

**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: Oskam, Hendrik and Marringje (Marri), HouseOther names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

**2. Location**Street & number: 6901 Dakota TrailCity or town: Edina State: MN County: HennepinNot For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A**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 at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ **national** \_\_\_ **statewide** \_\_\_ **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ **A** \_\_\_ **B** \_\_\_ **C** \_\_\_ **D**

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**Signature of certifying official/Title:****Date**

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

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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**Signature of commenting official:****Date**

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**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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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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.)

Building(s)

☒

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

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

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

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood, cement, glass, concrete

### 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.)

#### Summary Paragraph

The Hendrik and Marri (Marri) Oskam House is located at 6901 Dakota Trail in Edina, a first-ring suburb west of Minneapolis (Figure 1). The house is located on Indianhead Lake, in a neighborhood known as Indian Hills, a name derived from a series of paths and trails created by Native Americans as they travelled from the present-day cities of Shakopee and Eden Prairie to Lake Bde Maka Ska in Minneapolis. The heavily-wooded area features steep hills and rugged terrain.

The Oskam House is sited on a particularly steep parcel of land with the house oriented to the southeast in response to the shoreline of Indianhead Lake (Photo 1). The modernist style house was designed by Elizabeth "Lisl" Scheu Close, co-founder of Close and Scheu, later renamed Elizabeth and Winston Close, Architects, and finally renamed Close Associates. The 1964 house features concrete block, redwood siding, asbestos cement panels, and expanses of glass. The design of the house responds to the steep terrain of the site and encompasses the two-level house, a breezeway, and garage, all united and covered by a butterfly roof. The property retains excellent integrity to its period of significance, 1964-1966, at both the exterior and interior.

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## Narrative Description

The Oskam House measures 42 feet by 24 feet, 8 inches, while the garage measures 22 feet by 20 feet. The house and garage are separated by an eight-foot-wide breezeway. The butterfly roof reflects the downward slope of the land as it covers the garage, breezeway, and a portion of the house. From that point the roof slopes upward toward the lake, sheltering the remainder of the house and embracing the expansive views of the lake.

The house and garage are built on a concrete block foundation, which is exposed to at least some extent on nearly all elevations. The foundation is painted white as is the trim around the doors and windows. Both the house and garage are largely sided with redwood siding characterized by vertical striations. The redwood was installed “wrong side out” as Lisl preferred the long textural grooves that were produced on that side during the milling process (Photo 2). Areas not clad with redwood feature gray asbestos cement panels. A metal fascia completes the roofline.

### Northwest Elevation

The northwest elevation is divided into bays by wood posts that support the five projecting beams of the roof structure and also create a broad overhanging eave. The main entrance is positioned on this elevation (Photos 7 and 8). The entrance consists of a solid door with an asbestos cement panel above. The door is flanked on the right side by a vertical panel of three windows. The only other fenestration is a band of rectangular clerestory windows positioned below the eave that extends the full length of the elevation, similar to the clerestory windows on the southeast elevation.

### Southwest Elevation

The southwest elevation features the exposed concrete block foundation wall of the lower level and an upper wall clad with redwood siding (Photo 6). The concrete block chimney is positioned to the right of center and projects from the face of the wall and extends above the roofline. To the left of the chimney, a scupper or “gargoyle” projects from the top of the wall allowing water to drain from the roof and away from the wall surface. One, two-light casement window is placed on the left side of the main level. There is a single casement window on the lower level. Metallic streamers are attached to the redwood to deter woodpeckers.

### Southeast Elevation

The lake-facing, southeast elevation, like the northwest elevation features five projecting beams that create a broad overhanging eave (Photos 3 and 4). This elevation is characterized by expanses of windows with the fenestration pattern identical on both the upper and lower levels. All the windows in the house were manufactured by the Andersen Corporation of Bayport, Minnesota. From left to right, the fenestration includes one fixed window, two sets of paired, sliding casement windows, an eight-foot-wide sliding glass door, and one additional set of

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sliding casement windows. The windows are framed with gray, asbestos cement panels. A band of rectangular clerestory windows are positioned directly below the eaves.

A deck accessed from the main level extends the length of this elevation and consists of a larger 12 foot by 13-foot cantilevered deck, located right of center, that is flanked by a narrow deck that is three feet, four inches wide. The narrow deck is framed by the building's projecting side walls. The larger deck is supported by two wooden posts. The outer side walls of the large deck are clad with redwood while the lake-facing side features a steel railing (Photo 5). The inner walls are clad with asbestos cement panels. A brick-paved patio opens off the sliding glass doors of the lower level. The same bricks are used in the interior of the house.

### **Northeast Elevation**

The northeast elevation features the exposed concrete block foundation wall on the lower level while the wall above is clad with redwood siding (Photo 9). A scupper or "gargoyle," corresponding to the one on the southwest elevation, projects from the top of the wall allowing water to drain from the butterfly roof. There are no windows on this elevation.

### **Garage**

Other than the overhead garage door on the northwest elevation that accommodates two cars, all remaining elevations are sided with redwood above the concrete block foundation. There is one large garage door on the northwest elevation and no windows (Photos 10, 11, 12). A walkway leading to the entrance of the house extends along the southwest elevation of the garage. The eave of the garage extends over the walkway to provide protection from the elements. Lights recessed within the soffit illuminate the walkway. The wooden walkway consists a level section following by four steps, which is followed by a second level section, and then four additional steps leading down to the entrance. The historic pipe railing is present.

### **Breezeway**

An eight-foot-wide open breezeway, which may also be referred to as a porch or deck, separates the house from the garage (Photo 12). The floor of the breezeway is also surfaced with wood. Two exposed beams that extend from the house through the garage support the breezeway's roof. Three compartments with double doors are built into the foundation wall of the garage and are accessed from the breezeway. The outer compartments are used for storage while the middle compartment was specifically designed as a doghouse for the Oskams' dog, Brionne.

### **Interior – Main Level**

The main level is essentially one large open space with only partial divisions between the rooms (Photo 13 and Figure 5 and 6). The five wood beams that support the roof structure are exposed on the interior. Supporting posts are also exposed on the interior and support the juncture of the two slopes of the butterfly roof. The ceiling is clad with redwood plywood. Interior walls are plaster, painted white.

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Major areas are carpeted except for the entrance and adjacent hallway, bathroom, dining room, and kitchen, which are paved with a glazed dark-brown brick, a feature found in vernacular Dutch architecture. The brick floors are waxed.

A hallway to the left of the entrance extends past a coat closet and leads to a half bath, the only room on the main level with full partition walls (Figure 5). A niche built into the end wall of the closet was designed to display art. A room divider to the right of the entrance separates the entry from the dining room. The five-foot-wide divider is built with red birch and consists of vertical posts and shelves (Photo 14).

An atrium, or garden room, is located directly beyond the entrance. Measuring approximately eight feet by ten feet, the space carries down to the lower level and it illuminated by a large skylight, which is referred to as a “skydome” on the plans. A stairway placed to one side of the atrium descends to the lower level. On the upper level, the low side walls of the atrium are clad with plaster while the two remaining sides features steel railings.

The living room is located to the right of the atrium (Photos 15 and 16). The room’s major feature is a fireplace positioned on the southwest wall (Photo 17). The fireplace features a raised hearth, a wide firebox, and brick stacked vertically in soldier courses above the firebox, extending to the ceiling. The brick used in the fireplace is of identical color to that used in the floor although it is slightly larger dimensionally. The brick that covers the surface of the raised hearth is identical to the floor brick. A curved seat is positioned to each side of the fireplace and extends the full width of the room. The seat is constructed with birch planks on steel supports.

The study is located on the opposite side of the atrium (Photo 18). The northeast wall is devoted entirely to bookshelves. An original light fixture with five pendants is suspended over Hendrik Oskam’s desk. A ten-foot-wide storage cabinet is positioned next to the low wall of the atrium. It consists of five large drawers for storing photograph records with an open shelf above. Four smaller drawers organized vertically are placed to each side of the large drawers at either end of the cabinet.

A “light valance” is placed over the windows on the southeast elevation and runs from the living room through the study providing both direct and indirect light. There is also a “light valance” above the bookshelves in the study. When illuminated, a soft light is cast throughout the space. A “bridge” along exterior wall, and joining the living room and study, provides access to the deck through the eight-foot-wide sliding glass doors. (Photo 19 depicts the light valance, the sliding glass doors, and the effect of the windows placed between the roof beams.)

The dining room is located to the right of the entrance (Photos 20). Three original pendant lights, identical to those in the study, illuminate the space. The kitchen is separated from the dining room by a divider that includes cabinets, drawers, shelves with glass doors, and a pass through (Photo 21). Built with red birch, the quality of the workmanship is evidenced by how the grain of the wood flows seamlessly from the doors of the cabinets through the face of the drawers. The divider is topped with a soffit that also extends over the entry to the kitchen. The kitchen may be

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closed off completely from the dining room by extending a folding door from the kitchen side of the divider across the pass through and across the entry to the kitchen.

The kitchen features birch cabinets, space for a built-in oven and cooktop, and an original barbeque grill (Photo 22). A “light valence” extends around three sides of the kitchen and provides both direct and indirect light.

### **Interior – Lower Level**

The stairway to the lower level descends along the side of the atrium, or garden room. (Photo 23 and Figures 7 and 8). The stairway features open treads and a steel railing. The floor of the garden room is paved with the same brick pavers utilized on the main level. At the base of the stairs, eight-foot-wide sliding glass doors open to a brick patio. To the right of the stairway is the primary bedroom, with views of the lake (Photo 24). It features a built-in vanity with a mirror flanked by closets with floor-to-ceiling doors (Photo 25). A smaller bedroom is located to the left of the stairway.

A hallway at the back of the garden room leads to the laundry room, storage room, bathroom, and utility room. A door at the back of the primary bedroom opens onto the hallway providing efficient access to the bathroom. The hallway and bathroom are also paved with brick.

### **Site**

The half-acre property is notable for its very steep terrain with a continuous slope from Dakota Trail to the shore of Indianhead Lake. A paved driveway enters the site from the road at an acute angle in order to navigate the terrain at a manageable grade. Both sides of the driveway are retained by wooden timbers. Timbers also retain the land near the lake in order to create a level patio located off the lower level.

Both the client and architect wished to retain as many trees on the site as possible and the house was sited with that in mind. The property contains oak, river birch, and aspen, well as coniferous trees. At the time of construction, landscape architect Charles Wood developed a planting scheme that called for preserving the natural landscape as much as possible. Additional native plants have been added over the years. No part of the property is laid to lawn.

### **Assessment of Integrity**

The Oskam House retains a remarkably high level of historic integrity. Integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association are all extremely high. There have been no additions, nor have any of the rooms or features been altered. The few changes to the house are very minor in nature. One exterior change was the installation of a metal fascia when the roof was replaced that appears to be slightly wider than the original. Interior changes have been limited to the replacement of several of the appliances.



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Even the mid-century modern furniture, which Lisl helped the Oskams select, is largely original. It is rare to find a property in such pristine condition. Its high integrity allows for an unusually complete level of understanding of the design philosophy of Lisl Close.

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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**

1964-1966  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

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

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

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

**Cultural Affiliation**

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

**Architect/Builder**

Elizabeth Close  
Elizabeth and Winston Close, Architects  
Bryan Construction

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**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 Hendrik and Marringje (Marri) Oskam House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, as the work of a master. The house was designed by Elizabeth “Lisl” Scheu Close, F.A.I.A. (1912–2011) who was an acclaimed modern architect and cofounder of the first architectural firm in Minnesota dedicated to modern design. She was the first woman from Minnesota elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the first woman to serve as president of what is now AIA Minnesota, and the first woman to receive AIA Minnesota’s Gold Medal, the highest honor the organization bestows. The University of Minnesota awarded her its highest honor, a Doctor of Humane Letters, for her “contributions to Modern Architecture in America.” Lisl was recognized both locally and nationally for her outstanding residential designs.

The Oskam House represents an exemplary example of the work of Lisl Close and one which embodies many of the most important characteristics of her designs including sensitivity to the site, practical use of exterior materials, particular attention to interior spatial planning and the needs of the client, as well as engagement with the outdoors. In Hendrik and Marri Oskam, Lisl found ideal clients who were particularly receptive to modern architecture. Emigrating from the Netherlands, the Oskams were familiar with European modernism and fully embraced Lisl’s ideas, allowing her design philosophy to reach its full expression, while meeting the precise requirements for the type of house in which they wished to live.

The Oskam House was built on an unusually steep and challenging site, requiring an innovative solution that would sensitively embrace the land while creating a unified design statement. The exterior, designed for efficiency and low maintenance, creatively employs redwood siding and asbestos panels. The interior is equally innovative and carefully considered with its non-traditional open layout, warm materials, numerous built-ins, and focus on natural light and engagement with the environment. Showcasing the latest in sliding glass doors by the Andersen Window Corporation, the house was featured in a national advertising campaign.

Without additions or modifications, the house is highly unusual for its pristine historic integrity and the ability to convey its precise appearance and features from the time of construction. Finally, and perhaps most telling, Lisl Close continued to cite the Oskam House as an important design within her body of work. Over the decades, she repeatedly selected the Oskam House to appear in publications featuring her designs. Far from her largest or most elaborate house, she recognized the Oskam House as an outstanding representation of her skill as an architect and an important example of the type of home she could provide for her clients.

The period of significance for the Oskam House begins in 1964 when construction was essentially completed and the Oskams moved into their home. It ends in 1966 when the final architectural features were added to the house. The Oskam House is of statewide significance.

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

### **Marri and Hendrik Oskam**

Marri (née Blok) Oskam (b. 1925) was born in the Netherlands and grew up in the town of Houten, near Utrecht, in an Art Nouveau style house designed in 1901 by architect R.E. Wentink. She attributes her lifelong appreciation for architecture to that house.<sup>1</sup> Hendrik Oskam (1923–2001) was born in Bergambacht in the Netherlands and educated at the University of Utrecht, where he earned his Ph.D. in plasma physics. His education was interrupted during World War II when he joined the Dutch Resistance. Despite the dangers he faced, “he supplied food to people hiding Jewish families from the Nazis and collected intelligence on German military operations.” He was arrested and spent two years in Nazi labor camps in the Netherlands and Germany for his “refusal to sign a Nazi loyalty document.” From 1952 to 1958, Hendrik worked for Philips Laboratories in the Netherlands studying gas discharge physics.<sup>2</sup>

Hendrik Oskam’s work was known in the United States. After the USSR launched sputnik in 1957 and the US sought scientists for their space programs, he was recruited by several American universities including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the University of California, Berkeley. In 1958, he joined the University of Minnesota’s engineering faculty, where he taught for 30 years. Through the University of Minnesota, the Oskams became part of a circle of European academics that included astronomer Willem Luyten, a fellow Netherlander. On a visit to Luyten’s International style home in Minneapolis, the Oskams were introduced to the architecture of Elizabeth and Winston Close, who designed the house in 1939. It was one of several modern residences they would design for U of M faculty members. As émigrés from the Netherlands, the Oskams shared European roots with Elizabeth Scheu Close, were knowledgeable about European modernism, wanted a modern house, and were attracted to the Closes’ architectural aesthetic. In 1963, they hired Elizabeth Close to design their home in the Minneapolis suburb of Edina, Minnesota. The Oskams did not want a large house, in part because they did not have children, but required “space and light” in their home.<sup>3</sup> In addition to designing their house, Close assisted the Oskams with site selection and finding sympathetic modern furniture and interior finishes for their residence.

### **Constructing the Oskam House**

The construction of the Oskam House is unusually well documented because of the detailed files on the house, which are part of the Close Associates Papers (N78), located at Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, as well as documentation about the house in the personal files of Marri Oskam.

<sup>1</sup> According to Marri Oskam, the house has received historic designation by the Dutch government. Marri Oskam, email to Jane King Hession, February 22, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> University Senate Minutes, University of Minnesota, December 6, 2001, and “Dedicated University Engineering Professor,” The Minnesota Daily, October 19, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Marri Oskam, Oral History Interview with Jane King Hession, August 28, 2014, Edina, Minnesota.

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The construction process began with the selection of the property on Indianhead Lake upon which to build the house, with Lisl assisting the Oskams in selecting the site. It is believed the lot was purchased at a cost of \$8,500.00. Next a survey of property was completed on October 19, 1962, by Egan, Field, & Nowak, Surveyors (Figure 2).

To begin the design process, the Oskams completed a detailed eight-page Program Questionnaire about their needs and lifestyle. Developed by Lisl, the questionnaire was organized into eight topics: Room Size, Use, Inter-Relationship, and Orientation; Activities; Furniture; Cabinets and Storage; Interior Finish Materials; Mechanical Equipment; Appliances; and Miscellaneous Information. Each topic was further broken down into subtopics. For example, Activities was broken down into specific activities including Formal Entertaining; Informal Entertaining; Conversation; Music; Television; Games; Reading; Sewing, and Active Play. The client would then indicate in which rooms an activity might take place and how many people might be participating. Collectively, the information provided by the client on the questionnaire allowed the architect to determine the number and size of rooms and the specific furnishings required, and thus meet the needs of the client. Without the questionnaire, it is less likely a client would fully communicate their needs.

Preliminary drawings were completed by November 28, 1962, with the final drawings completed by March 15, 1963 (Figures 3-8). There were several changes from the preliminary drawings including a modification to the window pattern on the lakeside elevation, a change in the slope of the roof, and a change in the orientation of the garage. On April 5, 1963, Bryan Construction Company of Minneapolis submitted a successful bid for the construction of the house in the amount of \$38,790.00. Construction began in June 1963. Lisl requested a list of all subcontractors, which was provided on August 28, 1963 (Figure 9).

Correspondence from Minnetonka Woodcraft Company of Wayzata is also found in the construction file. The company provided an estimate for the construction of the screen between the entrance and dining room. The estimate noted, "Red birch room divider per Arch. detail - \$134.00."

The Oskams moved into their house upon its completion in early 1964. Lisl assisted with the selection of the furnishings. Some of the Scandinavian mid-century modern furniture was purchased at Barrett Pohl in Minneapolis. Letters in the construction file indicate that carpeting and fabrics were ordered from F. Schumacher and Company in New York City.

On March 2, 1964, Bryan Construction completed a full accounting of the construction costs and submitted a final invoice (Figure 10). The total cost of construction was \$35,428.35. The architect's fee was 10% of the cost or \$3,542.83. The finished areas of the house totaled 1,731 square feet.

Upon the completion of the house, Lisl prepared a summary of the design and construction process (Figure 11). The summary includes a statement of the design problem, a description of the site, the design solution, a description of the house, and details about the construction costs.

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The account goes into considerable detail about specific design features noted that the sloping roof of the main living areas improves the volume of space for listening to music, a favorite pastime of the Oskams. She also notes that the windows between the wood beams add lightness to the wood ceiling, and a varying pattern of light, without the loss of privacy. Lisl included a humorous remark in which she noted that while she had designed a doghouse for the Oskams' Irish setter, Brionne, the dog preferred to spend his time by the gliding doors with a view of the lake.

Lisl continued to provide design services to the Oskams over the next several years. Architectural plans dated November 5, 1965, were furnished for the storage cabinet in the study that was designed primarily to store phonograph records. Plans dated December 3, 1965, were provided for a mail box, which was installed on Dakota Trail next to the driveway. Unfortunately, the mail box was ultimately lost to the ravages of a snow plow. Plans dated October 20, 1966, were furnished for the vanity in the primary bedroom. And undated plans were also provided for an extension of the patio, although the extension was never built.

The most significant addition to the house following its initial construction was the replacement of the sliding glass doors on both the main and lower level. Andersen Corporation, which had provided all the original windows and sliding glass doors for the house, had developed a larger eight-foot sliding glass door by late 1965. They offered to replace the existing sliding glass doors with their latest model at no cost if the Oskams would agree to allow their house to be featured in a national advertising campaign for the new product, which were called gliding doors. The Oskams agreed and the Andersen Corporation provided architectural plans dated November 11, 1965, for the installation of the new doors. The plans identified the Oskams as the client and Lisl Close as the architect. According to the Andersen Company website, the Perma-Shield Windows and Gliding Doors were formally introduced in 1966. The windows and doors featured double-pane, insulating glass with a vapor barrier. The Perma-Shield feature offered a weather-proof cladding to the frame that did not require painting.<sup>4</sup>

A photograph of the original sliding glass doors appeared in a newspaper article on the Oskam House dated October 4, 1964 (Figure 14). The sliding glass doors are shown along with a third fixed window to the left. The new larger sliding glass doors occupied the entire space without the additional window. A ca. 1966 photo of the house taken in the winter from Indianhead Lake depicts the house shortly after its completion and with the gliding doors in place (Figure 12).

An example of one of the advertisements featuring the Oskams' gliding doors is found in an issue of *Newsweek* magazine in July 1970 (Figure 13). The advertisement states, "Doors that bring outdoors and indoors together." The photograph of the Oskams' doors encompasses the entire atrium and displays the gliding doors on both the main and lower levels. Three young people shown on the deck were recruited by the Oskams to appear in the ad from nearby families living on the lake. The idyllic scene is complete with a sailboat in the background. The Oskams'

<sup>4</sup> "Andersen Perma-Shield Windows and Gliding Doors! – 1966," <https://www.andersenwindows.com/about/our-story/>, accessed July 1, 2024.

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Irish Setter, Brionne, is shown observing the scene from in front of the gilding doors. The Oskam House continued to appear in advertisements for at least a decade.

### **The Oskam House in the Press**

In addition to the advertisement for the Andersen Gliding Doors, a number of articles have been identified that feature the Oskam House. Shortly after the house was completed, a lengthy article dated October 4, 1964, was published in the *Minneapolis Tribune* and included two exterior and two interior photos (Figure 4). The article noted that the house blends a “love of nature with modern functional architecture.” The site was described as an “impossible” lot but instead of bulldozing the site the house was designed to fit the lot.<sup>5</sup>

The house was also featured in an article that announced the architects who had been elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1969, including Lisl and Winston Close (Figure 15). The article noted, “Practicing in Minneapolis, Elizabeth and Winston Close have been a consistent force in the development of modern architecture in that region.” Lisl referenced the Oskam House when she stated the firm had “designed everything from a doghouse to a research center.”<sup>6</sup> The three examples of their work that were featured in the article included the Oskam House, the Duff House, and a Minneapolis senior facility.

An extensive article published by the *St. Paul Dispatch* dated April 13, 1983, focused on the life and career of Lisl Close (Figure 16) states:

To architect Elizabeth Close, the essence of a well-designed house is one that combines unity, function and repose. Such a house not only blends with the environment and reflects the lifestyle of the people who live there, but it creates a kind of organized whole suitable for “work, reflection and day-to-day living.”

A typical Elizabeth Close design has several distinctive features: open, airy spaces inside, careful attention to site, and the use of natural materials such as untreated redwood, and stone or brick masonry which have soft earthen textures. Whenever possible, economy features such as natural lighting and south orientation of windows for passive solar heating are used.<sup>7</sup>

The article also discusses the prejudice that Lisl faced practicing in a male-dominated profession. Contractors or clients might arrive at her office and assume Lisl was the secretary and not the architect. But she overcame those difficulties and ultimately designed for some of the best known names in the Twin Cities including Bruce and Wallace Dayton, Frank Heffelfinger, Stanley Hubbard, and Arthur Naftalin. The article concludes with a quote from Lisl. “The thing

<sup>5</sup> “Edina House has European Flair,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 4, 1964, 10-11.

<sup>6</sup> “Four Fine Fellows,” *AIA Journal*, September 1969, 86.

<sup>7</sup> David Smith, “Pioneer architect Elizabeth Close still opening doors to new design,” *St. Paul Dispatch*, April 13, 1983, 9B, 11B.



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I'm proud of is that some of our houses are 40 years old and still look new. Even though lifestyles may change, a good house is one that will adapt."<sup>8</sup>

Three photographs were featured in the article; a photograph of Lisl standing next to a model of a proposed building for the School of Music at the University of Minnesota and two photographs of the Oskam house, both interior and exterior. Marri Oskam is quoted as saying her home provides seclusion and "spacious living without enormous expense."<sup>9</sup>

### **Elizabeth Scheu Close – Early Years in Vienna, Austria**

Elizabeth "Lisl" Scheu Close (1912–2011) was born in Vienna, Austria, to a politically, socially, and culturally involved family with deep Social Democratic roots. Her grandfather, Josef Scheu (1841–1904), was a founder of the Austrian Social Democratic Party. Her father, Gustav Scheu (1875–1935) was a lawyer who served as councilor for housing matters for the city during the early years of "Red Vienna," as the era of social democratic leadership between 1919 and 1934 was known. In that capacity, he was responsible for addressing the housing crisis that gripped the city in the aftermath of World War I. Gustav Scheu had a longstanding interest in housing and city planning. Prior to the war, he traveled to England to study the Garden City philosophies of British town planning visionaries Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin, concepts that would inform his views on public housing. Lisl's mother, Helene Scheu-Riesz (1880–1970), was born to a Jewish family of wine merchants in Olmütz, Moravia (now the Czech Republic). She was an author, translator, and founder of the children's book publishing house *Sesam-Verlag* (Sesame Books). She was also active in international Quaker, peace, suffrage, and child welfare organizations.

In 1912, the year of Lisl's birth, the Scheus commissioned architect Adolf Loos to design a house for their family in Hietzing, a district of Vienna rich in baroque architecture and imperial associations. Schönbrunn Palace and Gardens, now a UNESCO World Heritage site but once a summer home of the Habsburgs, stands less than two miles from the Scheu House. In contrast to the traditional villas that populated Hietzing, the Scheu House was radically modern and a stylistically shocking insertion in the neighborhood. As Loos later wrote, "Years ago I built the house of Dr. Gustav Scheu in Hietzing, Vienna. It aroused general disapproval . . . one person went to the Municipal Council to ask if this type of building was permitted by the law."<sup>10</sup>

When the Scheus hired him, Loos was at the center of a firestorm of controversy ignited by his design for the Michaelerhaus (also known as the Looshaus), a multistory retail/apartment complex that stood in Vienna near the Hofburg, the imperial palace of the Hapsburgs. At the heart of the controversy was the building's stark, unadorned façade. His other buildings in the city to date included the Café Museum (1899), the Kartner Bar (1908), and the Steiner House (1910), his first modern villa in Hietzing.

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<sup>8</sup> David Smith, 11B.

<sup>9</sup> David Smith, 11B.

<sup>10</sup> Benedetto Gravagnuolo, *Adolf Loos: Theory and Works* (London: Art Data, 1995), 146.

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For the Scheus, Loos designed a three-story, flat-roofed, house in which the two levels above the ground floor were successively smaller in area, thereby creating spaces for outdoor terraces. The unprecedented and controversial design was reputedly the first terraced house in Central Europe. Its unusual, stepped profile earned the villa the derogatory nickname “the giant’s staircase.” Objections were raised by the city because the smooth white stucco façade of the house was completely devoid of ornamentation. The Scheus were granted a building permit on the condition they grow ivy up the bare walls. Loos counterpointed the stark, white exterior of the house, with warm, textural interiors, wood-beamed ceilings, and intimately scaled spaces, including a fireplace inglenook. Lisl would later bring a similar awareness of scale and material warmth to her residential designs.

When the Scheus moved into the house, Loos presented them with a leather-bound guestbook, which he was the first to sign. This now historic volume documents the wide array of writers, artists, architects, journalists, musicians, performers, and politicians—many of whom were or would become world renowned—whose conversations enlivened the Scheu House salon for more than half a century.<sup>11</sup> Many visitors were friends or colleagues of the Scheus, while others were members of international groups with which they were associated, including town planners and advocates of the Garden City movement. Red Vienna scholar Eve Blau believes the house “functioned as the intellectual and spiritual center of the Austrian garden city movement,” and the “left-leaning intellectuals and artists,” who gathered there.<sup>12</sup> The Scheu House became a magnet for those in the forefront of modern design. Lisl claimed to have been “indoctrinated” by the house, which taught her that architecture was an important subject. For this reason, she decided to pursue a career as a modern architect even though she did not know of a single woman architect in Vienna or Europe at the time.

### **Immigrating to the United States**

Lisl began her architectural education at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna in 1930 but found the faculty to be hostile toward women. In addition, rising political tensions in Europe, coupled with her mother’s Jewish roots, made Vienna an increasingly dangerous place for Lisl and her older brother, Friedrich, a law student at the University of Vienna.

Boston department store magnate and philanthropist, Edward Filene, who was a frequent visitor to the Scheu House, offered Lisl a solution to her problem. He suggested she continue her studies at MIT. In 1932 he arranged for her safe passage to the United States and provided financial assistance. She thrived at MIT and by 1935 had earned both her undergraduate and graduate

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<sup>11</sup> In 2001, Lisl traveled to Vienna, Austria, accompanied by her son and daughter-in-law, Roy and Linda Close, and donated the guestbook to the Wien (Vienna) Museum. Of the book she said, “I thought I should take it back to Vienna, where it was born.” While in Vienna, Lisl visited the Scheu House, her family home. Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, holds a copy of the guesthouse as part of the Close Associates Papers.

<sup>12</sup> Eve Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919–1934* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 93.

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degrees in architecture. She was the only woman in her graduate school class.<sup>13</sup> Her brother Friedrich, a socialist and a foreign correspondent, narrowly escaped Austria in 1938.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to leaving Vienna for the United States, Lisl visited the *Werkbundsiedlung*, an experimental housing development, which was constructed near her home. Organized by architect Josef Frank, a leading promoter of Viennese modernism (and a Scheu House guest), the exhibition featured seventy single-family dwellings and row houses designed by Frank, Loos, Richard Neutra, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, Josef Hoffmann, and other influential Austrian architects.

The *siedlung*, or settlement, was a built expression of “Neues Bauen, or the New Building era in Vienna.” The movement was “not primarily concerned with aesthetic or theoretical principles of design and form, focusing rather on the individual needs of the occupants.”<sup>15</sup> For Lisl, the housing development was also an opportunity to consider the ways in which multiple architects applied modern ideas, new technologies, and a range of building materials to residential design. The principles of the *siedlung*, along with her father’s commitment to providing public housing for those in need, resonated with Lisl and would influence her future architectural choices and values. The experience qualified her to lecture on “Modern European Housing” on her arrival in Minnesota in 1936—one of a handful of European-born architects in the United States qualified to do so at the time.

Lisl had the misfortune to enter the job market during the Great Depression, the worst economic downturn in US history, yet she limited her job search only to those firms doing modern design or public housing. The fact that she was a woman further restricted her options. To put the rarity of women in the field in perspective, one study revealed that by 1934, only 72 women (Lisl among them) had earned architecture degrees from American universities.<sup>16</sup> Far fewer were in practice.

She applied to three architectural firms for work: New York-based William Lescaze refused to hire her because he believed a woman would disrupt the drafting room. Austrian Richard Neutra, then practicing in California, agreed to take her on if she paid him a monthly fee for the privilege. Philadelphia-based architect Oskar Stonorov hired her. For Stonorov, she worked on Westfield Acres in Camden, New Jersey, a New Deal federally funded housing project for more than five-hundred families. Lisl admired Stonorov’s “humanistic attitude,” when it came to housing design and his concern “about the people who were going to live there instead of the bureaucrats who were running the place.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Jane King Hession, *Elizabeth Scheu Close: A life In Modern Architecture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 32, 38.

<sup>14</sup> Scheu, who was the Vienna-based correspondent for the London Daily Herald, documented his near arrest and harrowing escape in the book *The Way into the Unknown: Austria’s Changing Destiny, 1929–1938*.

<sup>15</sup> *Werkbundsiedlung Wien 1932: A Model for New Living*, exhibition brochure, Wien Museum.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Allaback, *The First American Women Architects* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 233-35.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth “Lisl” Scheu Close, FAIA Oral History Interview with Jane King Hession, June 5, 2000; Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

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## Close and Scheu

In 1936, at the invitation of her Minnesota-born, MIT graduate school classmate Winston “Win” Close (1906-1997), Lisl moved to Minneapolis to join him as a designer for Magney and Tusler, one of a consortium of firms working on Sumner Field Homes, a federally funded, New Deal low-income housing project sponsored by the Public Works Administration (PWA). In 1938, Lisl and Win left Magney and Tusler to establish Close and Scheu, the first architectural practice in Minnesota dedicated to modern design. They married later that year. In 1940, the firm was renamed Elizabeth and Winston Close, Architects, and in 1969 it became Close Associates.

Win and Lisl collaborated on the firm’s early projects. However, in 1946 after serving in the Navy during World War II, Win embarked on a teaching career at the University of Minnesota. He would later serve as head of campus planning and the university’s advisory architect. In that capacity, he led several major campus expansion efforts including the master planning of the university’s new West Bank campus and Washington Avenue Bridge in Minneapolis, and its campuses in Duluth and Morris. Between 1946 to 1971, when Win retired from the university, Lisl ran the firm and was its lead architectural designer.

The firm’s “Opus One” was the 1938 Faulkner House—the first residence in Minneapolis influenced by the International style. It was commissioned by three bachelor professors at the University of Minnesota—Ray Faulkner, Gerald Hill, and Edwin Ziegfeld. All taught courses in contemporary art or music. As such, they were well-informed about modern design and wanted to build a modern house. Of the collaboration, one historian wrote, “All five individuals were committed to modernism in the arts. The house they collaborated on was a physical manifesto of their beliefs.”<sup>18</sup>

The flat-roofed, two-story geometry of the house consisted of uncomplicated volumes punctured by strip windows. Materials that fit the “very simple character” of the house were chosen to sheathe the structure. They included horizontal redwood siding and resin-bonded plywood. As was true of the Scheu House in Vienna, the stark, reductive geometry of the exterior of the house belied its warm, textured interiors. Finishes included brick, gumwood veneer, and Homasote, a cellulose-based wallboard more commonly used to line railroad cars than for residential design. Word of mouth about the house, particularly among University of Minnesota faculty members, generated a string of residential commissions for the firm.

The Interstate Medical Clinic in Redwing, Minnesota, completed in 1940, was the Close’s first commercial commission. The building was a fusion of functional design, state-of-the-art medical technology, and world-class modern art. The asymmetrical exterior of the L-shaped, flat-roofed building was wrapped in glazed white tile and plywood. In another example of how the Closes elevated simple materials to handsome effect—in part a Depression-born impulse—birch plywood was used extensively throughout the building’s interior, including for walls and stair

<sup>18</sup> Loren Soth, “The Art Today House and Its Aftermath: A Case History in Architectural Patronage,” an unpublished, undated paper in the collection of Jane King Hession.

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railings. Three large-scale reliefs, by noted Redwing artist Charles Biederman, were commissioned for display in the clinic.<sup>19</sup>

Many of the Closes's early buildings were built during the Depression and early war years, when budgets were tight and federal restrictions limited the availability of building materials for any purpose other than government construction. Despite these constraints, in 1941 Joseph Beach, the head of the University of Minnesota's English department, and his wife Dagmar, a writer, asked the Closes to design a small cabin for an isolated site on the St. Croix River near Osceola, Wisconsin. Their slim \$1,200 budget necessitated a great deal of creative thinking on the part of the Closes. They recessed the 576-square-foot, sod-roofed cabin into the earth and built exposed walls of redwood and local native stone gathered onsite. Inexpensive hollow tile was used for flooring, stone and plywood for interior walls, and a trash can recessed in the earthen wall of the kitchen served as a rustic refrigerator.

The Closes suspended their practice from 1942 to 1946. While Win served in the United States Naval Reserve during World War II, Lisl went to work for the Page & Hill Company of Minnesota designing prefabricated house models for defense industry workers. She first explored the concept of factory-made housing at MIT where her undergraduate thesis was on "A Production Plant for Prefabricated Housing."

After the war ended, Lisl continued to design for Page & Hill creating models that appealed to a burgeoning, new generation of homeowners. Between 1941 and the late 1950s, she designed dozens of house models for the company from which more than 10,000 houses were produced, shipped, and built across a fifteen-state area. Although Lisl described these houses as "ordinary and inexpensive" and not architecturally "very modern," they addressed a very pressing contemporary need: the rapid mass production of affordable housing to quickly populate new neighborhoods and suburbs.<sup>20</sup> Entire neighborhoods of Page & Hill homes sprung up across the upper Midwest. Twin Cities examples include Acorn Ridge in Minnetonka, and Vista View in Burnsville. In addition, more than 1,000 units were shipped to Minnesota's Iron Range to house an influx of Taconite industry workers, including to the newly incorporated town of Hoyt Lakes.

During the Cold War, one of Lisl's "ordinary" Page & Hill prefab designs, played an extraordinary role in a highly publicized, propagandistic display behind the Iron Curtain of the benefits of life under the American system of democracy. In 1950 the US State Department selected a Page & Hill "Jubilaire" model to represent the "Typical American Home" at the Berlin International Industrial Exhibition. The house was shipped in 94 crates to Berlin where it was assembled onsite in ten days. The stated purpose of the "Model American Home" was to "graphically represent the high living standard of the American wage-earner," and "the fruits of American democracy and free enterprise."<sup>21</sup> More than 43,000 people, including many from the Soviet sector of the then politically divided city, visited the house during the fair's two-week run.

<sup>19</sup> They included #7, *New York*, now in the collection of the Tweed Museum of Art at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

<sup>20</sup> Winston and Elizabeth Close Interview with Loren Soth, August 18, 1988. Falcon Heights, Minnesota.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from unidentified sender to General Sarnoff (Radio Corporation of America), September 12, 1950. CDF 1950-54, box 5225, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland.

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The six-room, fully furnished house was equipped with the most current marvels of American domestic life including a thermostat, television, and washing machine—most of which seemed miraculous to the residents of war-torn Berlin. The State Department declared the “achievement” of the house to be the “gratifying demonstration of what can be accomplished in selling the American democratic way of life.”<sup>22</sup> Lisl was not credited in State Department records for the design of the high-profile house, nor had her involvement been widely known even in Minnesota.

In the 1950s and ‘60s, Lisl designed prefabricated house models for at least three other companies including “Precision-bilt System” houses for the Fullerton Lumber Company of Minneapolis and prototype factory-built mobile homes for the Iseman Corporation of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In 1964, Tacoma-based Weyerhaeuser, the nation’s largest producer of lumber, hired her to design the “Atrium Contemporary,” a three-bedroom house for the company’s Registered Homes program, which was marketed directly to consumers through national publications. She also conducted research and development on the architectural uses and machine production of plastic structural elements for Polystructures, a Minnesota-based company.

The largest cluster of Close-designed custom houses stands in University Grove, an exceptional neighborhood of 103 single-family homes built on University of Minnesota-owned land in Falcon Heights. The Grove was established in 1928 when the university set aside an attractive parcel of land for an academic housing village to attract and retain eligible faculty and administrators. A requirement at the Grove, which was built over a 40-year period, was that all homes be architect designed. For this reason, the neighborhood is characterized by residences in a wide array of styles designed by several of Minnesota’s most accomplished architects. This stylistic diversity prompted *The New York Times* to describe the unique neighborhood as “an architectural time capsule.”<sup>23</sup>

The firm's first Grove house was a 1940 residence for education professor Tracy Tyler and his wife Helen. The design of the Tyler residence, like every Close-designed house—was grounded in an understanding of its site’s characteristics, stressed the conservation of trees, and used natural materials to sympathetically blend house and site. In 1953, when Win’s positions at the university made the Close family eligible to build a home in the Grove, Lisl and Win designed a two-story, redwood-sided house built into a sloped site. It was owned by members of the Close family for six decades. In all, the firm designed more than 200 custom residences over fifty years. One of Lisl’s most celebrated designs was the Wayzata residence for Eleanor and Philip Duff, which received the AIA-MN Twenty-Five Year Award. Unfortunately, the house was demolished in 2012.

The majority of Lisl's residential designs were built in and around the Twin Cities metro area. But she also designed homes and lake homes across Minnesota including those for clients in

<sup>22</sup> United States Government Office Memorandum from Paul A. Shinkman to Henry J. Kellermann, November 3, 1950, NARA.

<sup>23</sup> Linda Lee, “St. Paul’s Architectural Time Capsule,” *The New York Times*, January 5, 1989.

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Afton, Appleton, Cook, Glenwood, Grand Marais, Ideal Township, Lake Vermillion, Lutsen, Mankato, Northfield, Ortonville, Owatonna, Red Wing, Rochester, Saint Mary's Point, Waseca, and White Fish Lake. In Wisconsin, she designed projects in Bayfield, Deer Lake, La Crosse, Osceola, Prescott, Rice Lake, Spider Lake, and Turtle Lake. Her houses also stand in at least seven other states including Arizona, Connecticut, Idaho, Iowa, Montana, South Dakota, Virginia, and in Saskatchewan, Canada.

Although she specialized in—and is best known for—her residential work, she also designed a range of commercial projects in Minnesota. They include: a park shelter for Bossen Field Park (1959) for the Minneapolis Park Board; the Ice Center (1957) in Golden Valley, one of the first indoor ice arenas in the western suburbs; the Peavey Technical Center (1966) in Chaska, a 50,000-square-foot research facility for the international grain merchandising company; several medical and clinic facilities in the 1950s and '60s including the Metropolitan Medical Center in Minneapolis; and the Freshwater Biological Institute (1974) in Navarre, a highly specialized laboratory facility dedicated to freshwater research, and recipient of an AIA Minnesota Honor Award in 1975.<sup>24</sup>

Over the course of her career, many Close-designed buildings were nationally published in architectural and general interest magazines, including *Architecture Forum*, *Architectural Record*, *Progressive Architecture*, *House & Home*, and *Good Housekeeping*, as well as dozens of newspapers. As a rare woman in the field of architecture, Lisl, herself, was often the subject of press coverage. In March 1948, she was one of ten women architects whose work was featured in *Architectural Record*.<sup>25</sup> Other articles spotlighted her rarity as a woman in the field of architecture sometimes under such dismaying and dismissive titles as “Doctor, Lawyer, Dentist, Architect Agree: Women Are Own Worst Enemy,” and “Woman Behind the Man: Her Blueprint Calls for Architectural Teamwork.”

In the postwar years, Lisl participated in several initiatives created to promote the merits of modern home design, including two exhibitions at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. In 1941 and 1947, Walker director Daniel Defenbacher commissioned two full-scale residences, “Idea House I” and “Idea House II,” which were built the grounds of the museum. The initiative was part of the museum’s progressive agenda to “educate the middle-class consumer about the advantages of modern design.” In conjunction with Idea House II (designed by Hilde Reiss and William Friedman), the museum commissioned six local architects, including Lisl, to design plans and small-scale models for Idea Houses III through VIII, which were displayed in the museum’s exhibition space. Each architect was assigned a hypothetical client, budget, and design brief. Lisl was charged with designing a \$15,000 - \$20,000 house for a family of four, who also required a guest room, garage, and garden space. Although the museum’s intent was to build the Idea Houses III through VIII in the Tyrol Hills neighborhood of Golden Valley after the exhibit closed, the homes were not built. However, the project was published locally and nationally including in the Walker’s *Everyday Art Quarterly*, the *New York Times*, *Progressive Architecture*, and *McCall’s* magazine.

<sup>24</sup> The Metropolitan Medical Center was a joint venture with Horty, Elving & Associates.

<sup>25</sup> “A Thousand Women in Architecture, Part I,” *Architectural Record*, March 1948, 105.

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In 1952, the firm participated *The Architects' Workshop*, an exhibition featuring drawings, models, and photographs of houses by nine local architectural firms. Of the importance of the exhibition one historian wrote, "Buildings like those now published by the Walker Art Center can function as guideposts that point to the possibility of a finer urban environment than we have yet developed."<sup>26</sup> As part of workshop programming, the Closes presented a clinic on remodeling old houses in a modern way.

In 1960, Lisl and Win collaborated on a competition entry for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, DC. A significant and singular aspect of the Closes' design was that it recognized Roosevelt's disability and was planned for wheelchair accessibility. The project did not win the competition but was one of a handful of projects in a field of nearly 600 entries, to receive honorable mentions and be published in both *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Forum* magazines—a remarkable achievement for a firm of its size.

Lisl was recognized locally and nationally for her residential expertise. When she and Win were awarded Fellowships from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1969 (the first couple to be simultaneously elevated) they were identified as "pioneers of the contemporary house," and "an important and contributory force to the development and acceptance of modern architecture" in the region. Lisl was further singled out as being "well known for her outstanding residential designs."<sup>27</sup> She was only the eleventh woman to receive an AIA Fellowship and the first woman in Minnesota to be awarded an AIA Fellowship. Among the letters of support for her nomination was a letter from former Minnesota Governor Elmer L. Andersen, who had been a client, and a letter from Austrian architect Victor Gruen, who designed Southdale Center in Edina, the world's first enclosed shopping mall, and located several miles from the Oskam's house.<sup>28</sup>

Lisl was also the first woman to serve as president of what is now AIA Minnesota (1983), and to receive AIA Minnesota's Gold Medal (2002), the highest honor the organization bestows. In 2003, the University of Minnesota awarded her its highest honor, a Doctor of Humane Letters, for her "contributions to Modern Architecture in America." Thomas Fisher, Dean of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, stated, "Close stands in the vanguard of women architects as well as the vanguard of Modern architects in the United States, with a past that connects her to some of the leading Modern architects and thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>29</sup>

She gave much of her time and expertise to professional architectural organizations. In addition to serving as the president of AIA Minnesota, Lisl also chaired chapter committees on house

<sup>26</sup> Donald R. Torbert, "The Architect and the City," *Everyday Art Quarterly*, Spring, 1952.

<sup>27</sup> Press release from Edwin Neuger & Associates for the Minnesota Society of Architects, AIA, May 17, 1969.

<sup>28</sup> Elmer L. Andersen, letter to the Jury of Fellows, American Institute of Architects, January 20, 1969, Close Associates Papers. Victor Gruen, letter to the Jury of Fellows, American Institute of Architects, January 15, 1969, Close Associates Papers.

<sup>29</sup> "One of the first Modern architects in Minnesota receives honorary degree," Press Release, College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (CALA), University of Minnesota, May 7, 2003. Other architects and designers who have also received the degree include Florence Knoll Bassett, Frank Gehry, Cesar Pelli, Antoine Predock, and David Salmela. "Honorary Degree Recipients," University Awards and Honors, [uawards.dl.umn.edu](http://uawards.dl.umn.edu).



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building, urban design, residential architecture, and hospital and health care. Nationally, she served on AIA committees on house and architectural building information services and on a Federal Housing Administration advisory panel on residential design. She also contributed numerous articles on residential design to local and national publications thereby helping to education the public—and the profession—on the subject.

Lisl Close retired in 1992 after practicing architecture in Minnesota for more than 50 years (Figure 17).<sup>30</sup>

### Design Philosophy

Lisl's architectural aesthetic and values were rooted in the European modern movements to which she was exposed during her youth and education in Europe, including the International style. Coincidentally, in 1932, the year she arrived at MIT, the Museum of Modern Art in New York staged its groundbreaking show *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* – a show that effectively introduced Americans to European modern architecture and popularized the term “International Style.” However, she would have been familiar with the work of many of the European practitioners featured in the show including Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Richard Neutra to name a few.<sup>31</sup> Evidence of the influence of the International style in her work included a preference for volume over mass, planar surfaces, rejection of ornamentation, and embrace of machine age technologies and materials.

She was also influenced by the principles of the *Neues Bauen*, or the New Building era in Vienna, a movement that was “not primarily concerned with aesthetic or theoretical principles of design and form, focusing rather on the individual needs of the occupants.”<sup>32</sup> The experience of growing up in the Scheu House, one of early modern architect Adolf Loos's most radical designs, was also a seminal influence. Living in the house, she gained an understanding of an architect's role in creating a home well-suited to its owners through the skillful manipulation of site, space, scale, light, and materials.

As an architect, Lisl was a practical and efficient designer who was “more interested in solving a problem than being stylistic.”<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, she firmly believed houses, like commercial buildings, should be programmed for efficient use. To ensure both architect and client agreed on the basics before design began, she required her clients to fill out an in-depth questionnaire identifying their wants, needs, preferences, and possessions. This information informed her planning. Ever pragmatic, she strove to remove design errors from the beginning and “to start with something that is easy to live with.”<sup>34</sup> To that end, she eliminated elements that fostered problems like gabled roofs, gutters, shingles, and decorative trim. She favored handsome,

<sup>30</sup> The firm of Close Associates continues to this day under the leadership of Gar Hargens, who had been a long-time employee of the firm.

<sup>31</sup> Architect Richard Neutra, a family friend, had been in guest in her home in Vienna and his future wife, Dione, lived with the Scheus for several months while she studied cello in the city.

<sup>32</sup> “Werkbundsiedlung Wien 1932: A Model for New Living” exhibition brochure, Wien Museum.

<sup>33</sup> Close Oral History, June 5, 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Close Oral History, June 5, 2000.

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durable materials that did not require frequent or expensive upkeep and would serve the homeowner well in the long run, especially natural materials like redwood. However, she was not afraid to use unconventional residential materials, like Homasote or resin-bonded plywood, in her houses. Conversely, she sometimes used common materials in unconventional ways, such as installing redwood siding vertically and “wrong side out,” because she liked the long, textural grooves that were produced on that side during the milling process. Concrete block, hollow tiles, and veneered plywood were also favored building materials.

Interiors are characterized by their warmth through the use of wood as well as brick or stone. Expanses of windows create light-filled rooms and engagement with the outdoors. Innovative interior planning often resulted in particularly open floor plans or unconventional placement of rooms such as locating bedrooms on the main level and living spaces on an upper level. The owner’s needs and lifestyle were carefully considered so that each interior space was deliberately designed. Numerous built-ins, including cabinets, bookshelves, and even dressing tables, were located throughout the home and allowed for efficient and practical living, as well as providing space for art and display purposes.

Placement of a house on its site was carefully considered with regard to topography, exposure, view, sunlight, and the conservation of trees. The firm considered landscape planning to be an integral part of the design of a building and consulted landscape professionals early in the planning process. As a result, Close-designed houses are noted for their careful placement on a site with a sympathetic relationship to nature.

### **The Work of a Master**

The remarkable recognition that Lisl Close received from her own profession during the course of her long career and her acclaimed body of work confirms her stature as a highly accomplished architect. Her accomplishments qualify Lisl Close as a master or expert in her field. However, in order to meet the National Register standard for a work of a master, “a nominated property must be assessed in relation to the expert’s overall portfolio” of work . . . and it must be a significant example of their work.”

The following are representative houses that were built throughout Lisl’s career and can provide a useful comparative analysis, keeping in mind that these are all well-designed houses with careful attention to the site and the client’s needs. The Faulkner House (Minneapolis, 1938) (Figure 18) was the firm’s commission and a very good example of the International style. The Tyler House (Falcon Heights, 1940) (Figure 19) is a two-story house with a somewhat more conventional in appearance. However, the house is among 15 Close-designed houses in University Grove, an enclave which was discussed previously. The Rood House (Minneapolis, 1947) is an expansive and elaborate design, built with a larger budget (Figure 20). It is known that changes have been made to the interior of the house, although the extent to the changes is not understood at this time. The Quist House (Edina, 1947) is a straightforward design on a conventional lot (Figure 21). Finally, the Duff House (Wayzata, 1955) is another example of a house built on a larger budget, which received considerable acclaim (Figure 22). Unfortunately, the house has been demolished.

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To further this comparison specifically to the city of Edina, four Close-designed residences are known to have been built in Edina: the Quist House (1947), the Dennison House (1950), the Ulvestad House (1959), and the Oskam House (1963). Only the Quist, which is described above, and Oskam houses remain standing today. The Ulvestad House was also located on Indianhead Lake but is nonexistent. A fifth residence, the Galbraith Residence, is believed to have been designed for a site at 5532 Mirror Lake Drive, but it does not appear the house was ever built. In addition, in 2015, the Oskam House received Edina Heritage Landmark Designation, the only mid-century modern house that has been designated by the city.

Thus, to place the Oskam House within the body of work of Lisl Close, the house represents an exemplary example of her work and one which embodies many of the most important characteristics of her designs and also retains particularly high integrity.

The house was built on an unusually steep and challenging site, requiring an innovative design solution that would sensitively embrace the land. The exterior, designed for efficiency and low maintenance, features asbestos panels and creatively employs redwood siding in an unconventional way. The interior is equally innovative with its non-traditional layout, warm materials, numerous built-ins, and remarkably open plan focused on natural light and engagement with the environment. The overall design of the house is an important example of Lisl's ability to meet the needs of her clients. Without additions or modifications, the house is highly unusual for its pristine historic integrity and the ability to convey its precise appearance and features from the time of construction. Finally, and perhaps most telling, Lisl Close herself confirmed that the Oskam House was an important design within her body of work. She continued to bring architects and potential clients to visit the house and over the decades she repeatedly selected photos of the Oskam House to appear in publications about her work. Far from the largest or most elaborate of her houses, she clearly believed Oskam House was an outstanding representation of her skill as an architect and an important example of the type of home she could provide for her clients.

## **Conclusion**

The house exhibits characteristics of the Modern Movement such as its planar surfaces, expanses of windows, and lack of ornamentation. Yet, more significantly, the house represents an exemplary example of the work of Lisl Close and one which embodies many of the most important characteristics of her designs including sensitivity to the site, practical use of exterior materials, particular attention to interior spatial planning and the needs of the client, as well as engagement with the outdoors.

Marri Oskam has resided in her home designed by Lisl Close for 60 years (Figure 23). The modernist house has stood the test of time and speaks to Lisl's skill as an architect and represents the work of a master under Criterion C. Its highly-functional exterior materials remain in excellent condition and belie their age, while the vibrant, light-filled interior continues to engage the eye and embrace the natural environment. The period of significance for the Oskam House begins in 1964 when construction was essentially completed and the Oskams moved into their

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home. It ends in 1966 when the final architectural features were added to the house. The Oskam House is of statewide significance.

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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  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☒ Other

Name of repository: Close Associates Papers (N78), Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** HE-EDC-00657

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** .51 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |



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**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☒ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- |             |                  |                    |
|-------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 469 260 | Northing: 4969 300 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:         | Northing:          |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:         | Northing:          |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :        | Northing:          |

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

Lot 1, Block 2, Overholt Hills, Sally Addition

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

The nominated property includes the land and building historically associated with the property.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Rolf T. Anderson and Jane King Hession  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: 212 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street  
city or town: Minneapolis state: MN zip code: 55408  
e-mail roanders6@aol.com, janekinghession@me.com  
telephone: 612-824-7807,  
date: August 26, 2024

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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: Hendrik and Marri Oskam House

City or Vicinity: Edina

County: Hennepin

State: MN

Photographer: Rolf Anderson

Date Photographed: February 14, 2024, May 5, 2024, and June 10, 2024

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

- 1 of 25. Oskam House, facing east
- 2 of 25. Detail of redwood siding to the right of the main entrance, facing southeast
- 3 of 25. Southwest elevation, facing northwest
- 4 of 25. Southwest and southeast elevations, facing north
- 5 of 25. Cantilevered deck, facing southeast
- 6 of 25. Southeast elevation, facing northeast
- 7 of 25. Northwest elevation, facing southwest
- 8 of 25. Main entrance door, facing southeast
- 9 of 25. Northeast elevation, facing southeast
- 10 of 25. Garage, northwest and southwest elevations, facing east
- 11 of 25. Garage, northeast elevation, facing southeast
- 12 of 25. Garage, southeast elevation, and breezeway, with built-in doghouse at far right, facing southwest
- 13 of 25. View of interior from entrance, south
- 14 of 25. Wood screen adjacent to the entry, southwest
- 15 of 25. Living room, facing west
- 16 of 25. View of Indianhead Lake from the living room, facing east
- 17 of 25. Fireplace in living room, facing southwest
- 18 of 25. View of the study from the living room and across the atrium with skylight, facing northeast
- 19 of 25. View of light valance and windows between beams, facing southeast
- 20 of 25. Dining room, facing northwest
- 21 of 25. Dining room with cabinets and entrance to the kitchen, facing southwest
- 22 of 25. Kitchen, facing southwest
- 23 of 25. Atrium from the lower level, facing northwest
- 24 of 25. View of Indianhead Lake from the primary bedroom, facing east
- 25 of 25. Vanity in the primary bedroom, facing northwest

**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.).

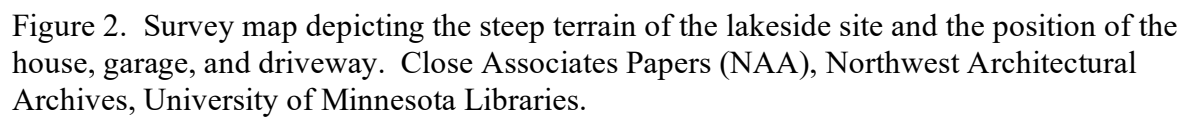
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Figure 1. Aerial view of the Oskam House. Hennepin County Property Map





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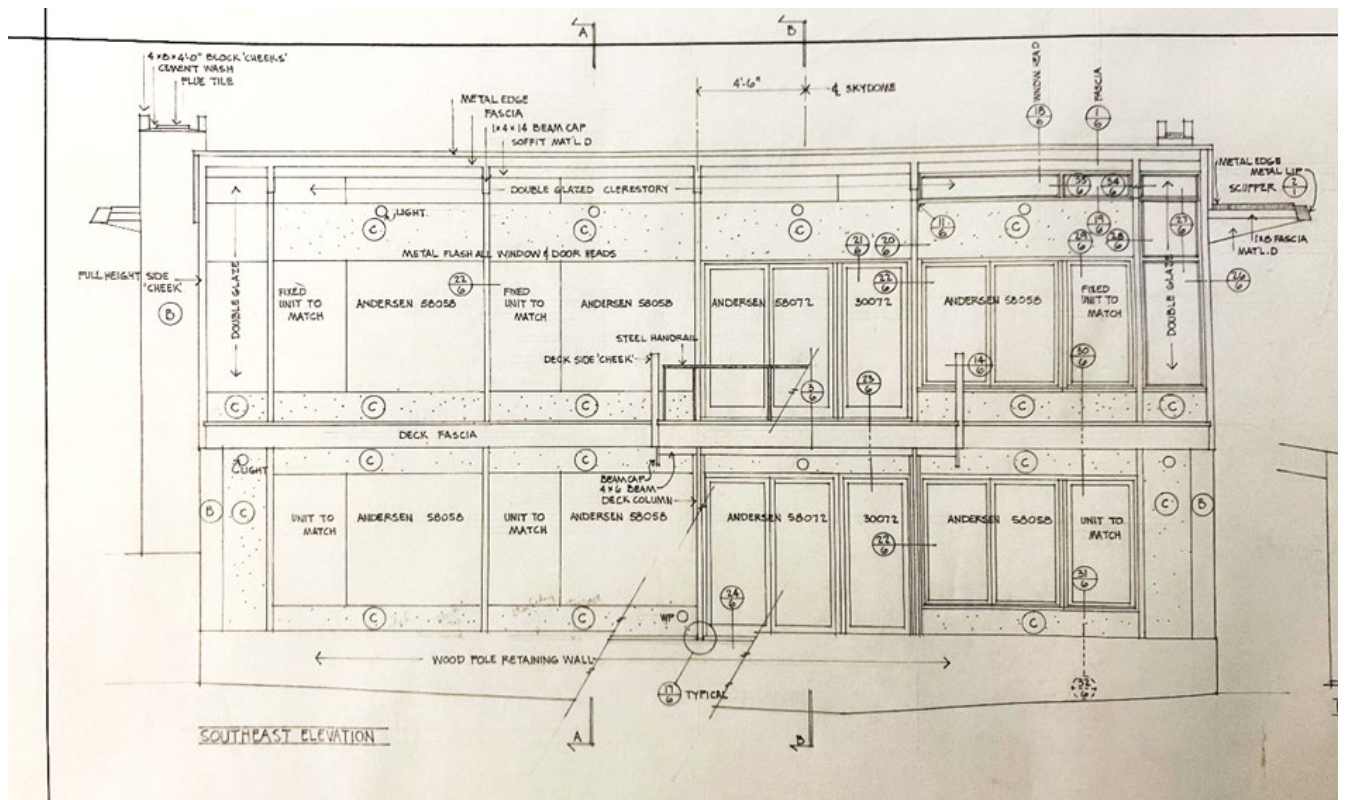


Figure 3. Working drawing, southeast elevation. Close Associates Papers

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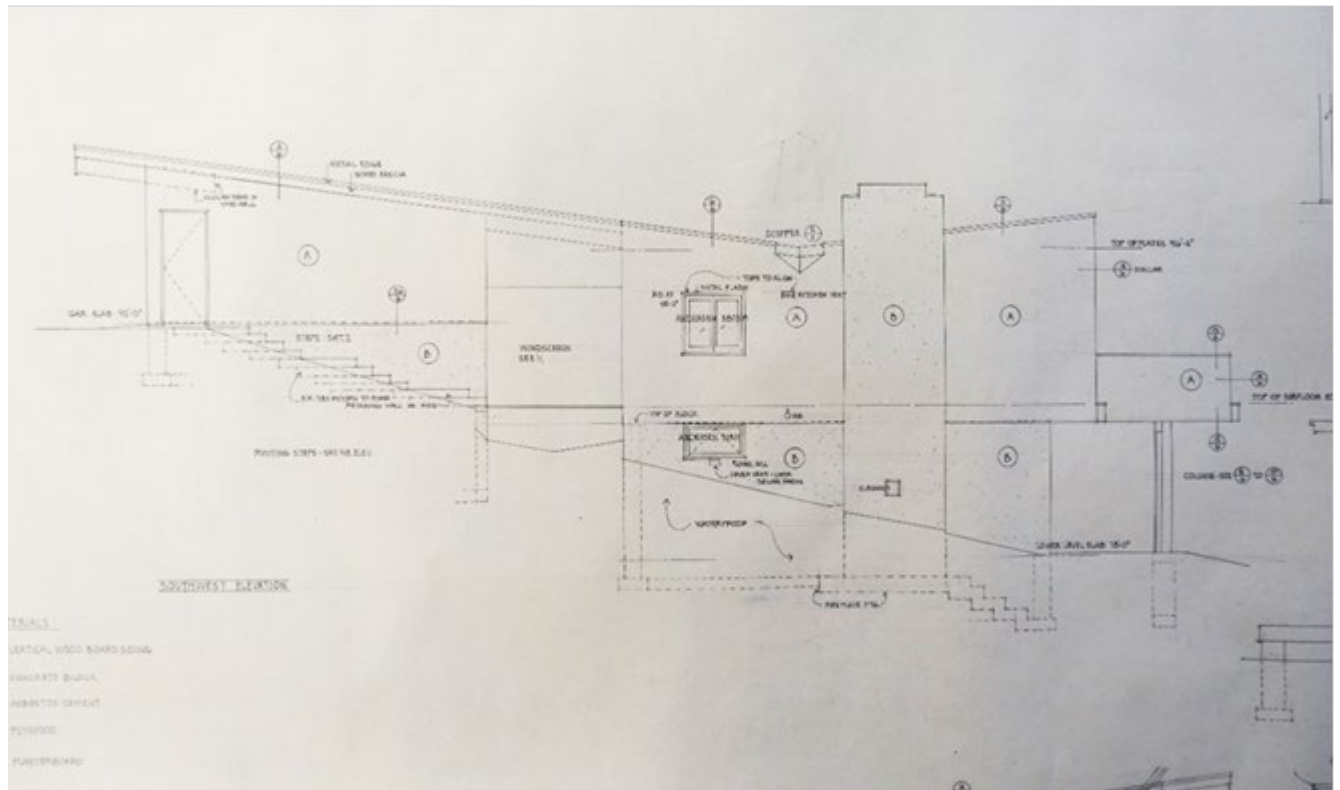


Figure 4. Working drawing, southwest elevation. Close Associates Papers

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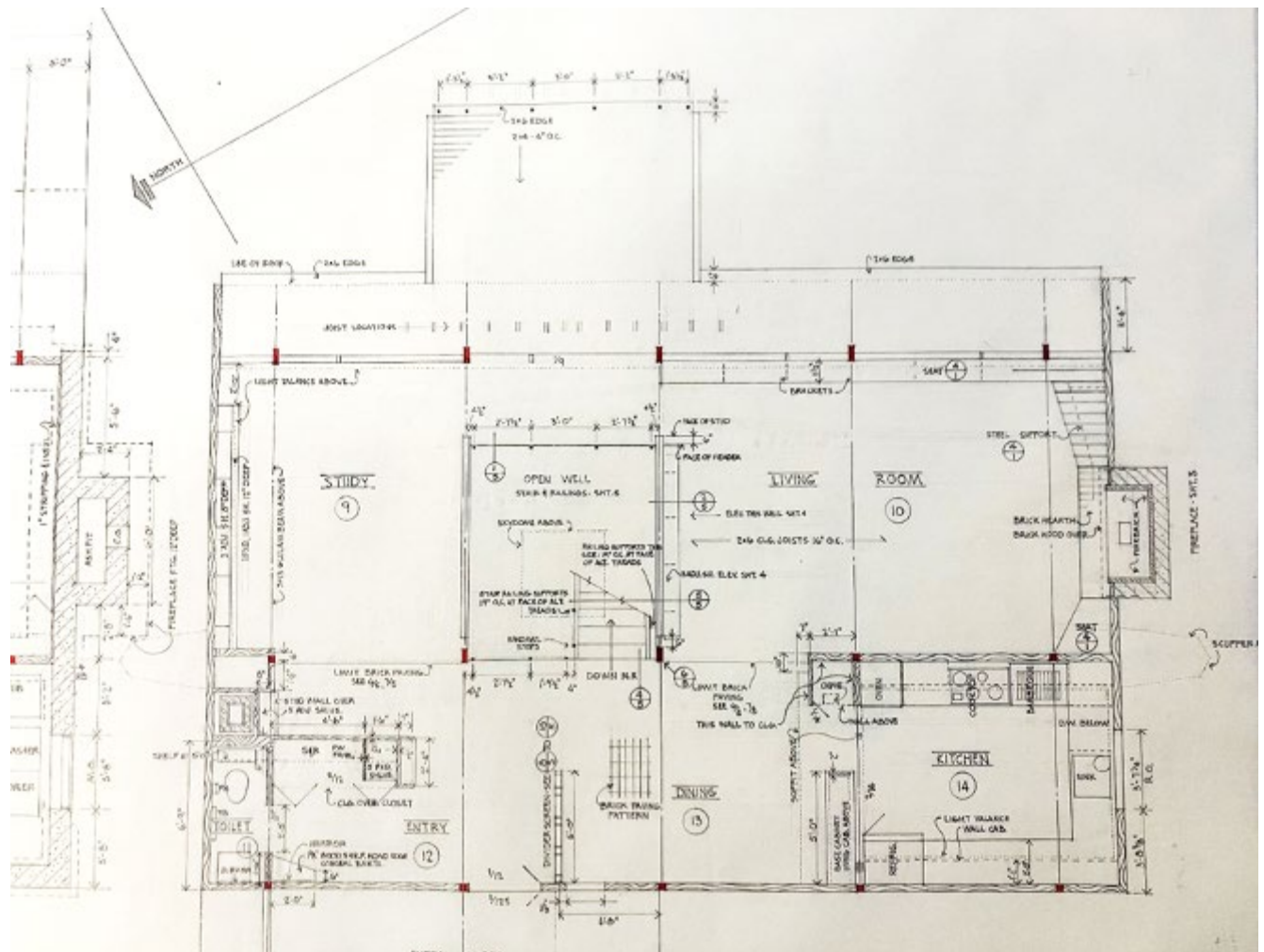


Figure 5. Working drawing, main level floor plan. Close Associates Papers



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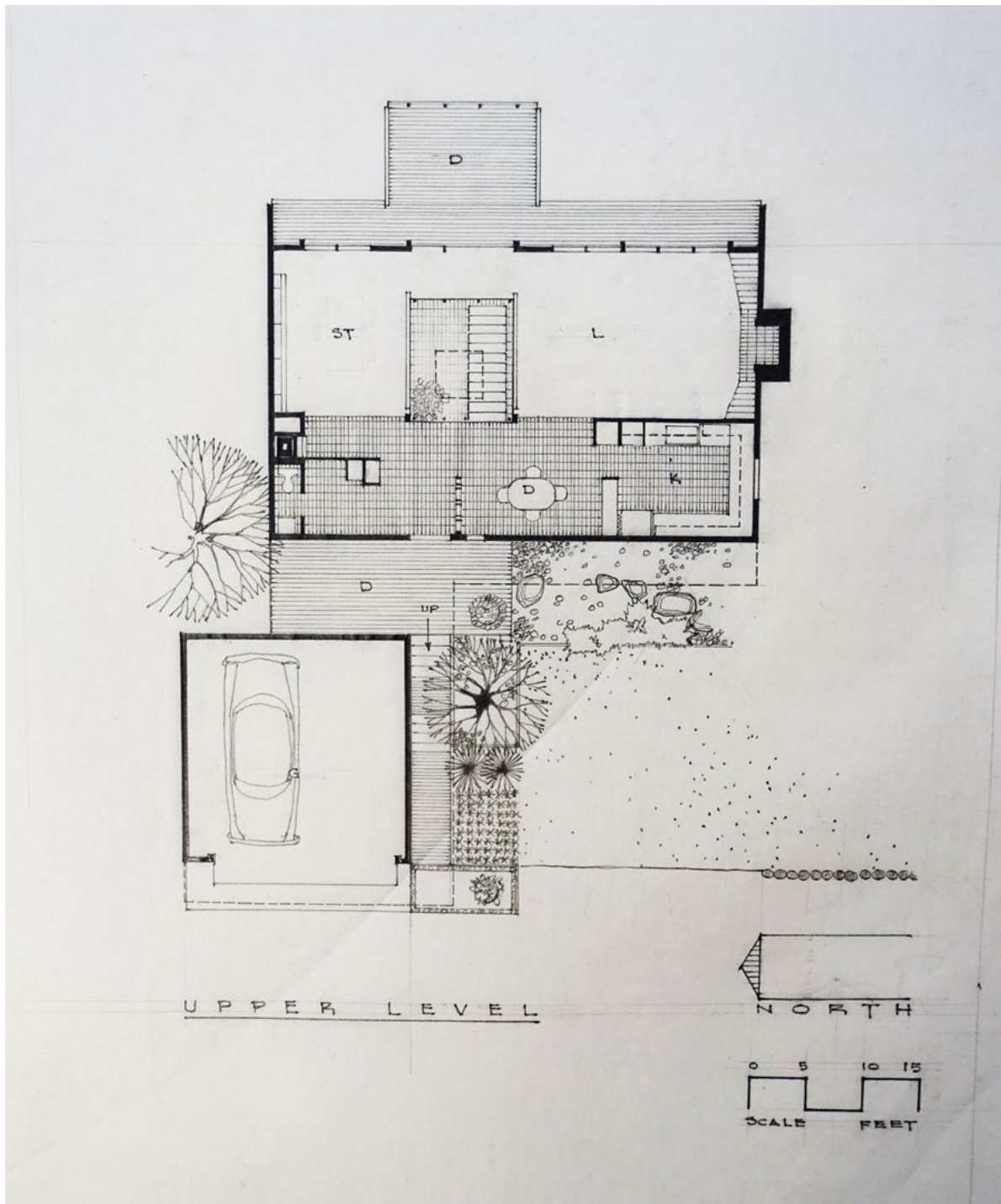


Figure 6. Presentation drawing, main level floor plan. Close Associates Papers

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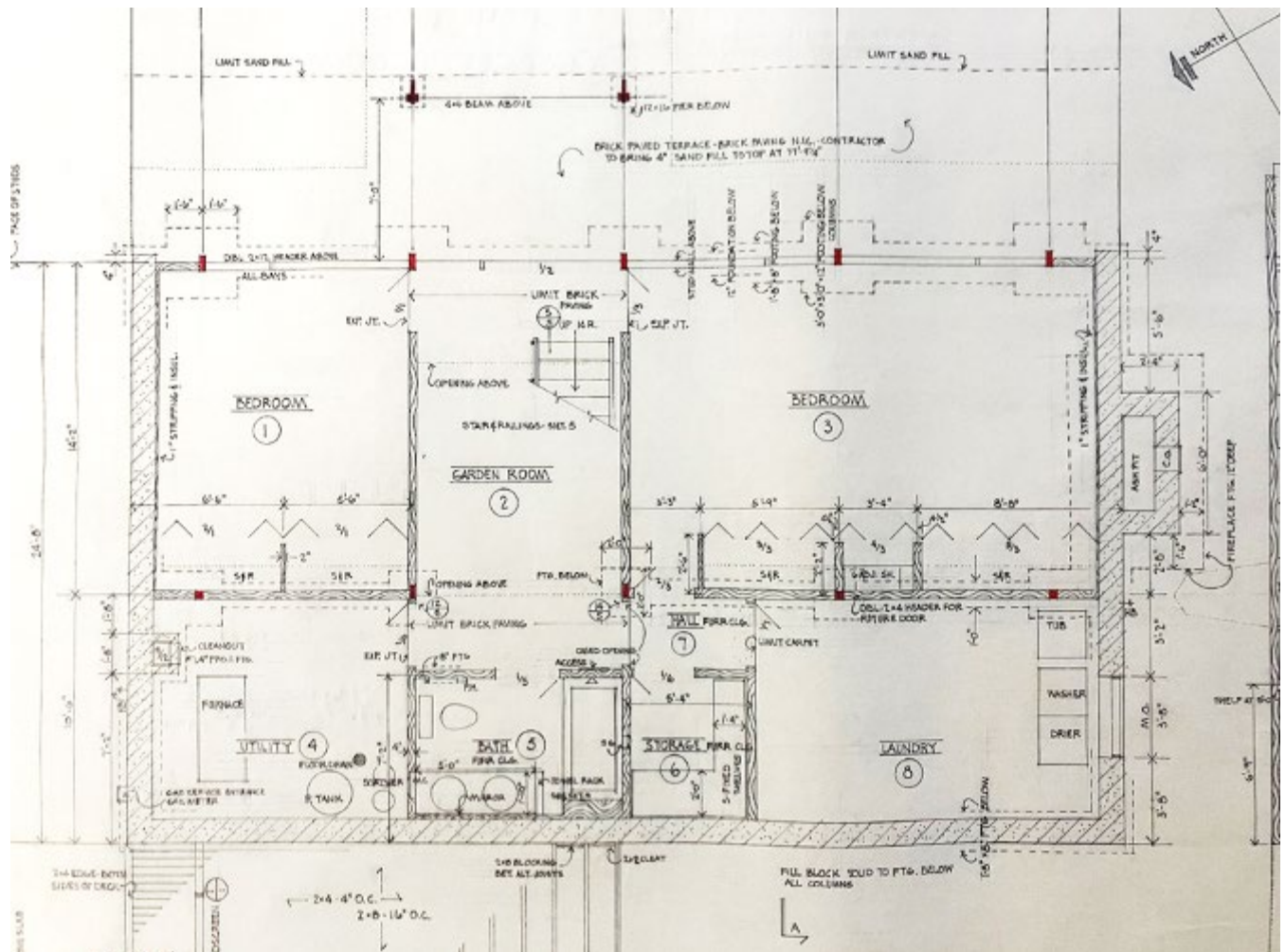


Figure 7. Working drawing, lower level floor plan. Close Associates Papers

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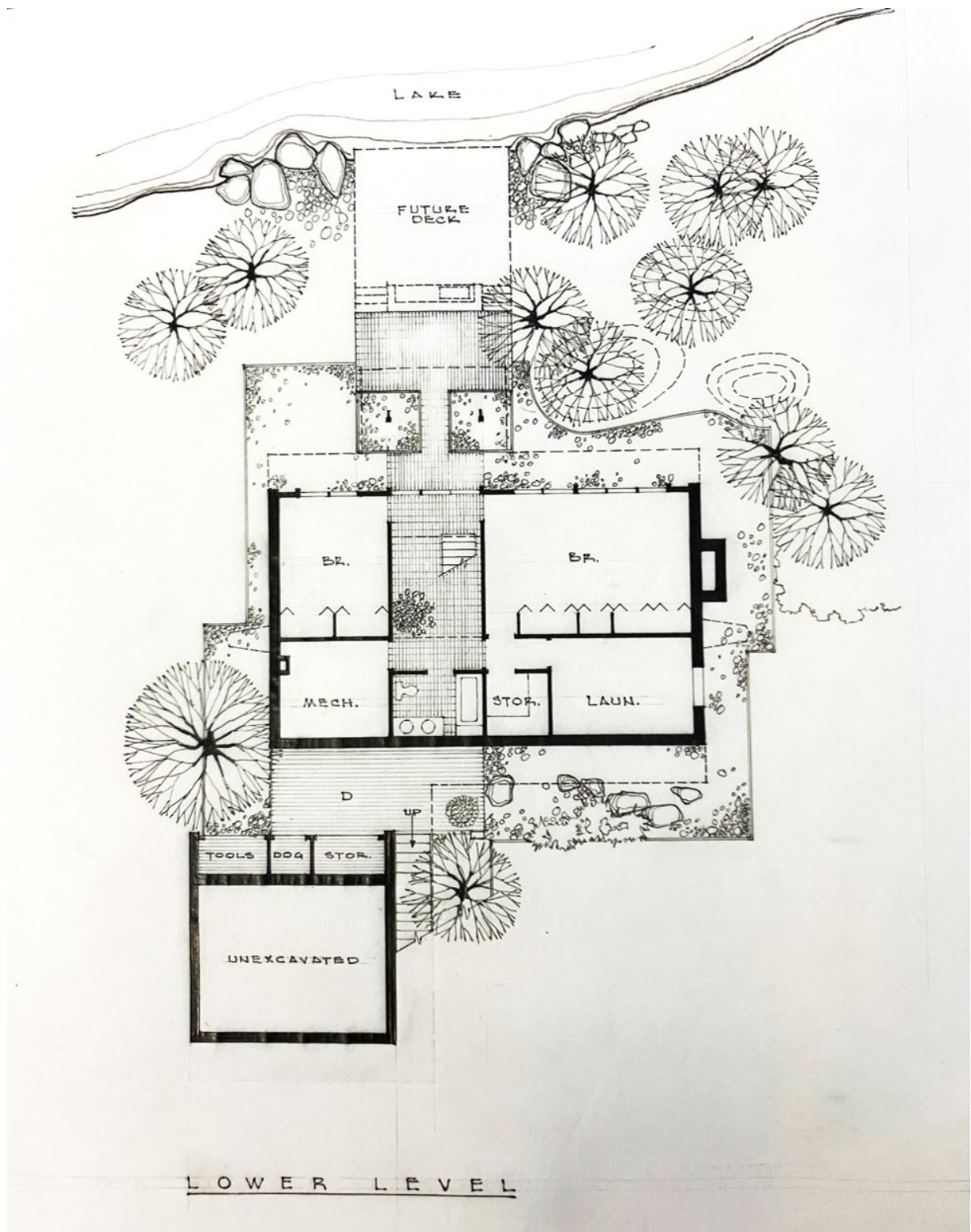


Figure 8. Presentation drawing, lower level floor plan. Close Associates Papers



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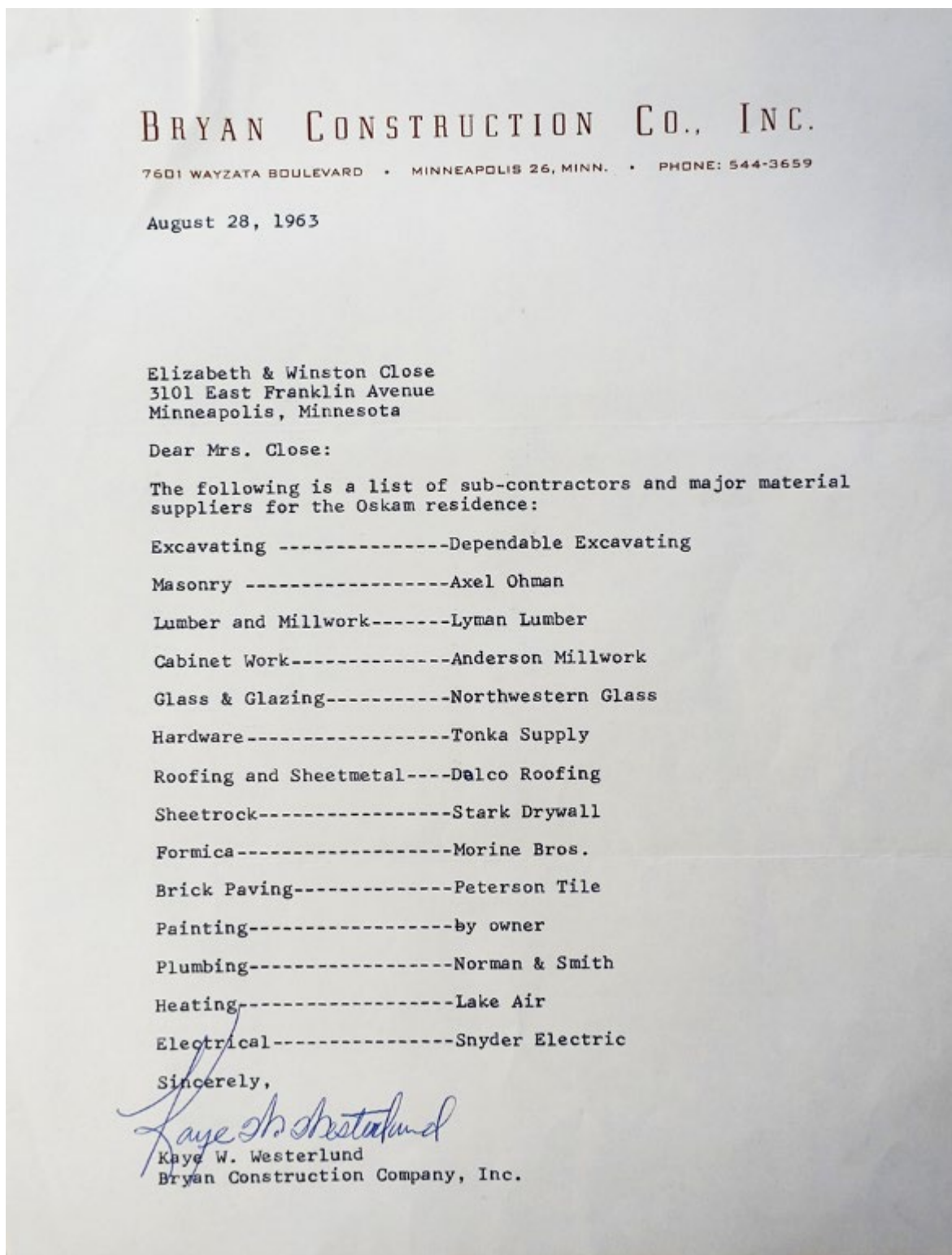


Figure 9. List of subcontractors. Close Associates Papers

Figure 10. Final accounting. Close Associates Papers



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OSKAM HOUSE  
6901 DAKOTA TRAIL  
EDINA

PROF. Hendrick Oskam  
PHOTOS. W. Zambino

1. Statement of Problem:  

To design a suburban house for a professor, his wife, and their Irish Setter. The program was simple: within a compact envelope, provide a spacious living area, a master bedroom, a guest room, a dog house, and the necessary service areas, all clearly zoned, taking full advantage of the little "private" lake.
2. Site:  

The site is very steep, heavily wooded, relatively shallow from road to lakeshore.
3. Solution:  

Car access was possible only from the southwest corner of the site. Cedar poles retain the entrance driveway and the upper slope at the garage entrance driveway and the upper slope at the garage entrance. Steps lead down to the porch which provides access to the dog's suite (below the garage) and the living level of the house. An open central stair leads to the bedrooms on the lower level, and to the lower terrace and deck.
4. General Description of the Building:  

The roof of the garage and porch repeat the ground slope. The living room roof tilts up, so that drainage may be accomplished by "gargoyles" at either end of the valley. Surface drainage likewise carries around both sides of the house, the entrance porch being a bridge at the high point of the upper wall.

All major rooms open onto terraces overlooking the lake, except the Irish Setter's suite. Because of this, he usually chooses the area on the main floor between the study and the living room.

The sloping ceilings of the living area provide additional volume which improves the space for music listening. The glazing between the roof beams adds lightness to the wood ceiling, and a varying pattern of natural light without loss of privacy.

Floors of the principal rooms are carpeted except the kitchen, dining, reception and hallway areas which are paved with brick. The same brick is used for the living room fireplace and the lower terrace. The ceilings and exterior siding are natural redwood.
5. Area -  

Total finished area is 1,731 sq. ft.
6. Construction Cost -  

General:	\$30,393
Mechanical:	3,500
Electrical:	1,600
	<u>\$35,493</u>

The Building was completed in 1964.

Figure 11. Statement of design problem and solution and description. Close Associates Papers

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Figure 12. Oskam House, ca. 1966. Photo courtesy Marri Oskam



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## Walkout Windows

Actually, they're Andersen® Gliding Doors. Doors that bring indoors and outdoors together.

Your patio becomes part of your kitchen. Your pool becomes part of your bedroom. Inside and out blend and live in harmony.

On the patio you can enjoy the warm sun for breakfast. A cool breeze for dinner. The romance of a bright, full moon and a nightcap on a warm, fall evening. And you still have easy access to your living room or kitchen.

Without losing your intimate contact with nature, Andersen Gliding Doors seal out foul weather as well. Made of natural wood, these gliding doors close snugly, locking out the biting wind during the winter.

Double-pane, insulating glass and a thermal barrier in the sill cut heat loss. The tempered (safety) insulating glass also checks condensation and frost.

If you want low maintenance gliding doors, choose the Andersen Perma-Shield Gliding Door. Perma-Shield is a weather-proof, vinyl sheath that won't need painting. Resists warping, peeling, and corrosion, too.

For more information about Andersen Gliding Doors, see your local lumber dealer. He's listed in the Yellow Pages. Or write for our free 24-page folder, "How to Get Good Windows."

Please send me your free booklet, "How to get good windows when you buy, build or remodel."  
Mail to: Andersen Corporation, Bayport, Minn. 55003  
☐ I plan to build. ☐ I plan to remodel a.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ T-74  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Andersen Windowalls 

Figure 13. Andersen Corporation advertisement. The Oskam House is shown at the upper left with the gliding doors on both the main and lower level. Newsweek, July 1970



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## Edina Home Has European Flavor

An Edina couple who came here from The Netherlands six years ago have blended the Northern European's love of nature with modern, functional architecture in their new

home on Indianhead Lake.

The Hendrik Oskams, 6901 Dakota Trail, selected a rugged lot on a steep bank of the lake. It could be described as an "impossible" lot.

Instead of marring nature by bulldozing the site level, the Oskams had their house designed to fit the lot.

"FILLING would kill the land," said Oskam, a phy-

sicist who is a corporate scientific adviser for Honeywell Inc., and a professor at the University of Minnesota.

Their theme of nature plus functionality runs throughout the two-level house.

The best example is the exterior of both redwood siding and asbestos cement paneling. It blends easily with the wooded lot yet requires no care or painting.

The architects, Elizabeth and Winston Close, were close friends of the Oskams, so Mrs. Close devoted special attention to the design.

AFTER MODELING an exact replica of the difficult, but challenging site, she decided on a "butterfly roof." The uphill half of the roof runs down with the contour of the hill, and breaks as the front

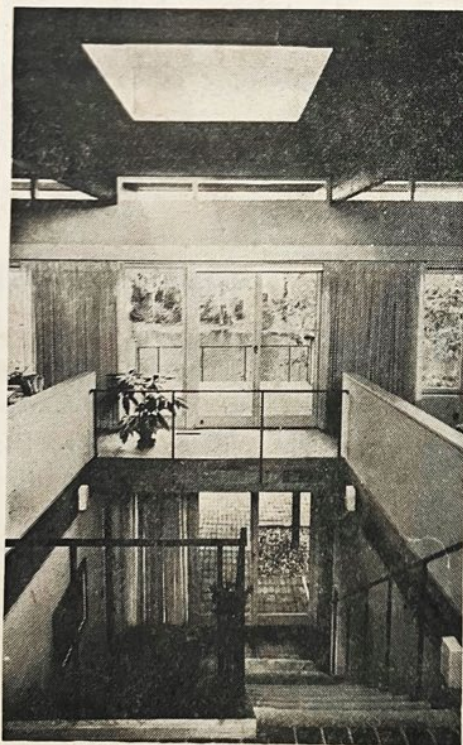


Minneapolis Tribune Photos by Duane Braley

### THE BUTTERFLY-ROOFED HENDRIK OSKAM HOUSE

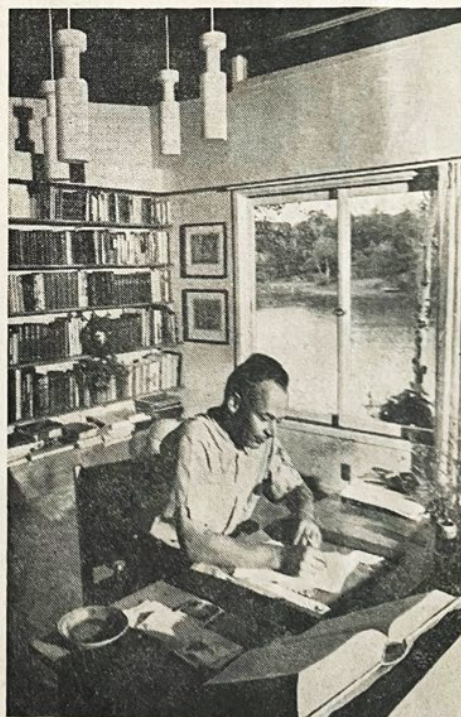
Home is built to fit the steep site

Oskam  
Continued on Page 11



### EACH MAJOR ROOM VIEWS LAKE

A lemon tree for under skylight



### PHYSICIST OSKAM IN UPPER-LEVEL STUDY

One wall houses the library

Figure 14. Minneapolis Tribune article featuring the Oskam House, October 4, 1964.



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## FOUR FINE FELLOWS

Practicing in Minneapolis, Elizabeth and Winston Close have been a consistent force in the development of modern architecture in that region. The Twin Cities had only four or five contemporary houses (all but one by Frank Lloyd Wright) when the Closes completed their first residence in 1939, a year after they established their two-way relationships as partners in Close Associates, Inc., and as Mr. and Mrs. Clients were few in the beginning, for the Closes limited their practice to those who sought them out. But soon, through their reputation, their designs began to dot the Twin Cities' landscape. Today they run an eight-man firm where "everyone does some drafting, including the secretary."

Close, who has been teaching at the University of Minnesota School of Architecture, became head of campus planning for the university in 1950. As such he planned and designed the university's Duluth campus which, with its interconnecting quadrangles, was the first all-weather campus in the United States. In '59 he became advisory architect to the university.

Although known mainly for their residential work and campus planning, the Closes have, in the words of Mrs. Close, "designed everything from a doghouse to a research center."

The doghouse accompanied a Close-designed resident; the research facility is a current project for the Peavey Company and will be completed next spring.

Among other projects underway are expansion and remodeling of St. Barnabas Hospital and, in a joint venture, several major buildings that form the Metropolitan Medical Center, both in Minneapolis.



Two redwood residences (above) and the Golden Age Homes for persons over 65, six identical one-story, four-apartment buildings grouped about two garden courts and a central area.



86 AIA JOURNAL/SEPTEMBER 1969

Figure 15. AIA Journal article, with a photo of the Oskam House, September 1969.

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Figure 16. St. Paul Dispatch article, April 13, 1983



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Figure 17. Lisl Close, ca. 1956. Photo courtesy Roy M. Close Family Papers

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Figure 18. Faulkner House, Opus 1, 1938, with later addition by Close Associates at left, Minneapolis. Photo Rolf Anderson, 2023



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Figure 19. Tracy and Helen Tyler House, 1940, University Grove, Falcon Heights. Photo Bill Olexy, ca. 2019.

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Figure 20. John and Dorothy Rood House, 1947, Minneapolis. Photo HB-14358-C, 1951, Chicago History Museum, Hedrick Blessing Collection



Hendrik and Marri Oskam House  
Name of Property

Hennepin County, MN  
County and State



Figure 21. Jason and Lorentina Quist House, 1947, Edina. Photo Bill Olexy, 2019



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Figure 22. Philip and Helen Duff House, 1955, Wayzata, razed 2012. Photo George Miles Ryan Studios Inc., Close Associates Papers

Hendrik and Marri Oskam House  
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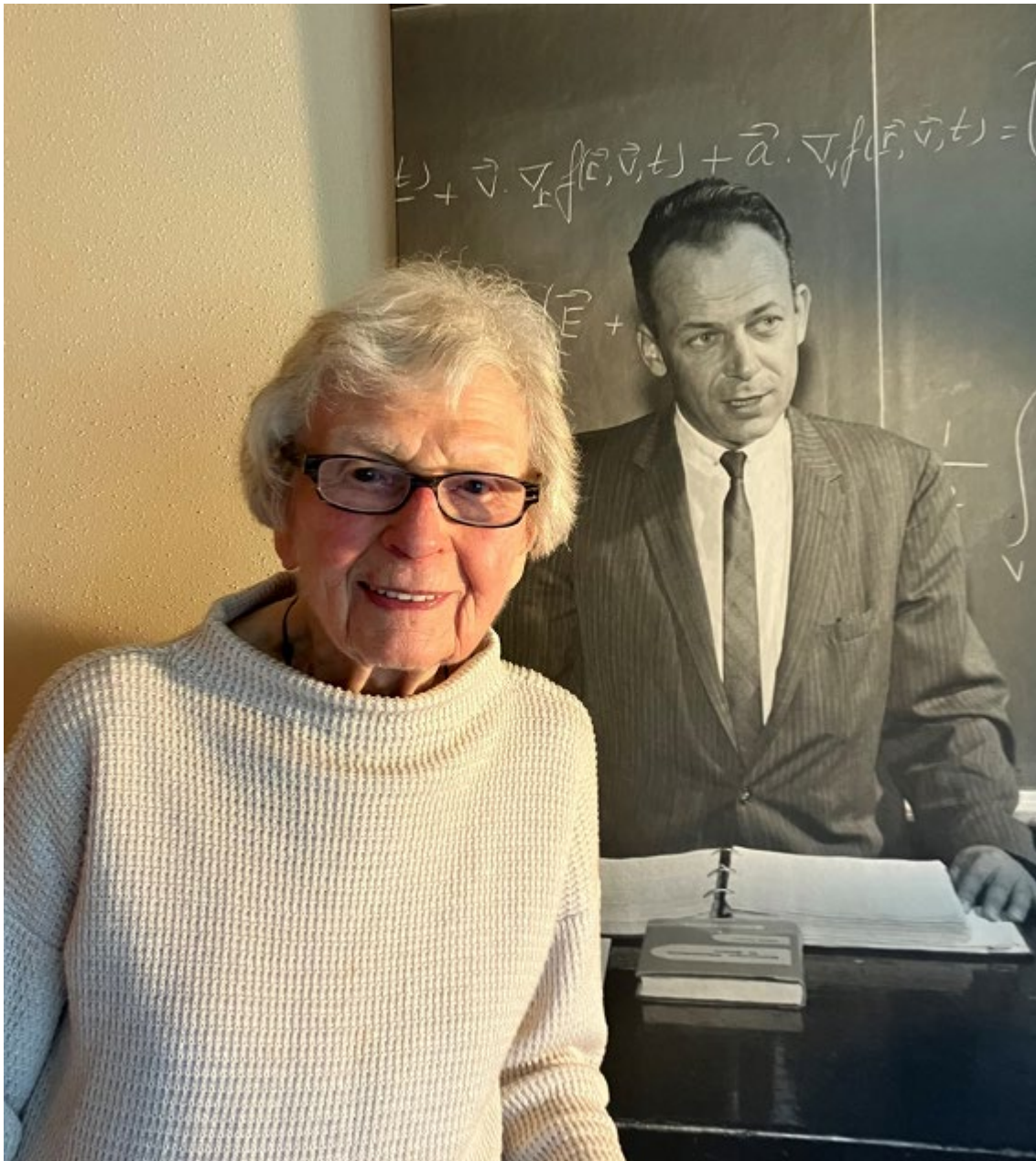


Figure 23. Marri Oskam with a photograph in the background of her late husband, Hendrik, shown in his classroom at the University of Minnesota, May 5, 2024. Photo Rolf Anderson



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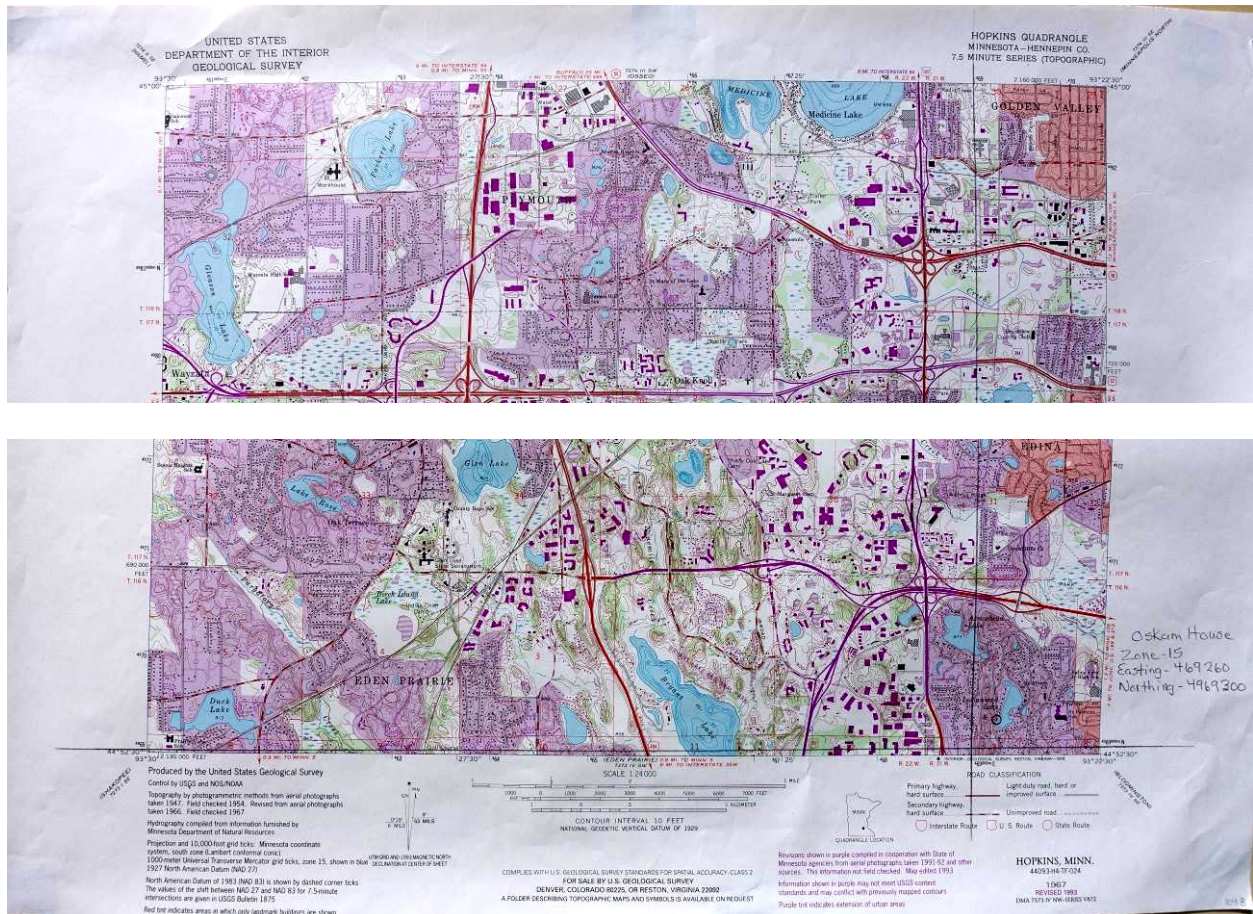


Figure 24. USGS map – Hopkins Quadrangle