

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 an 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 Parents' and Children's Schoolhouse

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 1505 Crane Court N/A  not for publication

city or town Midland N/A  vicinity

state Michigan code MI county Midland code 111 zip code 48640

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Robert D. Eckert 6-7-96  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
MI SHPO  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action


5. Classification

Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
The Residential Architecture of Alden B. Dow in Midland, Michigan, 1933-1938.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school= nursery school

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling=residence

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls STUCCO

HOMASOTE

roof SYNTHETIC

other WOOD

ETHOCEL UNIT BLOCK

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

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.)

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1938

Significant Dates

1938

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Dow, Alden B.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Alden B. Dow Archives

Parents' and Children's Schoolhouse

Midland County, MI

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 6	7 2 2 2 8 0	4 8 3 3 5 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth C. Panhorst

organization Alden B. Dow Archives date December 20, 1995

street & number 315 Post Street telephone (517) 839-2744

city or town Midland state MI zip code 48640

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Bryce

street & number 1505 Crane Court telephone (517) 835-3947

city or town Midland state MI zip code 48640

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 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 Information Systems, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0019), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Parents' and Children's Schoolhouse  
Midland, MI

## DESCRIPTION

The Parents' and Children's Schoolhouse is an L-shaped, single story, flat-roofed stuccoed house marked by long horizontal lines and broad flat surfaces. It was designed by Alden B. Dow in 1938 to house the nursery school established by his wife, Vada B. Dow. The front facade, facing north, is tripartite: a large picture window in the center is flanked to the left by a blank wall and to the right by the front entrance and garage. The low structure, capped by a simple fascia, seems to hug the ground on which it sits. The building originally included kitchen and playroom along the front wing, second playroom and garage at the angle, and bathroom, office and music room in the back wing. Today, living and dining areas occupy the area designated on design drawings as "playroom A," "playroom B" serves as a den or sitting area, the "office" is the master bedroom, and the "music room" is two smaller bedrooms. The interior contains such distinctive Alden Dow features as edge-grain fir trim, built-in shelves, freestanding fireplace and large windows. The building is located on a quiet court with an ample yard. Shrubbery has grown high enough to obscure much of the front of the house. The structure was converted with relatively minor interior changes from a nursery school to a residence in the mid-1940s, while still owned by Mrs. Dow. The exterior of the house remains original, except for paint color. The property has been well maintained and is in good condition.

The exterior of the Schoolhouse is characterized by long low lines, interrupted by the vertical elements of the windows. The walls are constructed of homasote panels with a stuccoed finish. At either end the roof extends beyond the block of the house, emphasizing the house's horizontal character. At the northwest corner the roofline is further lengthened by a horizontal wooden trellis stretching out to the side, now hidden by tall shrubs. The recessed facade at the front northwest corner allows for covered entry to the front door and the garage. A two-step stoop leads from the driveway to the front entrance which is set at a right angle to the facade. The stucco wall between entry and garage is dotted with the square faces of ethocel unit blocks set into the wall.

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Parents' and Children's Schoolhouse  
Midland, MI

Description (continued)

Along the back of the house another trellis extends the eave of the south facade over the floor-to-ceiling windows of the dining room. A deep recess at the southeast corner creates space for a covered porch under the main roof with doors to both the dining room and kitchen. The bedroom wing projects as a block from the main house, its windows accentuated by narrow vertical battens that extend downward from each side.

The main entry leads directly into the living room, originally called "playroom A," a spacious room along the front of the house. Characteristic Alden Dow features include a built-in wooden shelf/seat that runs the length of the front wall, a freestanding open fireplace with plaster chimney breast, a row of copper-capped ceiling light fixtures, and large windows. The interior walls are homasote panels whose rectangular divisions are apparent in the painted surface. At the end of the living room is a dining area with an exterior door to the back porch and a doorway to the modest kitchen. In the kitchen, original edge-grain fir cabinets have been replaced. An exterior door in this room also leads to the porch.

On the other side of the living room fireplace is a comfortable sitting area originally called "playroom B." Now separated from the hallway by a floor-to-ceiling bookcase added in the mid-1940s, doors from this area lead to the front closet, the basement, and the garage. The hall leads to the bathroom and what are now three bedrooms, but were originally an office and music room. The master bedroom was created from the office in the mid-1940s when the house was converted from a nursery school to a residence, and partitions in the large room originally called the "music room" created the hallway and two smaller bedrooms. (1) Cupboards and closets in keeping with original materials and design were also added to these rooms.

In recent years the single-paned window glass in the house has been replaced by thermopane glass.

The house is set on a quiet neighborhood court. Large trees and shrubs in the front yard obscure the house. The sunny backyard is fenced for privacy on two sides. The original concrete back porch has been bricked and extended into the yard. Flower beds now ring the yard. There is no evidence of original plantings.

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Parents' and Children's Schoolhouse  
Midland, MI

SIGNIFICANCE

The Parents' and Children's Schoolhouse is a fine example of Alden B. Dow's belief that small, affordable houses could also exhibit good design and craftsmanship. The simple, functional plan of the building was effective as a learning place for young children, and with minimal alterations has been equally successful as a family residence. Mr. Dow was concerned with the shortage of low-cost housing at this time, and designed many modest houses in Midland to meet that need, often using innovative materials.

Vada B. Dow, trained as a teacher with degrees from Kalamazoo College and Columbia University, established a progressive nursery school in her own basement in the late 1930s. When she began looking for a building to house her growing school, the shortage of housing in Midland necessitated that she build something new. Her husband provided the design for the facility that served the school for the next few years. The school was quite successful, for plans to add more classroom space in the basement were drawn up in 1942.<sup>(2)</sup> For whatever reason, these plans were never carried out, and the school was disbanded soon thereafter. Minor interior alterations in the mid-1940s, overseen by Mr. Dow, converted the office and music room to three bedrooms. Mrs. Dow continued to own the house as a rental property for many years, renting to relatives and to members of her husband's architectural firm. The house was purchased by the last tenant and current owner in the late 1960s.

NOTES

1. These changes were discussed with Mrs. Robert Bennett, sister-in-law of Vada B. Dow and first tenant in the house after the nursery school was disbanded, in conversation with Elizabeth Panhorst, researcher, Alden B. Dow Archives, 27 November 1995.

2. "Alterations: Parents' and Children's School June 22 1942," working drawing, Alden B. Dow Archives, Midland, Michigan.

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National Park Service

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Parents' and Children's Schoolhouse  
Midland, MI

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dow, Alden B. Papers. Alden B. Dow Archives, Midland, Michigan.

Robinson, Sidney K. The Architecture of Alden B. Dow. Detroit:  
Wayne State University Press, 1983.

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 25, Golfside Addition, Midland, Midland County, Michigan.

### VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the entire parcel originally  
purchased by Alden B. Dow and Vada B. Dow.

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Parents' and Children's Schoolhouse  
Graphic and Textual Resources in the Alden B. Dow Archives

### GRAPHIC

July 1938, working drawings: plans, elevations and details, 4 sheets.

22 June 1942, working drawing: plan and details, basement alterations, 1 sheet.

### TEXTUAL

Bids, July-August, 1938.

Contracts, July-August 1938.

Painting specification, 28 July 193[8].

Labor records, September 1938, September 1941, October 1942.

Contracts, February 1953-May 1958.