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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 Spies - Robinson House

other names/site number Robinson, David, House

2. Location

street & number 2424 NE Seventeenth Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Portland N/A vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 87212

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.)

[Signature] April 30, 1997  
Signature of certifying official/Title Deputy SHPO Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
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] \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action 6-13-97  
Signature of title keeper

Spies - Robinson House

Name of Property

Multnomah County, Oregon

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

2 buildings

sites

structures

objects

2 Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Prairie Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls concrete brick veneer over wood frame

roof asphalt, composition shingle

other

Narrative Description

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

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**SPIES - ROBINSON HOUSE (1922)**  
2424 NE Seventeenth Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

**COMMENTS OF THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER**

The two-story Prairie style house built in 1922 at 2424 NE 17th Avenue in the Irvington district, an elite residential development on Portland's east side, was designed by Orlo Hossack. The builder and first occupant was Christian Spies. The house is titled in acknowledgement, not only of the builder and original owner, but of its most distinguished resident of the historic period, the civil rights advocate, David Robinson. The house is significant to Portland under Criterion C as a good example of residential buildings influenced by the Prairie School. In addition to displaying all the characteristic elements of the inventive strain of Arts and Crafts architecture that originated in the turn-of-the-century work of Frank Lloyd Wright in Illinois, the Spies - Robinson House is distinctive in terms of its tectonics. It is veneered entirely with scribed, or raked concrete brick. Light brick is the predominating color of the brick. Dark tan bricks are used for contrasting striping and other accents. The applicant points out that, while brick was commonly used by Prairie School designers and builders to clad houses or portions of houses in the upper Mid West, the norm in Portland for houses in this style is stucco.

Concrete brick was widely promoted in American trade journals of the early 20th century. While a concrete brick and block manufactory was in operation in Kenton, in north Portland, about the time Christian Spies built his house, the country's builders could order concrete brick-making machinery from the J. B. Foote Foundry Company of Fredericktown, Ohio and similar suppliers who advertised in *American Builder*, for example, in the 1920s.

The defining qualities of Prairie style architecture exemplified in the house on NE Seventeenth Avenue are a low hip roof which hovers massively over the core volume with boldly projecting eaves, and general horizontality that is emphasized in facade composition by ribbon windows, contrasting string elements, and single story wings at end elevations that make a visual transition to surface grade. The building's clean, angular lines are reinforced by straight concrete coping.

The Spies - Robinson House faces east on its 75 x 100 foot lot, at the back of which, on the south side, is a garage which was designed and detailed as part of the initial development. Accordingly, it is counted a separately contributing feature. The garage has a 18 x 20-foot

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ground plan and has a low hip roof and brick exterior. The original doors were replaced by an overhead door in later years, and a carport has been constructed across the face.

The house rises from a basement foundation as a two story volume enclosed by a low hip roof with broad, uniform eave overhangs. The front entrance is sheltered by a canopy clasped by oblong brick piers which continue to the sill line. The three equal structural bays of the formally composed facade are slightly inset and filled with three-part banks of wood casement windows with square and rectilinear border light divisions. Window heads of the upper story abut bed molding beneath the eave soffits. Ground story windows have straight hoods. Windows on secondary elevations are double-hung, but have the characteristic vertical border divisions. On each of the secondary elevations, there is a single-story porch or window bay with sheltering overhang of a hip or deck roof.

The formally-organized interior is based on a central hall plan with livingroom and study on the south side of the stairhall and diningroom and kitchen on the north. The Prairie influence is sustained throughout. Superior workmanship is evident in paneled wainscoting, leaded art glass-fronted cabinetry, extra wide cornice assemblies, a free Classic chimneypiece, French doors, and so on. The only alterations to the house are strictly minor and consist of the addition of a half bath near the kitchen in 1951 and a kitchen remodeling of 1977 which resulted in a fixed panel window modification on the rear face.

This application traces the house directly to its Illinois roots through the career of Orlo R. W. Hossack, who was active in Portland as draftsman and architect from 1910 to the time of his death in 1937. From the documentation we learn that Hossack began his career locally as draftsman for the firm of Bennes, Hendricks and Thompson. He was with the firm for two years before moving on to a succession of professional associations that included Tobey and Mills, the Oregon-Washington Railway & Navigation Company, the Ready Built House Company, and Houghtaling and Dougan before he emerged into independent practice in 1923 after achieving his license under the "grandfather" provisions of the State architect examining legislation. The link to Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School is thought to have been Hossack's first local employer, the Illinois-educated John Virginus Bennes, who is credited with introducing the Prairie style to Portland in his several master works of the period 1909-1917.

To demonstrate the comparative distinction of the house designed by Hossack among comparable examples, the applicant has made use of the Portland Historic Resource Inventory of 1983-1984 which identified 35 Prairie style buildings in the city. Eleven of these are located in subdivisions on the spreading plain of northeast Portland, which in the 1910s was experiencing

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the first great upbuilding. The Spies - Robinson House is thought to be the only brick-faced example of the style in northeast Portland. In any case, it is an example which embodies outstanding craftsmanship and integrity.

The house also is considered eligible for the National Register under Criterion B in the area of social history for its association with its second occupant, David Robinson, a civil rights advocate and honored humanitarian. After two years' occupation by the building contractor, Christian Spies, and his wife Clara, the house was sold to Title and Trust Company, which held the property until 1930. The house next was purchased by David and Edna Robinson, who lived in it the rest of their lives, until 1963 and 1965, respectively. Robinson was born and raised in Portland and trained in law at the University of Oregon in Eugene. He is noted in the city's legal annals as the first, and for some time the lone public defender. He was the founder of the Legal Aid Society, and founding president of the city's Anti-Defamation League. The building's historic period of significance under Criterion B is drawn to 1947, the dawn of the Cold War era and a new phase of the civil rights movement. The seventeen years between 1930, when the Robinsons entered the house, and 1947 span David Robinson's characteristic contributions to the movement in Portland, if not the full spectrum. He was for thirty years a leader of the Anti-Defamation League, which he had helped organize locally about 1926, and he remained active in the League's affairs to 1956.

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The Spies-Robinson House, designed by Orlo R.W. Hossack and built by Christian Spies in 1922, is a two-story, brick residence with a full basement. The house displays elements of the Prairie style with its low-pitched, hipped roof with wide eaves, casement windows set in horizontal bands, brick construction with darker brick decorative bands, and two one-story porches with low hipped roof and decorative supporting columns.

### SITE

The Spies-Robinson House is located on the north ½ of Lot 17 and Lot 18 of Block 48 of the Irvington Addition to the City of Portland. The Irvington Addition is part of the William Irving Donation Land Claim. The house faces west on the 75 ft. by 100 ft. lot, the longer axis running east and west. A concrete sidewalk connects house and street sidewalk. A loosely laid collection of bricks reaches from the front entry to the driveway on the south side of the lot. There is a concrete driveway leading to a rear garage on the south edge of the property. The lot slopes very slightly to the west. A concrete sidewalk and planting strip edge the property to the west, the street side. Neighboring houses are of a similar age and size in a variety of styles including bungalows, Arts and Crafts and period styles.

Landscaping is informal with native plants and shrubs. The north lot line is marked by a Colorado blue spruce, a variegated holly tree, and other native plants. Blueberry bushes grow in front of the two side bays of the house. Rows of azaleas line the concrete driveway leading to a rear garage on the south. The grounds to the front of the house are relatively open; the rear spaces of the lot are more fully occupied with a garage on the south side and to the rear of the lot and a non-historic pool to the east. A 6 ft. high reddish-hued concrete block fence encircles the back one third of the lot.

### EXTERIOR

The Spies-Robinson House is a two-story rectangular building with the addition of two open one-story porches on south and east sides and a minor extension on the north side. Cladding is buff colored concrete brick with a raked surface. The house has a low-pitched hipped roof with wide, boxed eaves measuring approximately five ft. in width and faced with beaded board. There is one exterior brick chimney; composition shingles cover the roof. The house has a concrete foundation.

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The exterior cladding of the house is light buff brick with a darker tan contrasting brick used for an accent. The main design element in the brick construction consists of a single row of darker brick extending straight across the pilaster or column about half of its width, a right angle with the trim brick extending in a perpendicular line, then a return to the edge of the pilaster, making a very elongated and shallow U-shape. This pattern is featured in several different construction details; in other places a simple horizontal line of darker brick forms the decorative element. Other horizontal accents are the low, unbroken roofline, flat, wooden awnings above west and south windows, concrete sills on the first floor, and the use of capped concrete walls on the open porch and flower boxes. The house is low to the ground; basement windows are at ground level with light wells.

### West Facade

The west (front) facade of the Spies-Robinson House presents a symmetrical, well-balanced aspect with a strong horizontal emphasis. A one-story open porch with broad eaves extends the horizontal line on the south side and a lesser addition on the north side adds to the feeling of width. Substantial brick pilasters forming the three bays of the house extend the full two stories and are connected by flat wall surfaces above and below. Casement windows in groups of three form horizontal bands on both levels and occupy much of the wall space. A centered entrance 9 and ½ ft. wide extends 7 ft. from the main body of the house and is roofed by a canopy at mid-height. Decorative engaged columns flank the entrance and extend slightly above the canopy roof. The four-paneled entry door, 40 inches wide, is flanked by narrow sidelights with leaded Art Glass lights. Five small lights above the sidelights and door form a long transom. The original brass door hardware is in place. Two knee-height piers extend from each side of the entry porch; a concrete urn with a square base rests on each of the piers.

### South Facade

On the south side of the house an open one-story porch is accessed through the paired doors flanking the living room fireplace. In keeping with the main body of the house it also features a hipped roof and wide eaves. The chimney rises through the roof at the back of the porch. The porch features square corner columns measuring about 1 and ½ ft. by 2 ft. The columns have the same decorative brick band element that is featured on the entry porch engaged columns. Brick half walls with concrete caps on east and west sides emphasize the horizontal emphasis of the Prairie Style house. The porch floor is scored concrete. The south side of the porch is open.

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A brick flower box with concrete cap is located directly beneath the rear bank of windows. A flat wooden awning shades this window and a wide roof overhang shades the second floor windows. Concrete stairs leading to the basement descend about halfway between the east end of the porch and the rear of the house.

### East Facade

The east (rear) facade of the Spies-Robinson House features another open porch directly off the rear door which is flanked by double-hung windows. Two brick columns, 1 and ½ ft. by 2 ft. support the roof. These columns have a different decorative element, a single line of darker brick encircling the column near the top and the bottom. The porch roof serves as a deck opening off the northeast corner bedroom and has a wrought iron railing around the edge. Just to the south of the entry door a window has been altered, the present window is a single large light. Concrete stairs to the basement descend near the north end of the porch.

### North Facade

The north side of the house also has a one-story wing, a 2 and ½ ft. deep extension near the front of the house. Measuring 12 ft. long, the extension features a bank of three casement windows (in the dining room) and a brick flower box with a concrete cap.

## INTERIOR

### Entrance Hall and Stairway

The centrally-located entrance hall measures 7 ft. by 4 and ½ ft. As stated earlier, the entry door is flanked by Art Glass sidelights. The walls are plastered except on the north wall which has wooden doors opening onto a shallow closet; closet door pulls are glass. There are six inch marble baseboards and a red tile floor with 1 inch by 2 inch tiles laid in a herringbone pattern. A 36 inch wide four panel door opens directly into the entrance and stairway hall of the house.

### Central Hall

The central hall of the house is 8 ft. wide and 23 ft. long. The open stairway ascending to the second floor is on the right side of the hall and features a 4 ft. wide staircase with square newel post with stick trim and three square balusters per step. At the end of the hall a small telephone station with drawer space and a closet form the wall. A stairway to the basement descends at the back of the hall. An open doorway to the right provides



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access to the living room; double-leaf folding doors with glass lights open to the dining room on the left. The recessed ceiling configuration consists of a 9 inch wide trim board encircling the room; the trim board is 4 inches lower than the ceiling and extends 4 and ½ inches down the wall in a slightly stepped pattern with one ogee curve. A separate picture molding is directly below the ceiling trim. All ceilings on the first floor are 9 ft. high. Plastered walls feature a 21 inch high wainscot with horizontal panels. A 4 and ½ inch wide stepped trim board with low relief is used throughout the house around doors and windows. All floors on the first floor, including the staircase, are oak. All hardware is the original brass with glass door knobs and glass cupboard pulls. Walls and ceilings are plastered throughout the house.

### Living Room

Opening to the right (south) off the entry hall, the 14 ft. by 23 ft. living room is entered through a four and ½ ft. wide opening. The long axis of the room runs east to west. To the right, at the west wall of the front of the house the entire wall is occupied by a 9 and ½ ft. window seat flanked by 2 ft. by 16 inch built-in cabinets with Art Glass doors. Above the window seat three centered casement windows with craftsman muntins illuminate the room. Each light measures 2 and 2/3 ft. by 5 ft.. The south wall features a 6 ft. fireplace flanked by folding doors with glass lights. The fireplace has a wooden mantel and paneled surround; a row of Arts and Crafts dark tan 4 inch square tiles outlines the fireplace opening and is also used for the hearth which has recessed mortar joints. The two pairs of narrow double-leaf folding doors flanking the fireplace measure 5 ft. wide and are hinged in the center. Craftsman muntins differing slightly from the window muntins divide the lights in the folding doors. A 9 ft. opening in the east end of the living room gives access to a study. The north wall has a door to the stair hallway near the basement stairs. The recessed ceiling configuration is identical to that in the main hallway and consists of a 9 inch wide trim board encircling the room; the slightly stepped trim board is 4 inches lower than the ceiling and extends 4 and ½ inches down the wall. A separate picture molding is directly below the ceiling trim. Window and door trim is also the same, a 4 and ½ inch wide trim board with shallow stepped relief. All woodwork, with the exception of dining room is painted.

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### Study

The study at the east end of the living room measures 14 ft. by 11 ft. Upon entering to the right are three double-hung windows with a total measurement of 8 and ½ ft. by 5 ft. on the south side of the house. On the east wall another three double-hung windows, also measuring a total of 8 and ½ ft. by 5 ft. are flanked by bookcases 2 and ½ ft. wide with Art Glass doors.

### Dining room

On the left (north) side of the central hall, the dining room is entered through two pairs of folding double-leaf multi-light doors, each 2 ft. wide with Craftsman muntins. The ceiling trim and all other woodwork in this room is stained a dark walnut. A 12 inch trim board extends into the ceiling area and extends down the wall in a typical cove and stepped pattern, giving a somewhat heavy look to the ceiling edge. Windows on the front (west elevation) are three 2 and 2/3 ft. by 5 ft. casement with Craftsman muntins, matching those in the living room. The exterior extension on the north wall results in a 2 and ½ ft. full height square corner column. On the inside of these corner pieces 1 and ½ ft. by 1 and ½ ft. built-in cupboards flank three 21 inch by 3 ft. lights centered on the north wall. The matching cupboards feature Art Glass doors above and a wood paneled door below. The room has 21 inch high wainscoting with horizontal panels. A single panel swinging door opens to the kitchen on the east wall of the dining room.

### Kitchen

The kitchen in the Spies-Robinson House has been remodeled, but retains its original shape. A breakfast nook has been reconfigured to provide more space for a small table and chairs. In the 1970s a half bath was added near the rear door. A lowered ceiling in the kitchen has been returned to its original height.

### Second Floor

The upstairs of the Spies-Robinson House consists of four large bedrooms, one bathroom, and a small office/study. All the bedrooms are corner rooms and have windows on two elevations. Windows are casement and double-hung, 5 ft. high and vary in width. The master bedroom occupying the southeast corner is the largest of the rooms, measuring 14 ft. by 18 ft.. The bedroom on the northeast corner has a pair of narrow doors, with lights, opening onto a rooftop terrace to the east. Two bedrooms flanking a small office-study

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extend across the front of the house. The bathroom has the original white hexagonal tile with a blue tile design. The remainder of the bathroom has been remodeled. Ceilings upstairs are 9 ft., all rooms have a 9 inch baseboard with stepped top and all doors are two panel. Hardware is brass with glass door knobs.

### Basement

The basement of the Spies-Robinson House has two finished rooms, a workroom and a recreational room with brick fireplace decorated with double chevrons. Other rooms include a laundry room, a furnace room, two store rooms and a bathroom. An original wash basin is in the hallway. Two outside stairways and one interior stairway access the basement. All windows have exterior light wells.

### Hardware and Art Glass

All door hardware in the Robinson House is original, consisting of brass escutcheons and hinges with glass door knobs. The sidelights flanking the entry door and three cupboards have Art Glass doors consisting of leaded clear glass with accents of textured gold-colored glass in a geometric pattern. Each pair of doors uses the same design elements in a different, but related, pattern. The sidelights and doors were original to the house; some have been repaired.

### Alterations

Alterations include the addition of a downstairs half bath near the kitchen in 1951 and the remodeling of the kitchen in 1977. With the exception of one window, no exterior changes were made in either case.

### AUXILIARY BUILDINGS

A light buff brick garage with the same trim elements in darker brick is located at the southeast corner of the lot, close to the lot line. The building measures 18 ft. by 21 ft., the longer axis running east and west. The garage has a low-pitched hipped roof and a bank of windows the full length of the building on the north side. There were apparently two paneled garage doors, the most southerly has been replaced with an automatic door; the other original door has been slightly reconfigured using the original panels. A carport with a corrugated plastic roof has been constructed in front of the garage. A concrete driveway extends along the south edge of the property to the garage.

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.)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
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.
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:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

1922-1947

Significant Dates

1922

1930-1947

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

David Robinson (1890-1963)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Orlo R. W. Hossack, Architect

Christian Spies, Builder

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 #

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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The Spies-Robinson House is significant under Criterion B for its long association with outstanding attorney, humanitarian, and civil rights worker David Robinson, 1890-1963.

The Spies-Robinson House is significant under Criterion C as an outstanding example of the Prairie Style house with brick veneer.

### HISTORY AND EARLY OWNERS, DAVID AND EDNA ROBINSON

The two lots the Spies-Robinson House is located on were part of a holding in Irvington beginning in 1910 when the Hughes Investment Company bought large tracts of the Irvington Addition. The Hughes Company held the land until it was purchased by Christian and Clara Spies in 1922, the year the Spies-Robinson House was constructed. After the house was finished, Mr. and Mrs. Spies were the first residents; Mr. Spies was the contractor for the house. In 1924 the Spies sold the house to the Title and Trust Company who owned it for the next six years.

David and Edna Robinson bought the house in 1930. They lived there until Mr. Robinson's death in 1963 and Mrs. Robinson continued to live there until 1965. David Robinson was an attorney and one of Portland's outstanding citizens during the thirty years before and after World War II. He was born in Portland and graduated from Lincoln High School. He immediately began work as a painter and the next year, when he was 17, he was elected as a delegate to the AFL national convention. He began law school shortly after and graduated from the University of Oregon Law School four years later. After graduation he became Portland's first public defender and continued in that position for many years before it was taken over by the Oregon Bar Association. He was one of the founders of the Legal Aid Society. During World War I, he was an officer in the U.S. Public Health Service and was honored by the British ambassador in Washington for driving the "Trade British" campaign that enabled Britain to buy American goods during the early part of the war.

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As a humanitarian, one of David Robinson's highest achievements was the founding of the Anti-Defamation League and the Portland chapter of B'nai B'rith and his ensuing presidency. He was active in the Anti-Defamation League for 30 years. He was also a member and president of the Urban League and was active in the Salvation Army for many years. Mr. Robinson was a past president of the District Grand Lodge of B'nai B'rith, past president of Congregation Beth Israel, charter member of Men's Garden Club, past president of the Portland City Club, past president of Portland Rose Society and a trustee of the American Rose Society.

When David Robinson retired from 30 years of service in the Anti-Defamation League in 1956 he was the guest of honor at a testimonial dinner at the Jewish Community Center and presided over by Rabbi Julius Nodel. Rabbi Nodel is quoted as saying, "Robinson's life was at times surrounded by bitter enemies, marked by his attacks on bigotry, espousal of civil rights, and of being a friend to the rich and the poor, the white and the colored". At his death in 1963 he merited an article in the editorial section of the Oregonian lauding his accomplishments in the field of human rights, charitable and cultural fields, and his long campaign to control and reduce vice and crime by removing the causes. After his death in 1963 Reed College established the David Robinson Memorial Fund for Human Rights in his honor.

The house at 2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue has a particularly strong association with Mr. Robinson's interest in the Portland Rose Society. For many years from the sidewalk in front of his house he passed out free rose bushes to children in the belief that young people who were interested in horticulture were less likely to become juvenile delinquents.

Later owners of the Spies-Robinson House were George and Coralou Loving from 1965 to 1972 and Arthur and Nancy Stubbs from 1972 to 1996.

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### HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Prairie Style house was first envisioned and built in the Midwest by noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, but went to Chicago at the age of 19 to study architecture. He first studied with Lyman Silsbee, who introduced the Shingle Style to Chicago. Within the year, Wright had moved to the office of architects Adler and Sullivan where he worked from 1887 to 1893. At this time the Adler and Sullivan firm was a strong advocate of a new commercial style, a much-simplified, metal-framed building with strong horizontal lines. Wright left their firm to begin his own practice and designed his first two Prairie Style houses in 1900. As Wright's practice grew, the Prairie Style evolved into houses that were characterized by strong horizontal lines emphasized by groups of windows, wide, overhanging eaves, horizontal decoration, a strong chimney, and an open, flowing floor plan. Philosophically akin to the Arts and Crafts movement in England of the same period, the Prairie Style house illustrates the concept of design from within rather than design dictated by exterior appearance. The Prairie Style is one of the few indigenous American styles; it flourished briefly, mainly from 1900 to 1925. The Spies-Robinson House is a late version of the Prairie Style.

The Prairie Style traveled to the West Coast, in one instance in Portland through the work of John V. Bennes, who was trained in Illinois and was a great admirer of Frank Lloyd Wright. Bennes designed several houses in the style, the Marcus J. DeLahunt house (1909), his own house (1911), and the Aaron H. Maegly house, (1917). These houses all emphasized the horizontal line with wide, overhanging eaves, (Bennes often selected a tile roof), bands of casement windows, strong piers supporting an open porch, and the use of stucco for an exterior cladding. Another exponent of the Prairie Style in Oregon was the Sullivan-trained architect William Gray Purcell who moved to Oregon from the Midwest after his retirement.

According to the City of Portland Historic Resource Inventory there were 35 Prairie Style houses constructed in the city. Thirteen of these were in N.E. Portland which was undergoing rapid development at that time. The Spies-Robinson House is an unusual example because of its brick veneer which allowed expression of the strong decorative elements. Another remarkable feature of the house is the brick material itself. For centuries the clay brick had been a major building material, but shortly after the turn of the century, concrete became much more popular, partly because of the availability of steel



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framing, the use of reinforced concrete, and the development of high-strength and high adhesion mortars. Concrete bricks were unusual, but in this case they add to the character of the house and its design. The Spies-Robinson House is finely crafted and incorporates the basic elements of the Prairie Style with vigor and distinction.

### ARCHITECT

Orlo R.W. Hossack was a Portland architect who practiced in the Portland area during the early part of the century. He is first listed in the Polk's Portland City Directory in 1910 when he was employed as a draftsman by the architectural firm of Bennes, Hendricks, and Thompson; he worked there for two years. This was the time period when that firm was designing its first Prairie Style houses and it is probable that Hossack worked on the plans for these structures. In 1912-13 he was employed as a draftsman for the Tobey and Mills architectural firm. In 1914 he worked as a draftsman for the Oregon-Washington Railway and Navigation Company. He is listed as a draftsman in 1915. In 1916 Hossack listed himself as an architect, however he is not listed in the Directory's list of architects.

In 1917 and 1918 Hossack is listed as secretary of the "Ready Built House Company", and in 1920 as foreman. J.H. Fenner was listed as president of the "Ready Built House Company", A.R. Fenner as vice president, and E.F. Patterson as treasurer. Their business address was 980 East Broadway.

Again in 1921-22 Hossack is listed as a draftsman with the firm of Houghtaling and Dougan. Beginning in 1923 Hossack had his own architectural practice and office located for a time in the Worcester Building and later in the Terminal Sales Building. One other building that he designed is listed in the Portland Inventory; it is the Kenton Lodge Hall for the Masons in 1922, designed in the Egyptian style and located at 8134 North Denver Avenue. Hossack also was involved in the remodeling of the Hillsboro City Hall.

Hossack was licensed by the State Board of Architect Examiners from 1922-1937; his license was issued by work experience. Orlo R.W. Hossack served in World War I and was later active in the CCC, serving as a lieutenant. He died in Boise, Idaho on January 31, 1937 at the age of 45 while attending a CCC camp there.

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National Park Service

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### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

According to the City of Portland Historic Resource Inventory, there are 13 Prairie Style houses in Northeast Portland; however, two of these have been reclassified and given another style designation. The Spies-Robinson House, 2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, is the only brick Prairie Style house in this area and it utilizes the contrasting brick building material to emphasize the traditional decorative elements of the style.

Nationally, brick was a common building material for the Prairie Style; however almost all the Prairie Style houses in the NE Portland area are stuccoed, generally with a smooth finish. All have a low-pitched hipped roof with wide eaves. Some examples of earlier houses include (1) 1617 NE Thompson St., a 1909 house designed by the John Bennes firm. The house has an encircling porch with large square piers and decorative urns. It is one of the more lavishly decorated examples with leaded and stained glass windows. The exterior is stuccoed. (2) The house located at 3917 NE 29<sup>th</sup> is a more modest example with double-hung windows and a stucco exterior. It was constructed in 1915. (3) A 1916 Prairie Style with beveled wood siding is located at 3930 NE 29<sup>th</sup>. It features a hipped roof portico and paneled columns. Two later examples were built in the Laurelhurst neighborhood: (4) At 969 NE Hazelfern Place a stuccoed example constructed in 1923 features multi-light casement windows and square, battered porch piers. (5) 4361 Hazelfern Place, a 1928 house, has picture windows and a paneled cornice; it is stuccoed.

All the Prairie Style house vary in depth and quality of detail. Some have unusual decorative elements, i.e. fluted pilasters, and many have the less traditional Prairie Style double-hung or picture windows. The Spies-Robinson House is remarkable for the interpretation of the Prairie Style afforded by the two colors of brick, for the richness of its details, i.e. the individually designed leaded and stained glass windows in subtle colors, and for its workmanship and integrity which have been carefully maintained over the years.

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National Park Service

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- Oregonian, September 19, 1963.
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10/7/96.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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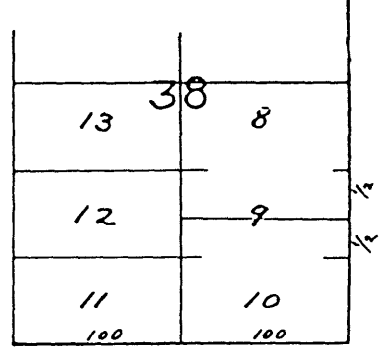
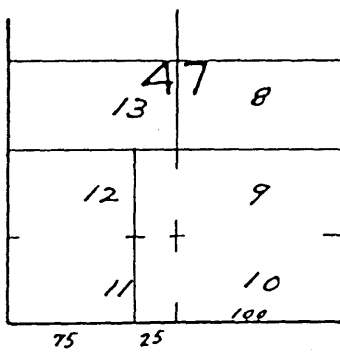
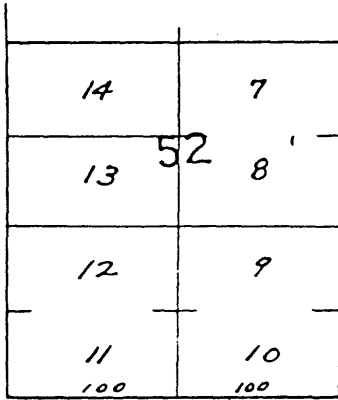
### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated area is in Township 1N, Range 1E, Section 26, Willamette Meridian and is legally described as the north half of Lot 17 and Lot 18, Block 48, Irvington Addition to Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. It is otherwise identified as Tax Lot 7500.

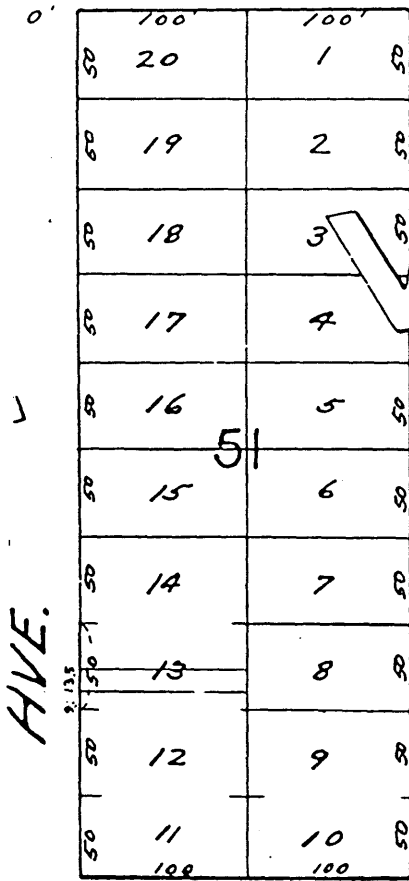
### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This lot (75 ft. by 100 ft. or .17 acres) defines the current property boundary.

SPIES - ROBINSON HOUSE, PORTLAND, MULTNOMAH COUNTY

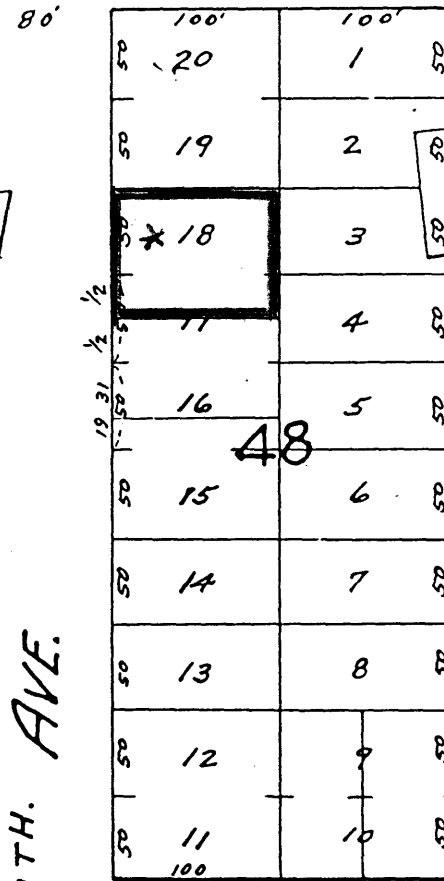
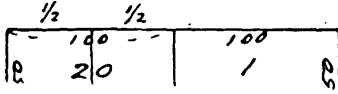


BRAZEE

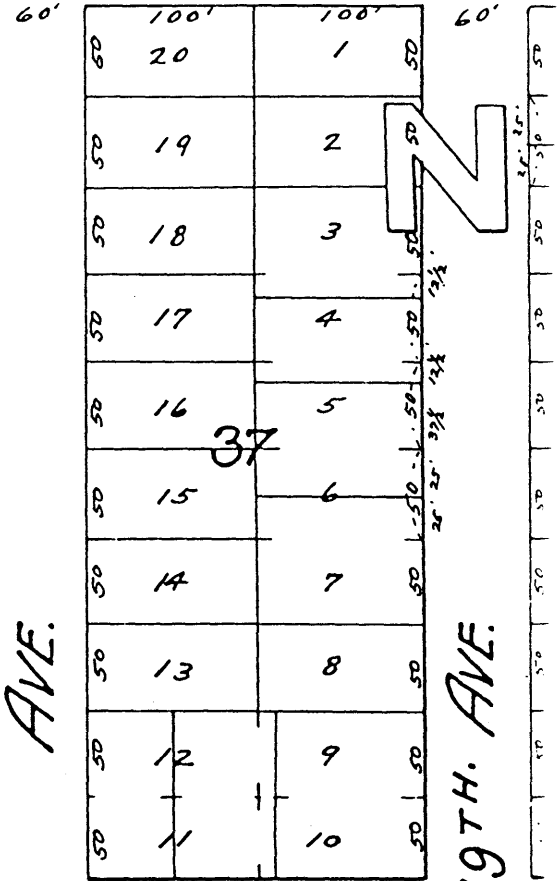


AVE.

THOMPSON

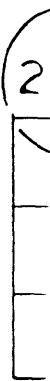
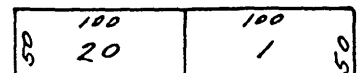


N.E. 17 TH. AVE.



AVE.

N.E. 19 TH. AVE.



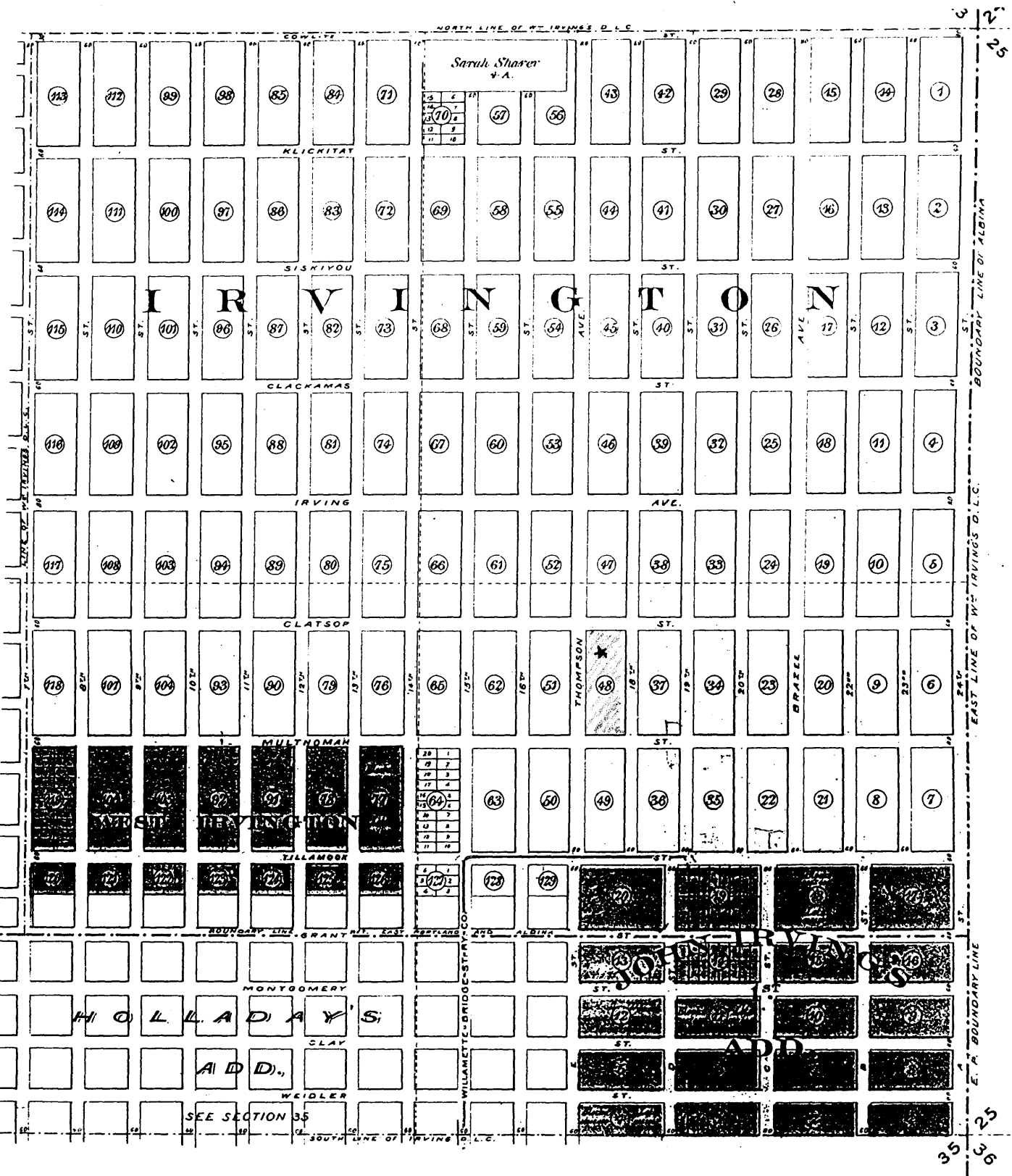
2

# SECTION 26.

T. 1 N. R. 1 E. W. M.

SCALE - 600 FEET TO THE INCH

Ownership Verified JULY 1891



S

S

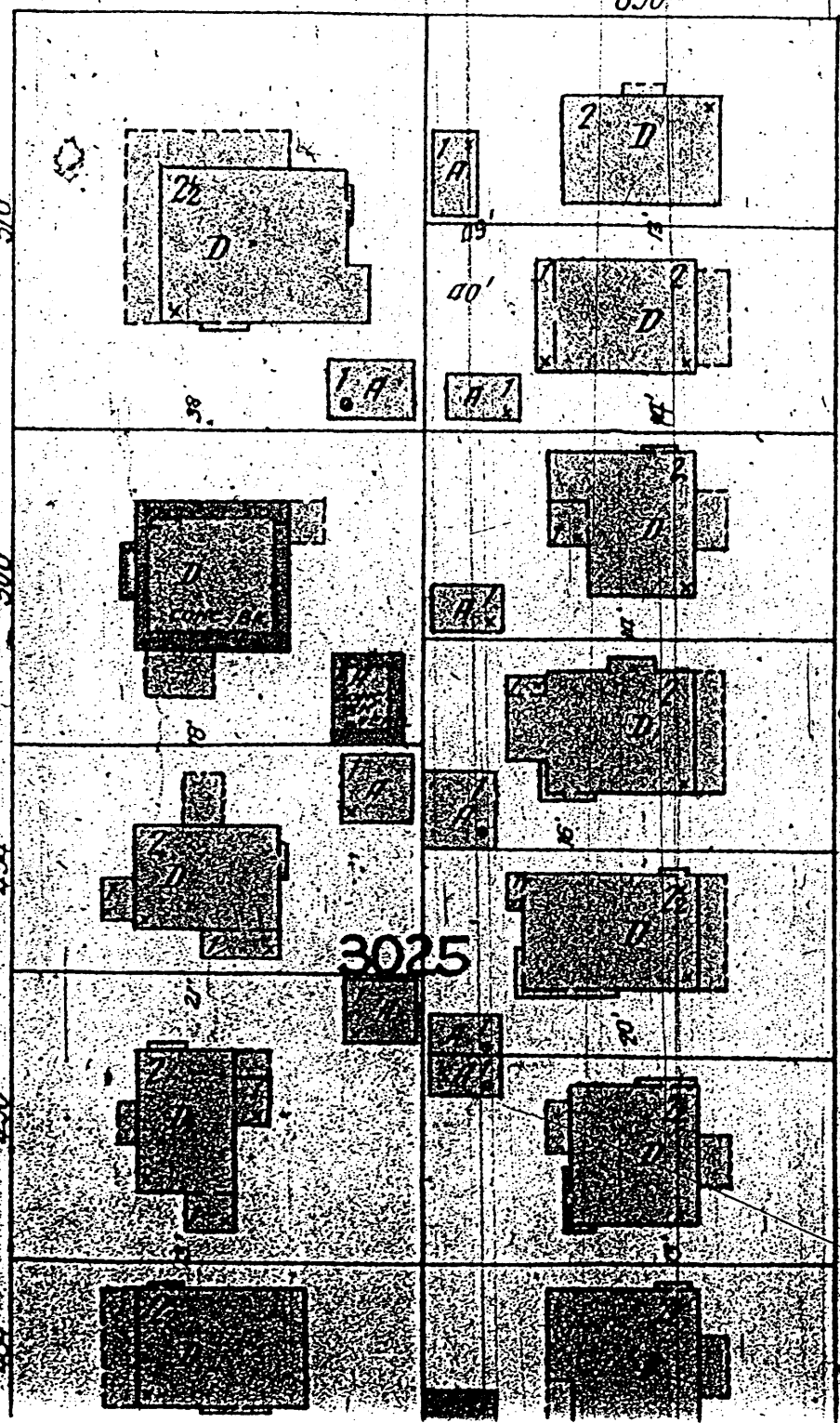
# BRAZEE

(67)

(78)

EAST 17TH

EAST 18TH



2" W. PIPE

2" W. PIPE

2" W. PIPE

2" W. PIPE

2" W. PIPE

2" W. PIPE

2" W. PIPE

510

507

500

501

504

503

502

505

509

508

3025

650

1924  
Sanborn  
Map

508  
506

504

500

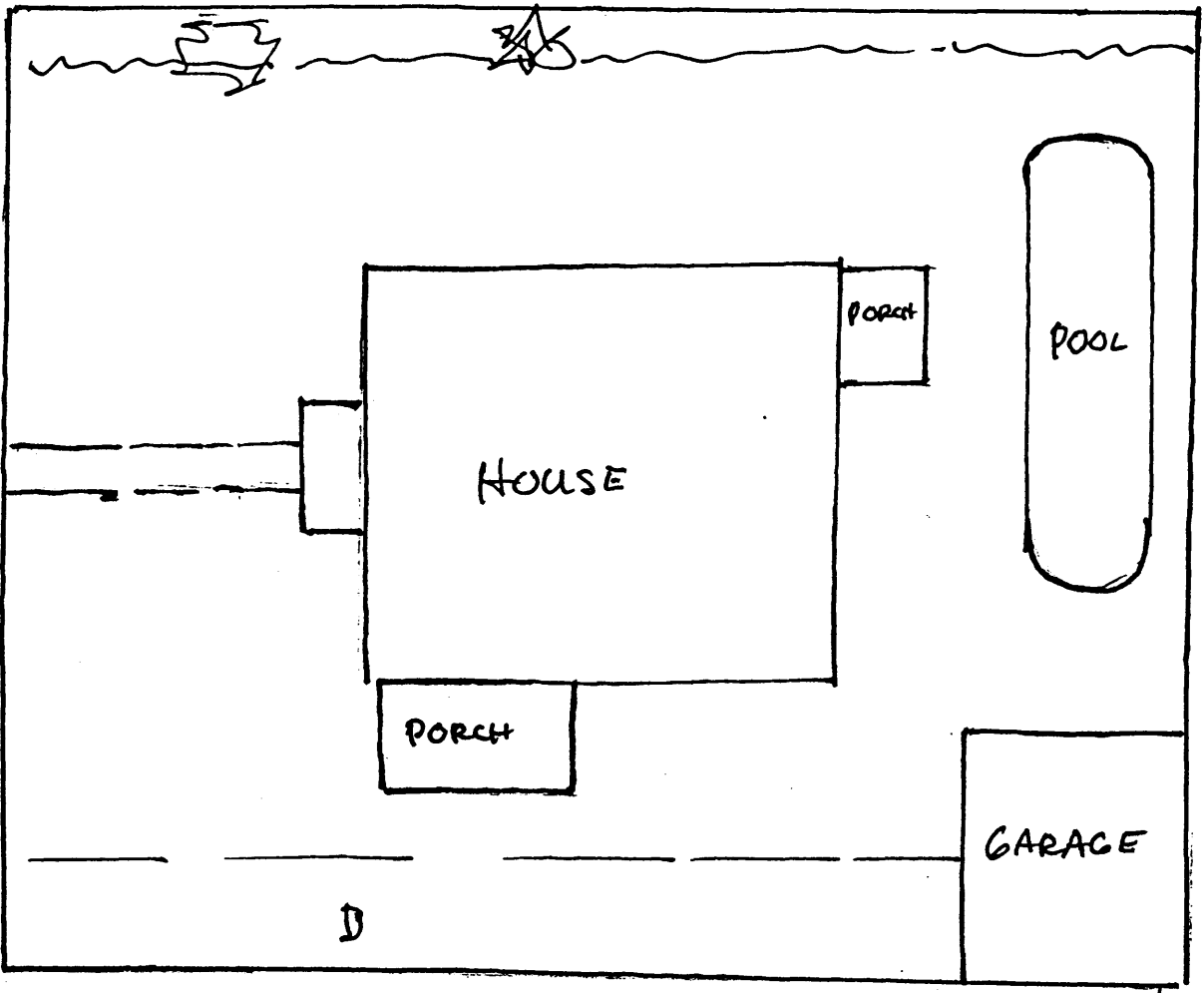
503

506

502

508  
506

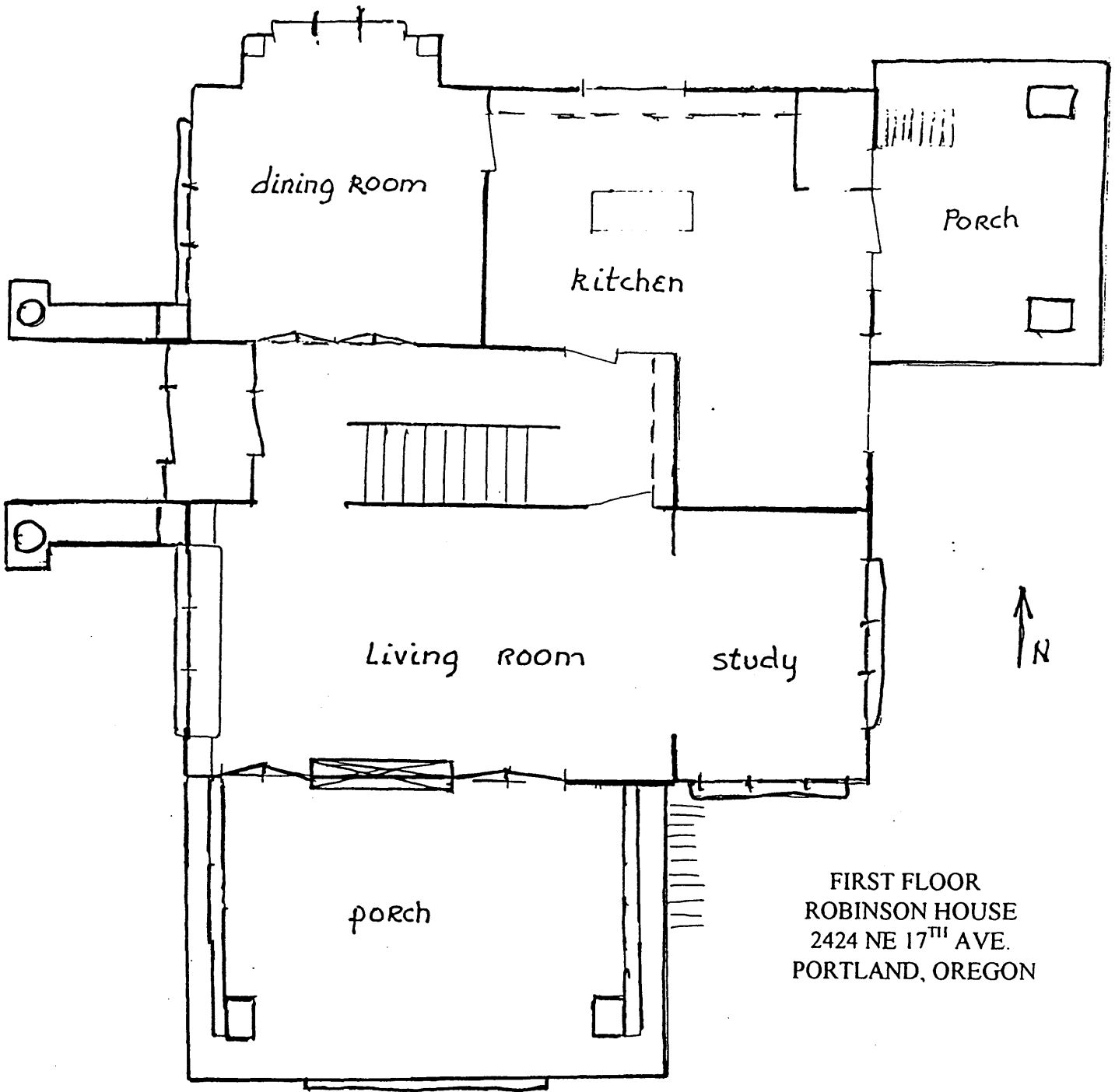
NE 17<sup>th</sup>  
AVENUE



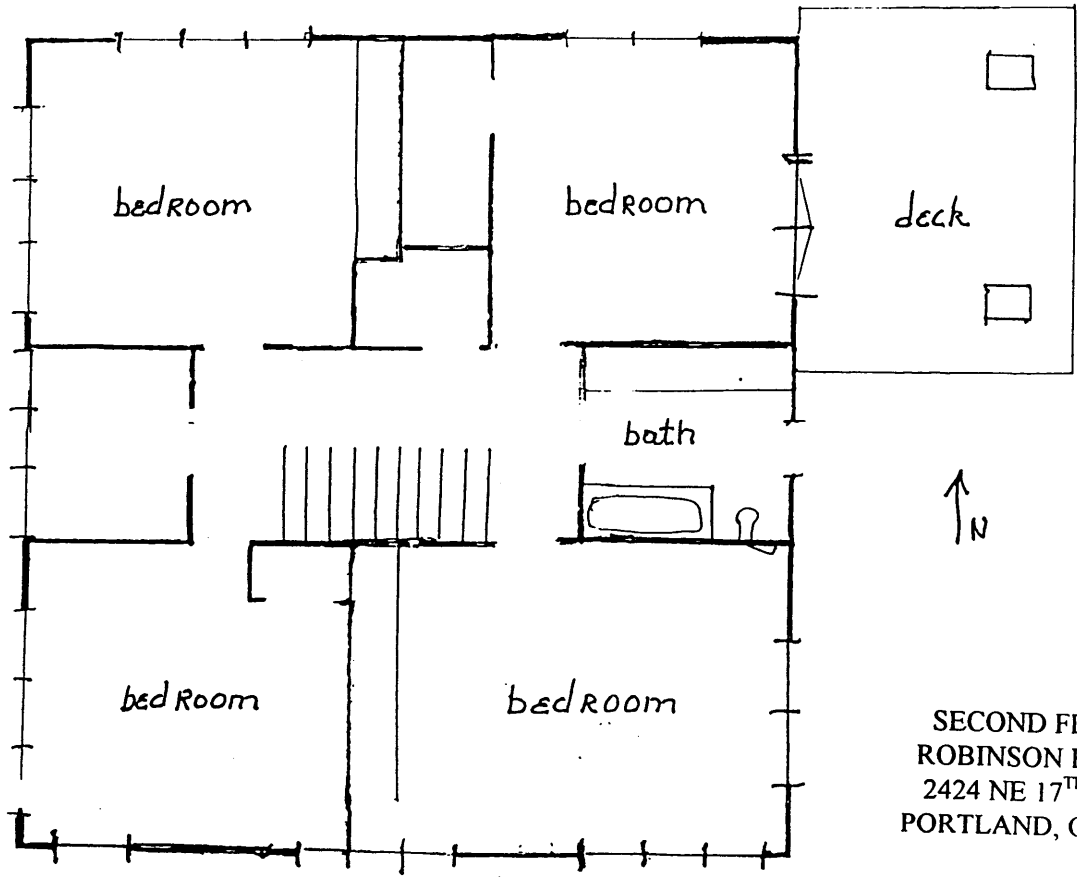
SITE PLANS  
ROBINSON HOUSE  
2424 NE 17<sup>TH</sup> AVE.  
PORTLAND, OREGON



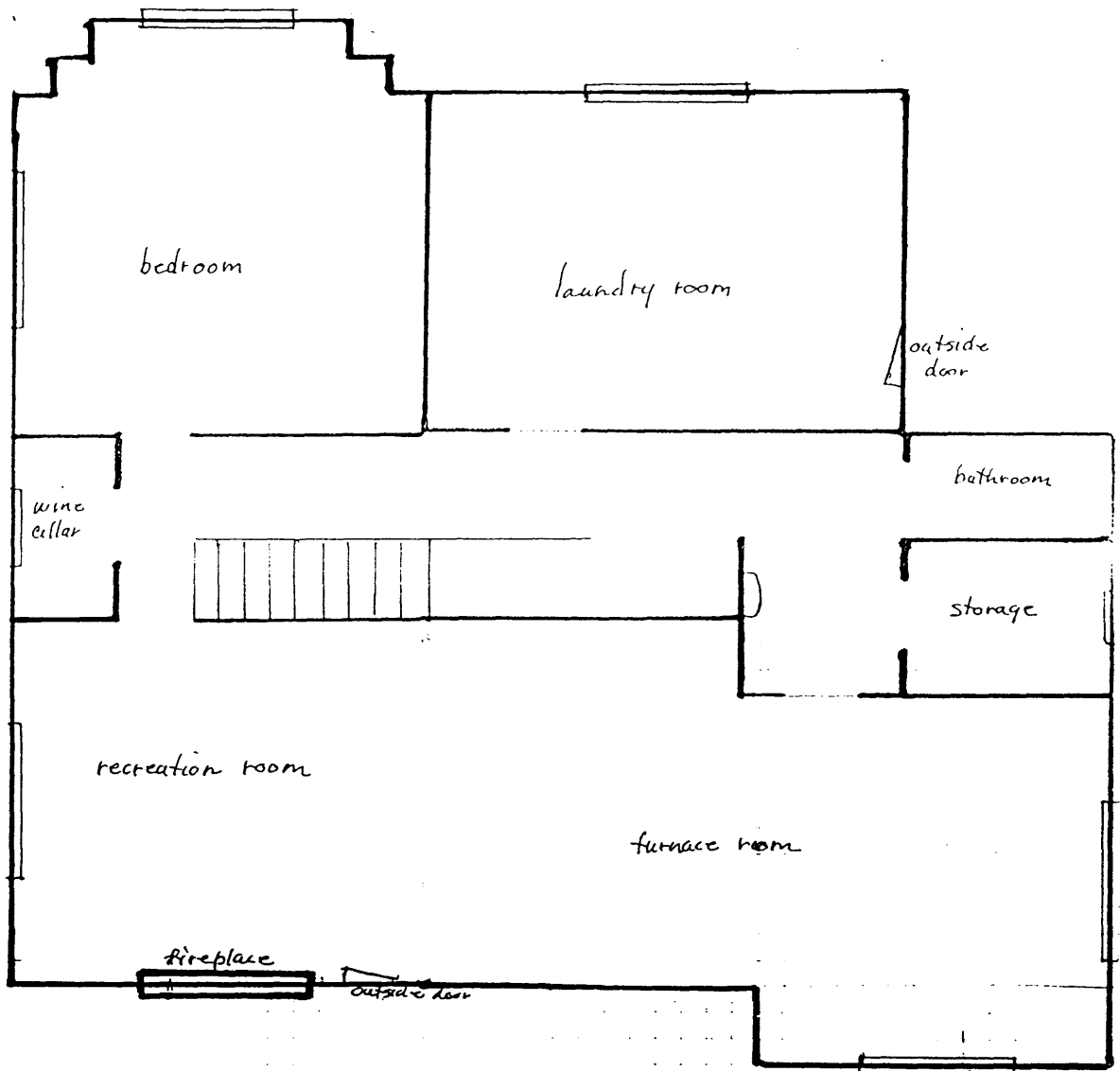




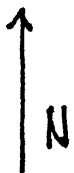
FIRST FLOOR  
ROBINSON HOUSE  
2424 NE 17<sup>TH</sup> AVE.  
PORTLAND, OREGON



SECOND FLOOR  
ROBINSON HOUSE  
2424 NE 17<sup>TH</sup> AVE.  
PORTLAND, OREGON



**BASEMENT LEVEL  
SPIES-ROBINSON HOUSE  
2424 NE 17<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE  
PORTLAND, OREGON**



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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The following information is submitted for all photographs:

Property: Spies-Robinson House  
Address: 2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97212  
Photographer: Robert Van Vactor  
Date: October 1996  
Negatives: Marianne Kadas  
3602 SE Alder  
Portland, OR 97214

Photographs:

- Photo #1 of 12: Front (west) elevation looking east from NE 17<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Photo #2 of 12: Front (west) elevation looking east from NE 17<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Photo #3 of 12: Front entry looking east from NE 17<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Photo #4 of 12: Southwest corner looking northeast from NE 17<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Photo #5 of 12: Southwest corner looking northeast from NE 17<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Photo #6 of 12: South porch looking northwest.  
Photo #7 of 12: Rear (east) elevation looking northwest.  
Photo #8 of 12: Living room looking southwest.  
Photo #9 of 12: Dining room looking north.  
Photo #10 of 12: Entry door with sidelight with leaded glass looking west.  
Photo #11 of 12: Living room cupboard door with leaded glass.  
Photo #12 of 12: Dining room cupboard door with leaded glass.

**Historic  
Resource  
Inventory**  
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



7-017-02424

2424 N.E. Seventeenth Avenue

Irvington, Block 48, North 1/2 of Lot 17, Lot 18  
QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 2832  
Irvington

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: Residence

DATE BUILT: 1922

STYLE: Prairie Style

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Hossack, A.R.W.

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: R-42041-0620

ZONING: R5

Rank III

HISTORIC DISTRICT: Irvington (potential)

**SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:**

Exterior of pale stretcher-bond brick, with ornamental brickwork in contrasting dark brick. Canopy between brick piers over main entrance. Casement windows with stained and beveled glass borders. Porch with hip roof and brick piers on south elevation.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

*City of Portland Buildings Bureau microform and card files.*

*Multnomah County Tax Assessor records, microform, automated data files, and card files (Portland, 1980).*

*Portland Bureau of Planning, Portland Historical Landmarks Commission, POTENTIAL HISTORIC CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (Portland, 1978).*

*OLD ADDRESS: 500 E. Seventeenth St. N.*

*ORIGINAL BUILDING PERMIT #: 112265*

*Present owner as of May 1980: Arthur A. and Nancy H. Stubbs*

*MAILING ADDRESS: By PDC, 1500 S.W. First Avenue, Portland 97201*

*No Preservation Funding*

*Negative: 501-6*

*Score - Design/Construction: 10*

*Score - Historical:*

*Score - Rarity:*

*Score - Environment: 8*

*Score - Integrity: 10*

*Score - Intrinsic:*

*Score - Contextual: 18*

*Score - Total: 53*



Robinson House

2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Multnomah Co., OR

1 of 12





Robinson House

2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Mattusmak Co., Ok

2 of 12



Robinson House

2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Multnomah Co., OR

3 of 12



Robinson House

2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Multnomah Co., OR

4 of 12



Robinson House

2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Multnomah Co., Ok

5 of 12





Robinson House

2424 NE 24<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Multnomah Co., Ok

6 of 12



Roberson House

2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Multnomah Co., OR

7 of 12



Robinson House

2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Multnomah Co., OR

8 of 12



Robinson House

2424 NE 24<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Multnomah Co., OR

9 of 12





Robinson House

2424 NE 24<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Multnomah Co., Ok

10 of 12



Robinson House

2424 NE 17<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Mautsman Co., Ok

11 of 12



Robinson House

2434 NE 24<sup>th</sup>

Portland

Multnomah Co., OR

12 of 12