

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

H. P. Sutton Residence

(RW05-1)

AND/OR COMMON

"The Wright House"

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

602 Norris Avenue

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

McCook

___ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

Nebraska

CODE

031

COUNTY

Red Willow

CODE

145

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

___ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

___ STRUCTURE

___ SITE

___ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

___ PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

___ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

___ IN PROCESS

___ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

___ OCCUPIED

☒ UNOCCUPIED

___ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

___ YES: UNRESTRICTED

___ NO

PRESENT USE

___ AGRICULTURE

___ MUSEUM

___ COMMERCIAL

___ PARK

___ EDUCATIONAL

___ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

___ ENTERTAINMENT

___ RELIGIOUS

___ GOVERNMENT

___ SCIENTIFIC

___ INDUSTRIAL

___ TRANSPORTATION

___ MILITARY

___ OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Dr. J. Harold Donaldson, Jr.

STREET & NUMBER

1302 2 W

CITY, TOWN

McCook

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Red Willow County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

McCook

STATE

Nebraska

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Preservation in Nebraska

DATE

1971

___ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Nebraska State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Harvey P. Sutton house is located on a corner lot just up the hill from downtown McCook on the city's main business street. Designed from 1905-1907 by Frank Lloyd Wright, construction began in 1907 and was completed in 1908 under the supervision of Mrs. Sutton.

As originally planned by the Suttons, the house would have been an expansion and remodel of their earlier house on the site. At least two and possibly a third preliminary scheme was submitted which incorporated some of the older house but none of these were accepted by the Suttons.¹ Both schemes were cross-axial in plan, the first being a single story solution with a gable roof; the second, a two story house with low-pitched hipped roof, was a fully developed prairie style solution.

The Wright design which was built was a two story frame and stucco prairie style house with raised basement. Arranged in a modified cross-axial plan, the house had a massive central chimney which opened into the living room on the south. A large reception room on the east and a dining room on the west occupied the two wings of the house while the kitchen was located behind the fireplace to the north. The plan became somewhat complicated in the northeast part of the house in order to accomodate an extra (in this case, servant's) bedroom. Entrance was gained to the reception room by a doorway cut through the south wall at grade level and up five risers to the first floor. A broad, low-walled veranda opened off of the living room. The veranda was partially sheltered by a low cantilevered roof.

The second floor provided space for five bedrooms, a hallway, bath and an exterior balcony over the servants bedroom below. Two bedrooms occupied the space over the living room, one bedroom each in the wings over the dining and reception rooms and a bedroom and bath over the kitchen. The basement space was used primarily for the furnace and coal rooms, as well as laundry and other service functions.

Formally the house is a simple two story rectangular mass which only hints at the modified cruciform plan of the interior. The slight projection of the living room wing to the south is covered by the pronounced overhang of the long, low hipped roof of the dining room-reception room wings. The central chimney mass and the cantilevered veranda roof which visually extends the space of the living room suggests the plan relationships of the interior. The low-pitched hipped roof of the kitchen wing to the north completes the overall tee-shaped or constricted cross-axial form of the house.

1. The planning details as revealed by the correspondence between Wright's office and the Suttons are well documented in Don L. Morgan, "A Wright House on the Prairie" in Prairie School Review, II:3 (1965), pages 5-19. The text, preliminary plans and sketches and the final working drawings presented in this article form the basis for much of the information presented in this nomination.

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The external appearance, like the interior, is a much simplified interpretation of Wright's characteristic decorative vocabulary. Budget limitations (the house cost \$10,000 to complete which was \$5,000 over what the Suttons had wanted to spend) required the simplification. A strong horizontality persists in spite of the box-like two story mass of the whole. This is accentuated by the lines of the roof, the ribbons of casement windows at the ends of each wing and by the dark painted wooden window heads and sills. The cap of the veranda wall (which formerly) provided space for built-in planters) and the trim-line just above the concrete water table reinforce the horizontality. Other decorative features were limited to the leaded glass casements and the simple rectangular panels on the symmetrical south walls of the east and west wings.

The interior reflected budget limitations as well. Simple, Wright-designed wall and ceiling lights enhanced most of the major rooms of the first floor. The pressed brick fireplace of the living room, the cabinet in the dining room, and the board trim of the high wainscot and ceiling panels complete the Wrightian motifs of the interior.

The present condition of the Sutton house reflects substantial alterations over the years. In 1932 a fire of unknown origin² destroyed the cantilevered veranda roof and caused other damage. Local builders purportedly could not figure out how to rebuild the roof so large columns were built to support the weight at the veranda railing. The proportions and location of the veranda roof were also changed slightly at this time.³ Other alterations were made during World War II when the second floor was converted to apartments.

Major changes were made to the structure after Dr. J. H. Donaldson, Jr. purchased the property in 1960. The house was converted for use as a diagnostic clinic and laboratories which resulted in major spatial changes. Numerous walls and partitions were erected which has destroyed the open, flowing spaces of the original plan (see photocopy #7). A small brick addition was made to the rear (north) of the property and the original front entrance was removed to enter into the living room from the veranda. The original roof has also been replaced with asphalt shingles.

2. cf. Morgan (1965), page 18; Donaldson (1965), page 26

3. cf. photos in Morgan (1965), page 5, 18.

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In 1962 a decorative concrete block wall was erected around the entire property. This wall (photos #1, 2) which constitutes a major intrusion to the property, incorporates several fish ponds, lily pools and fountains (cherubs pouring water from vases, etc.). While it is not certain whether the interior alterations are irreversible, the block wall could be removed without damage to historic fabric.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1905-1908 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Frank Lloyd Wright

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

McCook at the turn of the century "... was a growing western town 275 miles southwest of Omaha, the result of the railroads' need for terminals and stations. At the time the Sutton House was built, McCook had a population of about 2,500 with homes and business buildings spread along the railroad from east to west. The Sutton property was seven blocks north of the railroad with only a few houses nearby. It dominated the town's main street being located on a hill overlooking the city, just two blocks south of the corn, wheat and grazing lands of the natural prairie. Mr. Sutton was the owner of the only jewelry store in McCook, an active man in community affairs and director of the C. B. & Q. Railroad Concert Band known throughout the state. Mrs. Sutton was an articulate, versatile woman who also took an active interest in community matters. She understood much about houses and their construction and later served as general contractor for her house designed by Mr. Wright.

"Frank Lloyd Wright's influence in architecture was just beginning to gain national attention in the early 1900's. The Architectural Review had published 'The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright' by R. C. Spencer, Jr. in June of 1900 and during the same year Wright was approached by Edward Bok to submit plans for publication in The Ladies Home Journal. The two designs submitted were published in the February and July, 1901 issues of the magazine, and the commission to design the Sutton house was an indirect result of this venture. It was not Wright's first design for a McCook client. Previously he had designed a house for the Charles W. Barnes family and it is presumed that Mr. and Mrs. Barnes' first contact with a Wright designed building was through The Ladies Home Journal. However, both the Barnes and the Suttons were close friends with Mrs. W. S. Marlan who was reared in Richland Center, Wisconsin, and had known Wright for many years. It was through Mrs. Marlan that the Suttons' first contact was made with the architect."⁴

4. Morgan (1965), pages 5, 6. In a letter to Mr. Wright dated January 19, 1907, Mrs. Sutton indicated that the Barnes had decided not to build (page 15).

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The Sutton residence design comes in the middle of what Manson has described as Wright's first golden age, that of the Prairie house, and should be considered among the first of a series of houses that represent the heyday of the Prairie house in Wright's career. Not considered one of Wright's more distinguished works, the Sutton house none-the-less embodies the principles, although not the detailed execution, of Prairie house design. The flowing, interconnected spaces of the plan, clearly articulated in the external massing; the strong horizontality of the form, reinforced by the low pitched roof, generous overhangs, horizontal strips of casement windows and the wood trim on the stucco walls; even the pier-like features which frame the ends of the wings of the house: all of these are characteristic of the developed Prairie house of Frank Lloyd Wright.

It is particularly interesting to note the plan-form similarities of the Sutton house with Wright's first Ladies Home Journal design. The arrangement of the major living areas and the four bedrooms above show remarkable similarities. Both show the tee-shaped or constricted cruciform plan with the major living spaces of the ground floor flowing freely into each other creating what is essentially one large room only articulated into small spaces. The rear wings (kitchen) of the two designs, however, are quite different as is the orientation of the house on the site and the location of the entry. But both have the slightly projecting pavilion of the living room with its associated veranda roof. The Sutton house shows a more literal symmetry in the two wings of the house (a symmetry which was latent in the first Ladies Home Journal design) than does the reknowned Willits house which in plan so resembles the second Journal design. In either case, the completed Willits and Sutton residences share a design vocabulary unlike either the first or second Journal design; a vocabulary more characteristic of the mature Prairie house than the earlier experiments.

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Wright felt sufficiently pleased with the project to have it exhibited with 34 other projects at the 1907 Chicago Architectural Club Annual Exhibition.⁵ While the center of the Prairie School movement was in the prairie states of the American middle west, the Sutton house represents the earliest of a very small group of Wright buildings in the Great Plains and is the only Prairie house designed by Wright in the region.⁶ The H. P. Sutton house is the only known (probably only) Wright house constructed in Nebraska.

5. Manson (1958), Appendix D, page 216.

6. Storrer's maps indicate that less than ten Wright buildings were constructed in the Great Plains region; see Storrer (1974), maps on un-numbered pages.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet Item 9

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A

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4	4	5	3	5	0
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D

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

D. Murphy, Architect

ORGANIZATION

Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

January, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

1500 R Street

TELEPHONE

(402) 432-2793

CITY OR TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Marcus B. Kott

2/14/78

TITLE

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography

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Brooks, H. Allen. The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and his
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Donaldson, J. H. Jr., M. D. "Letter to the editor" Prairie School
Review II:4 (1965), page 26.

Manson, Grant Carpenter. Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910: The First
Golden Age. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corp., 1958.

Morgan, Donald L. "A Wright House on the Prairie." Prairie School
Review II:3 (1965), pages 5-19.

Storrer, William Allin. The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright.
Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1974.



Photo 1 of 6 – general view looking northwest showing the intrusive block wall and one of the fountains

Photo by David Murphy, 1977, NSHS (7707/29:18)

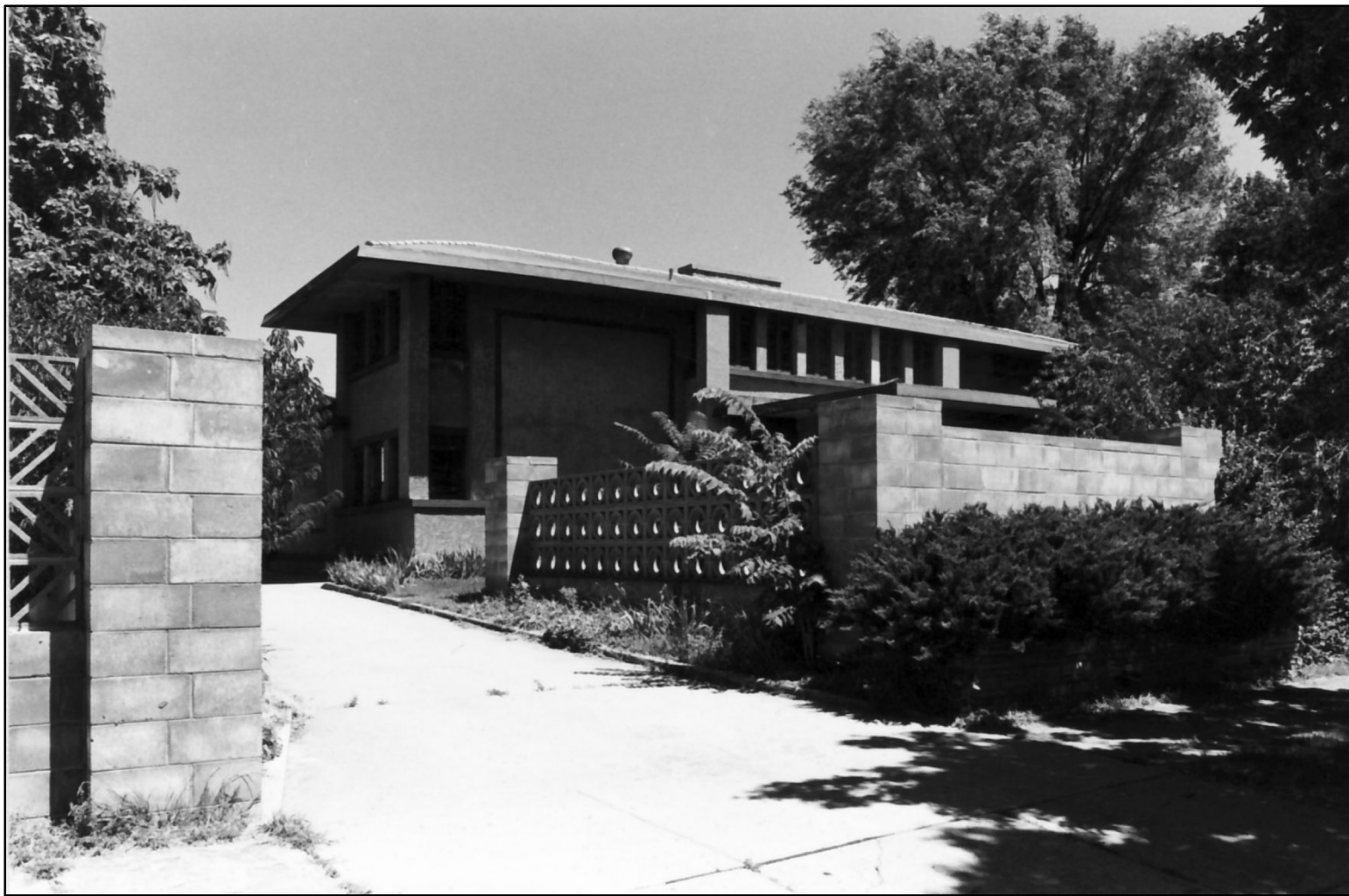


Photo 2 of 6 – general view looking north-northeast showing intrusive wall & driveway

Photo by D. Murphy, 1977, NSHS (7707/29:11)



Photo 3 of 6 – view showing the south and west facades, looking northeast

Photo by D. Murphy, 1977, NSHS (7707/29:9)



Photo 4 of 6 – view of the south and east facades, looking northwest

Photo by D. Murphy, 1977, NSHS (7707/29:24)



Photo 5 of 6 – view of the east façade showing the major additions and alterations on the north wing, looking west
Photo by D. Murphy, 1977, NSHS (7707/29:21)



Photo 6 of 6 – general view of the living room looking southeast from the fireplace toward the veranda

Photo by D. Murphy, 1977, NSHS (7707/28:34a)