1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Manitoga

Other Name/Site Number: Wright, Russel, Home, Studio and Forest Garden; Dragon Rock (residence)

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: NY 9D Not for publication:

City/Town: Garrison Vicinity:

State: New York County: Putnam Code: 079 Zip Code: 10524

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property
Private:	x	Building(s):
Public-Local:		District: x
Public-State:		Site:
Public-Federal:		Structure:
		Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	1	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	1	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 3

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: Hudson Highlands Multiple Resource Area

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.

_____ _____

Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

_____ _____

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: DOMESTIC; LANDSCAPE Sub: single dwelling; garden

Current: RECREATION AND CULTURE; LANDSCAPE Sub: museum, garden

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Modern Movement

Materials
Foundation: concrete, stone
Walls: stone, glass, wood
Roof: gravel, aggregate
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Manitoga, Russel Wright's home, studio, and forest garden, occupies a seventy-five acre parcel in Garrison, Putnam County, New York. Garrison is a small hamlet on the east side of the Hudson River, approximately fifty miles north of Manhattan. The hamlet is located in the Hudson Highlands, a series of small, sharply rising hills that frame the narrow, winding river corridor for approximately twenty miles. The topography of the highlands is characterized by steep, heavily forested hills, narrow hollows and valleys, and massive rock outcrops. Manitoga is located on the east side of NY 9D, the Bear Mt.-Beacon Highway, which parallels the river between the Bear Mt. Bridge and the village of Cold Spring. The nomination includes all but one small parcel of the original Wright property, which was purchased and developed between 1942 and c. 1960. The excluded parcel was sold off and redeveloped during Wright's lifetime. There are three contributing features: the house and studio (separate buildings connected by a pergola) and the designed landscape. There is one non-historic building, a small wood-frame guide house constructed in 1974.

The Wright estate is located on South Mountain, which rises to 550 feet and slopes almost entirely to the northwest. Typical of upland forests in the United States, the site includes diverse vegetation. Due to extensive clear cutting and excavation for a quarry (which ceased operation in 1910) no old forest growth remains. Soils are rocky and thin and the land is characterized by boulder fields and rock outcroppings. Several streams meander through the property, including one principal stream that flows east-west through the center of the estate, and there is one small pond in the southeast corner. A stone fence predating the Wright acquisition survives along the northern boundary of the property.

Manitoga is a complex, extensively manipulated landscape that incorporates buildings, circulation features, vegetation, and small-scale built features within an overall spatial organization that can be described as a series of physically and visually connected rooms, beginning with the house itself and extending out to the edges of the property. Spaces around the house are the most dramatic and distinctive, while those on the outskirts are the least manipulated. The focal point of the property is the former quarry in the northwest quadrant of the site. This is the location of the residence and studio, which are built into the side of the quarry overlooking a pond that Wright created in the abandoned pit. The area in and around the edge of the quarry is the most highly articulated portion of the landscape design. The rest of the designed landscape extends primarily south and east of the quarry and residence.

Buildings

The house and studio, which are known as Dragon Rock, are independent structures connected by an open wooden pergola. The buildings, completed in 1960 after years of planning, study, and site development, were almost the last part of the estate to be developed during Wright's lifetime. The designs were developed by Wright and construction drawings were prepared under Wright's supervision by David Leavitt and Associates, a New York City architectural firm. Wright's own firm provided drawings of the interior under his careful oversight. Although the house was intended for weekend use, he spent increasingly large parts of him time here, and it was his primary residence during the last years of his life.

Dragon Rock has been described as "part cave, part forest pavilion, [a] rough hewn house that hugs the brow of a cliff over a secluded quarry pool [sheltering] nobly dramatic spaces which join the panorama of nature, change with the seasons."[1] The house was an intensely personal design, which Wright conceived entirely to accommodate his own family's lifestyle. Nevertheless, it was also an experiment intended to demonstrate how a modern American family might live following the principles embodied in his aesthetic and design philosophy.

[1]Olga Gueft, "Dragon Rock," *Interiors* 121 (September 1961), 105-111.

Among the qualities that determined the final form of the house were the specific character of the site, Wright's ideas about domestic efficiency, economy of space, use of materials, the interrelationship of exterior and interior spaces, natural and human-made materials, and the family's personal habits and taste.

The house and studio complex is sited at the edge of a precipice overlooking the pond. The rear (north) elevation is long and low, generally hidden from view, while the front (south) elevation is expansive and almost completely open, with large expanses of glass and views and spaces that expand beyond the confines of the building itself and incorporate parts of the natural landscape. The building is literally built into the quarry, incorporating parts of the granite cliff into the foundation and living spaces. Although generally rectangular in shape, in massing it follows the form of the cliff, stepping down into a complex eleven-level plan. The frame is of white pine and the exterior is clad in a combination of fixed and operable glass panels, plywood panels, and railroad ties laid to simulate vertical-board siding. Flat roofs are aluminum and gravel, partially planted with sedum, and feature deep overhanging eaves with exposed rafters. The studio roof was recently restored with contemporary materials to prevent drainage problems. The new studio roof consists of a gravel bed over modified bitumen built-up roofing over plywood decking; the edges are new terne-coated stainless steel and the sedum has been replanted.

The studio, which was also Wright's personal living space, is located at the east end of the complex. The studio is a small rectangular wing on one level with storage space below. The interior is divided into a combination workroom/bedroom and a small guest bedroom separated by a bathroom and hall. The studio wing is built into the bank on the north and east elevations so that some windows in the workroom are almost at ground level (giving Wright what he described as a "worm's eye view). The south elevation overlooks the quarry (giving all three rooms a view of the pond) and has its own stone terrace. Other steps and paths on the quarry side provide access to the main house and to a "secret" exterior room tucked into the quarry wall almost directly opposite the residence.

Wright's workroom/bedroom section, the largest part of the studio, features low, built-in Formica cabinets, desk, drafting table, and a couch. Floors are pegged oak planks, recently refinished, and lighting is recessed and concealed by fabric, such as burlap. The ceiling, painted dark green, is plaster embedded with sprigs and clusters of pine needles over metal lathe. Open wooden shelving divides the bedroom space from the studio, and, on the bedroom side, a curtain could be drawn for additional privacy. There are white roller shades on the windows in the workroom and wooden blinds in the bedroom. Furnishings and fixtures, many of Wright's design, are either original pieces, period pieces similar or identical to the originals, or reproductions of the originals. The latter includes a framed Audubon print. The bathroom features narrow, vertical cedar board walls and a tub and sink built into wooden cabinets. The guest bedroom door is covered in birch bark and the room features built-in cabinets and a closet with a reversible panel (green or gold). The flip side of this panel faces the hall. Doors in the hall conceal storage space. The studio was extensively restored in 2003-04 based on historic photographs and now presents an appearance accurate to Wright's occupancy. The badly deteriorated roof was replaced and its original sedum cover replanted. The connecting pergola was rebuilt. On the interior, damaged and missing furniture was rebuilt or replaced.

Although it is a single structure, the residence is essentially divided into two separate spheres: the family or communal space, which includes the kitchen, living and dining rooms, bathroom, and den; and, at the west end of the building, the small secluded wing that included bedrooms for Wright's daughter and housekeeper, a bathroom, and a private terrace. Access to the house is through a unobtrusive door on the rear elevation and into a narrow hall/service core. The core contains stairs to the main living area and basement, closets, and a long hall to the bedroom wing. The fact that the entire house was planned around the irregular granite cliff is most evident here, where portions of granite can be seen in the basement.

The hall to the bedroom wing is illuminated by a plastic partition lit from behind. This hall is also the location of a linen closest concealed by plastic tambour doors. The wing is divided into two bedrooms and a bathroom. All three have full-height windows overlooking the pond on the quarry (south) side, while the other elevations are without openings. Ann Wright's bedroom, on the west end of the building, is the largest. The adjacent housekeeper's room separates it from the bathroom. Floors are one-inch-square wood parquet and both bedroom closets have sliding plastic doors with embedded plant materials. In the housekeeper's room, the walls were covered in lavender woven cotton, while Ann's walls and ceiling are pink metallic foil. Both bedrooms had built-in furniture, such as dressers and/or desks. In Ann's room, the back of a built-in sofa could be flipped up to create bunk beds.

The bathroom features a sunken tub adjacent to full-height doors that can be opened, transforming bathing into an outdoor experience. Water flows into the tub from a mini-waterfall in a wall constructed of large boulders. The tub and floors are of Murano glass tiles in five shades of blue set with blue mortar. The sliding bathroom door is constructed of what Wright called "lamentation," botanical matter collected on site and inlaid in plastic. Here, one panel features a collection of butterflies of different colors and sizes, while the other has leaves and flowers. Both Ann's room and the bathroom open onto a generous private terrace, which is sheltered from view from the main part of the house and the studio by a large boulder wall with an exterior fireplace. Although intact, the bedroom wing has not yet been restored or refurnished and is currently used as offices and storage.

The family living space, the largest and most dramatic section of the house, occupies the center of the building complex. In massing, this section is lower than the harem and studio and the interior spaces are dispersed over five levels. Entrance is from the rear and down a narrow set of stairs before emerging into an open, multi-level space with expansive views. Functional divisions, from top to bottom, include a den and bathroom, a two-level living area, and a dining room and kitchen. The granite cliff serves as a central structural element and motif, evident in the large boulder fireplace wall, flagstone floors that extend outside the living areas onto the terraces, and massive central stone and concrete stair. The south wall is almost entirely of glass and features sliding doors at two levels opening onto terraces and steps to the studio and quarry pond. Walls in the entrance hall are epoxy and white sand; walls in the primary spaces are green plaster embedded with hemlock needles and branches collected on the property.

A focal point of the living space is the massive cedar log that serves as the building's primary vertical support post. The log, stripped of its bark, is thirty inches in circumference, narrowing to eighteen inches at the top. This post supports a twenty-eight-foot long oak beam, twelve by twenty-three inches wide. Smaller exposed beams rest on stone corbels. A dramatic serpentine stair, constructed of concrete and large stone boulders, winds down through the center of the living space, linking den, living room/ hearth, and dining/kitchen areas and providing the major spatial division between living and dining/kitchen areas.

The upper rooms, at the top of the stone stair, are a bathroom (west) and a den (east). The small multi-function bathroom also served as a flower arranging room, gift wrapping station, and bar. It features two sinks, a small refrigerator, and concealed storage spaces for vases, shipping paper, and glasses. The small square den, which is over the kitchen, features built-in furniture on the east wall, a broad band of windows over cabinets on the south side (facing the quarry), and a half-wall on the west side (facing the living area). This gives the room the qualities of both enclosure and openness. Wright concealed a number of practical features in the den. These originally included a washer-dryer, dumb waiter and ironing board. The room was outfitted with casual appointments, including a day bed, built-in magazine rack, and bookcases covered with laminates that could be switched seasonally.

The living room area, at the intermediate plane, is a double-height space on two levels. The upper level features

a seating area with built-in cabinets; several steps descend to a second, hearth-side seating area with a large built-in couch facing the fireplace (historic photos show a second built-in couch facing the quarry). Sliding glass doors provide access to a terrace and the same irregular stone paving is used both inside and out. The massive stone corner chimney also extends outside, where, on its opposite side, it houses the exterior harem fireplace. The living room fireplace is large enough to accommodate four-foot logs standing upright.

The dining room and kitchen are at the lowest level, at the bottom of the stairs. While the rest of the house accommodates the irregular shape of the site, space for this corner of the building was blasted out of the quarry wall. The dining room is also a full-height space with doors opening to a terrace; as in the living room, the same stone paving is used both inside and out. The adjacent kitchen, under the den, is a small square room divided from the dining room by a half-wall and, above the counter top, a fourteen-foot counter-balanced cabinet that can be raised into a hole in the ceiling, leaving an open pass-through. The kitchen was designed for efficiency and aesthetics. The refrigerator occupies a central location and work spaces were arranged to afford a view of the quarry pond. Cabinets are white Formica trimmed with natural white oak; appliances are white enamel, and the floor is covered with Armstrong bleached cork. The ceiling is of laminate panels supported by exposed oak framing members and concealing fluorescent lights.

Interior finishes and furnishings are varied, eccentric, and interchangeable. They include bathtub faucets within rock walls, plaster walls embedded with plant materials, translucent plastic walls embedded with pressings of local plants and butterflies, and tree branches used as newel posts, window sills, and towel racks. Door knobs, each different, include a cast bronze knob with a whimsical face, polished wood and rounded stone knobs, a twig handle, and a bronze wheel crank. Lighting was provided by a combination of fluorescent, incandescent, phosphorous, candlelight, oil flares, moonlight, and a fireplace. Most artificial lighting was recessed or concealed behind plastic, Styrofoam, or fabric. Furniture, fabrics, fixtures, and artwork were changed seasonally. These included curtains, light fixtures, panels and partitions (many of which could be reversed to reveal another color or pattern), chair, sofa, and bed coverings, and prints. The winter palette, defined by warm colors such as red, brown and gold, was created to contrast with the cold winter landscape, while the summer palette, of blues, greens, and white, was intended to blend into the natural landscape. An especially dramatic change was achieved in the dining room, where a twenty-two-foot high drape composed of three shades of red ribbons for winter use was replaced with a similar drape of five shades of white yarn in summer. Similarly, a wrought-iron chandelier used in winter was replaced by a summer light fixture composed of Plexiglas shells and white fiberglass. As a whole, the majority of the interior furniture and decoration survives, although some is in need of restoration and some has been placed into storage until the spaces have been refurbished.

The small, attached one-story garage, located behind the harem in the northwest corner of the residence, has been altered for use as offices. The guide house is located some distance west of the house, near the public parking lot. This one-story rectangular building was constructed on a raised wooden platform. The building is of post and beam construction with exposed framing members surmounted by a flat roof supported on wide rafters with exposed ends. The guide house was constructed in 1974 to accommodate the public using the trails, as was Wright's intention. However, the building house is non-contributing because it was constructed after the period of significance.

Landscape

Manitoga is an immensely subjective design intended to be experienced as a series of directed sequences that changed based on factors such as the time of day or the season. The major components of the landscape include the quarry (including the residence and studio, terraces, pond, waterfall, and their immediate setting), a series a woodland paths that radiate from the quarry in increasingly larger circles, a number of specifically designed "garden rooms," accessible from the paths, and the auto court. Except for the auto court, the entire landscape is

intended to be experienced on foot and most of the effects are arranged to engage the attention of those in motion. The site is bisected by one major stream, which flows east-west from the highest elevation to the Hudson River. This stream, which Wright diverted and dammed to create the waterfall and quarry pond, serves as the primary axis, and the house is oriented to it at the point where it was dammed to create the pond. The main path parallels this stream, initially following the route of an old logging road; other paths diverge from it and cross it as they extend into the southern and eastern quadrants of the property.

Although the design is naturalistic and developed to harmonize and highlight the natural contours of the site, it was created through extensive, precise and very selective clearing, cutting, planting, cultivating, leveling, and smoothing, as well as the manipulation of texture, color, light, sound, and smell. When Wright acquired the property, the quarry pit was a great dry hole filed with debris, brambles, and various vegetation. His earliest site work included clearing the pit, diverting the largest stream into it to create a thirty-foot waterfall, and building a dam across the eastern end to create a pond. Wright carefully designed the waterfall by blasting the granite ledges until they broke away into smooth steps, thus creating a series of pools and cataracts. A large rock was placed in the pond to create a visual break in the large expanse of water.

On the ground level, extensive work was undertaken to clear unwanted elements and weeds and encourage the growth of desired elements. Wright also introduced native plantings, such as vines or lilies, moved boulders into informal compositions, and smoothed out rough terrain. Both single and double file paths were created, following the natural contours of the land but smoothed or grouted for easier walking. Water crossings were accommodated by wooden plank or log bridges or stones, and wet terrain was compensated for with stepping stones or cordwood. Stones and boulders were used to create informal seating through the property (as well as in the house itself). Some features bear the marks of the property's earlier use. Plug marks from blasting operations are visible, as is a piece of cable anchored to the ground and a cable hook still embedded in a rock outcropping. Although the evidence is authentic, some of these features were moved (or revealed in some way) by Wright to become part of the designed landscape.

Wright relied on the hemlock, the most plentiful tree on the property, extensively in creating effects of color and texture. Hemlocks were used to create walls and ceilings, to control the effects of light filtering through the branches, and to illuminate ground level vegetation, such as moss, fern and laurel. They were also used to define spaces and to frame views of specific landscape elements both immediate and distant. Because Wright was fascinated with specific species, he created areas within the landscape with dominant collections of certain plants. In addition to the hemlock canopy, mountain laurel and ferns dominate the understory, and several species of moss and indigenous ground covers carpet the floor. Throughout the landscape, natural elements were arranged into specific scenes. For example, a field of lilies was planted on the sloping quarry wall; beds of ferns were laid around or near water features or boulder fields; skunk cabbage was planted in wet areas, and trees were carefully pruned to frame views. Paths were laid out as processionals to specific destinations: a water feature, plant grouping, garden room, or a view. The sensory experience was heightened by variations in the width and the character of the path, the number of plantings and/or boulders within or adjacent to them, whether turns were gradual or abrupt, walks gradual or steep, or views anticipated or unexpected. Sounds and smells provided by water, wind and vegetation were also employed, and additional interest and variety was created by seasonal variation, the time of day, and the direction from which the path was experienced. This allowed Wright to use a single path to create a variety of different experiences. The landscape continued to evolve over time in accordance with the natural cycles of plant growth, and Wright continued to revise and enhance it with additional planting, clearing or manipulation.

The major landscape components include the following:

Auto Court
This is a small parking area behind the house (north) at the end of an entrance drive. From this vantage point, only the long low rear elevation of the house is visible and there is no hint of the quarry or waterfall beyond. The auto court was surrounded by walls of vegetation with window like openings offering views up the adjacent slopes into the forest. The clearing itself features a range of plantings and wildflowers native to the area, and a sculptural composition of large boulders was created as a centerpiece. A metal fitting embedded into the boulders recalls the quarrying activity that previously occurred on the site.

Quarry
In addition to the house, terraces and waterfall, the quarry was embellished with plantings such as lilies, laurel, birch and moss. Steps descend to the lowest level for access to the pond for swimming and a path encircles the upper edge, crossing the waterfall and dam, providing views of the house and waterfall, and showcasing a sampling of vegetation. There are two garden rooms in the immediate vicinity of the quarry. The "secret room," a cleared enclave below the quarry path (but above the quarry pond), is accessible via a concealed path from the studio. Wright described this room as his private sanctuary or retreat. The room provides a direct view of the house and studio but is almost imperceptible from them. The "moss room" is a narrow corridor with a thick mossy carpet along the edge of the quarry; it can be viewed [or looked into] from the upper quarry path. Another landscape feature, a mossy plateau where a small grove of twisting gray birch was exposed, is directly opposite the house and overlooking the quarry. This grouping was dubbed the "Martha Graham Girls" because is was thought to look like dancers. Only a few original trees remain but new plantings have been donated to restore this feature.

Paths
There are almost four miles of trails. The main path runs east-west, following an old logging road and paralleling a stream, to the property's highest elevation. Most of the other paths are accessible from the main path and follow a "semi-circular" route south around the quarry. Paths were given individual names, such as Autumn Path or Sunset Path, depending on the primary intended experience. The Morning Path, for example, was designed to take advantage of the rising sun, while the White Pine (or Fern) Path was laid out to showcase an enormous white pine, estimated to be 150-200 years of age (but unfortunately blown down in a hurricane in 1976) and to display a wide variety of ferns along the way. The Deer Pool Path is a small diversion to exactly that, while the Deer Run Path leads through a display of ferns and wildflowers to a stream crossing on a narrow plank bridge. The Lost Pond Path is the largest trail, a steep climb through the less cultivated section of the property culminating at the approach to Lost Pond. Wright intentionally left the last three hundred yards to the pond uncleared in order to elevate the sense of surprise or discovery. Path names are somewhat confusing because Wright himself varied them, used dual names for the same path (depending on when or in which direction it was experienced), or changed them over the years and landscape features were enhanced or evolved. However, their layouts and character remained relatively consistent.

Garden Rooms
In addition to those mentioned above, other rooms include the Quadruple Oaks Room and the Four Corners. The latter is a natural clearing where all of the main paths converge. Wright described other rooms defined by wildflowers, such as the Lady Slipper Room, or even by shapes and smells, such as a place where he seeded a large amount of wild thyme amidst a huge boulder field. Some are more complicated. He identified one room planted with silvery leaf everlasting mixed with lady fern and enclosed by laurel against a background of hemlocks.

Osios

Wright used Osio, a native American word for view, to refer to the framed vistas that he specifically created by careful pruning or shaping. The resulting window-like views are framed by branches. The approach to the Boulders Osio is a small offshoot from the main trail and the view takes in eighteen-foot-high boulders filtered through thinned trees at sunset. The Chestnut Oak Ridge Osio is also accessed by an offshoot of the main trail and takes in a view of the Hudson River.

Landscape Integrity

The overall plan, character, and the majority of the materials survive. The circulation system, spatial definitions, “finishes” (natural materials that define the character of a space), water features, views and many, many plants remain as Wright had intended them. The major loss of landscape integrity has been the loss of a substantial number of hemlock trees to disease. Hemlocks were predominantly overstory vegetations used for structure, light and view control, and their loss has altered the intended qualities of light, color and texture, changed views and spaces, and affected vegetation (that was either protected or prevented by them). However, despite their crucial role, hemlocks were only one of a vast number of plants and natural elements that Wright employed. Much of the intended experience was on a more intimate scale, with features placed at eye or ground level, and the overall design is far too complex to be compromised by their loss. As a whole, the landscape that Wright designed survives to an exceptional degree.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: _ Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A_ B X C X D_
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A_ B_ C_ D_ E_ F_ G X
NHL Criteria:	2 and 4
NHL Exceptions:	8
NHL Theme(s):	III. Expressing Cultural Values 2. visual and performing arts 5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design
Areas of Significance:	Industrial Design Architecture Landscape Architecture
Period(s) of Significance:	1941-1976
Significant Dates:	1960
Significant Person(s):	Wright, Russel
Cultural Affiliation:	N/A
Architect/Builder:	Wright, Russel, with David L. Leavitt
Historic Contexts:	XXVI. Decorative and Folk Art XVI. Architecture Y. Rustic

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary

Manitoga is exceptionally significant for its association with the life and work of Russel Wright (1904-1976), one of the most acclaimed and influential American designers of the mid-twentieth century. Wright had a long and diverse career, which included work in set design, industrial design, interior design, and conservation; however, he is best known for his designs for inexpensive, mass-produced household furnishings, including tableware, glassware, silverware, and furniture. Wright spent his productive life demonstrating his conviction that "good design is for everyone."[2] His democratic ideas about public access to and appreciation of "good design" coincided with the development of mass marketing, enabling him to produce and popularize an enormously wide range of affordable items for the home. By combining ideas about informal and efficient American living, knowledge of new design possibilities available through modern materials and mass production, and successful consumer-oriented marketing techniques, Russel Wright created a distinctive line of products that were intended to be stylish and well designed as well as casual and affordable. Successfully melding art and industry, Wright has been called a "craftsman of mass produced products."[3]

Influenced by his wife, Mary Einstein Wright, Russel Wright used and advanced principles developed to facilitate mass production and industrial design. His designs were reasonably priced, widely produced, heavily advertised, and cleverly marketed for mass appeal. Incorporating his signature into all of his products and advertisements, Wright was an early proponent of the now-common practice of incorporating name recognition into product design.[4] As a result, "Russel Wright" became well-known as a brand name throughout America (particularly among the middle-class) in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. His best-known work, American Modern china (1939), sold more than 80 million pieces between 1939-1959 and became one of the century's best selling designs. He introduced numerous popular products, including stainless steel flatware, sectional furniture, and unbreakable dinnerware.[5] The enormous variety of Wright's designs for household necessities, including glassware, tableware, furniture, and fabrics, reveals his desire to transform the total environment of the American home.

By the early 1950s, Wright moved from the design of individual pieces and objects to designs for total environments, particularly those associated with the contemporary middle-class home. Wright believed that the modern home could express the defining ideas of democracy and individuality, concepts that he believed were inherent in the twentieth-century pursuit of relaxation, spontaneity, labor and space-saving households, informal living and entertaining, and a greater variety of affordable, well-designed household furnishings.[6] The *Guide to Easier Living*, published in 1951, laid out Russel and Mary Wright's ideas for an entire way of living and included advice about home design, furniture, and decoration, as well as domestic efficiency, the division of labor, menus, and table settings. As such, it has been called a "manifesto on suburban domestic life."[7]

Wright, a founding member of the American Society of Industrial Designers, was one of a group of well known

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[2]Kathryn Hiesinger and George Marcus, *Landmarks of Twentieth-Century Design: An Illustrated Handbook* (NY: Abbeville, n.d.), 399.
[3] Arthur J. Pulos, "Russel Wright: American Designer" *American Craft* (October-November 1983): 11.
[4] *Russel Wright: Good Design is for Everyone – In His Own Words* (Garrison: Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center, 2001), 40.
[5] Diane Cochrane, "Designer for All Seasons," *Industrial Design* 37 (March 1976): 46.
[6] Mary and Russel Wright, *Mary and Russel Wright's Guide to Easier Living*. NY: Simon and Schuster, 1950.
[7] Donald Albrecht and Robert Schonfeld, introduction to Donald Albrecht, Robert Schonfeld and Lindesay Stamm Shapiro, *Russell Wright: Creating American Lifestyle* (NY: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 18.

architects and designers whose designs for machine-made objects introduced the aesthetic of modernism to Americans in the late 1920s.[8] More so than others of this group, which included Donald Deskey, Norman Bel Geddes, Walter Dorwin Teague, Henry Dreyfus, Raymond Loewy, William Lescaze, Joseph Sinel, Paul Frankle, Gilbert Rohde, and others, Wright concentrated on products for the American home and worked to establish a machine-age aesthetic that was both modern and American, reconciling the forms and concepts of European modernism with the early twentieth century movement to establish a national identity. In this Wright appealed directly to the American middle class, and his genius was to present new products, designs, styles, materials and environments in a popular and affordable way. Between the 1920s and the 1960s, Wright produced a succession of artistically and commercially successful products that helped bring modern design to the American public and to the American home.[9] His tableware was characterized by free-flowing, organic forms with rounded edges, soft, muted colors and speckled glazes, while his furniture was designed with simple, streamlined forms that drew upon the prevailing American colonial period taste, executed in solid hardwoods. Combining a contemporary design aesthetic with mass production and consumer friendly marketing, Wright has been called the person most responsible for the acceptance of modern design in America.[10]

Russel Wright's work was widely recognized during his lifetime. In the 1930s, his work was displayed in several of the most influential exhibits of American industrial design of the decade, including shows at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1930; 1934), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1932), the Museum of Modern Art (1934), and Rockefeller Center (1934). Throughout his career, his products and designs were also the frequent subject of articles in magazines for the general public, such as *House Beautiful, Interiors,* and *House and Garden,* and several of his designs (including Oceana, American Modern china, and Residential) received awards. Since his death he has been the subject of numerous books and articles, and his work has been discussed in a number of anthologies. Today, he is represented in virtually all museum collections of twentieth-century design, including those at the Smithsonian Institution, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Museum of Modern Art, and his work has been featured in more than eight major exhibitions of this genre, including *The Machine Age in America: 1918-1941* (Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1986), *Russel Wright: Creating American Lifestyle* (Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York, 2001), and *American Modern 1925-1940: Design for a New Age* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000).[11]

Manitoga is a seventy-five acre property that was entirely designed by Wright. The estate, which includes a residence, studio and designed landscape, was Wright's home for the last thirty-five years of his life. Because of the length of his residence and his personal involvement with its design and development, Manitoga is the resource most significantly associated with Wright's productive life. In addition, within Wright's oeuvre, Manitoga is the work that best epitomizes his ideas about American lifestyle and design. Wright acquired the property in 1941 and over the next twenty years designed, developed, and crafted a home and forest garden that includes buildings, circulation features, vegetation, views, water courses, rock outcroppings, and various small-scale features. The estate is characterized by a complex and extensively manipulated landscape set in and around an abandoned quarry on steeply sloping land. The residence and studio (constructed c1957-1960) were built into the side of the quarry, which is the focal point of the design, while paths extend in widening circles south and east of the quarry to the outer edges of the site. In creating Manitoga, Wright drew on both his experience in set design and his thirty-year career in industrial design, a period marked by innovations in the

[8] The Society of Industrial Designers (SID) was organized in 1944; in 1955, SID became the American Society of Industrial Designers.
[9] David McAlpin, forward to *Good Design is For Everyone*, 13.
[10] George Nelson, quoted in Albrecht and Schonfeld, 11.
[11] Donald Albrecht, curator, Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, personal communication, 24 March 2005. See addendum for a comprehensive list of exhibits featuring the work of Russel Wright.

use of materials, the development of a modern aesthetic suited for the middle-class American lifestyle, a study of household efficiency, and a growing interest in nature and ecology. Designing his own estate gave Wright the opportunity to explore ideas that he had been developing for years on a scale not possible with product design.[12] Both buildings and landscape were conceived as a series of rooms, small-scale sets within which to enact the scenes of family life in different seasons and times and with various family members and guests. An intensely personal work, Manitoga was designed entirely in reference to Wright's personal taste, the needs and lifestyle of himself and his family, and the specific natural character of the site. Nevertheless, it also employed all of the features that Wright advocated for the American modern home and represented an illustration of how a modern American family might live following the principles embodied in his aesthetic and design philosophy. Because the estate embodies and expands so many of the concepts about design, Manitoga functions as a retrospective of his entire career. The estate, including residence, studio and designed landscaped, remains exceptionally intact from Wright's period of residence.

American Industrial Design

In a sense, the history of industrial design in modern America began with the 1876 Centennial Exposition, which popularized the idea that machines could produce objects that were both inexpensive and of good design. For the public, affordable machine-made objects promised a substantial increase in the standard of living. The cook stove and sewing machine, for example, two important domestic appliances introduced in the mid-nineteenth century, significantly decreased the time needed to produce everyday necessities while greatly expanding the range of available options for meeting those needs. Introducing the variable of customer choice into commerce was an important step in legitimizing an object's style as of equal or greater importance than its utility.[13] For manufacturers, the move toward mass production of machine-made goods presaged enormous changes in the way that they did business, forcing them to re-conceptualize manufacturing and sales practices. In 1875, the American Watch Company (of Waltham, MA), which developed a system of manufacturing inexpensive watches, codified a set of guidelines for the manufacture of machine-made items, stating that objects must be specifically designed for mass production, that they must be conceived to be superior to their competition, that they rely on interchangeable parts and exacting performance standards, that businesses must be invested with sufficient facilities and capital to support mass production, and that businesses must develop marketing, advertising and distribution methods geared to the quantities of objects produced.[14] As these principles implied, success in the machine age would depend on mass production, mass distribution, and mass consumption. Perhaps most important was the advent of the consumer, a new kind of customer made possible by the significant expansion of the middle class in the period after the Civil War. The middle-class American consumer was characterized by a certain sense of entitlement: to a certain standard of living and personal taste, to an income to support it, leisure time to enjoy it, and the right to indulge in personal comfort and care.[15]

As technology advanced and the industry and market for machine-made products expanded, however, American designers were slow to respond. Early mass-produced furniture for the American home has been described as "ill designed and poorly constructed," relying on applied motifs, complicated carving and expensive veneers.[16] At the same time, American craftsmen, such as Gustav Stickly, although concerned about improving the quality of goods available to the middle class, failed to anticipate and capitalize on the enormous demand for labor- saving and inexpensive machine made goods, furniture and decorative objects that consumer economic power and new technology would impose on manufacturers.[17] The proliferation of mass-produced objects, the

[12] Malcolm Holzman, "Transforming the American Home," in *Good Design is For Everyone*, 61.
[13] Arthur J. Pulos, *American Design Ethic: A History of Industrial Design to 1940* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 161-165,
[14] Pulos, *American Design Ethic*, 158.
[15] Pulos, *American Design Ethic*, 171.
[16] Cara Greenberg, "Metro," *Metropolitan Home*, March 1990, 16.
[17] Pulos, *American Design Ethic*, 211.

rapid spike in consumer demand, and the sluggish response of the American craft community influenced the rapid growth of the relatively new field of industrial design. The role of the industrial designer was to give form to the mass-produced object and to serve as a bridge between the manufacturer and the consumer.[18] With a high demand and so many choices, industrial success was dependent on being able to create objects that would best fulfill consumer needs. Industrial designers applied technical expertise, knowledge of new materials, an awareness of changing lifestyles, savvy business practices, and artistic sensibilities not only to meet the needs of the consumer but to create those needs themselves.

The beginning of the twentieth century was marked by the expansion of technology and its effect on American society. The 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo has been called a "paean to electricity," which illuminated the fair site using power from nearby Niagara Falls while inundating the public with a wealth of new ideas about how technology could be used to make everyday life easier and more pleasant. Recent and imminent technological advances would transform personal life by facilitating communication (the telephone, the phonograph, and the motion picture), transportation (the electric trolley and the gas-powered automobile), and the creation of a "carefree' domestic environment (the incandescent lamp, electric flatirons, washing machines, stoves, fans, vacuums, and a host of other domestic appliances).[19] Yet, while European designers began to address the problem of developing a new aesthetic for machine-age products in the next decades, American manufacturers focused on efficiency and economy but continued to cloak their new products in age-old patterns and/or historical styles.[20]

After World War I, with the emergence of the United States as a world power, American industrial art began to change in response to a national concern with independence and self-sufficiency, an awareness of the enormous markets that could be created with mass production, and an awakening to the idea that aesthetics could add value to machine-made products. Among the first American designers to address these issues in the 1920s were a group of European immigrant architects and artists, including William Lescaze, Paul Frankl, Joseph Urban, Paul Laszlo, Raymond Loewy, and others. Many of these new Americans carried with them artistic sensibilities nourished on the social and aesthetic ideals of European modernism.[21] However, despite American advances in technology and production, the need for a new aesthetic for the machine age was not embraced by the American public, many of whom were looking in exactly the opposite direction, toward a romanticized colonial past, for the development of a national style to support their growing national identity. Events such as the opening of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1924 and the development of Colonial Williamsburg in the mid-1920s more accurately celebrated the idea of a distinctly "American style" as it was understood in that era.[22] It was not until industrial designers recast machine-made objects as both modern *and* distinctly American that middle-class American consumers began to consider purchases for their contemporary style as well as for their advances in efficiency, utility, or economy.

Unlike Europe, where design was often put to the service of social idealism, modern design in America was about defining an American identity that was keyed to lifestyle; that is, an affordable, comfortable, easy, egalitarian, and attainable American way of living. As the twentieth century progressed, that lifestyle was increasingly defined as casual, suburban, and middle class. In large part, Russel Wright's popularity as a designer rested on his understanding of and response to the idea that his calling as an industrial designer was to provide the settings for this lifestyle and to capture an American sensitivity that rejected European traditions.

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[18] Pulos, *American Design Ethic*, 324.
[19] Pulos, *American Design Ethic*, 228.
[20] Pulos, *American Design Ethic*, 243-249
[21] J. Stewart Johnson, *American Modern 1925-1940: Design for a New Age* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000), 25.
[22] Donald Albrecht, "From Hollywood to Walden Pond: Stage Sets For American Living," *Russel Wright: Creating American Lifestyle*, 94-95.

Wright understood and respected the aesthetic proclivities of his consumers. He himself rejected the Bauhaus aesthetic as "too austere and inhuman."[23] Instead, he redefined modernism for Americans as an aesthetic characterized by elegantly simple and organic forms. Wright's designs were streamlined and contemporary; his furniture was "honest" in its use of straightforward forms and construction, economical in its use of solid wood, and it was traditional in employing an abstracted American colonial aesthetic and native materials. He aimed for the middle ground, avoiding both the "forced adherence to past periods and the abrupt introduction of unprecedented ideas."[24] Wright's products were decorative, useful, and affordable, and his appeal both to tradition and to efficiency contributed to the great popularity of his designs among average Americans. [25] Although the nascent field of American industrial design did not come into its own until the 1930s, some of those who were to become its stars proved influential in bridging the gap between a machine age aesthetic and an American style for the modern era. Among them was a group of theater and set designers who, beginning in the mid-1920s, turned their skill at creating stage sets to practical use in designing and promoting settings for American domestic life. Among the most important were Norman Bel Geddes, Henry Dreyfus, and Russel Wright, but it was the latter who, over the course of his career, stretched his personal interest in the theater the farthest by creating and marketing first the props, then the sets, and finally entire holistic environments for the thousands of new suburbanites who were redefining the idea of family life in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Wright began his career designing objects that symbolized the new lifestyle. As he expanded his product line, he used both advertising and design to demonstrate how these objects could be combined into scenes; by the 1950s, he had expanded his range to include the design for the lifestyle itself.

In addition to new ideas about nationalism and family life, the growth of industrial design in America was also fueled by the effects of the Great Depression. Competition for the limited resources of American consumers proved a catalyst to the creation of inexpensive products, while designers sought to stimulate sales by making common necessities attractive and appealing to the general public, as well as by flooding the market with endless variations. In addition to reviving the economy and improving everyday life for the American public, this consciously "planned obsolescence" helped to foster the belief among Americans that the newest and the best decorative objects, household furnishings, and appliances were indispensable to modern living.

Beginning in the 1930s, industrial designers such as Russel Wright led the way in developing an understanding of industrial processes and new materials and developing products that combined good taste with utility, safety, appearance, and economy [26] Although most of the most important American industrial designers, such as Norman Bel Geddes, Henry Dreyfuss, Walter Dorwin Teague, Donald Deskey, and Raymond Loewy, worked in a broad range of genres, designing products for both commercial and industrial clients, Russel Wright was distinctive in concentrating on products for the home.[27] In designing affordable products for a specific, growing market, the middle-class family, Wright was successful in reaching a wide audience. As a result, his work was particularly influential in introducing modern design to a great segment of the American public.

Russel Wright[28]

Russel Wright was born in Lebanon, Ohio in 1904. His mother was a direct descendant of two signers of the Declaration of Independence and his father, a Quaker, was a judge. Wright received his first artistic instruction

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[23] Russel Wright, quoted in Cochrane, 47.
[24] William Hennessey, quoted in Wolf Von Eckhardt, "Reflections on the Wright Look: American Modern," *Time*, July 1983, 67.
[25] Penny Sparke, *Furniture: Twentieth Century Design* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1986), 40.
[26] Donald J. Bush, *The Streamlined Decade* (NY: George Braziller, Inc., 1975), 21.
[27] Dianne H. Pilgrim, "A Singular Artist," in *Good Design is for Everyone*, 23.
[28] Russel Wright bibliography substantially derived from William J. Hennessey, *Russel Wright: American Designer* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press), 1983.

at the Cincinnati Academy of Art, where he became acquainted with Frank Duveneck just prior to that artist's death in 1920. That same year Wright finished high school and moved to New York, where he studied at the Art Students League. At the urging of a professor, Wright re-directed his studies from painting to sculpture and almost immediately won first place in a student competition. In the fall of 1921 Wright began classes at Princeton, his father's alma mater, where he avidly pursued theatrical design and direction with the Triangle Club. The latter proved to be Wright's only real interest at Princeton. He spent the summer of 1923 as a theater designer for the Maverick Art Colony in Woodstock, New York, and although he retuned to Princeton in the fall, he began spending weekends in New York as an apprentice to Norman Bel Geddes, who was then working in theater design. In early 1924, Wright left Princeton to return to New York. Although Bel Geddes offered him an unpaid internship, Wright, needing an income, took a job at the Neighborhood Playhouse instead. The latter opportunity resulted from his friendship with Aline Bernstein, a theatrical designer and close friend, who has been credited with teaching Wright scenic and costume design, as well as influencing the development of his aesthetic sense. From the Neighborhood Playhouse, Wright moved on to the Laboratory Theatre and subsequently worked as a stage manager for several Broadway plays. In 1927 he returned to the Maverick Theatre for the summer season and it was there that he met Mary Small Einstein, a sculpture student. In the fall of 1927, Wright and Einstein were married, an event that proved to be one of the seminal events in the designer's life.

Wright continued to work in theater for the next several years, both in New York and in Rochester, where he worked as a set designer for George Cukor; however, Mary Wright encouraged her husband to use the experience he had gained in theater design to create decorative objects, and when he returned to New York in 1929, he followed his wife's advice and embarked on a new career as a designer. His first efforts were life-size character masks of celebrities. Although not successful as a retail venture, the masks attracted attention, in part because of Wright's eclectic choice of materials (including spun glass, mirrored glass and even marshmallows, which were used to create a Herbert Hoover mask), and several were featured in the *New Review*. Wright's next products were miniature plaster animals modeled on large-scale papier-mâché animals he had created for the Maverick Festival. These animals were much more successful, leading Wright to experiment with producing them in other materials, such as hand-cut aluminum and chromium-plated sheet metal. Increased sales and positive critical response gave Wright the confidence and the security to expand into the design of functional objects, and his first pieces were informal serving accessories, including cocktail shakers, an ice bucket, and a spun pewter bar set. The latter were also well received and sold well, enabling the Wrights to move to a carriage house on East 35th Street in 1931.

The carriage house provided Wright with his first studio, within which he carried out not only design work but also manufacturing, production, shipping, and sales. Although not a designer, Mary Wright was an active partner in the business. As such, she was responsible for conceiving and developing several of the innovative business practices that were most important in contributing to Russel Wright's success: the use of manufacturing and sales techniques developed for mass production and the concept of designing, producing, advertising, and marketing his products as part of a desirable and attainable lifestyle for the twentieth-century American. Led by Mary Wright, the Russel Wright franchise was defined by the mass production of original designs, an ever increasing variety based on interchangeable components (shapes, colors, tones, sizes, specific pieces), the creation of distribution networks, marketing structures, and strategies encompassing artist, manufacturer, retailer and customer, and an advertising program appropriate to creating and meeting customer demands. Later, Mary Wright's interest in domestic efficiency helped to shape the couple's influential book, *Mary and Russel Wright's Guide to Easier Living* (1950).

Despite the success of his early metal objects, when Wright began to engage in manufacture and production on his own, he could not afford the specialized equipment necessary to produce the chromium-plated steel. This

led him to experiment with producing similar objects using another material: spun aluminum. Aluminum was economical and easier to work with; however, it also offered Wright the opportunity to experiment with the use of an industrial material for decorative objects. By treating the aluminum with an emery cloth, Wright achieved an appearance resembling pewter, which he considered a traditional American material. The discovery of this medium had a liberating influence on him. The ability to produce a wide variety of shapes with relative ease inspired him to create a whole line of "informal service accessories," including ice buckets, bun warmers, mugs, pitchers, vases, tureens, and many others. His pieces began to take on the distinctive organic forms and rounded shapes that became his trademark and they set an important precedent for the use of industrial materials. Wright's spun aluminum line marked him as the first designer to adapt a strictly utilitarian material for decorative table use.[29] During the 1930s, Wright continued to experiment with the use of organic forms, and in 1935 he introduced Oceana, a line of wooden (maple and cherry) serving pieces manufactured by Klise Woodenware Company, Grand Rapids. As its name implies, Oceana employed forms derived from marine life, including different types of shells, as well as by the serpentine qualities of moving water itself. The pieces were organic, sculptural, and machine made, illustrating Wright's early success in linking art and industrialism. They were also inexpensive, and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) featured the line on the cover of *The Bulletin* (January 1940) in an issue devoted to "Useful Objects Under Ten Dollars."

By the 1930s, Russel Wright also began to achieve critical recognition as an artist. Along with Donald Deskey, Paul Lobel and Walter von Nessen, Wright was one few Americans invited to exhibit at the *International Exhibition of Contemporary Industrial Art* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) in 1930. In 1932, Wright designed an all-aluminum breakfast room for a show at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where his work was exhibited along with some of the most influential industrial designers in America, including Norman Bel Geddes, Raymond Loewy, Henry Dreyfuss, Walter Dorwin Teague, and Donald Deskey. Wright was represented in two important shows in 1934: an exhibit at the Met on industrial and modern home furnishings, which also included work by Teague, Loewy, Deskey, Rohde, and Jensen, and a MoMA show called *Machine Art*, where he shared the display with Teague, Rohde and Jensen. He was among the designers included in a 1934 exhibit at Rockefeller Center called *Art in Industry*, along with Deskey, Dreyfuss, Loewy, Teague, Rohde, and Jensen. And in 1939, Wright designed two major exhibits for the New York World's Fair. One of them, the unusual Focal Foods Exhibit, was a surrealistic display of dioramas about food production and distribution that reflected Wright's preoccupation with forms found in nature.

Meanwhile, in 1934, Wright presented his first collection of furniture, a sixty-three piece set for the Heywood-Wakefield Company of Gardner, Massachusetts. This line, which was introduced at Bloomingdales, included one of Wright's most well-known (and still popular) inventions, the sectional sofa. Although the Heywood-Wakefield pieces were contemporary in appearance, with curved edges and simple pulls, they were still constructed using veneers, a more typical and expensive method of furniture manufacture in the period. However, Wright's marketing of the line was innovative in that the pieces were sold as open stock, and buyers were encouraged to assemble their own combinations of individual pieces. This emphasis on individuality depended on manufacturing a wide variety of interchangeable pieces and offering them at affordable prices, a marketing strategy that became a defining component of all of Russel Wright's product lines.

Wright's first major line of furniture, American Modern, designed in the mid-1930s for the Conant-Ball Company, also of Gardner, Massachusetts, represented an artistic and commercial breakthrough. The American Modern collection included more than fifty pieces. They were constructed of solid maple and available with either a dark or a light finish; the latter, dubbed "blond" by Mary Wright, was far more popular and became a signature element of Wright's furniture. While simple and streamlined, featuring clean lines and rounded

[29] Hennessey, *American Designer*, 24.

corners, the designs of American Modern furniture hardly embodied the same avant garde styling that distinguished European modernism. Instead, Wright focused on the abstraction of colonial era motifs, the use of native American hardwood, the elimination of excess ornament, and the appeal of economy (made possible by the less expensive manufacturing process for solid wood construction).[30] The line, among the earliest mass market American furnishings, was marketed through Macy's, where it was initially displayed as a nine-room modern maple house at Herald Square. Advertisements were aimed at the average homeowner, stressing the furniture's affordability and "native American" character. The line was extremely popular, making Wright's name common in thousands of American homes and facilitating its evolution as a brand. A buyer for Macy's called American Modern the "most important development in American furniture in the last few decades." [31] Even its name, "American Modern," reinforced the link between the consumer and an image of America in the modern age.[32]

The furniture line was followed up with the introduction of American Modern china. This line of ceramic dinnerware, designed in 1937, became Wright's best known and most successful products. The irregular shapes, wide array of unusual serving pieces, and odd muted colors had no equal in contemporary ceramics and Wright, who invested his own funds in producing the models and molds for the pieces, was unable to find a manufacturer until 1939, when Steubenville Pottery began to produce the line. American Modern china combined fluid, organic forms with soft colors and textured glazes. Although it had a distinctive, designer quality, it was promoted for casual use, multiple functions, and informal occasions. Wright intended his china to be practical as well as stylish and contemporary; thus, the delicately molded salad bowl was also shaped to contain the greens and the "rimless" plates could be stacked for efficient storage.[33] Color served several functions as well. The earthy palette, which included Coral, Seafoam Blue, Chartreuse Curry, Granite Gray, Bean Brown (some of the names given to some of the earliest colors), conveyed both a natural, untreated feeling and a modern, designer quality, while its subtle shading and complementary tones enhanced the ability to mix and match. American Modern could be purchased either in sets, such as basic service for four, six, or eight, or as open stock. As with Wright's furniture collections, the marketing of these pieces based on their uniqueness and variety encouraged the consumer to buy and assemble any assortment of pieces and colors based on individual taste and needs. The multitude of available shapes, colors, and glazes allowed for an almost infinite number of variations, and new pieces were constantly introduced. Their affordability, as well as the emphasis on individuality and choice inherent in the design itself, encouraged buyers to continue adding "the latest" colors and pieces to their sets.

American Modern was tremendously popular from the time it was introduced. Department stores occasionally reported being mobbed on the days new shipments arrived, and Steubenville Pottery expanded twice to meet the demand. It acquired a reputation as a statement of fashion and modernity, particularly among the young families who were beginning to populate the suburbs, and it became one of the best selling lines of tableware in history. More than eighty million pieces were sold in a twenty-year period (1939-1959) and the line was said to gross more than $150 million in sales. Because of his self-referential advertising strategy, enormous volume of sales, frequent media appearances, and newspaper articles by and about him, Russel Wright was one of the first American designers to become a household name.[34] As Russell Lynes recalled, "[Wright's] name in the 1930s and 40s was something of a household word to those of us who were then trying to establish households and

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[30] Lindsay Stamm Shapiro, "A Man and His Manners: Resetting the American Table," *Russel Wright: Creating American Lifestyle*, 32.
[31] O.L. Overby, quoted in Shapiro, 32.
[32] Lesley Jackson, *The New Look: Design in the Fifties* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 109.
[33] Shapiro, 33.
[34] "Russel Wright," lecture by William Hennessey, n.d.; Paul Warwick Thompson, forward to *Russell Wright: Creating American Lifestyle*, 6.

their trappings. We thought of Wright as 'our designer.'"[35] American Modern also attracted the attention and admiration of critics, winning the American Designers' Institute Award for 1941 for Best Ceramic Design of the Year. With its popularity, sales, awards, and countless imitations, American Modern "directly and indirectly…dominated American ceramics during the 1950s."[36]
In 1940, Wright attempted to expand the relationship between industrial designers, consumers, and the modern American home with the introduction of the American Way program. American Way was a cooperative venture that was intended to facilitate the mass-production of original designs for home furnishings and stimulate the sales of new American products. American Way merchandise, designed by American artists and sold at department stores at affordable prices, included a wide variety of products, both practical and decorative. Wright initially brought together sixty-five artists, craftspersons, and manufacturers, including such well-known designers as Henry Dreyfuss, Norman Bel Geddes, Eliel Saarinen, Grant Woods, and Gilbert Rohde, under a board of directors that included Edgar Kaufmann Jr., John W. Root, and Edward Durrell Stone. He also included his own products and traveled the country seeking out well-designed objects by lesser known designers. Much like his marketing strategy for American Modern china, Wright intended to develop a coordinated promotional campaign and to create a national distribution network. In addition to giving the artist a role in the production of home furnishings that could be offered to the middle class at affordable prices, Wright also had a nationalistic agenda, as he clearly intended the promotion to bolster American cultural confidence and promote a distinctly "American" style and way of life. A placard at the entry of the American Way promotion announced Wright's intent to "develop a more inherently American design expression [and] to relate design in home furnishings more directly to the American way of marketing and living."[37] The line was introduced at Macy's, where furniture, lamps, drapery, and art were displayed in coordinated room groupings. The same "mix and match" philosophy that Wright promoted in the use of his own products was encouraged in the choice of home furnishings. The name, "The American Way," once again suggested the connection between consumerism and the freedom of choice inherent in American citizenship. Wright also proselytized the American Way program in speeches and magazines, extolling the beauty and diversity of the American landscape and American inventions and condemning the deference shown to European art.[38]

The initiative won the approval of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (herself a promoter of American crafts), who personally officiated at the opening event. However, despite substantial advertising and press coverage, the American Way program was not a commercial success. Wright had difficulty ensuring quality control, and problems with coordinating deliveries from so many companies proved problematic, leading to delays and sparking discontent among consumers. The onset of World War II, with the ensuing shortages of materials, added additional difficulties. American Way proved a short-lived initiative and was discontinued in 1942.

Despite the disappointment of the American Way project, Russel Wright continued to produce designs for the American home for another two decades. In addition to major collections of furniture and china, by the mid-1940s, Wright had expanded the range of American Modern products to include linens, glassware, and flatware. He branched into commercial design as well, including china designed for hotels and restaurants. In 1946, he introduced Iroquois Casual China, a new domestic product, which was intended as an improvement and updating of American Modern. The new china included new colors and shapes while retaining the elements that contributed to the success of American Modern, such as the ability to mix and match; however, Iroquois was made with a special clay formula and fired at a high temperature in an attempt to increase its durability. It was promoted for its ability to go from stove to table and guaranteed against chipping and breaking for three

[35] Russell Lynes, "Russel Wright Revisited," *Architectural Digest*, October 1983, 58.
[36] Jackson, 109.
[37] quoted in Hennessey, *American Designer*, 46.
[38] Hennessey, *American Designer*, 47.

years, all of which suggested increased utility, efficiency, and economy. Sold as "Russel Wright's Casual China," the new line embraced the designer's name as an integral component of the marketing strategy. [39]

In 1949, Wright introduced his first collection of molded plastic dinnerware, Meladur, made of Melamine (Melmac), a thermo-plastic material developed by the American Cyanamid Company. He produced two additional plastic lines in the 1950s, Residential and Flair. In all three, Wright incorporated his trademark rounded forms and muted colors into products manufactured for durability and convenience. Wright's Melamine products introduced and popularized the use of plastics in domestic products. Residential received MoMA's Good Design Award in 1953 and 1954, and in 1957 it was touted as the "best-selling door-to-door tableware in America, with gross sales of $4 million."[40] As he had with his spun aluminum pieces twenty years earlier, Wright embraced the challenges and opportunities presented by new materials and brought his artistic sensibilities to the design of everyday household products. Although numerous manufacturers capitalized on the new market for plastic dinnerware, Wright's products were singular in their association with an important designer. A 1957 advertisement for Melmac in *Better Homes and Gardens* illustrated more than a dozen lines of plastic dinnerware, but only Residential had a designer's name.[41]

In 1950, Wright also introduced a new line of furniture, Easier Living, a fifty-piece collection produced by the Stratton Furniture Company of Hagerstown, Maryland. Easier Living pieces were made of solid sycamore with a natural finish. They resembled American Modern in their solid wood construction, clean lines, and unadorned forms; however, they were innovative in incorporating Wright's evolving ideas about domestic efficiency. Individual pieces were designed to accommodate multiple purposes: chairs had folding writing arms and magazine racks; tables had built in extensions and drop leaves; beds had headboards with storage space.

After World War II, Wright began to expand the range of his own enterprise, moving from the design of individual objects to the integration of those objects into domestic environments. In this, Wright was able to capitalize on his experience in set design and to draw upon the successful design and marketing ideas that he had already developed. The post-World War II era, with its surge in the number of new households, houses, and neighborhoods, engendered a demand for new ideas about how to furnish and live in them. Following the Depression and the war, consumers welcomed the opportunity to increase their standard of living once again, acquiring labor saving and life enhancing objects and pursuing additional leisure time activities, including more informal and family oriented social events. These social changes both encouraged consumption and offered Americans another chance to distance themselves from Europe and embrace a taste that was both modern and American.

In 1950 Russel and Mary Wright published the *Guide to Easier Living*, which has been described as a "manifesto on suburban domestic life."[42] The book reflected Russel Wright's belief that "peace of mind could be achieved by simplifying life and the easiest way to do this was by intimately understanding and interacting with one's surroundings."[43] As such, the guide was the Wrights' attempt to bring post-war Americans into a harmonious relationship with their new suburban homes. It was premised on the idea that post-war suburban living should be "easier," effortless, spontaneous, relaxed, practical, elegant, and free from drudgery. The guide

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[39] Shapiro, 167 n. 25.

[40] Charles L. Venable, et. al., *China and Glass in American, 1880-1980: From Tabletop to TV Tray* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 2000), in Shapiro, 56.
[41] Shapiro, 56.
[42] Albrecht and Schonfeld, 18.
[43] David Raizman, *History of Modern Design* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 2004), 146.

was presented as a manual – or a script – for achieving and embracing a modern lifestyle.[44] The Wrights brought to the task their own ideas about design, but they also drew upon the recommendations of home economists, who were calling for less formality in daily life (one such recommendation, for example, advocated serving simpler meals, with fewer courses), and the work of efficiency experts, such as Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, who had applied the principles of assembly line production to the home.[45] In approaching "home as a small industry," the Wrights proposed ideas about how to plan and design a home, how to keep it efficiently, and how to live in it and entertain in it easily. In eliminating all that was "unnecessary, unduly arduous, and time-consuming," their prescriptions were as simple as advising readers to eliminate "unnecessary steps and motions in your work" or as complex as suggesting menus, precise table settings, and the division of labor among family members and guests.[46] In that their recommendations encompassed broad social trends in sociology and demographics, planning and design, lifestyle and entertainment, even behavior and food preparation, the Wrights influenced the post-war home in an all-encompassing way that far surpassed many other contemporary architects and designers.[47] "So popular were Wright's designs in the 1950s…that to this day the sight of them evokes a vision of a tidy suburban household…."[48]

Interestingly, the Wrights developed some of these ideas not while living in suburbia but in a Park Avenue apartment, where they took up residence in 1942. Numerous articles documented the Wrights' decoration and use of the three-floor penthouse. A 1943 article in *Interiors* magazine noted that the new space blended home and work in a "simplified whole," and photos revealed the open, efficient floor plan (with zones for family work and entertainment), simple yet elegant decoration, and Wright-designed furniture.[49] A move to a townhouse on East 48th Street in 1946 gave the Wrights additional room in which to experiment, and the space was outfitted with built-in furniture and entertainment centers. Wright also developed a garden and installed a expansive glass wall to link the indoor and outdoor spaces and permit easy access between them. The open plans, flowing spaces, connections between indoor and outdoors, technological innovations, efficient plans, and labor-saving gadgets were offered as validation of the idea that Americans needed – deserved - to live in comfort and ease. [50] Later Wright incorporated and expanded upon many of these ideas in the design for his own home in Garrison.

By the 1950s Wright's reputation was well established and frequently acknowledged. In 1950-51 he was represented in the annual exhibits of the Society of Industrial Designers, and between 1950-55 his work was regularly included in Good Design exhibits organized by Edgar Kaufman Jr. for the Met. His designs were prominently featured in two period shows at the Alright-Knox Museum in Buffalo: *Good Design is Your Business* (1947) and *Twentieth Century Design U.S.A.* (1959). Wright (a founding member) was elected president of the American Society of Industrial Designers in 1952, and his accomplishments in combining art and industry for the middle-class domestic market were recognized by both designers and lay people in 1959, when a poll selected American Modern china as number twenty-two of the "100 Best Designed Products."[51]

Despite critical acclaim of designer and product, the Easier Living line was not the success that Wright had

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[44] Donald Albrecht, "From Hollywood to Walden Pond: Stage Sets For American Living," *Russel Wright: Creating American Lifestyle*, 18.

[45] Shapiro, 24.
[46] *Guide to Easier Living*, 125, quoted in Shapiro, 43.
[47] Albrecht and Schonfeld, 19.
[48] Meredith Mendelsohn, "Place of Great Spirit," *ART/new* 3, no. 9 (October 2004): 146.
[49] In Albrecht, 101.
[50] Albrecht, 83.
[51] *Fortune Magazine*, in Hennessey, American Designer, 65.

hoped for and the designer experienced a loss of confidence in his ability to capture the public mood. This, combined with Mary Wright's untimely death in 1952, hastened Wright's retreat from the public eye and the expansion of his activities into other areas. After closing his office in 1958, Wright went on to work with the United States State Department developing cottage industries in southeast Asia, advised Japan on improving native crafts for export, and worked as a consultant for New York State (at Bear Mt. State Park) and for the National Park Service. Wright was sought out by Stanley Cain, an under secretary of the interior, who visited Manitoga in 1967. Although Cain wanted to hire Wright to design a new park for the nation's capitol, the designer proposed an alternative plan, "Summer in the Parks," a program intended to develop neighborhood programs in existing parks. Wright's program, initiated in 1968, included trips, craft programs and concerts. It was immediately popular and a version of this program exists today.[52] During this time, which coincided with the development of Manitoga, Wright began to look more directly to nature for inspiration, designing ceramics that incorporated patterns for the first time. In White Clover, 1951, his first patterned dinnerware, Wright incised delicate foliate patterns directly into the glaze. Even the Melamine was decorated with natural ornament, such as the real Ming Lace Leaves embedded into plates for the Flair line in 1959.

Manitoga

Russel and Mary Wright began to look for land in the Hudson Valley in the late 1930s. Wright later recalled that the search for the perfect spot had taken three years of weekends.[53] In 1941, they purchased eighty acres on the east side of the Hudson River near the hamlet of Garrison, New York. The steeply sloping site was located on South Mountain, which rose to an elevation of 550 feet. The property had once been logged and occupied by a quarry, which had long been abandoned. When the Wrights purchased it, the site was overgrown, scarred by quarry pits, and generally unappealing. Wright's design and manipulation of the site began almost immediately and significantly before construction of the house. He later explained that he and his wife had begun the process by compiling a list of all their wishes, including such things as a place to swim (for her) and a view of the river (for him). A keen observer of nature, Wright studied the land and its character intensively: he climbed rocks to discover the most dramatic views, identified the water sources, familiarized himself with the topography, contemplated the light, observed the native vegetation, and marked the seasonal variations. Wright's approach to landscape design was based on the delicate manipulation of natural elements over many years. He approached the forest as a sculptor, slowly revealing its character and bringing out its most subtle and beautiful features. Although in some places he undertook significant changes, such as clearing, blasting, and earthmoving, in others his actions were as simple as pruning a single limb to reveal a view. Wright cast the entire landscape design into an overall frame provided by the canopy of eastern hemlocks, whose light branches and lacey leaves created a dappled pattern of filtered sunlight overlaying the ground level vegetation. The hemlocks were also important in controlling the light needed by the plants in the understory or those that carpeted the landscape floor.

The fern meadow exemplifies Wright's restrained exploitation of nature, as he created it by removing all of the vegetation that might otherwise keep the ferns from multiplying or obscure the view of them. Other focal points along the paths, created in similar ways, include a carpet of violets, various water features (brooks and waterfalls) that were crossed or viewed, and rock outcroppings grouped for visual interest of arranged to frame specific views, including several of the Hudson River. Interestingly, many of the large estate houses in the Hudson Highlands were constructed to take advantage of the extensive river views made possible by the region's steep topography. While the river dominates the views from many of these retreats, at Manitoga it is only one element of a much more complex visual experience.

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[52] Hennessy, 82.
[53] Russel Wright, "Lecture Notes, Slide Presentation," April 1961.

The design was conceived in relation to the steep topography of the site and its most conspicuous feature, the abandoned stone quarry, within which Wright positioned the largest and most substantial built feature, the house and studio, known collectively as Dragon Rock. Among his most substantial and obvious changes was re-routing a major stream into the quarry pit to create a thirty-foot waterfall, while damming its other end to create a pond. The path of the waterfall was carefully crafted by creating ledges and placing boulders in strategic locations to control the speed and direction (perhaps even the sound) of the flow. The pond, waterfall, exposed bedrock of the pit, and enclosing vegetation became the major visual components of the view from the house, which was set into the northwest side of the quarry. Likewise, various views of the house are the dominant elements of the view from the path that encircles the top of the quarry (Upper Quarry Path). This is the shortest and most intimate of the site's many designed walks, and it is also the most highly embellished, with banks of ferns, lilies, moss, and laurel planted or encouraged to spread around the rim and along the sloping walls of the quarry to provide a lush and sensual experience. Specific elements were grouped or arranged to be enjoyed individually and in specific lights, times of day, and seasons. Here, as throughout the property, Wright used the concept of "garden rooms" to denote small natural alcoves in which he used vegetation to create a specific and distinctive character. For example, the play of light on its thick green carpet helps to convey the mood of the "moss room," which extends along a long and narrow space on the outer edge of the quarry wall. In the "secret room," Wright took advantage of an isolated hollow in the side of the quarry opposite the house and below the main path. Wright intended the secret room to be a private retreat, describing the partially cleared space as "a delightful place to sit in or picnic in alone or with one or two friends."[54] He established a path near the base of the quarry between his studio and the secret room; however, Wright ensured his privacy by disguising the approach so that only he could find it. Although garden rooms are most fully developed near the house, others occur throughout the site. They include a Quadruple Oak Room, where "two huge multi-stemmed oaks face each other in an open bowl," the Four Corners, a natural clearing where all of the paths come together, and Tigiana, where a stream descends "in a series of pools and waterfalls, with little islands formed where the stream braids."[55]

Other than the views from the house, the rest of the landscape was experienced primarily from the series of walks that Wright created. The trails follow generally circular paths at expanding distances from the quarry, and the landscape becomes less manipulated toward the outer edges of the property. Despite their naturalistic appearance, every detail of these paths was carefully planned so that the visitor would experience a series of directed sequences as he/she progressed through what Wright called a "forest garden." Each walk had a name that reflected its particular character or the time, place, or season for which it was created. Names such as Autumn Path, Winter Path, Morning Path, White Pine Path, and Fern Meadow Path associated the path with the intended experience. The Morning Path travels east to take advantage of the rising sun, while views on the Autumn Path are enhanced by "the medium of color" during the fall months. White Pine Path led to an enormous, ancient white pine tree (unfortunately lost to a hurricane after Wright's death), while Lost Pond Path approaches a small pond near the outer extent of the property. The latter trail is one of the site's steeper and most rugged climbs and forms the approach to what Wright described as a "lost, secret place." Wright emphasized the remoteness and isolation of the pond by not clearing the trail the entire distance to its site. Instead, the formal trial ends approximately 300 yards before the pond.[56] The trek through uncultivated territory also heightened the hiker's sense of surprise when he/she emerged at the water's edge. Further, Wright also significantly expanded the range of experiences within the landscape by laying out trails that could serve multiple purposes. For example, the Autumn Path and the Sunset Path follow the same trail but provide

[54] Russel Wright, quoted in *Good Design is for Everyone*, 124
[55] Carol Franklin, quoted in item 7, National Register Nomination Form for Manitoga, 1996.
[56] Russel Wright, *A Garden of Woodland Paths*. [originally published in *House and Garden*, December 1970] Revised version. Garrison, NY: Furthermore Press, 1996, 146.

different experiences depending on the season or the time of day the visitor follows them. Likewise the Winter Path and Morning Path cover the same territory, but the experience is different depending on whether one navigates it forward or backward. And White Pine Path was alternately known as the Fern Meadow Path because the walk to the white pine passed through a damp and moderately sloped area extensively populated with a wide variety of ferns.

In general, Wright focused on materials and features that were native to the site. He used the numerous hemlocks, large boulders and small watercourses that dominate the site for structure, while making extensive use of moss, ferns, laurel, and native wildflowers for embellishment. Wright's design for Manitoga is especially tactile: there are things to touch, to hear, to see and to smell, and there are places in which the volume of the space is an important part of the design. As with his designs for furnishings, Wright intended these elements to work together to create specific settings or scenes.

Wright laid out the forest garden for himself and his guests. He conceived the design as a series of scenes and, as with a play, there were specific directions for the enjoyment of each. In one description, Wright explained that "there will be a place in the brook where they will be asked to take off their shoes and wade in the water and other places where they will be asked to walk in silence for ten minutes, sitting down later to exchange their reactions."[57] He posted maps in the foyer of the house for the convenience of visitors, who could enjoy the sequences as Wright intended them or discover alternate experiences by combining parts of different paths, taking different directions or following designated routes at other times of the day or in different seasons. Wright himself took advantage of the opportunity to "mix and match" by constantly refining the landscape, creating new focal points and renaming paths. Although created for personal use, the garden was clearly intended to be shared with the public, as Wright allowed visitors to Manitoga even before his death.

House and Studio[58]

Russel and Mary Wright spent their time at Manitoga in a small, non-descript cabin that he described as almost completely enclosed by dense vegetation.[59] While he was developing and executing the landscape design, Wright also began planning for the house. Although Mary Wright was involved in the early planning for the house, construction did not begin until the late 1950s, several years after her death. Wright devoted a considerable amount of time to choosing a building location and planning the interrelationship between house and site. He chose a spot on the northwest side of the quarry, setting the building within the quarry wall rather than atop it. He then staked out the different room dimensions on the rocky ledges and spent time in the proposed room sites at different times of day and night so that he could anticipate how light and air would contribute to the experience of using the room. The form and siting of the building reflect his desire to experience nature on an intimate level. For example, he set one wall of his own studio wing so low into the ground that his eye-level window gave him what he described as a "worm's eye view" of the environment immediately outside it, and he planted the roofs of both house and studio with sedum, literally setting the house into the soil. Wright's numerous sketches were used as the basis of the construction drawings, which were prepared by the architectural firm of David Leavitt and Associates. Drawings for the interior of the house were prepared by Wright's own staff under his careful supervision. Wright estimated that he spent 4,600 hours planning the house, while his office devoted 3,500 hours to research and drawing, and the architects spent 1,500 hours on drafting.[60] He oversaw every aspect of the construction himself and provided extensive written

[57] Russel Wright, quoted in Cochrane, 46.
[58] Portions of this section were abstracted from the National Register Nomination Form for Manitoga, 1996.
[59] Wright described the accommodations as "shacks." One of them survives in greatly altered form on the small parcel that Wright sold before he constructed the residence and studio and is excluded from the nomination. The other burned prior to 1961.
[60] Russel Wright, "Building a Dream House – The Story of Dragon Rock." [c1960]

directions to the workers.[61] Site preparation was extremely difficult, requiring blasting and moving many boulders, some of which weighed more than two tons.

The long, rectangular building incorporated portions of the granite into the foundation, and the various rooms and functional areas ranged over multiple levels of the rocky cliff so that the building almost seems to extend from the quarry itself. In addition to granite, the principal building materials are the white oak frame, wooden siding used on the rear (entrance) elevation, and the glass used to enclose much of the building on the elevations that face the quarry. Wright described the masonry of the house as experimental, explaining that the "beauty of the natural uncut and aged stone of the cliffs" should dictate the pattern, rather than the forms of traditional cut stones. As he described it, he "looked at my mountainside and saw that the mountain was covered with thousands of stones and boulders which had rolled together forming sculptural masses that supported themselves" and adapted this as the pattern for the exterior masonry.[62] He also employed this model in the design of the massive living room fireplace, which was constructed to "reproduce the effects of stone piled at random at the bottom of a cliff."[63] A similar wall in his daughter's bathroom incorporated plumbing so that the water trickled through the stones and into the tub in the manner of a waterfall.

The exposed wooden framing also suggests an expansion of the natural character of the site, most dramatically in the main living area, where a massive stripped cedar log provides the principal vertical support for a twenty-eight-foot long oak beam, the building's major horizontal framing element. The extensive use of glass creates a sense of transparency, both as the building appears from the quarry and as its occupants view the natural setting from inside. The glass also allows for permeable boundaries between exterior and interior, as most of the rooms have operable doors that provide easy transitions between indoors and out. The informal division between exterior and interior is emphasized by the use of the same paving stones for the floors in the main living and dining areas and for the terraces that serve as outdoor expansions of these spaces, as well as by the use of an outdoor fireplace constructed of native stone boulders on the terrace outside of his daughter's bedroom.

The layout of the house was designed to accommodate the specific needs of Wright and his family, which, by the time construction was completed, consisted of Wright, his young daughter, and his daughter's governess. He divided the building into three separate spheres. The two private areas, a work-living wing for himself and a bedroom wing for his daughter and her governess, were located at each end of the house; between them was a central family or communal space. The latter was essentially a single large, open volume, but Wright accommodated a number of different functions within it by dividing it into multiple levels. Thus, occupants of the entry, den, living, dining, kitchen, and outdoor terrace areas could pursue separate activities while enjoying the open, airy interior, with its high ceiling, extensive views, oversized boulder fireplace and massive central concrete and boulder stairway.

More than two decades earlier, Frank Lloyd Wright (FLW) had addressed the issue of how the twentieth-century American family should live in his conceptual plan for a decentralized city (Broadacre City) and the design of the Usonian House (1936). Intended as the "prototypical" American middle-class family home, the Usonian house introduced some of the design ideas that Russel Wright used for Dragon Rock. The long, low form, open floor plan, zoned functional spaces, central place of the kitchen and hearth in home life and building design, free flow between indoor and outdoor space, economical use of built-ins, emphasis on fitting buildings

[61] See Russel Wright, "A Letter from Russel Wright to All Those Working on the House." [c1957]
[62] Wright, "Lecture Notes."
[63] Wright, unidentified clipping, Manitoga archives

into their sites, and use of native materials are all features that define the Usonian House. In the Broadacre City plan, FLW proposed a radical rearrangement of the city, siting single-family Usonian houses on choice one-acre lots in the center, a space more conventionally reserved for public/commercial/religious buildings. However, if Broadacre City was intended to reposition "the individual" in the center of society, Russel Wright saw himself as that individual, and he designed Dragon Rock not as a prototype but for a specific family. As such, Dragon Rock is an intensely personal and subjective design that, in its owner's estimation, could shelter no one else. In a sense, Russel Wright developed FLW's ideas to their fullest for a society of one family – his own.

But if the house was "organic" in its siting, "naturalistic" in incorporating the forms and materials of its immediate environment, and personal in being precisely built to meet the needs of Wright's family, it was also an object of industrial design in which the artist used a wide array of both natural and manufactured materials to fashion a modern home that expressed his conception of how a family should live in the twentieth century. The building followed Wright's prescripts for efficiency and was equipped with a full range of contemporary labor saving appliances, such as a dishwasher and a washer-dryer, as well as furniture and storage spaces cleverly designed for maximum efficiency and flexibility. The use of built-ins was extensive and included not only bookcases and closets but sofas, beds and dressers, a dumbwaiter and an ironing board, and a bank of kitchen cabinets that served as a room divider or could be raised up into the wall to create an open connection between kitchen and dining areas. Wright combined a diverse catalogue of natural and modern manufactured materials for finishes and decorative embellishment, and the range of materials and effects, as well as the lavish use of color created a dramatic interior environment that both complemented and rivaled the natural landscape. As he explained to workers, "large expanses of machine-made materials, such as vinyl, fiberglass, etc. will dramatically set off pieces of nature that will be brought in as contrast to be visually shocking." [64] The design evolved gradually, as Wright experimented with a wide range of materials and textures, among them "lumber…sanded and finished, weathered, roughly-cut…or just with bark removed."[65] He also experimented with leather, fur, stone, and birch-bark and Formica.

Natural features incorporated into the design included tree branches used for newel posts and towel racks and doorknobs of solid wood or stone. He embellished walls by embedding springs and clusters of pine needles into the wet plaster for an effect somewhat akin to the incised foliate decoration he was experimenting with in his dinnerware of the 1950s. He also combined botanical materials and plastic to make what he called lamentation, translucent walls embedded with pressings of local plants and butterflies. These were sometimes lit from behind and were often reversed or replaced seasonally. Among his most unusual panels was one lit from behind and constructed with two sheets of colored plastic; between them Wright placed the ends of toilet paper or paper towels rolls to create an organic pattern. He also used fabrics such as burlap, bamboo, and cloth to cover walls and ceilings and birch bark to cover a door.

Like the forest garden, Manitoga was intended to provide different experiences in different seasons. This was accomplished mainly by a complete change in palette. In summer, cool blues and whites were used, while the winter house was full of warm colors, such as red and orange. With the change of seasons, curtains and drapes, slip covers and wall panels were replaced or reversed and new fixtures and artwork were installed. Mood was also created or enhanced by the placement of decorative objects of his own design and especially by his own china, which was the centerpiece of every meal.

Integrity

[64] Wright, "Letter" quoted in Albrecht, 116-118.
[65] Wright, "Lecture Notes," April 1961.

Manitoga retains an exceptional level of integrity. The house is virtually unchanged since Wright's death; the floor plan, functional divisions, materials, and finishes all remain as Wright left them. Although some of the original furniture has been removed, many original pieces remain. In addition, the owner (Manitoga, Inc., the Russel Wright Design Center) has been actively working to replace the missing pieces, either by locating and returning the originals or by substituting identical or similar period pieces designed by Wright. The major threat to the house has been deterioration. Over the last few years, the Russel Wright Design Center has been engaged in significant refurbishing at Manitoga and recently completed its first project, restoration of Russel Wright's studio and bedroom wing. All structural changes were made in accordance with Wright's original design, and substantial photographic evidence was used to replace and/or restore interior finishes accurately. The master plan for the site includes a future project to restore Ann Wright's bedroom wing.

The integrity of Wright's landscape design is also high. The overall plan and structure survive, as does most of the circulation system (given that Wright himself continually changed and redesigned the paths), and many of the smaller design components (water crossings, boulder grouping, views) either survive or are restorable (clearing overgrown views, for example). The division into "garden rooms" is extremely intact and most or all of those identified and described by Wright survive and can be discerned, even where elements have been lost (trees felled, vegetation overgrown or lost). All landscapes change over time; however, the evolving nature of plant life has not compromised the overall structure or significantly changed the overall effect, about which extensive information has been preserved in the form of Wright's detailed descriptions. The most significant alteration to the landscape is the loss of many original hemlock trees to disease, changing intended effects of light and shadow and affecting the growth patterns of ground level vegetation. A hemlock study has recently been completed, and the Russel Wright Design Center intends to replace missing hemlocks as soon as a landscape restoration policy has been finalized. Despite the loss of some original hemlocks, Wright's design is so rich and textural that its character is clearly evident even in places where the hemlocks are now sparse. As a whole, the Manitoga landscape survives with an exceptional level of integrity and continues to present visitors with opportunities to enjoy the experiences that Wright planned for himself, his family, and his guests.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_x Previously Listed in the National Register.
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_x State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency
__ Federal Agency
__ Local Government
__ University
__ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 75

UTM References:

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	18	581194	4577866
2.	18	581199	4577828
3.	18	581146	4577765
4.	18	588213	4577499
5.	18	588097	4577316
6.	18	587553	4577431
7.	18	587585	4577600
8.	18	587498	4577620
9.	18	587526	4577726
10.	18	587477	4577735
11.	18	587505	4577815
12.	18	587604	45777852
13.	18	587615	4577827
14.	18	587590	4577799
15.	18	587648	4577785
16.	18	587635	4577829
17.	18	587624	4577850

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification: The boundary has been drawn to include the entire property owned and developed by Russel Wright during the period of significance with the exception of one parcel that was sold during Wright's lifetime and redeveloped. With the exception of this parcel, the entire original estate retains its integrity and significance.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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Date: July 2005

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY
September 1, 2005