

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Palmer, William B. and Mary Shuford, House

other names/site number N/A

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 227 Orchard Hills Drive not for publication  
N/A

city or town Ann Arbor vicinity N/A

state Michigan code MI county Washtenaw code 161  
zip code 48104

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally      statewide      locally. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brown  
Signature of certifying official

2/10/99  
Date

MI SHPO  
State or Federal agency and bureau



Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   0  

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

  N/A  

=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>  Domestic  </u>	Sub: <u>  single dwelling  </u>
<u>  Landscape  </u>	<u>  garden  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>  Domestic  </u>	Sub: <u>  single dwelling  </u>
<u>  Landscape  </u>	<u>  garden  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>
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<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>

=====  
7. Description  
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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

  Wrightian    
                    
                  

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation   Concrete    
roof   Wood/shingle, Metal/copper    
walls   Brick    
                    
other   Glass    
                  

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====  
8. Statement of Significance  
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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Landscape Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1950-1964  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1950-52  
1962-64

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Wright, Frank Lloyd  
Howe, John

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS) None  
 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data  
 State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 1.5 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	276040	4684060	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title Kathryn B. Eckert  
\_\_\_\_\_

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 16 November 1998

street & number 4940 E. Golfview Dr., P. O. Box 525 telephone 616/256-7662

city or town Leland state MI zip code 49654  
=====

Additional Documentation  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage  
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
Property Owner  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name William B. And Mary Shuford Palmer  
\_\_\_\_\_

street & number 227 Orchard Hills Drive telephone 734/668-6024

city or town Ann Arbor state MI zip code 48104  
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=====  
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

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### Physical Description

The William B. and Mary Shuford Palmer House, built in 1950-1951, is a multilevel brick and cypress late period Frank Lloyd Wright house, the plan and design of which is based on the equilateral triangle. The house is sheltered by a long broad hipped roof with deep overhangs. The cantilever extending over the terrace is the most dramatic feature of the house. The walls are finished with brick that ranges from pale pink to light grayish yellowish brown, and the roof with wood shingles and copper flashing. The trim is clear grained cypress. The house rests on a red-tinted concrete mat. The chimney mass rises above the brick base and the roof. A window band encircles the house. Terraces extend from the porch off the living room of the house. Shallow stairs rise gradually to the main front entrance. The house has three wings arranged off the main entrance: Beyond the entrance to the north, the long loggia of the carport extends to the projecting tool shed; to the east is the triangular living room wing; to the southwest the compact bedroom wing. The open interior is fitted with Wright-designed furniture and built-in cabinetry. The unique house is off a quiet unpaved road in a comfortable upper middle class subdivision close to the University of Michigan campus. Accessed from Orchard Hills Drive and the west, the house is carved into the crest of a hogback. The living area of the house overlooks to the southeast a downward sloping informal garden planted with deciduous trees and evergreens, shrubs, ground cover, bulbs and wildflowers. Paths lead from the grassy terrace off the living room, down the hill by the garden house, and meander over and along streams and a collecting pool and through the rest of the garden. The Palmer house exemplifies Wright's open, American organic architecture in which all parts are related to the whole and are linked to the environment in an adaptation of form to nature.

The Palmer house is a single family dwelling with an attached carport set in a landscape garden. The house has approximately 1,900 square feet of living space.

The house is on a one-and one-half acre site that comprises three contiguous lots (lots 20 [south], 21 [house] and 22 [north]) of Orchard Hills Number One Subdivision at 227 Orchard Hills Drive. This upper middle-class neighborhood of Ann Arbor was annexed to the city less than one year ago from Ann Arbor Township. The lots are situated off Orchard Hills Drive, a narrow, winding, quiet road with an unpaved surface that enhances the neighborhood's rural character. Orchard Hills Drive is just over one mile from the University of Michigan campus. The house and the landscape are harmonious.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

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The design of the Palmer house is based on an equilateral triangle. That is, the very footprint of the house is a triangle, and many details are triangles. The plan is open without full basement or attic. The house is divided into three wings connected by the entrance hall: the loggia of the carport and tool storage shed, the living room wing, and the bedroom wing. The low ceiling main entrance lobby at the northwest, with the kitchen, and, in turn, the pantry, formerly the children's mud room, just north of the entrance hall, gives way dramatically to the living room to the east. The ceiling of the living room rises to the full height of the roof. The low ceiling of the entrance lobby continues as a lighting deck at the door height of seven feet seven inches, and this deck, into which cove lighting is placed, runs around all three sides of the living room. In the living room cypress boards and battens laid horizontally form the ceiling on all three sides of the underside of the roof. The ceiling rises to a central peak. In the south corner of the living room is the large fireplace. Next to it on the southwest a built-in seat defines the living room. In the north corner is the dining table, and just to the west of the dining table is the kitchen. Off the kitchen is a service door and small pantry that once served as the mud room for the children's overclothes. From the kitchen workspace a narrow stairway descends to the carport, and, at the foot of these stairs, a parallel flight of stairs descends further to a small subterranean heating and storage room located beneath the kitchen. Both flights of stairs are parallel to the stairs rising to the main entrance.

To the southeast off the entrance hall three low-rising steps ascend to the compact and private bedroom wing. The dogleg bedroom gallery into which a desk is tucked behind the entrance hall leads to the narrower gallery that continues to the bedroom section. Here, the gallery widens to access the bedrooms. Off the gallery are arranged the master bedroom and bathroom, two small bedrooms, a bathroom, and a linen closet. At the southeast end of the gallery is a small sunken study with a sky-light. The entire west wall of the gallery is lined with bookshelves, above which a frieze of perforated ceramic blocks admits light. The ceiling of the bedroom gallery is six feet six inches in height, and the lighting deck of the bedrooms is at this height. The ceilings of the bedrooms rise with the underside of the roof, however, lending a sense of spaciousness to the small rooms. A small fireplace is tucked into the north corner of the master bedroom.

From the main entrance the loggia of the carport extends north to the projecting tool shed, the lower level of which has a room for the storage of garden equipment that opens to the hillside below. This loggia and the gently rising red concrete steps under its roof make the approach to the Palmer house and the main entrance one of the best Wright ever designed. The concrete pad

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

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is radiant heated after it enters the house. Opposite the glazed front doors is a small coat closet.

The house is multilevel with low-rising stairs connecting the carport and the driveway to the main entrance, and from the entrance lobby to the bedroom gallery.

Sand-molded bricks in a range of warm pale pink to light grayish yellowish brown laid in common bond with raked horizontal joints and flush vertical joints rise in the walls. The brick was manufactured by the Claycraft Company at its Upper Sandusky, Ohio, kiln. The brick is known as "Cranbrook brick" because it is the same as that used by Eero Saarinen at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills. Clear grained cypress trims both the exterior and the interior of the house. Horizontal boards and battens of cypress line the ceiling beneath the roof, the lighting deck, and the core partition walls. The interior partition walls are plywood core covered with horizontal boards and battens of cypress fastened to the plywood with brass screws. Running through the plywood core is the electrical wiring. The floor is concrete dyed red, scored into triangular shapes, and worn and waxed to a rich patina. The concrete floor carries the radiant heat.

The broad sheltering roof projects outward to cover the terrace off the living room and the loggia and the carport. Wood shingles and copper flashing cover the roof.

The house is constructed on a concrete slab. Steel supports the cantilevered roof that projects over the porch off the living room and much of the structure.

An open porch with a built-in seat and the upper terrace are off the east end of the living room. A long pointed cantilevered roof upheld by two strong brick piers inset with lights shelters both the porch and the beginning of the terrace. A pair of glazed doors between the brick piers opens to the porch and the upper terrace. The terrace descends in three tiers to connect the house with the garden.

Three pair of glazed doors open off the southeast wall of the living room. Another pair of glazed doors opens from the living room to the porch and terrace. A bank of casement windows runs along the north wall of the living room and the southeast wall of all three bedrooms. Windows are mitered in all corners of the living room and in the corners of the master and south bedrooms. Skylights are in the kitchen, study, and master bathroom. Interior doors are veneered with clear grained cypress laid vertically.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

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The massive brick chimney rises through the house at the southeast corner of the living room carrying flues for both the living room and master bedroom fireplaces.

Extended brick retaining walls tie the building to the site at the driveway and near the entrance. Brick walls define the upper and middle terraces. Plans called for a brick wall to run along the southeast of the house, but the Palmers, with Wright's concurrence, eliminated this, because it was too costly and it would have been a barrier between the house and the garden.

Important decorative elements are the perforated ceramic blocks in a range of warm pink to light yellowish brown. The ceramic blocks were fired at the Claycraft Company kiln in Upper Sandusky, Ohio, which also supplied the brick. The blocks were fired and glass inserted between them. The perforated blocks band the house above eye level creating a "frieze of light" and warming the interior space. They occur on the west wall of the bedroom gallery and above and below the cabinets in the interior and exterior walls of the kitchen and pantry.

Another decorative element is the triangular light fixture on a triangular pier at the entrance. Detailing the interior are all elements needed to furnish a house. The living room couch, chairs, tables, hassocks, dining table and chairs, and built in storage cabinetry under the windows of the north wall all lend themselves to arrangements for varied uses. In the bedroom wing, as in the living room, the furniture was designed by Mr. Wright and was made of red tidewater cypress as specified. All beds and built-in cabinetry serve not only their specified use but make for the cohesiveness of a Wright-designed home.

The significant interior feature of the Palmer house is the design. It employs the geometric use of a T-shaped plan of equilateral triangles. Three wings project from the entrance point: the loggia and carport wing, living room wing -- including the kitchen and pantry, formerly the mudroom -- and the bedroom wing. The wings are covered with hipped and sloped wood-shingled and copper-flashed roofs that form great horizontal planes. Leonard K. Eaton, Emil Lorch Professor Emeritus, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, the University of Michigan, observes that the nesting of fractal forms is best seen at two points in the house---the entry way and the fireplace. "At these places one encounters not only actual triangles but also implied (truncated) triangles. The result is a three-dimensional geometry of bewildering complexity. At the entrance there are not only the triangles composing the ceramic ornament, there is also a triangular light fixture atop of a triangular pier. There is a triangle jutting forward overhead, and triangles in the red-tinted concrete slabs underfoot. The fireplace hearth is a

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

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triangular cavity enclosed between triangular piers. The concrete slab on which the grate rests is a triangle. Overhead are the triangular soffit lights and the larger triangles of the ceiling. The hassocks are truncated triangles. Perhaps the most amazing detail in the entire house is the cast iron triangle on which the fireplace implements rest.....it is as if Wright were hiding a clue at the hearth, or heart, of the structure."<sup>1</sup>

The plumbing fixtures in the two bathrooms are original to the house. The kitchen appliances, including the stainless steel Thermodor ovens and cooktop range, and the refrigerator are original to the house. The stainless steel kitchen countertops and sinks are original.

The garden house is the only outbuilding. Jack H. Howe, chief assistant to Wright and head of the drafting room at Taliesin, designed the garden house as a place for small intimate gatherings. It was built in 1964. Like the house, the plan and design of the garden house is based on an equilateral triangle, and, in fact, the building employs the same vocabulary as the house. The brick, perforated ceramic block, and wood shingles are the same as the materials of the house. The roof of the garden house terminates in a finial recalling the chattrra of the ancient Buddhist stupa. The garden house is tucked into the side of the southern slope of the hill. Inside, to the southwest of the entrance a sunken triangular conversation area is arranged around a table. Here, from within, one is serenely and intimately surrounded by the rich variety of native and ornamental vegetation. A fireplace stands in the corner opposite the sunken seating area, and behind the fireplace and chimney wall are a tiny kitchen and a lavatory. Glass windows on the two walls flanking the sunken seating arrangement slide open to screens. Redwood boards and battens placed horizontally line the ceiling below the roof.

The landscape of the Palmer house at 227 Orchard Hills Drive comprises three contiguous one-half acre lots. The house stands on lot 21, the middle lot. The landscape has evolved from the remains of an old orchard, a stand of white pine, and an assortment of native Michigan deciduous trees, including hickory, elm, locust and walnut. For over forty years the Palmer family has developed this landscape as an inseparable and harmonious partner with the house.

The house is tucked neatly into the hogback at the west, and on the southeast the living room and the bedrooms afford clear views of the surrounding landscape garden on the ravine below.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

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The landscape comprises two distinct zones:

- 1) The three-tiered terrace, a large flat plateau originally bounded by a taxus hedge and perennial border, apple and pear trees, and white pine and native hickory and oak overstory trees, is located on the east side of the site. The grassy upper and middle terraces are connected by low rising steps and are now defined by flanking brick walls. The flat space of the middle terrace was created by the grading of soil off the hogback. A lantern designed by Jack Howe and installed in 1964 marks the entrance to the lower terrace and the garden itself. From the lantern stepping stones lead down to the plateau or terrace on which the garden house is situated.
- 2) The copse, a native overstory of walnut, hickory, ash and oak complemented by ornamental plantings of ground cover and flowering shrubs, and curvilinear pathways, is located on the south side of the site. The copse was the setting for what became the wild garden. The wild garden is characterized by evergreen shrubs, ferns and ground cover accented with wildflowers and bulbs and curvilinear paths. For a listing of plant materials, see the appendix.

Approached on foot from the terrace, the garden is connected by a system of curvilinear paths laid with wood chips. The garden is "a stroll garden" in the Japanese sense of the phrase, and experienced best as one walks along the one-third mile of interconnected paths. From the north of the northernmost lot a service drive enters the garden.

An eighteenth century Japanese lantern stands low in the garden valley next to a stream east of the living room.

A feature of the garden is evidence of the dry stream which has its season and own life when it rains and when it is artificially watered. A small pool overflows, dividing and meandering down the hill, collecting in a low pool lined with stones, then runs off on its way to the Huron River.

The streams are spanned by two bridges: One is one-half of a longitudinal section of a large log; the other is constructed of small split logs that imitate the vertical log retaining walls found along the paths.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   7  

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There have been no alterations to the property. The house and landscaped garden possess full integrity. Everything has been meticulously maintained.

1. Leonard K Eaton, "Fractal Geometry in the late Work of Frank Lloyd Wright; the Palmer House." Nexus II: Architecture and Mathematics (Firenze, Italy, 1998) 35.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

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### Statement of Significance

The William B. and Mary Shuford Palmer House, designed and built in 1950-1951, is significant as one of the finest late works of master architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). The house is considered one of the best of a long series of houses based on a module which is either an equilateral triangle or a parallelogram. The house rests comfortably tucked into a hogback and surrounded by a lush informal garden that drops down the ravine to the east and southeast. The landscape garden possesses superior aesthetic quality and constitutes an important artistic statement. The house and the landscape garden meet national register criterion C in the area of architecture as one of the finest late works of master architect Frank Lloyd Wright in America and in the area of landscape architecture as one of the most luxurious and successful landscapes of all of Wright's commissions. The landscape garden was created in harmony with the house with the advice and actions of knowledgeable friends and from the Palmers' own research and travel.

William B. Palmer (b.1907) spent his entire academic life at the University of Michigan. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in economics, taught in the Economics Department, and retired from the university in 1976. He was born and raised in Imlay City, Michigan, an agricultural center in Lapeer County. His father was a banker, and the family's historic home on the main street is currently a funeral home. In 1937 William B. Palmer married Mary Wharton Shuford.

Mary Wharton Shuford (b.1916) earned her Bachelor of Music degree from the School of Music, the University of Michigan, in 1937. She was born and raised in Conover, North Carolina. Her father, Adrian L. Shuford, was successful in business. Both her grandmother and her mother, Annie Shuford, who was the secretary of the state association of garden clubs in North Carolina, instilled in Mary a love of learning and of gardening.

After their marriage in 1937, the Palmers moved into a farmhouse they bought and remodeled at 2024 Geddes Avenue, only a short walk to the site of their present house at 227 Orchard Hills Drive. In 1940 a son, Adrian, was born, in 1942 a daughter, Mary Louise. While living at this location on Geddes Avenue, the Palmers became acquainted with their neighbors and developed a circle of friends who influenced their decision to acquire the site on Orchard Hills Drive and who later offered advice and assistance with their garden.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

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Across the street from the Palmers' house at 2024 Geddes Avenue lived Charlotte Sanders (Mrs. Henry Arthur Sanders), an expert gardener who counted among her friends the best and most avid gardeners in Ann Arbor. Charlotte Sanders introduced the Palmers to a wide circle of knowledgeable people in Ann Arbor, including Elizabeth Inglis, the widow of James Inglis. The English garden on the eight-and-one-half-acre site of the Neo-Tudor James and Elizabeth Inglis House (1918, Lilburn Woodworth) at 2301 Highland Road was one of the state's showplaces. The gardens comprised a formal garden, a cutting garden, a meadow, an orchard, and wildflower areas. The Inglises also had a tennis court and a three-hole golf course on their property. Before retiring in Ann Arbor, Mr. Inglis had owned the American Blower Company, manufacturer of fans for cooling the automobile factories of Detroit. Elizabeth Inglis gave Inglis House, including the greenhouse and landscape garden, to the University of Michigan for use as the president's house (although it was never used for that purpose).

In 1949 Mrs. Inglis informed Mrs. Palmer that the road behind the Inglis house on Highland Road was to be extended for a subdivision and met her at the site with the words, "Mary, this is the most beautiful piece of property left in Ann Arbor." At Mrs. Inglis's suggestion, in 1949 the Palmers purchased as a site for a new house both high and low pieces of land—lots 20 and 21 that included the hogback and the valley filled with deciduous trees. The lots were part of the Bishop property. Six years later, in 1955, they acquired lot 22 from Edmund Devine.

In the meantime, to make an informed judgement on the selection of an architect for their future house, Mrs. Palmer began educating herself on residential architecture by reading books available in the library of the university's College of Architecture. She read Frank Lloyd Wright's An Autobiography (New York and London, 1932, revised 1943 and 1945) and Henry Russell Hitchcock's In the Nature of Materials (New York, 1942) and became an enthusiastic follower of Wright's philosophy. Her readings about Wright's architecture and a visit to the Gregor S. and Elizabeth B. Affleck House (1941, Frank Lloyd Wright) in Bloomfield Hills in 1947/1948 convinced the Palmers that they would ask Wright to design their house.

Having prepared topographical maps and taken photographs of the site on Orchard Hills Drive, and having prepared a letter outlining the family's requirements for a house, the Palmers scheduled a meeting with Wright in May 1950 in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he was giving a lecture. Wright agreed to design a house for the Palmers. Although Wright had had two clients in Ann Arbor, the plans for these houses were never executed. Wright may have sensed the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

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commitment of the Palmers to follow through and build the house from plans he would draw, and he may have seen the Palmer commission as an opportunity to influence young architecture students and the faculty at the College of Architecture at the University of Michigan, where the emphasis then was on Mies van der Rohe and the Bauhaus.

Born in Richland Center, Wisconsin, in 1867, Frank Lloyd Wright is of the American tradition of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. His inspiration was drawn from the soil. Seeking a restful environment for occupants of his houses, Wright evolved a new concept of interior spaces, in which their functions overlap and are defined by the user. Wright's early training with Froebel kindergarten gifts instilled in him a sense of order and proportion. His summers on his uncle's farm gave him an appreciation for the land, nature, and the materials that nature produced. Wright took some mechanical drawing and basic mathematics courses at the University of Wisconsin, then worked in the offices of J. L. Silsbee and of Adler and Sullivan in Chicago before going on his own. He evolved the prairie house, the Usonian house, and, in his late period, extremely varied works that grew out of his earlier experiments in unorthodox shapes and forms. Wright died at Taliesin West, his winter retreat, in 1959.

Mrs. Palmer's mother, Annie Shuford, had kept up with her daughter's readings in architecture and her search for an architect for their house in Ann Arbor. The Palmers had the full support of the Shufords for their choice of Wright as an architect, and the Shufords assisted the couple substantially with the construction costs as they had with the land acquisition cost.

In the fall of 1950 the Palmers traveled to Taliesin East in Spring Green, Wisconsin, to pick up the plans for the house. Returning to Ann Arbor, they engaged Erwin Neithammer of Ann Arbor to build the house. Neithammer's son-in-law, Paul McDowell, was the master carpenter. Construction began that fall, and the house was completed in December 1951. The Palmers moved in at Christmastime.

Wright based his design for the Palmer house on the equilateral triangle as the module. Leonard K. Eaton notes, "it is the particular contribution of the Palmer house that Wright's manipulation of the triangular module reveals with special clarity, dramatically and beyond debate, his intuition of what we now recognize as fractal geometry—a discipline that was neither named nor recognized in his lifetime."<sup>1</sup> A fractal is a geometrical figure in which an identical motif repeats itself on an ever diminishing scale.<sup>2</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

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The Ocatillo Desert Camp of 1927 in Arizona was the first executed building in which Wright used the triangle as a planning module. Equilateral triangles serve as units in a parallelogram in Wright's Carl Wall House ([the Snowflake] 1941, Plymouth, Michigan), among others.

The Palmer house exemplifies Wright's organic architecture. The plan is free and non-essentials are eliminated. Both the basement and the attic of earlier traditional American houses have disappeared. A substantial fireplace and chimney rises through the center of the house. The closed spaces overhead of traditional houses were added to the rooms and used to live in. The interior space, not the container, seems as the reality of the building. The kitchen workspace is incorporated with the living room as the open plan. The furniture is built in. Floor space everywhere is living space, and it is expanded by terraces. A sense of broad shelter is emphasized overhead as the outside and inside mingle.

The Palmer house is significant as one of the finest works of Wright's late period. Frank Lloyd Wright entered his late period after World War Two, and it lasted sixteen years until his death in 1959. The period was a time of new vision for the architect, in which his buildings seemed to grow from the inside out and take advantage of the new technology. At this time Wright designed the Guggenheim Museum in New York City and Unity Church in Madison, Wisconsin, as well as the Palmer house, and many other projects. In 1943 Wright began designing the revolutionary Guggenheim Museum, and its construction was begun in 1959. The museum is a continuous ramp around an interior court, its plastic form resulting from concrete molded into curvilinear shapes reinforced by steel. In 1947 the church for the First Unitarian Society in Madison, Wisconsin, was built in Shorewood Hills, Wisconsin. Here the narthex, nave and chancel are gathered into one unit which serves as auditorium, chapel and parish hall. The triangular roof, which resembles the prow of a ship or praying hands, functions as the steeple. In this period Wright designed mostly residences. The Palmer house displays one of the most daring and dramatic cantilevered roofs ever created by Wright.<sup>3</sup> The roof reaches out from the living and dining area to cover the porch and connect the house with the terrace.

In their development of the Palmer house landscape garden, the Palmers were greatly influenced by Wright and his architects and their University of Michigan and Ann Arbor friends and acquaintances, by their travels abroad, and by books. All three cultivated the Palmers' tastes and attitudes. All three influenced plant choice, path alignment, and color and texture schemes in the landscape. Gardening was the favorite pastime of the Palmers.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

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Frank Lloyd Wright and his chief assistant, Jack Howe, designed the house and the garden house respectively in a way that established a dynamic relationship of the buildings with their site. In siting the buildings, they created the need for sculpting the land during construction. The Wrightian philosophy of architecture and landscape in harmony is reflected in the development of this landscape.

The Palmers undertook in two phases the development of the landscape garden from its original state as an old orchard, a stand of white pine, and an assortment of deciduous trees. From the beginning, in 1952, with the grading of the entrance driveway, to its present maturity, the landscape was perceived as an integral extension of the house. From 1952 to 1966 the terrace was developed. From 1960 to 1970 the copse became the setting for what became the wildflower garden.

Friends, acquaintances and professionals, in particular Elizabeth Inglis and Charlotte Sanders, influenced the shaping of the Palmer house landscape garden at 227 Orchard Hills Drive. Mrs. Sanders cultivated the tastes of the Palmers and exposed them to fine plant specimens. Mrs. Inglis was a great influence through her garden, friends and help. Other influential people included Estelle and Mischa Titiev, May Brown (Mrs. Everett Brown), Sadye and Eugene Power, Stanley Cain, and Charles W. Cares, Jr. Also helpful were John and Ruby Dillon, Ferruccio and Alice Filie, Laurence Scott and Gerald Naylor, Tom Thompson, and Elmer Meyers. Three landscape professionals, E. Allan McClellan, Steve Toth and Rudolf Wortmann, assisted the Palmers with grading, the location of paths, advice and implementation.

Books about ferns, trees, shrubs and vines, song birds, wildflowers and Japanese and Chinese gardens read by the Palmers influenced the shaping of the Palmer house landscape. Among the books that Mrs. Palmer considers most important are the following: Cecil Billington's Ferns of Michigan (Bloomfield Hills, MI, 1952), F. Gordon Foster's Ferns to Know and Grow (New York, 1971; Portland, OR, 1971, 1984, 1993), Donald Wyman's Trees for American Gardens (c. 1951, 1961, 1965, 1990), John K. Terres's Song Birds in Your Garden (1953), Clarence Hylander's Wildflower Book, David Harris Engel's Japanese Gardens for Today (1959), Tetsuro Yoshida's The Japanese House and Garden [Gardens of Japan (1955, trans., 1957), Samuel Newsom's A Dwarfed Tree Manual for Westerners, Saito, Wada, The Magic of Trees and Stones, Jiro Harada's, Japanese Gardens (1956), and Osvald Siren's Gardens of China (c. 1949).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

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The Palmers traveled extensively throughout the world, and the places they visited influenced the shape their landscape has taken. They took three world tours in 1962 and 1969. In preparation for their travels, they read about foreign cultures and studied Japanese language, art and culture. The tours took them to Japan, Italy, and India; Thailand, Cambodia, Java, Indonesia, Bali, Tahiti, the Fiji Islands, and Mexico; and India, Ceylon, Kenya, Tanganyika, South Africa, Brazil, and Columbia. In other trips they visited England, Copenhagen, Brussels, Holland, and Spain. These travels and inspections of Asian gardens broadened the Palmers' knowledge of other cultures and philosophies of life and exposed them to ancient and very successful gardening techniques.

Leonard K. Eaton, Emil Lorch Professor Emeritus, College of Architecture and Urban Design, the University of Michigan, prepared this statement about the significance of the Palmer house and landscape:

The Palmer house of 1950-1951 in Ann Arbor, Michigan is one of Frank Lloyd Wright's very finest late works. It is probably the best of a long series of houses based on a module which is either an equilateral triangle or a parallelogram. According to John Howe, Mr. Wright's chief assistant, Wright himself "...would have placed the Palmer house at the top of his list." When one considers that his list would, in his later years, have included the Hanna house, now the property of Stanford University, and Fallingwater, a house so important that it is on a postage stamp, one has some idea of the measure of this compliment. Scholars from all over the world have enthused on the quality of the Palmer house. Its admirers include James Marston Fitch, Bruno Zevi and the late Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as well as the American community of Wright scholars who have had the privilege of visiting it. The Palmer house is a brilliant solution to the problem of a difficult site, and is a magnificent spatial experience.

In an evaluation of the Palmer house certain other factors should be noted. At this writing, the Palmers have lived in the house for 45 years and they have given it superb maintenance. It contains all the original furnishings, most of which were designed by Wright. Furthermore, they have surrounded the house with a garden as fine as their building. In its union of dwelling and landscape the Palmer house is a "place" in the 18<sup>th</sup> century English sense of the word, and it is thus most unusual in the canon of works by Wright. Too many of his best works have been spoiled by uncaring owners or insensitive neighbors. The visitor to the Palmer house today will understand why Frank Lloyd

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

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Wright visited the house twice in the last decade of his life. These visits were unusual. It was a period when he was extremely busy with the construction of many large buildings across the country. It is likely that he never saw most of the houses he designed in the years 1949-1959. But he liked the Palmer house well enough to stay overnight there. The Palmer house is one of the great treasures of American architecture, and it should be preserved for future generations nearly as intact as possible.<sup>4</sup>

Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, trustee and director of the Archives for the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation in Scottsdale, Arizona, states: "Horticulture being the favorite pastime of the Palmers, this is one of the most luxurious and successfully landscaped of all Wright's commissions. The ravine was turned into a marvelous Japanese garden, seemingly free and wild, but in fact carefully groomed."<sup>5</sup>

The Palmers have lived in and meticulously maintained the house and garden for forty-six years. The William B. and Mary Shuford Palmer House possesses full integrity.

The Palmers are members of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy and share a concern for the preservation of the house and the garden. From the conservancy they have gained many useful ideas as they plan for the future stewardship of the house and garden.

1. Leonard K. Eaton, "Fractal Geometry in the Late Work of Frank Lloyd Wright: the Palmer House," Nexus II: Architecture and Mathematics (Kim Williams, editor, 1998) 37.

2. This is as defined by Hans Lauwerier (Fractals: Endlessly Repeated Geometric Figures [Princeton, 1991] in Eaton. Ibid. 29.

3. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer and David Larkin. Frank Lloyd Wright: The Masterworks. (New York, 1993) 235.

4. Eaton, Leonard K., Emil Lorch Professor Emeritus, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, The University of Michigan. The Palmer House.

5. Pfeiffer and Larkin. Ibid. 235.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

### Appendix A List of Plant Materials

William B. and Mary Shuford Palmer House, Ann Arbor MI

List Revised by Mary Palmer and Craig Terrell 1998

#### Deciduous Trees

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Origin</u>
Acer ginnala	Amur Maple	Japan, China, Mongolia
Carya glabra	Pignut Hickory	Native
Carya ovata	Shagbark Hickory	Native
Cercis canadensis	Redbud	Native
Cornus florida	Florida Dogwood	Native
Cornus kousa	Kousa Dogwood	Japan, Korea, China
Cornus mas	Cornelliancherry Dogwood	Europe
Craetegus mollis	Downy Hawthorne	Native
Ginko biloba	Ginko	China
Juglans nigra	Black Walnut	Native
Magnolia stellata	Star Magnolia	Japan
Malus pumula	Apple	Europe
Malus sp.	Apple	Europe
Populus delioides	Eastern Cottonwood	Native
Prunus serotina	Black Cherry	Native
Pyrus communis	Pear	Europe
Quercus rubra	Red Oak	Native
Quercus velutina	Black Oak	Native
Robinia pseudoacacia	Black Locust	SE United States
Ulmus americana	American Elm	Native

#### Evergreen Trees

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Origin</u>
Chamcycypris pisifera	Japanese Falsecypress	Japan
Picea glauca 'Albertiana'	Hybrid (engelmannii x glauca)	Canada
Picea glauca 'Conica'	Dwarf Alberta Spruce	Canada
Picea pungens	Blue Spruce	SW United States

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 16

Pinus nigra	Austrian Pine	Europe
Pinus strobus	White Pine	Native
Pinus sylvestrus	Scots Pine	Europe
Taxus baccata 'repandens'	Spreading English Yew	Europe
Taxus cuspidata	Japanese Yew	Japan
Thuja occidentalis	White Spruce	Native
Tsuga canadensis	Hemlock	Native

## Deciduous Shrubs

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Origin</u>
Calycanthus floridus	Carolina Allspice	SE United States
Euonymus alatus	Winged Euonymus	China
Hibiscus syriacus	Rose-of-Sharon	China, India
Paeonia suffruticosa	Mountain peony	China
Pyracantha coccinea	Scarlet Firethorn	Europe
Rhodotypos scandens	Black Jetbead	Japan, China
Viburnum plicatum 'Mariesii'	Doublefile Viburnum	Japan, China
Viburnum quercifolia	Oak-leaf Hydrangea	SE United States
Viburnum rhytidophyllum	Leatherleaf Viburnum	China
Viburnum trilobium	Highbush Cranberry	Native

## Evergreen Shrubs

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Origin</u>
Buxus sempervirens	Common Box	Europe, Africa, Asia
Buxus sempervirens 'Inglis'	Inglis Boxwood	Europe, Africa, Asia
Euonymus fortunei 'Emerald Gaiety'	Wintercreeper Euonymus	China
Euonymus fortunei 'Manhattan'	Wintercreeper Euonymus	China
Euonymus fortunei 'Vegetus'	Wintercreeper Euonymus	China
Ilex crenata	Japanese Holly	Japan, Korea
Ilex x mersvae 'Blue Prince'	Merserve Hybrid Hollies	Europe
Ilex x mersvae 'Blue Princess'	Merserve Hybrid Hollies	Europe
Juniperus chinensis 'Pfitzeriana'	Chinese Juniper	Japan, China, Mongolia
Leucothoe fontanesiana	Fetterbush	SE United States
Mahonia aquifolium	Oregon Hollygrape	NW United States, British Columbia

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

*Picea abies* 'nidiformis'  
*Pieris japonica*

Bird Nest Spruce  
Japanese picris

Europe  
Japan

### Evergreen Groundcovers

Scientific Name

*Asarum europeum*

*Euonymus fortunei* 'Kewensis'

*Euonymus fortunei* 'Radicans'

*Hedera helix*

*Helleborus argutifolius* var. *corciensis*

*Helleborus niger*

*Helleborus orientalis*

*Vinca minor*

Common Name

European Ginger

Wintercreeper Euonymus

Wintercreeper Euonymus

English Ivy

Corsican Hellebore

Christmas Rose

Lenten Rose

Common Periwinkle

Origin

Europe

China

China

Caucasian Mountains

Corsica

Europe

Europe

Europe

### Herbaceous Perennials

*Asarum shuttleworthii*

*Aconitum napellus*

*Arabis caucasica* 'Floro Pleno'

*Aruncus dioicus*

*Digitalis purpurea*

*Epimedium* x *rubrum*

*Galium odoratum*

*Hosta sieboldiana*

*Hosta undulata* 'Albo-marginata'

*Iris ensata*

*Pachysandra procumbens*

*Pachysandra terminalis*

*Pulmonaria saccharata* 'Mrs. Moon'

*Rodgersia pinnata*

Southern Wild Ginger

Garden Monkshood

Double Rock Cress

Goat's Beard

Purple Foxglove

Red Barronwort

Sweet Woodruff

Siebold Hosta

Wavy-leaved Plantain Lily

Japanese Iris

Allegheny Pachysandra

Japanese Spurge

Bethlehem Sage

Featherleaf Rodgersflower

SE United States

Europe

Mediterranean

North America

Europe, North Africa

Hybrid

Europe, North Africa, Asia

Japan, China

Japan, China

Japan, Eastern Siberia

SE United States

Japan

Europe

China

### Wildflowers

Scientific Name

*Actaea pachypoda*

*Arisaema triphyllum*

*Asarum canadensis*

Common Name

Banberry Doll's Eyes

Jack-in-the-Pulpit

Wild Ginger

Origin

Native

Native

Native

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 18

Cimicifuga racemosa	Black Cohosh, Bugbane	Native
Heuchera americana	American Alumroot	Native
Polygonatum biflorum	Small Solomon's Seal	Native
Sanguinaria canadensis	Bloodroot	Native
Smilacina racemosa	False Solomon's Seal	Native
Smilacina racemosa	False Solomon's Seal	Native
Trillium grandiflorum	Great White Trillium	Native

## Grasses

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Origin</u>
Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola'	Golden Variegated Hakonechloa	Japan
Miscanithus sinensis 'Variagatus'	Japanese Silver Grass	Japan

## Ferns

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Origin</u>
Athyrium nipponicum 'Pictum'	Japanese Painted Fern	Japan
Dryopteris marginalis	Leatherwood Fern	Native
Matteuccia struthiopteris	Ostrich Fern	Native
Osmunda regalis	Royal Fern	Native
Polystichum acrostichoides	Christmas Fern	Native

## Bulbs

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Origin</u>
Eranthis hyminalis	Winter aconite	Europe, Siberia
Erythronium americanum	Trout Lily	Native
Galanthus nivalis	Common Snowdrop	Europe
Narcissus sp.	Daffodil	Europe, Mediterranean
Scilla campanulata	English Wood Hyacinth	Europe
Scilla siberica	Blue Squill	Russia, Siberia

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   19  

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 20

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

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### Boundary Description

Lots 20, 21, and 22, Orchard Hills Number One Subdivision, City of Ann Arbor.

### Boundary Justification

Entire property historically and currently associated with the house.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 1

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### Photographs

Palmer, William B. and Mary Shuford, House  
Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan

#### Photographer:

Balthazar Korab (#1-5)

Kathryn B. Eckert (#6-7)

Date: 1980-90 (#1-5), 1998 (#6-7)

#### Negatives:

Balthazar Korab, Ltd., Box 895, Troy, MI 48099-0895 (#1-5)

Michigan SHPO (#6-7)

1. View of house to east showing tool shed, carport and loggia wing, entrance, bedroom wing, and drive off Orchard Hills Drive.
2. View of entrance to east, showing stairs leading to main entrance.
3. View of house to southeast from carport and loggia wing, showing broad sloping overhanging roof over porch and dining room windows.
4. View of living room interior to the southeast, showing paired glazed doors to porch, brick pier with inset lights, fireplace, built-in couch, and dining table and chairs.
5. View of living and dining room interior to the northeast, showing built-in couch, kitchen wall, and dining table and chairs.
6. View of entrance to east, showing stairs leading to main entrance.
7. View of garden house to the southeast, showing entrance and chimney.