

**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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Stockmayer, Walter and Sylvia, House

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:

Mid-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Norwich, Vermont

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

## 2. Location

Street & number: 48 Overlook Drive

City or town: Norwich State: Vermont County: Windsor

Not For Publication  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

   national    statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A    B X C    D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of commenting official:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Title :**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government**

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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#### 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.)

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Building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
District	<input type="checkbox"/>
Site	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Object	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement: Wrightian

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: concrete, wood, brick, glass

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Walter and Sylvia Stockmayer House, constructed in 1961, is a one-story, single-family residence built of brick, wood and glass. It was designed by architect Allan Gelbin, who apprenticed with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin East. Gelbin fully embraced the Wrightian style and approach to design in his works. Located on a Norwich hillside, the Stockmayer House has a strong horizontal emphasis that allows it to blend into the surrounding landscape. Sited to take advantage of expansive views to southeast overlooking the Connecticut River Valley, the house features walls of windows and a large patio on the south elevation. Additional features include a carport as well as furniture, planters, and fixtures designed by Gelbin. The Stockmayer House retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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### Narrative Description

This one-story, rectilinear form house, has a predominantly flat roof with wide overhangs which stress the horizontal design of the house. It is located on the side of a hill with expansive southeast views. According to the *Mid-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Norwich Vermont* Multiple Property Documentation Form:

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The new designs made dramatic use of the New England hilly terrain for multi-level living. The hills gave the opportunity to incorporate extensive views into the plan and created dramatic exteriors on the private, downhill side while maintaining a simple, more demure appearance on the public/roadside – typically the uphill.<sup>1</sup>

The Stockmayer House embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the Wrightian/Organic Style type, including rectilinear form, horizontal emphasis, and minimal ornamental details. The house retains its original setting, and later improvements respect the original design. It retains integrity with its original massing, floor plan, and original siding and windows.

### **Exterior**

This one-story, Wrightian style house, has an irregular footprint. It has a predominantly flat roof with a gabled section in the center with deep open eaves and an attached flat-roofed carport. A gable roof rises from the center of the membrane-covered flat roof. The fully-glazed gable peaks allow daylight to penetrate the center of the house. Clad in horizontal board and batten, the 2,060 square foot house rests on a concrete slab and has no basement or attic. Fenestration includes a combination of ribbons of ¼ inch polished plate glass and wood casement windows. Insulated glass replaced the plate glass in the upper clerestory windows. The casement windows open outward on brass butt hinges.

Built along the lines of the Usonian houses created by Frank Lloyd Wright, the Stockmayer House was moderately priced and is characterized by simplicity and its relation to nature. The house lies on a hillside with a wide exposure to the south and the north (rear) elevation built into the hill. The house sits on a rise at the top of the slope and overlooks a large lawn, the road, and a meadow and has a sweeping vista to the mountains to the east. It has a low, flat roofline that fits into the surrounding landscape. With its low profile, the building blends into the landscape, and following the tenets of Frank Lloyd Wright, the building enhances the surrounding landscape rather than providing any form of a contrast.

The foundation consists of poured concrete footings set four feet deep. There is peripheral tile in gravel drainage. The house rests on a poured 3½ inch concrete slab reinforced with steel mesh over a polyethylene vapor barrier and six inches of gravel and sand. The slab is colored with a top dust of Grace and Company “tile red” color hardener and finished with smooth trowels with unit lines hand scored in four by four-foot sections.

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<sup>1</sup> Papazian, Lyssa, *Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Norwich Vermont* Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, October 15, 2018.

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The house has two-by-four stud framing with plywood sheathing, Sisalcraft building paper, and R-11 fiberglass insulation. The yellow cypress board and batten are  $\frac{3}{4}$ " to  $\frac{7}{8}$ " thick. The soffits and carport have three coats of stucco work on a galvanized metal lathe.

Two-by-eight and two-by-ten boards with two-by-four decks frame the house. The finish fascias are made with yellow cypress. A rubber membrane covers the entire roof, except the south gable side which has asphalt shingles. The flat portions were initially made with five-ply built-up asphalt or tar with pea gravel, and the gable roofs had red cedar wood shingles.

The masonry walls have a 9" cavity and a 1" layer of asphalt-coated insulation. The brick is West Lebanon-made Densmore standard size brick, Terracotta colored, and laid in running bond with raked horizontal joints.

The south elevation is dominated by windows, and the eastern end of the south elevation has a wood board and batten siding, laid in wide horizontal bands. There are wood casement windows and fixed plate glass windows and two sets of doors leading to the patio. The western end of the south elevation has full-length plate-glass windows. The center section of the south elevation projects approximately two feet from the primary elevation. The east portion of the projection mirrors the remainder of the west portion with a blend of board and batten siding, wood casement windows, and fixed plate windows. The west portion of the projection has entry doors and full-length plate-glass windows. The doors open onto a patio. The concrete slab runs uninterrupted from the interior flooring to the exterior patio.

The east elevation is an open, two-bay carport. The roof is supported by wooden beams that rest on wooden posts set on brick half-walls. Reflecting on the role of the car in post-World War II America, the formal entry is accessed through the carport. The second bay of

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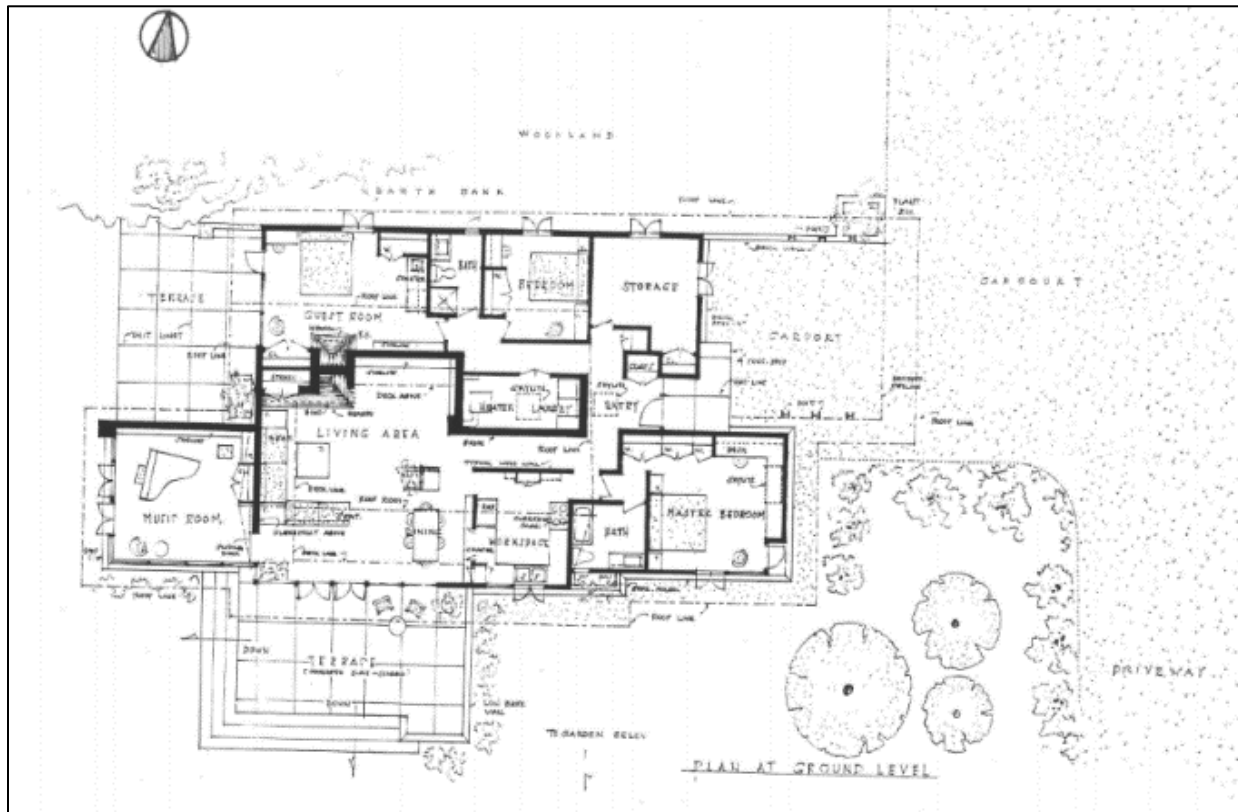


Figure 1 Floor Plan (Art Institute of Chicago)

the carport (north side) was later added on by the Stockmayers. The current owners installed a brick retaining wall in keeping with the original style to shore up the posts and carport roof in 2016.

The north elevation is clad in brick, and there are wood casement windows.

The west elevation features a recessed area and patio, with a door accessing the ski room. It is a combination of brick, board and batten siding and wood casement windows.

There is a wide overhanging eave that continues the lines and detail of the interior ceiling. The southern glass allowed for passive solar heating when the winter sun was low, and the deep overhang of the roof eaves prevented overheating when the summer sun was high.

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### **Interior**

Using the principle of compression and expansion, the interior traffic directs from the compact passageways into a large and expansive living areas designed for socializing.<sup>2</sup> Upon entering the entry hall, there is a perforated brick wall with a geometric pattern immediately to the west. There is a cavity behind the wall for lighting that accentuates the design. The entry hall leads to two passageways: the southern passageway leads to the master bedroom, kitchen, and living areas, which the northern passageway leads to the storeroom, bedroom, and ski room.

The interior is entirely wood, brick and concrete, and it utilizes a red-to-brown palette throughout the house. The interior trim features Yellow Cypress wood. The interior ceiling surfaces consist of three coats of plaster over metal lathe and sprayed with a light honey/wheat colored, sand textured paint. A center spine of brick supports the house, allowing for glass perimeter walls. There are original, architect-designed lighting fixtures throughout the house. Many of the rooms feature remnants of a built-in hi-fi music system with speakers and switches in the rooms.

The left passageway leads directly into the living areas. There is a separate opening that provides access to the master bedroom and kitchen. Visitors can access the living/entertaining areas directly through the hallway while the owners can access the bedroom and kitchen. The master bedroom, kitchen, and living area are also connected, thereby providing private and public access to the main living areas.

The master bedroom is in the southeast corner. It is relatively small and adjacent to the kitchen. It has minimal natural lighting with wood casement windows. It has a skylight over the desk, and there is a mirror for natural lighting. The kitchen has an original red countertop made of a linen-resin material called Micarta, stainless steel sink, gas oven, and a Lyoncraft garbage disposal. Kitchen and master bedroom hardware included paper towel holders, robe hangers, soap dishes and towel bars manufactured by Hall-Mack Company of Los Angeles. Gelbin purchased the hardware for the windows and doors at Simon's Hardware in New York City. The bathroom featured floor tile from the American Olean Tile Company.

The living room is an open space featuring built-in furniture, a fireplace, and a space for a piano. The fireplace consists of Densmore Terracotta color brick. It shares the chimney with the ski room. There is a pass-through between the living room and a ski room closet used for wood. The living room/dining area has a built-in sofa, cabinets, bookshelves, and planter boxes. The horizontal lines of the roof and floor are repeated in the lines of the interior wood lines and shelving. Uplights and two custom-designed task lights are in the

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<sup>2</sup>Korey, Jane. "Landscaping at the Stockmayer House." 48 Overlook Drive -A Usonian House, 2017; Personal Notes and Writings of Tammy Heesaker, 2017.

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low soffits around the perimeter. Gelbin designed the free-floating and built-in furniture, and the hanging and wall mounted light fixtures. John Stuart of New York City provided the major upholstery pieces. There is a pass-through and two-way dish cabinet connecting the kitchen and dining area. There is accent lighting in high decks over the living area and kitchen.

The northern hallway provides access to the storeroom, bedroom, bathroom, and ski room. Similar to the southern portion of the house, the bedrooms and bathrooms are relatively small, while the ski room called for more space. The Stockmayers wanted the ski room/guest room for après ski enjoyment. It features a fireplace, wet bar, and an Acme brand mini-fridge in the lower cabinet. There is an adjacent outdoor patio for removing ski equipment.

The utilities and the double fireplace are in the central core of the house. The fireplaces have cast concrete lintels and separate flues. There are copper coils underneath the concrete slab and separate zoning and controls.

### **Landscaping**

The landscaping is an extension of the interior, with only the glass serving as the boundary between the two spaces. The asymmetrical landscaping includes rectilinear patios and bold curving lines.<sup>3</sup> A low brick wall “demarcates the patio, which is set asymmetrically into a gravel rectangle.”<sup>4</sup> The owners removed a window box that provided a space for colorful accents during a recent renovation. The property is terraced, producing a series of horizontal levels, reflecting the horizontal lines of the roofline and siding. A bank garden, added by Sylvia Stockmayer, created “an herbaceous boundary for the intimate living space.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Korey, Jane. “Landscaping at the Stockmayer House,”; 48 Overlook Drive -A Usonian House, 2017.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

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## 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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1961-1967

**Significant Dates**

1961

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Gelbin, Allan (architect)

Wilder, John (builder)

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Stockmayer House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria C at the local level of significance as a notable example of the Modern

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Movement. It meets the registration requirements for a Wrightian/Organic Style house type, as stated in the *Mid-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Norwich* Multiple Property Documentation Form.<sup>6</sup> It is also eligible under Criterion A at the local level for its association with the significant post-World War II residential expansion of Norwich by middle and upper-middle-class residents. These people brought urban and international cultural experience and worked with local architects developing cutting edge ideas that stood out starkly in the traditional New England countryside. Allan Gelbin, an apprentice of Frank Lloyd Wright, designed the house for Dartmouth professor Walter Stockmayer and his wife, Sylvia in 1961. The Stockmayer House possesses significance in the category of Architecture as an innovative residential design exhibiting the fundamental characteristics of the Wrightian/Organic Style. This style includes simple geometric form, flat and low pitched roofs, use of vast expanses of glass to bring nature and sunlight into the interior, siting and landscaping, long, low profile on the land, and its open floor plan with many custom architect-designed built-ins. The period of significance is from 1961 to 1967, which encompasses the original construction in 1961 and the addition to the carport in 1967.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

***Mid-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Norwich* Multiple Property Documentation Form: Wrightian/Organic Style**

The Stockmayer House meets the registration requirements for a Wrightian/Organic Style House type, as stated in the *Mid-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Norwich* Multiple Property Documentation Form. The architect-designed Stockmayer House possesses much of its original elements such as original roof form, entry plan, and fenestration pattern. It possesses original materials including siding, windows and doors. The Stockmayer House retains original interior features such as the main floorplan, built-in-furniture and fireplace features. Sited on a hillside with views to the southeast, the landscape and site relationship remains intact.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Papazian, Lyssa, *Mid-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Norwich Vermont*.

<sup>7</sup> To be eligible for listing, Contemporary and Wrightian/Organic Style houses must have their original roof form, entry plan, and fenestration pattern. Typically, they are architect designed. Ideally, they should have original materials including siding, windows and doors but replacements in kind and in the same style are acceptable. For example, replacement of original single-glazed windows with double-glazed or insulated glass windows is an acceptable alteration as long as window openings and configuration remain intact. Original interior features must include the main floorplan, if present original built ins and stair and fireplace features. Any additions must be secondary to and ideally smaller than the main house and in the

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### **Criterion A: Community Development and Planning**

The Stockmayer House is significant at the local level under Criterion A for its association with the significant post-World War II residential expansion of Norwich by middle and upper-middle-class residents. Primarily associated with Dartmouth College and Mary Hitchcock Hospital, these professionals “brought urban and international cultural experience and /or worked with local or other architects developing cutting edge ideas that stood out starkly in the traditional New England countryside.”<sup>8</sup> There are several examples of Mid-Century Modern architecture in the town of Norwich, including the Norwich Mid-Century Modern Historic District. This district includes Allan Gelbin’s 1974 home and studio (23 Spring Pond Road) and the 1964 Gardner House (107 Spring Pond Road).

### **Criterion C: Architecture**

The Stockmayer House is significant at the local level under Criterion C for architecture. According to the *Mid-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Norwich* Multiple Property Documentation Form, the Stockmayer House possesses many of the trademarks of Wrightian/Organic Style homes. The Stockmayer House has an asymmetric layout with the obscure entry found in the carport. It is primarily a flat roof building with a low-pitched gable roof rising from the middle. The vast expanse of windows and doors on the south elevation plus the continuous floor covering the interior and patio accentuate the blending of the indoor and outdoor spaces.

The hillside siting of the horizontal themed house and the further use of wood and brick also emphasize the building’s connection to nature. According to the *Mid-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Norwich* Multiple Property Documentation Form, the integration of the house into the often-dramatic site was a Wrightian trademark that “was accomplished through stepped massing, use of indigenous materials, and color of exterior materials. Wright called his approach to building “Organic Architecture” and the siting was as much a part of the design as the building itself.”<sup>9</sup>

#### *Allan Gelbin*

Born in 1929, Allan Gelbin spent his youth in New York City and the surrounding metropolitan area. He attended the School of Architecture at Carnegie Institute of

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same stylistic vocabulary. The landscape and site relationship should be intact.

<sup>8</sup> Papazian, Lyssa, *Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Norwich Vermont* Multiple.

<sup>9</sup> Papazian, Lyssa, *Mid-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Norwich Vermont*.

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Technology in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from 1947 to 1949. Impressed by Frank Lloyd Wright's theories about organic architecture, Gelbin quit college to become Wright's apprentice at Taliesin East in Spring Green, Wisconsin. After leaving Taliesin in 1953, Gelbin supervised the construction of three of Wright's residential commissions in Canton, Ohio: Rubin House, Dobkins House, and Feiman House.

In 1956, Gelbin built the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed John L. and Joyce Rayward House, a.k.a. Tiranna, in New Canaan, Connecticut. Between 1964 and 1967, Taliesin Associated Architects oversaw significant renovations to the property. Wright formed this firm, and following his death, it continued with his architectural vision. It appears that architect John de Koven Hill designed the additions, and Gelbin acted as the supervisor on the project.<sup>10</sup>

Gelbin established his private practice in Connecticut in 1957 and built the first of his three personal homes in Ridgefield, Connecticut, in 1958.<sup>11</sup> During this time, he was part of a modernist architecture movement that combined the stark look and form of the International Style with the organic approach of Wright and his Usonian homes.

#### *Harvard Five*

Gelbin lived in Weston, Connecticut, where he had worked near the Mid-Century Modern architectural enclave in neighboring New Canaan. The group of architects, known as the Harvard Five, were Phillip Johnson, Landis Gore, Elliot Noyes, Marcel Breuer, and John M. Johanson. These five formed the core of the New Canaan group, but other architects, like Gelbin, "lived and practiced there as well, taking advantage of the affluent and modernist-leaning potential clientele."<sup>12</sup> The architects

lived and worked to disseminate their own form of International and also Wrightian/post-International style architecture...New Canaan and the surrounding suburban Connecticut towns, where wealthy residents could afford and were interested in having the cutting edge of architecture for their homes and corporate headquarters, boasts a significant collection and concentration of the best examples of this east coast modernism.<sup>13</sup>

Ten years following the death of Frank Lloyd Wright, the *Hartford Courant* reported that his

<sup>10</sup> Triangle Modernist Houses Website, 2007-2012. Accessed October 29, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Allan J. Gelbin Papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60603-6404.

<sup>12</sup> Papazian, Lyssa, *Norwich Mid-Century Modern Historic District National Register Form*, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

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Style lives on in the work of the many young architects who lived and worked at his studios in Arizona and Wisconsin as well as in the works of architects who have admired him everywhere. One of those is a young architect who spent eight years with Wright and who is now living and working in Westport.<sup>14</sup>

Gelbin's firm focused primarily on residential design, with the majority of its commissions located in New York State and New England. Among Gelbin's New Canaan designs were the Murphy House (1964), Leuthold House (1966), and Whitlow House (1969).

The Murphy House has an irregular plan, sharp angles creating prow like elements, cantilevered deck, and a pyramidal skylight capping a pyramidal roof.<sup>15</sup> The house demonstrates Frank Lloyd Wright's influence in Gelbin's work "in its use of natural materials, relationship to the landscape, organic forms, and finely crafted details like door handles and light fixtures that reflect the triangular motifs in the house."<sup>16</sup> The Leutold House was "defined by curving walls and irregular plan."<sup>17</sup> The house featured detailed woodwork, plate glass, red tile, carport, cantilevers, exposed mahogany beams, breezeway, guesthouse, board and batten wood siding.<sup>18</sup> Although influenced by Wright, Gelbin's design of the Leutold House was "uniquely his own, featuring sculptured forms that respond to existing and manmade landscape elements on the site."<sup>19</sup> The Whitlow House featured a cantilevered deck, bands of windows, vertical slat wood screens, and a carport.<sup>20</sup>

*Walter and Sylvia Stockmayer*

In 1960, Sylvia Stockmayer, of Weston, Massachusetts, contacted Gelbin. She had learned about Gelbin through Lucille Zimmerman, who lived in a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home in Manchester, New Hampshire. Stockmayer's husband, Walter, was a university academic and "internationally known chemist who contributed to classified research during World War II."<sup>21</sup> He transferred from his position at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to Dartmouth College, and the Stockmayers sought a new home. As Mr. Stockmayer "was a passionate hiker and lover of the outdoors," they were "drawn to the

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<sup>14</sup> Basch, David, "Frank Lloyd Wright is Alive and Well in the Westport Area of Connecticut," *Hartford Courant*, April 13, 1969.

<sup>15</sup> Building Conservation Associates, *New Canaan Mid-Century Modern Houses*, Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Sylvia Stockmayer to Lucille Zimmerman dated November 17, 1960; Allan J. Gelbin Papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60603-6404.

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Norwich-Hanover area because of Dartmouth College's proximity to the White Mountains."<sup>22</sup>

In November of 1960, Mrs. Stockmayer wrote to Mrs. Zimmerman:

You were very kind to answer our questions about your F.L.W. [Frank Lloyd Wright]house. I will very much appreciate your sending me the address of Allan Gelbin, whom you mentioned as an ex-apprentice of Mr. Wright, and who lives in Connecticut. It's a nerve-wracking business, deciding on an architect.<sup>23</sup>

The Stockmayers also looked for other architects in the Hanover area, initially choosing a different architect. On November 28, 1960, eleven days after Mrs. Stockmayer wrote Mrs. Zimmerman about Gelbin, Mrs. Stockmayer wrote Gelbin:

Thank you very much for your letter concerning the building of our house, but we just agreed to receive preliminary sketches from an architect in the Hanover area. He's a very fine architect whose latest example we saw last week while up there, and we hope he will do well for us. If we find that we do not agree with his ideas, we will get in touch with you again. I am sorry we missed this contact with you by one week because we would have preferred an F.L.W [Frank Lloyd Wright] type of [home].<sup>24</sup>

The Stockmayers eventually changed their minds and chose Gelbin as their architect. Sylvia Stockmayer called Gelbin which, in his words, significantly

changed my life, the lives of the Stockmayer family, and many others – forever, I knew the ardent call was not from another lukewarm prospector for an architect, but from a genuine, determined and sincere woman in search of the uncommon - an idea, that might deliver benefits to their friends and community.<sup>25</sup>

Gelbin recalled their initial conversations:

Mrs. Stockmayer wished to know if I were interested in designing a house for her family ... They had two teenage sons, Ralph and Hugh. We talked about what they needed in their new home. Above all, they wanted to live with beauty and poetry, as

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Letter, Stockmayer to Gelbin, Allan J. Gelbin Papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60603-6404.

<sup>25</sup> Gelbin, Allan, "Magic on a Vermont Hillside," Allan J. Gelbin Papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60603-6404.

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well as utility...To have a home as a work of art, in harmony with the magnificence of their new surroundings.<sup>26</sup>

Gelbin, who was building his home in Connecticut at the time, drove up from his Ridgefield office "on a cold January day" and met Mrs. Stockmayer, who drove up from Weston, Massachusetts.<sup>27</sup> They met at the Hanover Inn and then drove over to Willey Hill in Norwich. Together, they walked the Stockmayer lot in snowshoes. The site features included

A gently sloping hillside. There are open meadows below to the south and east. Woodlands are above on the north side, and to the west, wide-open views from the site are magnificent, to the south, southeast and southwest ... overlooking the Connecticut River valley and Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Sufficient land ensures against the encroachment of most objectionable future development.<sup>28</sup>

Following their meeting, Gelbin returned to Ridgefield, thinking about his site visit on the drive home.

I carried a strong impression of that wonderful site back to Connecticut and quickly went to work, envisioning an idea for a design before putting anything down on paper. I learned that in my years of working with Mr. Wright. Within a short time, preliminary colored drawings were on their way to the Stockmayers for their study and approval.<sup>29</sup>

Gelbin was very excited about the potential of the Stockmayer commission. In addition to the magnificent site, Gelbin was excited, for it was his first commission outside of Connecticut. Looking back, Gelbin recalled the Stockmayer's needs for the house:

I learned what the Stockmayers' space needs were, their budget, and that they were a rugged outdoor-loving, nature-loving family with interests in many things, including music and painting. I had to figure out what would fulfill their invisible inner wishes as they related to their surroundings both inside and outside.<sup>30</sup>

The Stockmayers' requirements called for a house with "as big as a living room with as much vistas and garden coming in as we can afford, with a fireplace in it and open

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<sup>26</sup> Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>27</sup> "Vermont Residences Designed and Supervised by Allan Jacob Gelbin, Architect." Allan J. Gelbin Papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60603-6404.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>30</sup> Gelbin, Allan, "Magic on a Vermont Hillside."

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bookshelves.”<sup>31</sup> Gelbin compiled a list of features that the Stockmayer house should possess. It included a carport that was not visible from the road; a masonry entry with room for coats and a skylight; a ski room with a fireplace, two beds, benches and a Pullman kitchen; a kitchen with no eating area, views, plastic tops, dual sinks and wood cabinets; a master bedroom located near the kitchen; a living room with a fireplace cove, a grand piano/music area, dining area and conversation area; a dead storage area; the boys room which would share the bathroom with the ski room; indoor planters and a laundry room. Additional notes included horizontal siding, double entry doors, high ceiling entry, separate ski room entry, and closed-off kitchen.<sup>32</sup>

Upon returning to Connecticut, Gelbin set back to work on the Stockmayer house. He wrote Mrs. Stockmayer:

Thinking about the hillside up there in Vermont is pure joy and I want to be sure that it is mated with the house that not only serves all your needs but will bring greater enhancement to the hill, the woods, and the countryside around, all within the budget allowed. This is a difficult but wondrous challenge, and I want to assure you that I will give it the best that I have. I have several completely different schemes in mind and will digest and sift; the creative process cannot be hurried.<sup>33</sup>

The location also followed a tenet that Gelbin learned from Frank Lloyd Wright, who wrote in 1932:

I knew well that no house should ever be *on* a hill or *on* anything. It should be *of* the hill. Belonging to it. Hill and house should live together each the happier for the other.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Wright, Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1943.

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Figure 2 Original Presentation Drawings (Art Institute of Chicago)

Sylvia Stockmayer wrote back to Gelbin in late January, expressing her comfort with the architect:

The very fact that I felt impelled to call you by your first name tells me that we already feel a very fine sense of rapport with you and have great feelings of pleasure in anticipating our working relationship...we will wait patiently and urge you not to feel hurried. We can live in the Hanover apartment indefinitely.<sup>35</sup>

Gelbin charged the Stockmayers an architect fee of \$3,200 broken down by \$320 for a retainer fee, \$430 for preliminary drawings, \$1,600 for working drawings, and \$800 for the supervision of work. If the bids for construction were too high, Gelbin offered to redo the drawings at no additional cost. He would also charge additionally for transportation and lodging but offered to stay in a tent on the site during construction.

In addition to maintaining an affordable project, Gelbin was challenged by “turning a basic rectangle into an entity that was alive and interesting and not a boring, imitative box that

<sup>35</sup>Letter, Stockmayer to Gelbin, January 24, 1961, Allan J. Gelbin Papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60603-6404.

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did no justice to the in-dweller, to the land in all its majesty.”<sup>36</sup> Gelbin found the answer to the challenges by drawing on his experience with Frank Lloyd Wright by

The liberation of the space within ... and the simplicity of genuine, basic, time tested materials uncovered by paint or one material falsely imitating another. That liberation came by way of a roof that echoed the slope of the surrounding hills running counterpoint to the great sheltering flat roof. Music at work in structure!<sup>37</sup>

On February 2, 1961, after a conversation with the Stockmayers, Gelbin jotted the following notes:

- Consider fireplace in corners – or/ move toward two feet toward the piano
- Firewood storage in both places
- Move screened area down for seating
- Consider less glass to south
- Planter at south
- Bookshelves (30 feet)<sup>38</sup>

Gelbin submitted preliminary drawings on February 11, 1961. The outline specifications called for a house “laid out on a uniform modular unit of four foot by four foot” with all the walls and partitions falling “on the unit line unless otherwise dimensioned.”<sup>39</sup>

Gelbin dined with the Stockmayers on February 13, 1961. Gelbin listened to the Stockmayers and he made the following notes: cypress, redwood; bar in kitchen; partition behind piano to be brick; warm heater room; ironing, sorting counter; avoid long entry corridor; double white sinks (double faucets); colored refrigerator; baking counter near refrigerator (mixer below), pans left; vegetable bin under refrigerator; dishwasher on west sink; eliminate kitchen door; fan over stove; no disposal; silver drawer; and provide linen storage.<sup>40</sup>

The Stockmayers, who were renting a house in Hanover at the time, gave the drawings to a Norwich builder, John Wilder, for study and cost estimates. On March 8, 1961, Wilder wrote to the Stockmayers, stating that he had reviewed the plans but required “quite a lot of more detail and specifications before providing a “real close estimate.”<sup>41</sup> Wilder, however, did a

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<sup>36</sup>Gelbin, Allan, “Magic on a Vermont Hillside.”

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Notes, 2/2/1961, Allan J. Gelbin Papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60603-6404.

<sup>39</sup>Outline Specifications, House for Mr. and Mrs. Walter M. Stockmayer, Allan J. Gelbin Papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60603-6404.

<sup>40</sup>February 13, 1961 Meeting, Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>41</sup> Letter, Wilder to Stockmayer, March 8, 1961, Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

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provide a rough estimate of \$15.00 per square feet or \$27,000 plus the cost of drilling the well and site grading.

After submitting the plans to the Stockmayers, a "few major changes were made," and Gelbin "proceeded with the working drawings and specifications ... Mrs. Stockmayer had a good idea about the workspace (kitchen) location, which I incorporated into the design."<sup>42</sup> Mrs. Stockmayer wrote to Gelbin on February 20, 1961:

My overall impression of the future house is one of great loveliness, and I hope that you know that I feel bad about changing anything. The only thing I do not know and feel inwardly right about is the seating arrangement, that, after all these years of entertaining, are most likely to set people at ease and which aid the hostess to bring this about.<sup>43</sup>

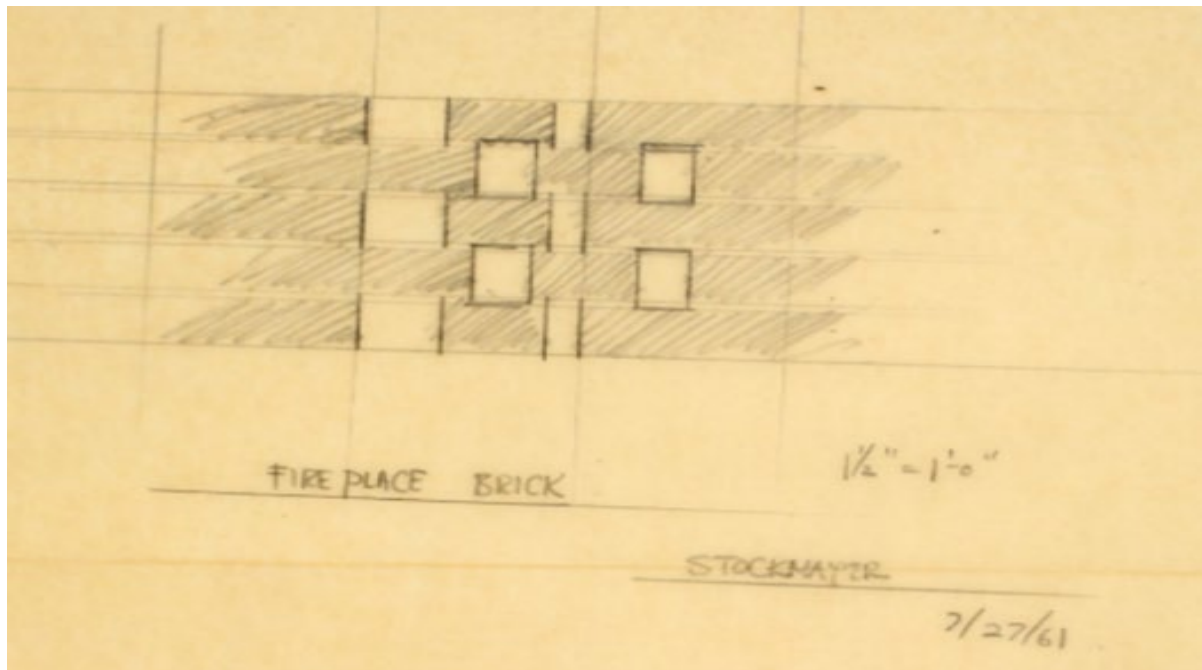


Figure 3 Drawings of fireplace brick pattern ((Art Institute of Chicago)

Gelbin's specifications called for locally made brick. The Stockmayers visited the brick factory in Lebanon and inspected potential bricks for the house. Stockmayer expressed concern:

<sup>42</sup> "Vermont Residences Designed and Supervised by Allan Jacob Gelbin, Architect." Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Letter, Stockmayer to Gelbin, February 20, 1961, Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

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We looked at the bricks in the Lebanon factory and are very confused at this point. While I tend to like a brick that looks old ... I remember you saying you didn't like pink brick. I am very open to suggestion and appreciate you sending me color samples you can think of for ideas of int. and ext. of the house.

Mrs. Stockmayer also expressed her color preferences in the house:

Now that everyone is so orange and blue-green conscious, I'm wary of them. A French blue with a warm or dark brown, with white citron for sparing accents, would be very nice. I am tending to want a plain linen effect for the kitchen counters, maybe in warm red or yellow with darkish blue appliances, you suggested.<sup>44</sup>

The changes included increasing the size of the laundry room, eliminated the long entrance passages, created a large linen closet, created a space for a piano, and enlarged the master bathroom.

The Stockmayers expressed concerns about the potential dirt accumulation in the storeroom, the necessity of a screened-in porch, enclosing the master bedroom balcony to make a conservatory, and creating more privacy between the kitchen and master bedroom. By February 22, Stockmayer wrote to Gelbin, stating that "your plans work out perfectly for us - we'll have all the papers ready..."<sup>45</sup>

Gelbin wrote to the Stockmayers in February 1961:

I am delighted that you are pleased with the house layout; I believe it will serve all of your needs and still be within the budget to erect. As to the beauty of the thing, I believe it will gracefully ride the hillside like a ship set into the waves (Hope you're not prone to seasickness), making for serenity and delight and a great deal of interest. It is usually true that if a design satisfies interior needs, the outward expression follows with the radiance of inward satisfaction.<sup>46</sup>

By May of 1961, Gelbin identified the changes to the building. They included changing the forced hot air heating to radiant heating, installation of lighting in the soffits, and the addition of terraces to the living room and ski room. There were smaller changes such as adding shelving, built-ins, trays and stereo speakers to some of the rooms. Gelbin and the Stockmayer's appreciation for Frank Lloyd Wright went beyond organic architecture and also included parenting techniques. In 1961, Gelbin sent the Stockmayers an article about Mrs. Frank Lloyd Wright, prompting Mrs. Stockmayer to write to Gelbin:

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Letter, Stockmayer to Gelbin, Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>46</sup>Letter, Gelbin to Stockmayer, February, 1961, Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

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We enjoyed the thoughtful article by Mrs. Wright very much. She has tremendous spiritual strength and courage to speak out this way. We are very aware of what she says when we try to train the boys.<sup>47</sup>

Work began in the Spring, of the year, and Mr. Wilder, “a first-class builder and a gentleman,” completed work in about nine months.<sup>48</sup> The plan was “based upon the four-foot square module and simple in character. The steep drive to the two-car, car court, making use of the rectangle.”<sup>49</sup>

In April 1961, Gelbin sent the Stockmayers ceiling samples, which they passed along to Wilder. Mrs. Stockmayer approved of the plaster colors for the ceiling:

If one would make the ceilings feel higher, use that one. If saffron looks yellow at night, I tend toward the dark buff, but it is certainly a small difference to us.<sup>50</sup>



Figure 4 Construction Photograph (Art Institute of Chicago)

<sup>47</sup>Letter, Stockmayer to Gelbin, February, 1961, Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>48</sup>“Vermont Residences Designed and Supervised by Allan Jacob Gelbin, Architect.”

<sup>49</sup>Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>50</sup>Letter, Stockmayer to Gelbin, April 6, 1961, Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

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The Stockmayers gave more working drawings to Wilder, who was “studying them now. He was mighty impressed for a taciturn Vermonter.”<sup>51</sup> As Gelbin predicted, Wilder “thought he estimated too low, before he saw these plans.”<sup>52</sup> Gelbin predicted earlier that Wilder had underestimated the project, prompting Mrs. Stockmayer to write to Gelbin: “You were right.”<sup>53</sup>

According to Gelbin, he got along very well with Wilder who

Carried out my ideas faithfully with the great assistance of his most decent foreman Harold Potwin who became a real friend and later worked with me on several projects. He was one of the most honorable gentlemen I have ever known – and a hard worker. What I appreciated about John Wilder was his faithful adherence to what was in the drawings, with some inevitable changes.<sup>54</sup>

Wilder was also building his own house during the construction of the Stockmayer house, which made the Stockmayers pessimistic about “making it before the snow flies.”<sup>55</sup> Gelbin also pushed Wilder to hire the two Stockmayer boys to assist with the construction.

During the construction of the Stockmayer House, Gelbin “came up from Connecticut for periodic inspections” while the Stockmayers “kept a careful watch on all phases of the work, and we kept in touch.”<sup>56</sup>

The project had a total budget of \$40,000 with about \$7,000-8,000 dedicated to land, “water, driveway, architect, builder etc.” and the remainder dedicated to the house itself.<sup>57</sup> Gelbin’s fee was 10% of the building cost. During the construction, Gelbin and Stockmayers made some “minor changes,” and the project budget “ran somewhat higher than originally planned.”<sup>58</sup> Gelbin justified the cost overruns as “since my designs also included most of the furniture and lighting, they could need, built-in and some freestanding, this became manageable.”<sup>59</sup> While they did exceed the budget, Gelbin was

Backed up, in a rare way, by both Walter and Sylvia. Even though Walter was, at times, understandably more than a bit unhappy about the bills, they showed great

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Gelbin, Allan, “Magic on a Vermont Hillside,” Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>55</sup>Letter, Stockmayer to Gelbin, April 6, 1961, Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>56</sup> “Vermont Residences Designed and Supervised by Allan Jacob Gelbin, Architect.”

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

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integrity by remaining true to the ideas of their architect – refusing to descend into the basement of conniving with the builder to change things behind their architect's back - a somewhat common event. Few things mean so much to an architect, especially a young one.<sup>60</sup>



Figure 5 Historic view of patio and viewshed (Art Institute of Chicago)

The furniture and lighting, “architect-designed, were made integral.”<sup>61</sup> Mrs. Stockmayer “chose the interior decor, with some assistance from the architect.”<sup>62</sup>

Within the house, we worked to create some built-in and loose furniture that would harmonize with the natural wood and brick interiors, some lighting that would not stand out in disturbing contrast ... Sylvia showed her artistry as an interior decorator, as genuinely carried out as her artistry outside.<sup>63</sup>

Gelbin did not see Stockmayer’s involvement in the house as an imposition but rather as an honor:

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<sup>60</sup>Gelbin, Allan, “Magic on a Vermont Hillside.”

<sup>61</sup> “House of Professor and Mrs. Walter Stockmayer, Norwich, Vermont, Allan J. Gelbin, Architect,” 1993 Architectural Record Draft Write up, Collection of Tammy Heesakker.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Gelbin, Allan, “Magic on a Vermont Hillside.”

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Any architect has to be especially grateful when a client invites their participation in the workings of the interior. Such sensitivity shows an understanding that there is no separation of the inside from the outside in a house, which is a work of art, organically conceived. The home becomes more of the owners' - not less -for this input. More of what it was meant to be from its conception. Unfortunately, not many understand this and when they do, few act upon it. Sylvia's touches can be seen throughout in painting, flower arrangement, upholstery fabric, art objects. The great buildings on earth always show a close collaboration between architect and owner, or dweller. Harmony is achieved that most buildings lack.<sup>64</sup>

After Wilder completed the construction, the site was "beautiful but barren, the scars of land surgery showing."<sup>65</sup> According to Gelbin, a "bombshell" arrived with the construction of the neighboring house:

The ubiquitous imitation, a painted-up box with holes punched in dead walls for windows; the box dropped into a great hole of the earth. The arrival of an alien to Nature's gifts and bounty.<sup>66</sup>

Mrs. Stockmayer "created and worked, for many years, to create the fine landscaping and gardens," and "Sylvia's magic began to take root."<sup>67</sup>

Sylvia, as a landscape artist, slowly and with much forethought and hard labor, transformed the barren meadow land into a symphony of form, texture, sound, and color. Even the wind began to sound differently in the pines, and the eyesore to the east began slowly to diminish until the harmonizing eye and spirit would easily pass over it. Along with her substantial and wondrous vegetable and flower gardens, the comforting green grass areas, gravel paths, came an atmosphere no visitor could help falling in love with, or envying. The great labor of love brought home and hillside together. The banked gardens and grass are easily reminiscent of Thomas Jefferson's beloved gardens at Monticello, in miniature. Sylvia and Jefferson shared the love of planting and growing things so dear to the mind and heart of Jefferson, no less Sylvia.<sup>68</sup>

The same year as the Stockmayer house, Gelbin designed the renovation of the Munch House, the Stockmayer's neighbor to the west. For this design, Gelbin used similar features

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Gelbin, Allan, "Magic on a Vermont Hillside."

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found in the Stockmayer House, such as the cement floor, corner fireplace, and personally designed light fixtures. Four years later, Gelbin designed the Gardner House on 107 Spring Pond Road. Gelbin's Norwich designs, "with their rooms' projecting dividers between wall and ceiling — a kind of continuous overhead shelf banding each room and hiding lights — are a direct link to Wright's designs emphasizing the horizontal line."<sup>69</sup> In 1965, Gelbin built his house and studio in Westport, Connecticut, "a fine example of a Usonian style home," which was an "outgrowth of Wright's early Prairie style" and reflected "Wright's vision of a home that was practical, affordable and uniquely American."<sup>70</sup> Wright's Usonian homes were

Inspired to create an architectural style that was practical, affordable, and purely American, using strong horizontal lines and natural materials that would fit into the landscape, as opposed to the concrete rectangular forms of the German Bauhaus architects.<sup>71</sup>

Thirteen years after designing the Stockmayer house, Gelbin moved to Norwich. He then designed his home and studio on 23 Spring Pond Road in Norwich (HD#13, Norwich Mid-Century Modern Historic District). The Gelbin house was a "Wrightian Mid-Century Modern style house is built in flat-roofed tiers into a hillside, and its asymmetrical complex massing includes several decks and porches."<sup>72</sup> In 1975, he designed the Seaton house in Hawk Pine Hills in Norwich.

When Gelbin moved to Norwich, Mrs. Stockmayer

was very upset to see me at work on a great house across town on a small wooded lot ... A shadow fell across a growing friendship and it may have been a serious mistake to have moved into the same town where I have designed for others.<sup>73</sup>

Gelbin spent approximately four years in Norwich, which were very difficult for the architect. When he built his studio, he faced numerous challenges. With the oil embargo and weak stock market, the project also made Gelbin bankrupt. Gelbin's neighbors were also markedly unfriendly.

I feel strongly about this particular house, as I do for all past work—mine and the work of some others—partly because I labored on this house for well over 3,000

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<sup>69</sup> Lilly, Amy, "Docomomo New England Tours Vermont's Modernist Architecture," *Seven Days Vermont*, August 6-13, 2014, Burlington, Vermont.

<sup>70</sup> "May is for Moderns House Tour," DoCoMoMo New York/Tri State, May 2012.

<sup>71</sup> "Architecture You Will Not See in Newport: Mid-20th-Century Modern," *Newport Seen*.

<sup>72</sup> Papazian, Lyssa, *Norwich Mid-Century Modern Historic District National Register Form*.

<sup>73</sup> Gelbin, Allan, "Magic on a Vermont Hillside."

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hours. I saw it through to completion through some very difficult economic and health hardships. I worked at just about every craft that needed to be done, sometimes with a full crew and for sixteen months mostly alone, since I had run low on funds. I gave jobs to, and trained, many young people, including Dartmouth students. The Stevensons [new owners] didn't simply acquire another house some local architect built on speculation. They got the gift of something built with great thought, heart, love, and sacrifice.<sup>74</sup>

In 1967, the Stockmayers contacted Gelbin for making an addition to the carport. The Stockmayers had difficulty storing the snowplow that fit on their Scout jeep. They stored the plow in a seven-foot square wooden frame that the car drove up on to install the plow. The Stockmayers were concerned about wheeling power machines over the crate framing or opening doors close to the box. They also wanted adequate storage for door and window screens, ladder, garden items, skis, camping equipment, porch furniture and landscaping tools such as rakes, shovels, lawnmower, and wheelbarrow. The Stockmayers wanted to save money and avoid damage to the carport ceiling

By not taking out the present brick wall with its planter. On the other hand, it may not look well and will certainly make access to storage places awkward if we leave it intact.<sup>75</sup>

They hoped to put in concrete retaining walls with brick facing. They wanted to keep the sides of the carport open, so they could access the land in the rear of the house. The Stockmayers also wished to save money by avoiding plaster ceilings on the addition and just using wood, painted to match the ceiling color. Later additions and renovations included converting the ski room into a guest room.

Gelbin lived in Norwich until 1977. In 1989, he published his book *Sun, Earth, and Sky: Ideas for a New City* in which he outlined his theories of city planning.<sup>76</sup> In 1991, the Stockmayers hired Gelbin to add a sunroom, which they never built. Looking back in the early 1990s, Gelbin noticed "the present value of the house and land" and believed the house was "probably worth six to ten times its original cost. It has proved a worthy investment – from that viewpoint alone. The joy, pleasure, and comfort it has brought the family and their friends, are immeasurable."<sup>77</sup>

In 1993, *Architectural Record* remarked:

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<sup>74</sup> "Vermont Residences Designed and Supervised by Allan Jacob Gelbin, Architect."

<sup>75</sup> Letter, Stockmayer to Gelbin, April 9, 1967, Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>76</sup> Papazian, Lyssa, *Norwich Mid-Century Modern Historic District National Register Form*.

<sup>77</sup> "Vermont Residences Designed and Supervised by Allan Jacob Gelbin, Architect."

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The house and its location have been a source of great joy to the Stockmayers, their architect, their family, and friends. Nobody who once visits there leaves without feeling that they've experienced something of beauty, mystery, and magic.<sup>78</sup>

Gelbin wrote about the house:

It was a home that has always been in harmony with nature—never an imposition upon it. An individual expression for living—imitative of nothing before or since. Mrs. Stockmayer deserves much credit for laying the foundation for living architecture in central Vermont.<sup>79</sup>

Reflecting on the Stockmayer house and the process, Gelbin recalled:

What really came into being on that alternatively sunlit, cloud-covered snow blanketed, broad hillside back in 1960? Very little of it all can be put into words, yet a few things are clear. Many seeds were sown that nurtured at least six growing families. Some great ideas came into being that has their origins long before any of us were born. Somehow, I believe that the spirit of Tom Jefferson, Washington, Lincoln, R.W. Emerson, Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and many others are alive there, And beyond them ... most surely the spirit of Richardson, Henri Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and more lately Lewis Mumford. Their messages and gifts were inherited by Mr. Wright, and I was one of the many lucky ones to whom the master architect passed them on to. The great gifts were modified, added to, by my own experiences. This may seem far-fetched to some, but I truly believe that the best of our American legacy lives on that hillside, as it does elsewhere. A great religious, spiritual legacy from our own history – the best of it ...fresh, vital, organic. Without the possibility of building upon the best of the past, it is impossible to create anything of real value in the realm of architecture. Anyone who thinks otherwise is deceiving themselves.<sup>80</sup>

### *Allan Gelbin's Later Years*

Gelbin was also an amateur photographer and began photographing Frank Lloyd Wright-designed buildings in color in 1949. Gelbin's other hobbies were art-making and aviation. Gelbin began aviation courses at the age of fourteen and owned and flew three

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<sup>78</sup> "House of Professor and Mrs. Walter Stockmayer, Norwich, Vermont, Allan J. Gelbin, Architect," Unpublished Article for *Architectural Record* (1993), Collection of Tammy Heesakker.

<sup>79</sup> Rooker, Sarah, *MCM Talk Notes*, Norwich Historical Society, 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Gelbin, Allan, "Magic on a Vermont Hillside."

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light aircraft as an adult. Gelbin also made and exhibited collages and silk-screen prints.<sup>81</sup>

Gelbin spent most of his career working in the New England states, although he also spent several years living in the south. He frequently designed furnishings for his clients, and also developed designs for retail distribution.<sup>82</sup> Toward the end of his life, Gelbin “moved to Arizona to be near Wright’s Taliesin West, where he intended to build another self-designed residence.”<sup>83</sup>

Gelbin reflected:

Where there is great light, there is also great shadow never far away. So much of what the Stockmayers and many others began in 1960 has passed by the deaf, the dumb, the blind. Perhaps that’s too harsh a judgment for anyone to make – too hasty – but let it stand now. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, have by now come into contact with these organic buildings ... all works of art made so by their owners as much as their creator; none of them mere mechanical repetitions of imitation heaped upon imitation; true individuality at work in all of them. Somehow, the more awake and intelligent in the surrounding communities should have picked up things of value and put them to work in the buildings of the community. With a few rare exceptions that never seems to have happened. Perhaps they do exist in hidden-away places but none that I have ever been seen driving around the area.<sup>84</sup>

Gelbin returned to the Norwich area in 1989, and “what I saw in the way of building was appalling.”<sup>85</sup> Gelbin saw

More beautiful Vermont hillsides and river plains given over to tick-tack boxes promoted by ignorant magazine publishers, newspaper editors, the building salespeople. Here and there perhaps something of interest but very rarely.<sup>86</sup>

Gelbin rejected the modern farmhouses that dotted the Vermont landscape:

The younger generations that came after ours seem to have learned little about what preceded them, in terms of building. They have shown themselves impotent in

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<sup>81</sup> Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Allan J. Gelbin Papers.

<sup>84</sup> Gelbin, Allan, “Magic on a Vermont Hillside.”

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

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building upon the best of the past. They have been busy regurgitating the past and attempting to bring to life what happened long ago and cannot be revived.<sup>87</sup>

Gelbin saw the non-residential buildings and a loss of creativity and imagination. He saw that most of the day's architecture abandoned the needs of the individual and was cookie-cutter in design and appearance:

Others, with brains scrambled by too much television, advertising, have reverted to making large buildings into packages suited to the latest taste sensation of the day, or a particular 'new' style learned from a college professor or a puerile critic writing for a big city newspaper. They are experts at slick packaging design seen everywhere in the bureaucratic high-rise slabs. Most haven't the slightest clue about relating a building to sun, wind, the site, the purposes, and needs of the users.<sup>88</sup>

While Gelbin lamented the stale urban environment, he also noted that rural architecture was not safe from the mediocrity of American architecture:

Their cousins in the countryside aren't much better off. Out of the college classroom has come a generation or two of the most awkward, and often freakish, expressions; supposedly, the work of 'individuality' expressing itself. Instead of having true humility and recognizing their own nothingness, thereby being able to receive the best influences of the past, they continue to project their often times very expensive distortions on suggestible, gullible clientele.<sup>89</sup>

Gelbin also lamented the fact that the present imagination and vision of Americans and their homes threatened the role of architect:

If deprived of the influence of the college classroom they have easy accessibility to plans made available for sterile "colonial" box for \$2.50 at the newsstand, or by the local paper, lumber yard, or State magazines making plans available for fifteen dollars thanks to an ignorant editor and publisher. It is a myth that only the wealthy can afford architects. My first two clients in my career had very little money, and what they received for the modest fees they paid me compensated them a hundred-fold for what they got in return, including the eventual sales price of the house.<sup>90</sup>

Gelbin believed that architecture had become stale and bland and greed influenced and motivated architectural design. Unfortunately, this type of architecture was ubiquitous.

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Gelbin, Allan, "Magic on a Vermont Hillside."

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Gelbin, Allan, "Magic on a Vermont Hillside."

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According to Frank Lloyd Wright, “the mediocre rose into high places.”<sup>91</sup> Gelbin and the Stockmayers understood the fate of architecture in the 1960s. Mrs. Stockmayer was

Determined not to be sucked up into it or allow that to happen to her family. As a non-conformist, idealist, yet very pragmatic, she saw another pathway. And so, she brought to Norwich much light, oxygen, and vitality to a sleepy old town and to her government in Montpelier. Without her, a great deal of the good would have never happened.<sup>92</sup>

The Stockmayer House is an excellent example of a Mid-Century Modern home in Vermont. As an apprentice of Frank Lloyd Wright-designed the home, it reflects Wright’s Usonian Home. The house continues to reflect the architectural vision of Gelbin and the Stockmayers. The house reflects the harmonious relationship between the outdoors and indoors and between man and nature. According to the *Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Norwich Vermont* Multiple Property Documentation Form, the Stockmayer House followed Wright’s tenets for siting a house:

The integration of the house into the often-dramatic site is also a Wrightian trademark and was accomplished through stepped massing, use of indigenous materials, and color of exterior materials. Wright called his approach to building “Organic Architecture” and the siting was as much a part of the design as the building itself.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Papazian, Lyssa, *Mid-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Norwich*.

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Windsor, Vermont

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### **Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Allan J. Gelbin Papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60603-6404.

Building Conservation Associates, *New Canaan Mid-Century Modern Houses*, Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, 2008.

Lilly, Amy, "Docomomo New England Tours Vermont's Modernist Architecture," *Seven Days Vermont, August 6-13, 2014*, Burlington, Vermont.

Papazian, Lyssa, *Norwich Mid-Century Modern Historic District National Register Form*, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2016.

Rooker, Sarah, *MCM Talk Notes*, Norwich Historical Society, 2017.

The Wright Library website, [HTTP://www.steinerag.com](http://www.steinerag.com), Date Accessed October 29, 2018.

Triangle Modernist Houses Website, 2007-2012. Accessed October 29, 2018.

"Vermont Residences Designed and Supervised by Allan Jacob Gelbin, Architect." Allan J. Gelbin Papers, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60603-6404.

Wright, Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1943.

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### **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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### **Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Stockmayer, Walter and Sylvia, House

Windsor, Vermont

Name of Property

County and State

- Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

Name of repository: Art Institute of Chicago, Norwich Historical Society

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property** 2.92 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

#### **Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Latitude 43.727614 Longitude -72.305398

#### **Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the Stockmayer House are the legal boundaries of lot Town of Norwich Parcel 11-197.000. It is approximately 2.92 acres located on Overlook Drive.

#### **Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the nominated property includes all land historically associated with the Stockmayer House.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Brian Knight  
organization: Brian Knight Research  
street & number: PO Box 1096  
city or town: Manchester state: Vermont zip code: 05254  
e-mail: brianknight@fastmail.fm  
telephone: 201-919-3416  
date: November 26, 2019

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered, and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Stockmayer House

City or Vicinity: Norwich

County: Windsor

State: Vermont

Stockmayer, Walter and Sylvia, House

Windsor, Vermont

Name of Property

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Photographer: Brian Knight

Date Photographed: November 1, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photograph 1 of 21: View looking north: Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 2 of 21: View looking northeast: Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 3 of 21: View looking northeast: Patio, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 4 of 21: View looking northeast: Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 5 of 21: View looking west: Carport, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 6 of 21: View looking southwest: Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 7 of 21: View looking south: Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 8 of 21: View looking east: Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 9 of 21: View looking southeast: Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 10 of 21: View looking east: Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 11 of 21: View looking south: Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 12 of 21: View looking west: Living Room, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 13 of 21: View looking north: Fireplace, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 14 of 21: View looking north: Living Room, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 15 of 21: View looking north: Kitchen and Dining Room, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

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Photograph 16 of 21: View looking north: North Hallway, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 17 of 21: View looking north: Front Entry, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 18 of 21: View looking north: Front Entry, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 19 of 21: View looking north: Chandelier/Lamp, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 20 of 21: View looking north: Planter, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

Photograph 21 of 21: View looking southwest: Carport, Stockmayer House, 48 Overlook Drive

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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