



NHL Executive Summary



- Name of Property:** Ford, Sam and Ruth Van Sickle, House
- City, State:** Aurora, Illinois
- Period of Significance:** 1949-50
- NHL Criteria:** 4
- NHL Theme:** III. Expressing Cultural Values, 5. Architecture, landscape architecture and urban design
- Previous Recognition:** National Register of Historic Places, national significance
- National Historic Context:** XVI. Architecture
- NHL Significance:**
- The Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House is nationally significant as a masterwork of twentieth-century architect Bruce Goff (1904-1982). Goff was a leader of the American Organic design movement, who, through his teaching at the University of Oklahoma and his design work, continues to influence contemporary architects.
 - The house was designed by Goff in 1947-49, during a period of particular creativity and it displays nearly all of the characteristics common to Goff's strongest work. These include a powerful underlying geometry and complex spatial variety.
 - The house is an excellent example of Goff's creative use of materials. From the Quonset hut ribs, which give the house its basic form, to the unique coal and cullet glass wall which encloses its main interior living area, these building components show Goff's uninhibited openness to exploring new uses for materials.



- The Ford House was brought to fruition by a skillful general contractor, Don Tosi. Tosi had been a student of Goff's and then a draftsman in his office, working on the Ford House drawings. This makes the Ford house an especially faithful and well-constructed example of Goff's design ideas.

Integrity:

- Ford House has been altered relatively little over its history, and the building maintains a very high degree of integrity.
- Since purchasing the house in 1986, current owner Robinson has restored or repaired several major elements, including its cedar shingle roof, exposed steel ribs and the Goff-designed, free-standing ornamental wall, which is a contributing resource at the western edge of the property.
- The NHL boundary includes the entire block on which the house stands. This area contained no other structures during its period of significance and does not today.
- The surrounding neighborhood retains the principally single-family residential character it had during the period of significance.

Owner of Property: Sidney K. Robinson

Acreage of Property: 1.25

Origins of Nomination: The nomination was initiated by an inquiry made by the preparer of the nomination in 2015 to the Chief of the National Register and National Historic Landmark Program. The inquiry was made at the urging of the then-Illinois Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, in conjunction with the house's nomination to the National Register. The house was listed on the National Register in 2016, at a national level of significance. The NHL nomination was prepared by consultant John H. Waters, AIA, with the support of the owner Sidney K. Robinson and input by NPS staff.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Designation will advance awareness of Goff's work. Goff's executed designs were predominately residential and there is currently no residential work by him that has been designated as a National Historic Landmark.
- Designation will help promote the importance of preservation of mid-twentieth century architecture by recognizing the significance of this unique example.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None is known

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of August 21, 2023):

- David G. De Long, Professor Emeritus and Chair, Graduate History Program in Historic Preservation, University of Pennsylvania
- Jan Mangers, Director (retired), City of Aurora Preservation Commission
- Mary Woolever, Co-editor, Bruce Goff exhibit catalog and Art & Architecture Archivist (retired), The Art Institute of Chicago



Landmarks Committee Comments:

- More discussion on the contemporary reaction to Bruce Goff's homosexuality and the homophobia exhibited at the time.
- Verbiage on views and viewsheds should be clarified and discussed to better explain the landscape and the removal of the house on the other part of the lot. Add photos and maps to assist in documenting the landscape and views.

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the designation of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House in Aurora, Illinois, as a National Historic Landmark, with any additions and corrections as noted by the Committee being made prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for action.

Advisory Board Recommendation: The National Park System Advisory Board recommends to the Secretary of the Interior the designation of the Sam and Ruth Van Sickle Ford House in Aurora, Illinois, as a National Historic Landmark.