AA members, Stepping Stones became not only a retreat for Wilson where he could focus on his writing but also a very real symbol of the sober alcoholic.

While the media conceded that "professional opinion on the usefulness of Alcoholics Anonymous is divided," membership in the organization had already climbed to "about 400 in towns all over the U.S." by 1940. The explosion of growth which followed the 1941 publication of the *Saturday Evening Post*'s cover story caused immediate difficulties for the organization as demands for assistance in setting up meetings and providing information to alcoholics poured in but AA's loose structure and informal nature allowed the organization to grow rapidly. Ultimately, AA would come to number its membership in the millions, with thousands of meetings occurring across the globe. From the beginning, membership in the organization was wide-ranging, with members being drawn from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.[49]

AA would also come, whether correctly or not, to be seen as the prototype for a variety of self-help groups in not only the United States but also abroad. Most of these self-help groups promote the idea of contact with others suffering from the same condition. This kind of contact is seen as enabling sufferers to "cope with the stigma of the condition [and to allow for] changing self-perception through realizing that others have succeeded in coping" with this same disease. [50] But although many of the self-help organizations which sprang up in the post-war period have pointed to Alcoholics Anonymous as their inspiration, these groups have often changed the meaning and intent of the original organization to better suit their own needs and concerns.

Al-Anon and Alateen

Lois Wilson (1891–1988) founded Al-Anon Family Groups for the family members of alcoholics. In the early days of AA, family members—typically wives as most AA's member were men—attended AA meetings with the alcoholic. While this approach helped wives support their husbands, AA meetings did not provide a separate

[46] Jack Alexander, "Alcoholics Anonymous: Freed Slaves of Drink, Now They Free Others," *The Saturday Evening Post*, March 1, 1941.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Kurtz, *Not-God*, 121.
[49] "Medicine: Alcoholics Anonymous," *Time*, February 19, 1940.
[50] Lock, "Self-Help Groups, 1596–1597.

or independent forum where wives could candidly discuss and share their own experiences and concerns about living with an alcoholic.

By 1940, Lois began organizing separate meetings that became known as "Family Group Meetings." Anne Smith, the wife of Bob Smith, originally worked with Lois in hosting these meetings. Both she and Lois understood first-hand the many issues that confront the friends and families of alcoholics who struggle to maintain their relationships with alcoholic family members or friends. In developing these early groups, both women advocated that members of these "Family Group Meetings" use an adapted version of AA's Twelve Steps to address the difficulties they faced. Family Groups became common across the U.S., spreading as AA did throughout the 1940s. However, these Family Groups lacked a clear structure and a national program to address their concerns.

In 1951, after Anne Smith's death, Lois and her friend Anne Bingham (Anne B.) began an effort to formally coordinate the numerous Family Groups across the country. Like Lois, Bingham was also married to an alcoholic and the two couples had become close after the Wilsons had moved to Westchester County, which was also home to the Binghams. Following AA's first General Service Conference in New York City in 1951, Lois invited the wives of the delegates to the conference to join her at Stepping Stones. Local members of the Westchester Family Group also attended this meeting. It quickly became evident that although most of the women who had traveled to New York with their husbands attended Family Groups in their hometowns, no two groups were alike.

Following this meeting at Stepping Stones, Lois Wilson and Anne Bingham traveled to meet and speak with various Family Groups in action across the country. Upon her return, Lois contacted all of the groups which she had met, as well as additional groups for which she had contact information. She suggested that these groups merge into a national organization, that the organization use the Twelve Steps approach to dealing with their own problems of co-dependency, and that the organization follow AA's lead in adopting a policy of anonymity. Following the suggestion of a family group in California, this new group adopted the name "Al-Anon Family Groups." Ultimately, the group became known as Al-Anon. By July 1951, only three months after the first national meeting of these groups at Stepping Stones, there were 145 registered Al-Anon groups, with several of these outside the United States.

Just as Bill Wilson had felt the need to codify AA's program by publishing *Alcoholics Anonymous*, so, too, did Lois Wilson and Anne Bingham feel a need to clarify the structure and mission of Al-Anon in writing. The pamphlet they co-authored, *Purposes and Suggestions for Al-Anon Family Groups*, emphasized that family members of an alcoholic needed to focus on themselves rather than on the alcoholic. This pamphlet was written by Lois at Stepping Stones. Bill Wilson's book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, had included a chapter that was addressed "To Wives." This chapter had not, however, been written by Lois. With *Purposes and Suggestions for Al-Anon Family Groups*, Lois Wilson finally had the opportunity to clarify, in print, her views on the many issues facing spouses and family members of alcoholics as well as her thoughts on how spouses and family members should respond to and assist alcoholics.

In the year that followed the formal creation of Al-Anon, the group became financially independent as requests for literature, along with financial contributions, began to arrive at Stepping Stones. The organization that emerged followed Alcoholics Anonymous in not only the Twelve Steps but also in its avowed apolitical stance; its emphasis on non-professionals and the idea of self-help; and its loose organizational structure. As Al-Anon grew, Lois turned to writing to assist family members dealing with alcoholism. Her writing included not only additional pamphlets but also the newsletter for Al-Anon. Like Bill Wilson, Lois repeatedly emphasized the idea of alcoholism as a disease in her work.

The Central Clearing House, as it was called, was also initiated at Stepping Stones by Lois Wilson. The group began with a letter Lois wrote on the desk that still sits today in the second-floor gallery of the house. The Central Clearing House provided assistance, information, and materials for the groups eventually becoming known as Al-Anon Family Groups. The Gallery served as the Groups' headquarters for at least one year until the program grew so big that it needed to be moved to an office location in New York City.

In 1957, Lois organized Alateen for the children of alcoholic parents. Like Al-Anon and AA, Alateen also grew to include chapters around the world. Today, Al-Anon/Alateen has 24,000 groups in over 130 countries.[51]

Lois Wilson also initiated a tradition at Stepping Stones intended to remind alcoholics and their family members of the fellowship at the heart of AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen; on the first Sunday of June, the Wilsons hosted an Annual Stepping Stones Picnic for Al-Anons, AA's, and Alateens. Even after Lois's death, the tradition continued, with the most recent Annual Stepping Stones picnic occurring at Stepping Stones on June 4, 2011. Approximately 500 to 700 people still attend the annual Stepping Stones picnic.

Stepping Stones as a Historic House

The lives of Bill and Lois are representative examples of the illnesses of alcoholism and co-dependency, and the materials found at Stepping Stones illustrate their lives. Lois's diaries, her guest books, and Bill's letters to friends and colleagues, all compiled at Stepping Stones, describe their day-to-day life. Among hundreds of other artifacts, Lois Wilson saved a series of letters written by Bill that she called "Bill's Dissertations While Drinking." These graphically demonstrate the struggles of the alcoholic and the toll alcoholism has on family members and loved ones.

Upon starting the Stepping Stones Foundation in 1979, Lois Wilson came to see the value that the house would have as a museum about the history of AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen. Reflecting her understanding that the house would be used as a museum, Lois spent the last eight years of her life putting together a gallery filled with AA and Al-Anon archival material. Today, Stepping Stones attracts visitors from all over the world who come to acknowledge not only the actions of Bill and Lois Wilson in founding AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen but also to acknowledge their own, more personal, struggles with alcohol and/or a family member who has struggled with alcoholism.

In her later life, Lois described Stepping Stones as a museum, filled with gifts and memorabilia from grateful AA members. These are on display, as Lois left them, throughout the home. Everywhere a visitor looks, he or she can find evidence of AA, Al-Anon Family Groups, and the AA way of life. Stepping Stones has been a touchstone of AA and Al-Anon activity since the Wilsons moved there in 1941 and its importance is noted by its inclusion in every book about the lives of Bill and Lois Wilson and the history of AA.

The museum has reached out to professionals in an attempt to develop an interpretative plan which can effectively address the needs and expectations of these many visitors. In 2007, Christopher Clarke, PhD, wrote a report about interpretive planning for Stepping Stones. In it, he noted that:

> While Bill and Lois Wilson can and should serve as inspirations, models, and exemplars of human courage and determination, they should also be recognized as human beings beset, like all humans, by flaws and contradictions. This theme takes us another step away from the specifics of the site itself and shifts the focus to the parts of the story that can make for broader human connections to the lives and events that are examined here. An exploration of the legacy of these

[51] Alcoholics Anonymous, accessed May 5, 2010, https://al-anon.org/.

two individuals, important in its own right, also has the potential to engage visitors around the question we all think of from time to time as adults: How do I want to be remembered?

Beyond the institutions and the movement that they helped build, Bill and Lois Wilson left a legacy as human beings. Their legacy begins with their right to be remembered and assessed as imperfect people who struggled, not icons who deserved to be deified or worshiped in any way. Their legacy includes the fact that Bill W. never entirely escaped the consequences of his notoriety, never really "got away," but nevertheless learned to cope with grace and dignity. Their legacy includes the books they wrote, the lives they touched, and the children they never had. Their legacy includes a society in which the problem of substance abuse and addiction is still a plague with an enormous attendant social cost.

Amidst all of these larger circumstances, it is important to note that whereas Bill did not self-consciously leave a memorial commemoration of his life, Lois did. Her displays on the second floor of Stepping Stones constitute both a catalog of the people and places that meant the most to her, and a summing up of her accomplishments and chosen memories. How many of us will have the time and the space to do the same? Lois's act of self-commemoration is worthy of exploration for what it might tell us about how we understand the meaning of our lives, and why we want to be remembered in certain ways. The entire Stepping Stones site is about memory, at some level, but this remarkable collection of mementos, assembled in a narrative, is the kind of legacy that cannot be encountered in most historic houses.

Don Harrell, PhD, a Stepping Stones Trustee wrote, "The mission and purpose of Stepping Stones, the home of Bill and Lois Wilson, may depend in large part on the mind of the beholder. Most visitors are members of Alcoholics Anonymous and/or Al-Anon, whether residents of the United States or another country, and they will bring their own experience and background to the time they spend there."

Other Associated Properties

As an organization, Alcoholics Anonymous traces its earliest roots to meetings that occurred in Akron and New York City during the mid- to late 1930s. But the organization saw its very real growth and impact throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Stepping Stones provides the best site to represent and illustrate this growth of Alcoholics Anonymous and the work and struggles of Bill and Lois Wilson. Several other properties provide insight into the history of AA but because of either a lack of historic integrity or reasons related to the more limited role these properties played in the history of AA and the Wilsons, these properties do not convey the story of AA, Al-Anon, Alateen, and the Wilsons to the same degree that Stepping Stones does.

<u>The Wilson House, East Dorset, Vermont</u>
This property is the birthplace of Bill Wilson. He actually lived next door and was physically born in the Wilson House, which was a hotel at the time and where his grandmother was working the day he was born. He was raised by his grandparents after age 9 when his parents divorced. Because Wilson attributed his alcoholism, in part, to the impact his parents' desertion had on both his sister and him, his recollections of this house are prominent in the history of AA. However, Wilson left his grandparents while a young man and the house played little to no direct role in Wilson's life as an alcoholic during the 1920s and no role in his struggles to become and remain sober.

Today, the Wilson House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and it operates as a nonprofit bed and breakfast and retreat center. Near the Wilson House is the graveyard where Bill and Lois Wilson are buried.

Because the Wilson house is simply where Bill Wilson was born and has no direct connection to his adult life, it lacks a strong association with the actual founding and growth of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Dr. Bob's Home, 855 Ardmore Avenue, Akron, Ohio
Dr. Robert Smith, known in AA as "Dr. Bob" was the second alcoholic to obtain permanent sobriety using the AA principles and is therefore considered, alongside Bill Wilson, as the co-founder of the movement. The Smith's home, currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is located in the town that is popularly considered the birthplace of AA. Smith's wife, Anne Smith, along with Lois Wilson, is credited with nurturing the early movement among family members that eventually led to the founding of Al-Anon Family Groups.

Anne Smith died in 1949 and Bob Smith died in 1950. The house was then sold to strangers. In the mid-1980s, when the house went on the market again, a group of AA members raised funds to buy it and turn it into a museum of AA history.

The Smith's home is currently run by a board of directors with one paid staff person. Besides daily guided tours, "Dr. Bob's home" hosts "Founders Day," an annual celebration commemorating the date of Bob's last drink, June 10, 1935, which is considered the day AA began. More than 15,000 people visit the home and surrounding area on that weekend alone.

Dr. Bob Smith's home is also nationally significant in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous. This property will be considered for NHL designation in the near future.

The Mayflower Hotel, Akron, Ohio
Bill Wilson made the famous phone call that led to his meeting with Dr. Bob from the lobby of this hotel.

The hotel opened in 1931 with 16-stories and 450 rooms. The Mayflower was bought in 1955 by the Sheraton Hotel company and the name changed to the Sheraton-Mayflower. By 1969, it was called the Sheraton until purchased by a New York group which renamed it the Mayflower. The hotel closed in 1971, reopening in 1973 as the Mayflower Manor, a subsidized housing apartment complex. It is now an assisted living facility and is not generally open to the public. It does welcome AA visitors to see the replica of the 1935 telephone and Church Directory used by Bill located in the lobby of the facility.

This house lacks both a strong and prolonged association with the founding and continued growth of Alcoholics Anonymous. This site also lacks the high degree of integrity which is required for National Historic Landmarks.

Gatehouse at Stan Hywet Hall, Akron, Ohio
Bill Wilson and Bob Smith had their first conversation on the grounds of the Frank Seiberling family estate, Stan Hywet Hall, in what came to be called "The Gatehouse." Stan Hywet Hall was designated an NHL in 1981 for its outstanding Tudor Revival main house and for its association with Seiberling, founder of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company.

Although the initial meeting between Wilson and Smith occurred here, their more in-depth conversations that led to Smith's last drink and the creation of AA were held at Smith's house.

St. Thomas Hospital, Akron, Ohio
Dr. Smith had been treating alcoholics for years and often tried to get his patients admitted to an Akron area hospital. The hospitals, still considering alcoholism a moral failing and not a disease, would refuse. Eventually, Dr. Bob and Sister Ignatia Gavin, of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine who staffed the Catholic St. Thomas Hospital, were able to open the first hospital ward ever for alcoholics in 1939 at St. Thomas. The hospital

continued to grow from the 1950s to the 1970s, adding new buildings and departments. It ceased to function as a Catholic hospital when an independent board took over control in the 1980s and, in the mid-1990s, St. Thomas merged with the Akron City Hospital to form the Summa Health System.

St. Thomas Hospital is more closely associated with Dr. Bob Smith than Bill Wilson.

Towns Hospital, 293 Central Park West, New York, New York
Several times during the 1930s, Bill Wilson was a patient at Towns Hospital under the care of Dr. William D. Silkworth (lovingly referred to as "the Little Doctor Who Loved Drunks"). Wilson counted December 11, 1934, a day which he spent at Towns Hospital, as his first day of permanent sobriety. Wilson recounted his experiences at Towns Hospital in the famous "Big Book;" the books include contributions from Dr. Silkworth, a physician at the hospital, and others on the nurturing of early AA.

After achieving sobriety, Wilson continued to pull drunks from Towns in an attempt to help them become sober using the Twelve Steps which were central to the AA way of life.

Towns Hospital is still standing, but today is a co-op apartment building. As such, it no longer retains high integrity to its period of significance when it was a functioning hospital.

Calvary Episcopal Church, 237 Park Avenue South, New York, New York
Bill Wilson attended Oxford Group meetings here from 1934 to 1936, as did his good friend Ebby Thacher. Thacher provided Wilson with hope for his sobriety in a conversation that many feel sparked the creation of AA. Samuel Shoemaker, the pastor at Calvary, had brought the Oxford Group to New York City. The Oxford Group's principles were the direct predecessor to the principles of AA, and Shoemaker remained a good friend of AA throughout his life.

The Calvary Church is still standing at the same location. It has consolidated with two other Episcopal parishes in order to remain a viable congregation. This property has not had as prolonged and consistent an association with Bill Wilson as Stepping Stones.

182 Clinton Street, Brooklyn, New York
This townhouse in the neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights was particularly important to the development of AA. It is where Lois Burnham Wilson was born and raised, and where she lived with Bill Wilson, when he was in the throes of his alcoholism and, as he put it, "relegated to living with his in-laws."

The house is a model of Victorian Era upper-class Brooklyn houses and it reflects the social position of the Burnham family. It was here that Bill experienced his worst years of struggling with his alcoholism. Wilson was living here when his friend Ebby Thacher visited and provided him with hope for sobriety. The Wilsons were also living here when Bill returned from Towns Hospital and began to help hundreds of other alcoholics. It was also at this property that Wilson developed the Twelve Steps which have come to be a hallmark of Alcoholics Anonymous.

> In the fall of 1935 Bill and Lois began to hold weekly meetings on Tuesday nights in their home on Clinton Street…The practice of opening one's home, making it into a sort of halfway house, had already been started by Dr. Bob and Anne Smith…Now, following the lead set by their Akron friends, Bill and Lois converted their own home into a similar hostel. Bill and Lois also had a theory that alcoholics felt unloved; therefore they, the Wilsons, would love them back into sobriety. Bill and Lois occupied the second floor and the rest of the house was made available to the 'recovering' alcoholics…Russ R., a recipient of their hospitality for over a year, described the way it was: 'All of us were living rent-free, food-free, everything free in Clinton Street, and

> Lois was doing all the work. She was working in a department store during the day and cooking for us and providing all the money the whole house had.
>
> …Lois later admitted that their success rate was low during the 1935–36 period at Clinton Street, she pointed out that many of the alcoholics Bill worked with during that time did recover later on. In other words, Lois said, the seeds of sobriety were being planted, to take root slowly.[52]

In 1939, Bill and Lois were forced to leave 182 Clinton Street. It had been foreclosed on, and they failed to save it.

Today, 182 Clinton Street is privately owned. It has undergone some renovations and does not have the high level of integrity from when Bill Wilson was first developing the Alcoholics Anonymous movement. This building is, however, a contributing resource in the Brooklyn Heights Historic District National Historic Landmark (designated in 1965 for its architecture as one of New York's most prestigious nineteenth-century addresses).

Alcoholics Anonymous World Service (AAWS), 475 Riverside Drive, New York, New York
This is the current headquarters for AA activity around the world; it includes the publishing arm of the organization. An archives room here hosts a permanent exhibition. AAWS is open to the public during regular business hours.

Although AA has had headquarters offices in many locations throughout New York City (30 Vesey Street; 415 Lexington Avenue; 141 East 44th Street; 305 East 45th Street; 468-470 Park Avenue South; and finally 475 Riverside Drive) none of these properties has the same strong or prolonged association with the Wilsons and their role in AA as Stepping Stones, their home in Katonah, New York.

Conclusion

The Wilsons' influence on twentieth-century society is immeasurable. The Twelve Steps remain the most successful means of treating alcoholism and are the central treatment program used in most hospitals and clinics. AA does not keep official membership lists; however, in 2002 the General Service Office estimated the organization's international membership at 2,215,293 members,[53] all following the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions devised by Bill Wilson. The report calculated that 51,245 groups with 1,160,651 members existed in the United States alone.[54] Two hundred and twenty-five other groups that address issues as varied as drug addiction, gambling, overeating, and surviving incest have subsequently adopted the Twelve Steps. In 1990, *Life* magazine named Bill Wilson one of the 100 most important Americans of the twentieth century, and in 1999, *Time* magazine selected Wilson as one of the 100 most influential people of the century.[55]

Stepping Stones is where Bill Wilson accomplished much of his professional work, where he wrote several books and articles on his personal struggles with alcoholism and what he came to call "the AA way of life." More importantly, Stepping Stones is where Wilson lived his life as a sober and recovering alcoholic and where he became the public face of AA. Stepping Stones is also the property with the strongest association with Al-Anon, the self-help group which assists the relatives and friends of alcoholics. The group began here in 1951 and Lois Wilson directed the activities of Al-Anon out of the Stepping Stones library for over a year. Finally, Stepping Stones possesses the most extensive archive of materials related to Bill and Lois Wilson anywhere in

[52] "*Pass It On": The Story of Bill Wilson and How the AA Message Reached the World* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous, 1984), 162.
[53] Alcoholics Anonymous, accessed October 10, 2002, https://www.aa.org/.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Susan Cheever, "Bill W: The Healer," 201–04.

the world. These archives, begun and maintained by Lois Wilson, allow scholars the opportunity both to research the history of AA and to gain an understanding of the intertwined nature of alcoholism and co-dependency through a close examination of the lives of Bill and Lois Wilson.

Each room at Stepping Stones illustrates the role Alcoholics Anonymous had on the Wilsons themselves. Lois's gallery is filled with AA and Al-Anon memorabilia and important historical information. Many visitors have expressed their gratitude to the Wilsons and the Twelve Steps Program through gifts which can be found throughout the house.

Today, the Stepping Stones Foundation remains dedicated to preserving the historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson, co-founders respectively of AA and Al-Anon Family Groups, and to commemorating their achievements in the field of recovery from alcoholism.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register. NR# 04000702, Listed July 16, 2004
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency
__ Federal Agency
__ Local Government
__ University
__ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 8.5 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	18	608833	4566975

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundaries of Stepping Stones consist of the entirety of the 5 parcels of land owned by The Stepping Stones Foundation, and is indicated by the heavy line on the attached Survey of Property map.

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes the buildings and acreage that have historically been associated with the Stepping Stones property and which maintain historic integrity.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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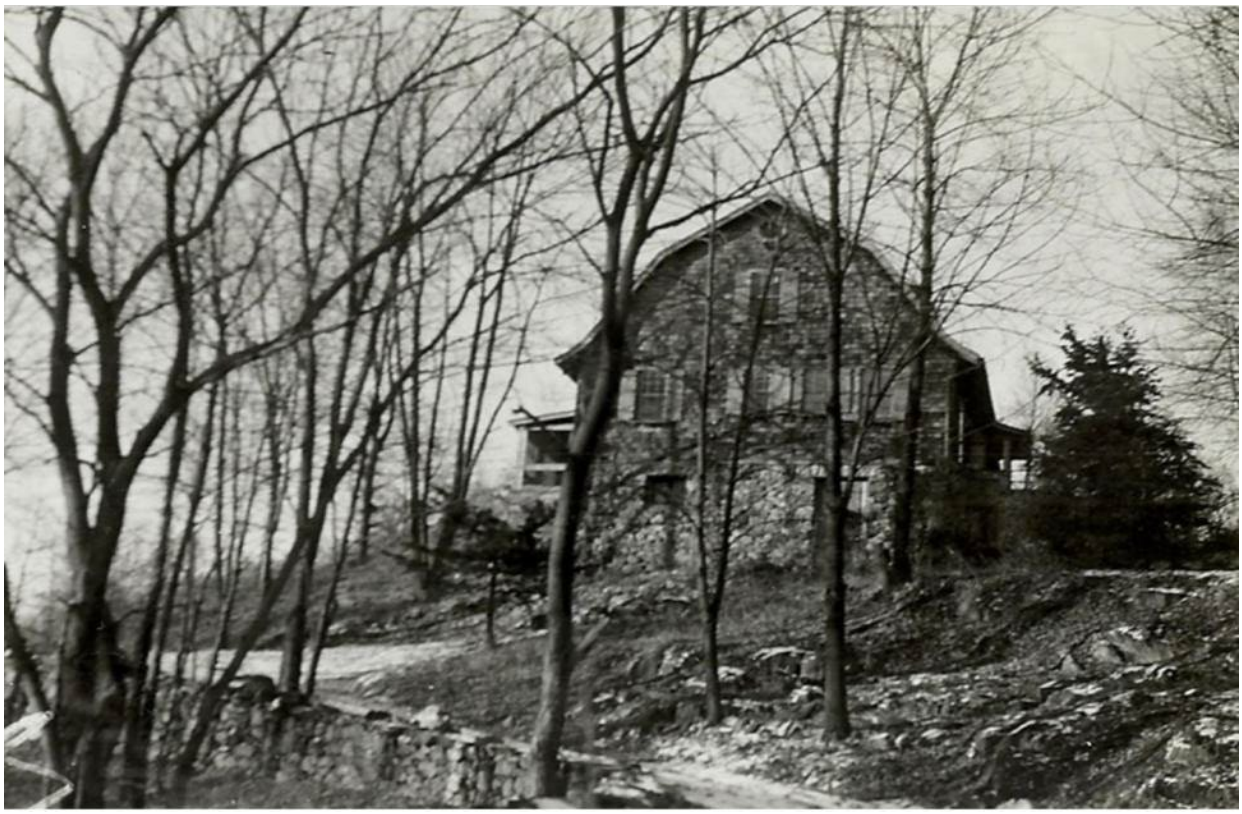
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DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
October 16, 2012



Earliest known photo of Steppings Stones, east elevation, 1944.



Stepping Stones, east elevation, 2009.



Bill and Lois Wilson sitting on hill at Stepping Stones, 1950.



Stepping Stones, main (north) façade, 2008.



Living room at Stepping Stones, 2008.



Kitchen at Stepping Stones, 2008.



Gallery walls filled with AA memorabilia at Stepping Stones, 2008.



Lois Wilson's desk in gallery where she founded Al-Anon at Stepping Stones, 2008.



Bill and Lois Wilson's bedroom at Stepping Stones, 2008.



Bill Wilson in front of "Wit's End," 1957.



"Wit's End," 2008.



Bill Wilson inside "Wit's End," around 1953.



Interior of "Wit's End," 2008.



Stepping Stones Garage, constructed 1951, prior to renovation.



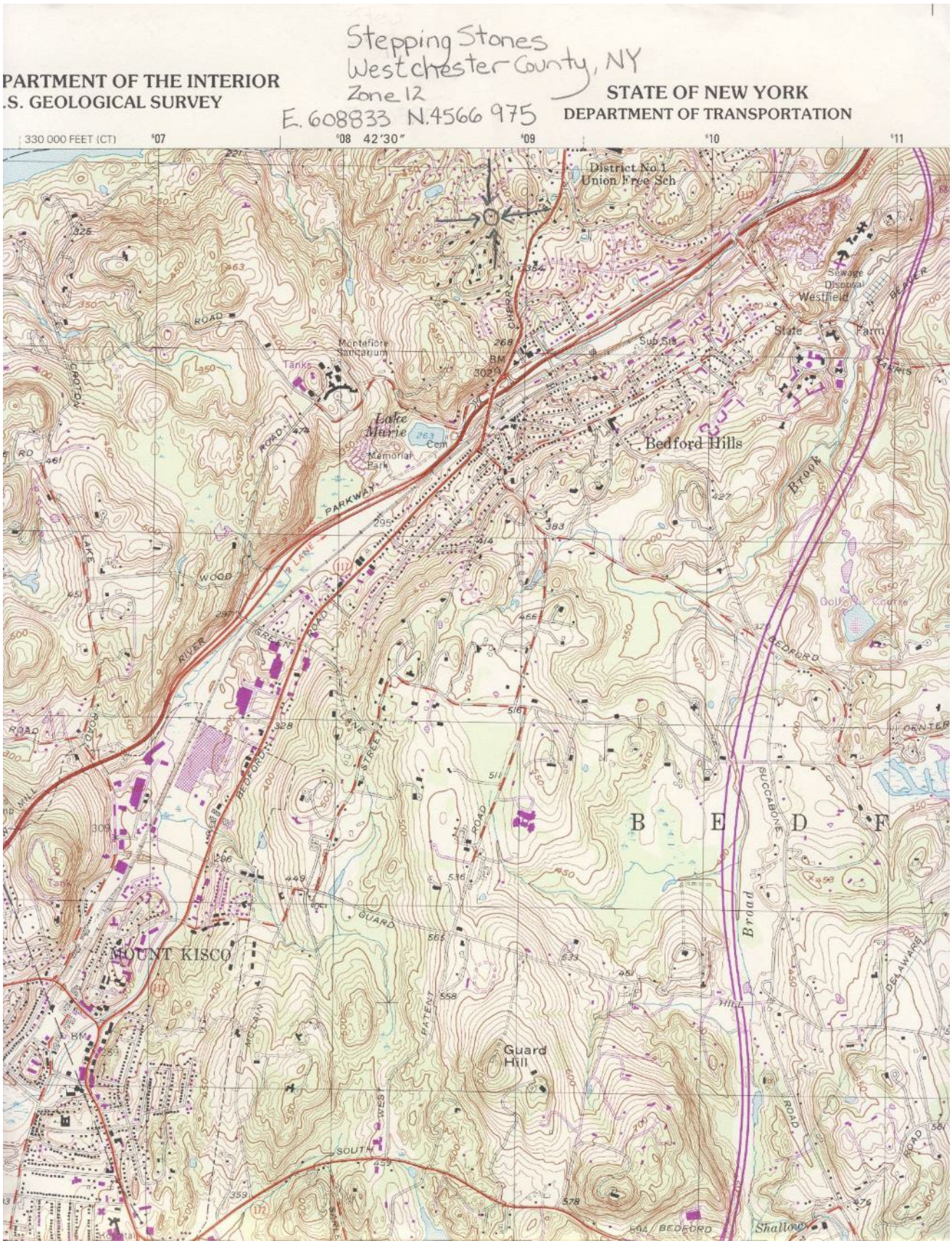
1951 garage after renovation, 2011.
Currently serves as Stepping Stones Welcome Center.



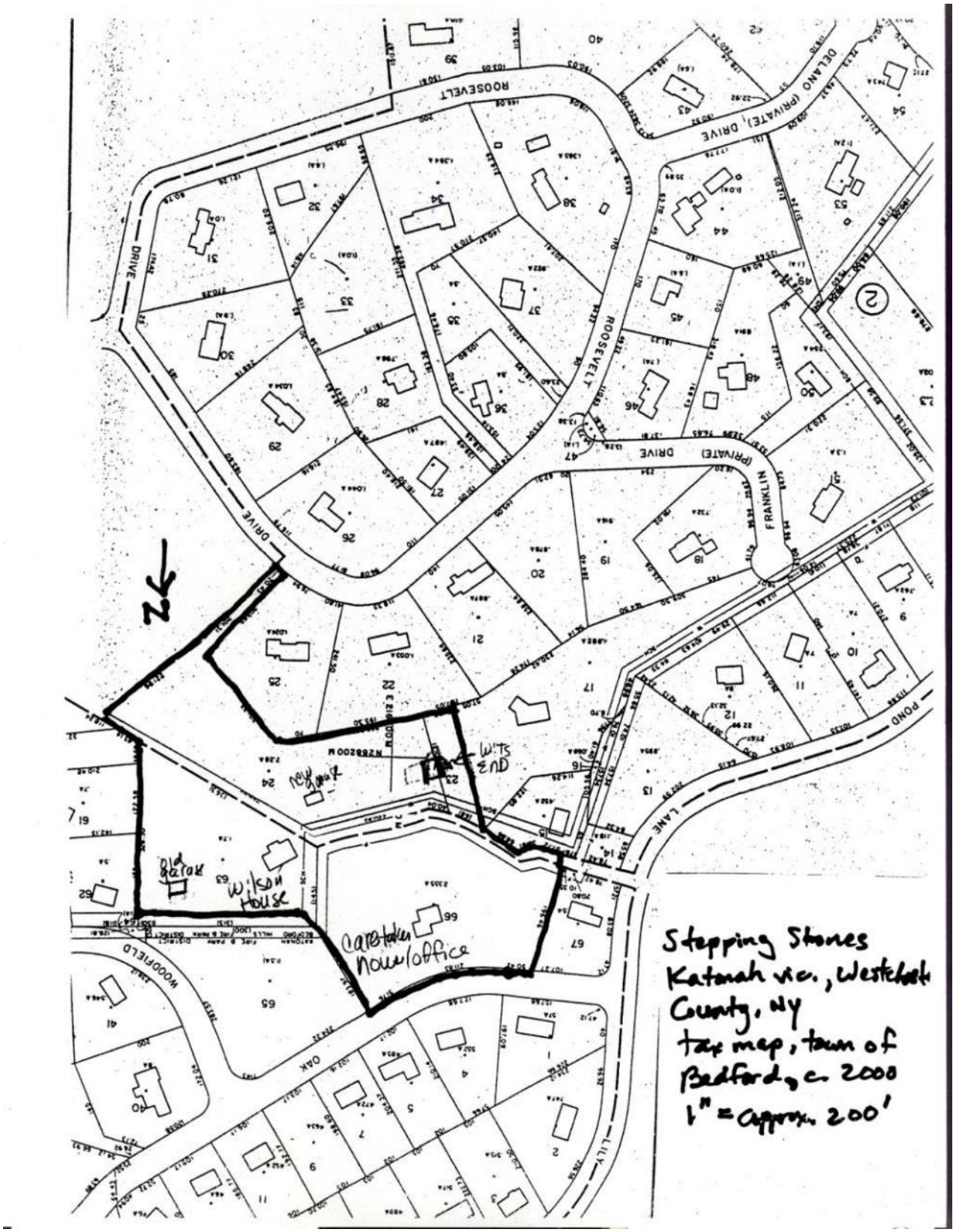
Inside the renovated 1951 Stepping Stones garage, now the Welcome Center, 2011.



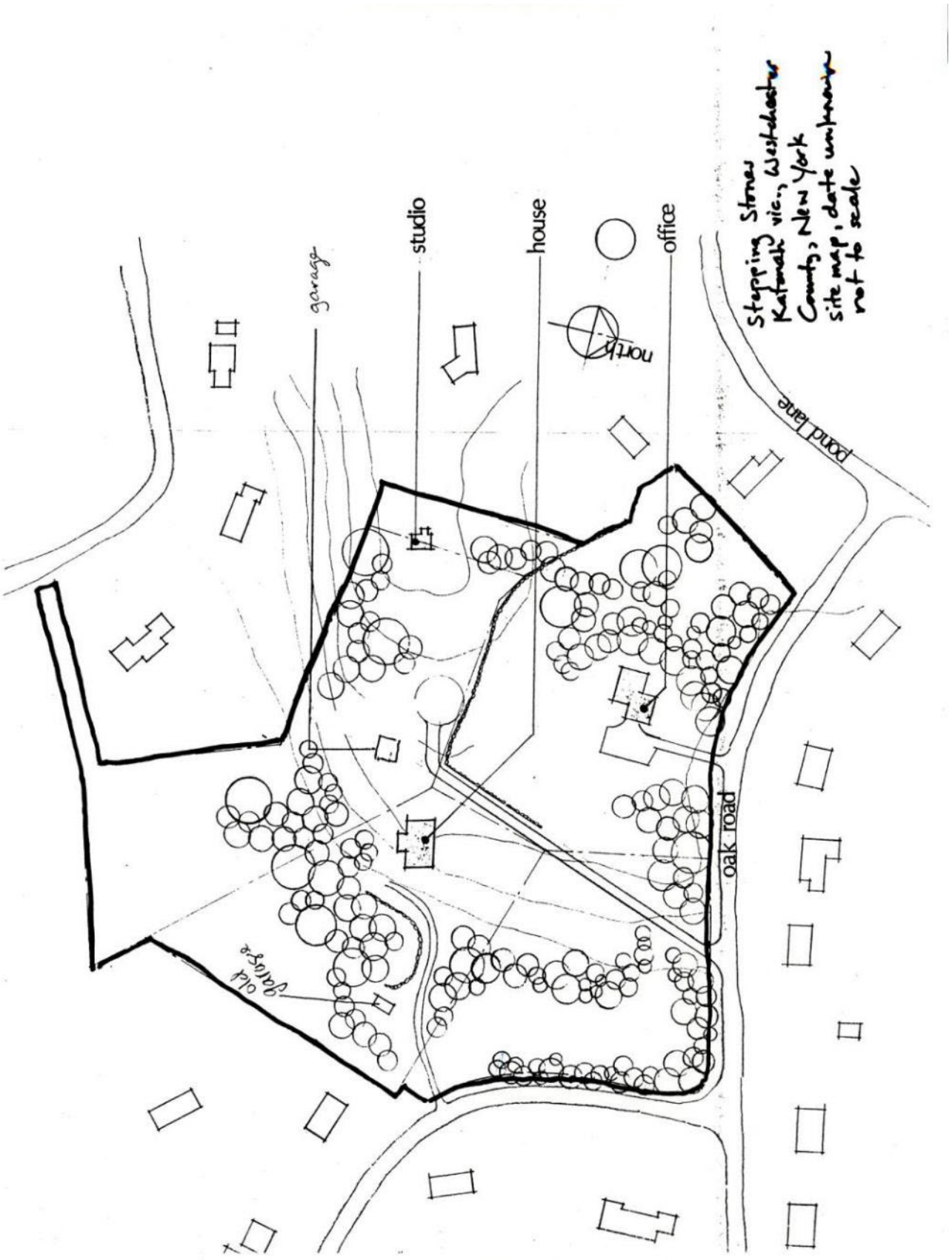
"Caretaker's House" which is central office space for Stepping Stones and includes archives. This is the building constructed by Lois Wilson in the early 1980s.


Stepping Stones
Westchester County, NY
Zone 12
E. 608833 N. 4566 975
PARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
330 000 FEET (CT)
42'30"
District No 1
Union Free Sch
Montefiore Sanitarium
Tanks
Lake Marie
Memorial Park
Cem
Bedford Hills
Sewage Disposal
Westfield
State
Farm
Sub Sta
BM 302
PARKWAY
ROAD
BEDFORD
Golf Course
Broad
Guard Hill
MOUNT KISCO
B E D F
Shallow

USGS Map



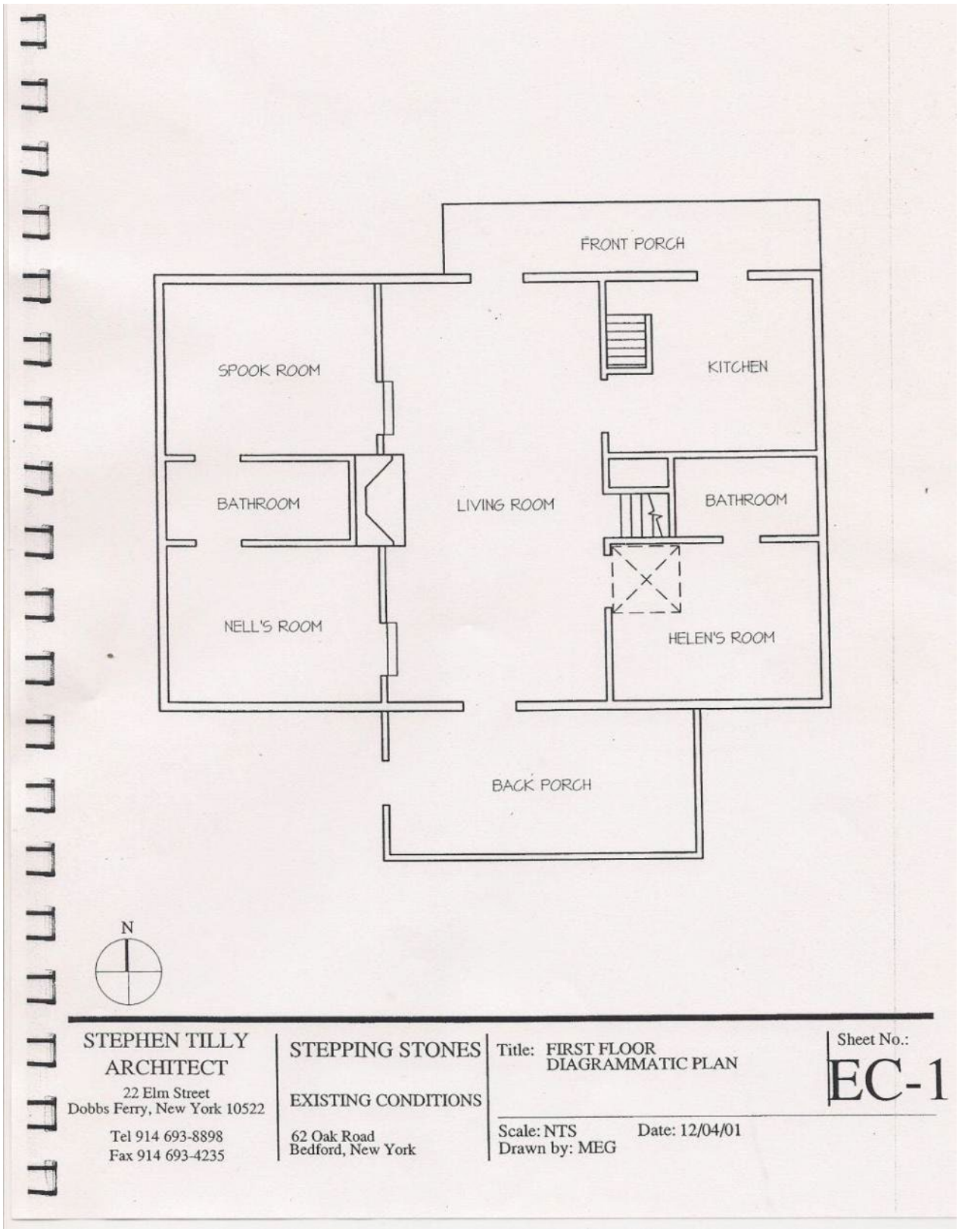
Tax Parcel Map



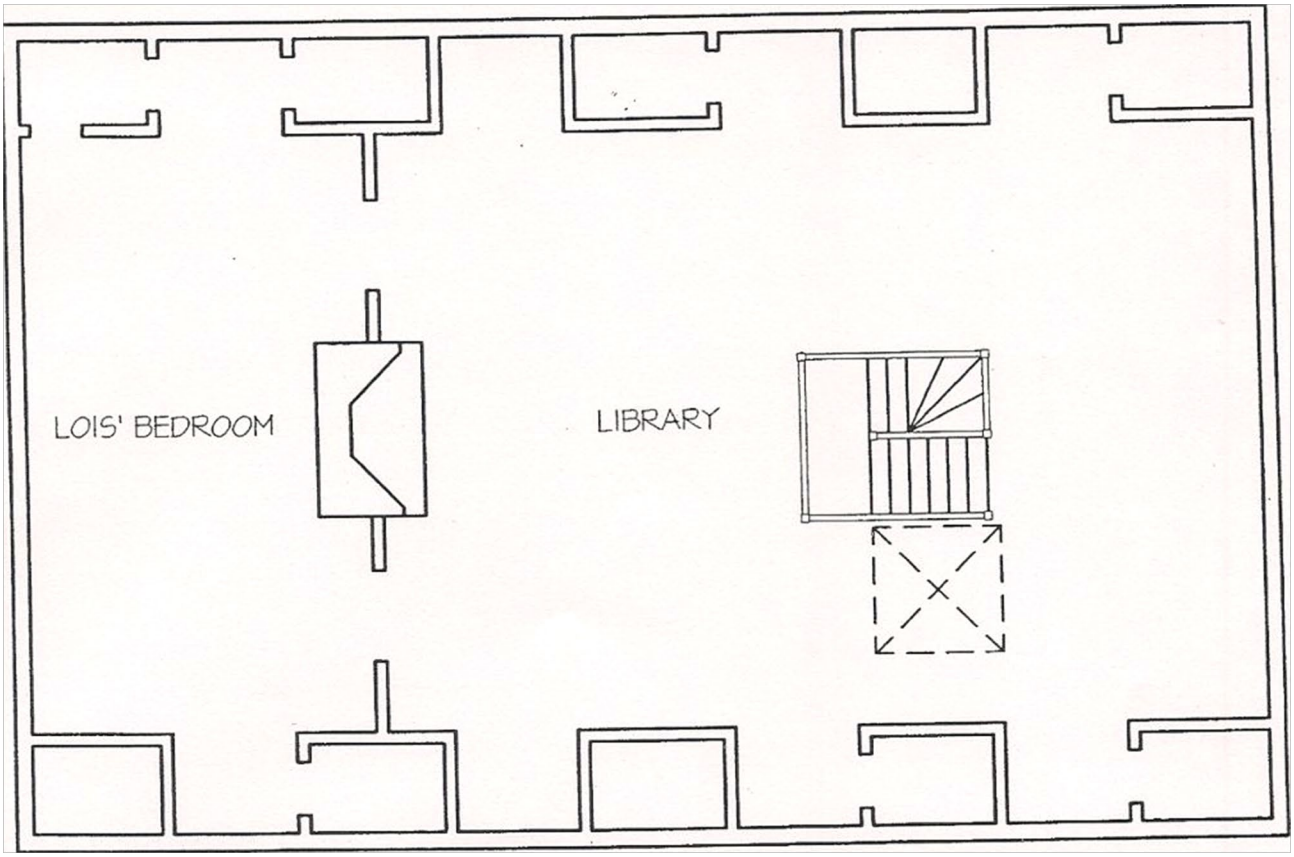
NHL Boundary Sketch Map



Stepping Stones Site Plan.



Stepping Stones main house floor plan, first floor.



Stepping Stones main house floor plan, second floor.