

Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination

Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office, City Hall, 3rd Floor
808 W. Spokane Falls Boulevard, Spokane, WA 99201

1. HISTORIC NAME

Historic Name **KIRK THOMPSON HOUSE**
Common Name

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 1430 East Overbluff Road
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99203
Parcel Number 35283.0069

3. CLASSIFICATION

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both		<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> residential
Site	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes, restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes, unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> moved		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

Name Charles G. & Katherine Bruya Reed
Street & Number 1430 E. Overbluff Road
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99203
Telephone Number/E-mail 509-710-3267, creed@dermsos.com

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Courthouse, Registry of Deeds Spokane County Courthouse
Street Number 1116 West Broadway
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99201
County Spokane

6. REPRESENTATION OF EXISTING SURVEYS

Title City of Spokane Historic Landmarks Survey
Date Federal ___ State ___ County ___ Local
Location of Survey Records Spokane Historic Preservation Office

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7. DESCRIPTION

(continuation sheets attached)

Architectural Classification

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check One

unaltered

altered

Check One

original site

moved & date

8. SPOKANE REGISTER CATEGORIES & STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

(continuation sheets attached)

Applicable Spokane Register of Historic Places Categories: Mark "x" on one or more for the categories that qualify the property for the Spokane Register listing:

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Spokane history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory history.

E Property represents the culture and heritage of the city of Spokane in ways not adequately addressed in the other criteria, as in its visual prominence, reference to intangible heritage, or any range of cultural practices.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bibliography is found on one or more continuation sheets.

10. DIGITAL PHOTOS, MAPS, SITE PLANS, ARTICLES, ETC.

Items are found on one or more continuation sheets.

11. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property

1 acre.

Verbal Boundary Description

Section 28, Township 25 North, Range 43 East
Willamette Meridian, Portion NW1/4 SW1/4,
Spokane County.

Verbal Boundary Justification

Nominated property includes entire parcel and
urban legal description.

12. FORM PREPARED BY

Name and Title

Linda Yeomans, Consultant

Organization

Historic Preservation Planning & Design

Street, City, State, Zip Code

501 West 27th Avenue, Spokane, WA 99203

Telephone Number

509-456-3828

Email Address

lindayeomans@comcast.net

Date Final Nomination Heard

June 17, 2020

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13. SIGNATURE(S) OF OWNER(S)

14. FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Date nomination application filed: _____

Date of Landmarks Commission Hearing: _____

Landmarks Commission decision: _____

Date of City Council/Board of County Commissioners' hearing: _____

City Council/Board of County Commissioners' decision: _____

I hereby certify that this property has been listed in the Spokane Register of Historic Places based upon the action of either the City Council or the Board of County Commissioners as set forth above.

Megan Duvall
City/County Historic Preservation Officer
City/County Historic Preservation Office
Third Floor—City Hall
808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.
Spokane, WA 99201

Date

Attest:

Approved as to form:

City Clerk

Assistant City Attorney

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2020 Thompson House, North Facade

SECTION 7: DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

Built in 1936 and located in an architecturally prominent Rockwood-area neighborhood on Spokane, Washington’s South Hill, the Kirk Thompson House is a fine example of the Art Moderne style. Although the Thompson House is not included within the boundaries of the Rockwood National Register Historic District it is located on East Overbluff Road, one block east of the historic district in the greater Rockwood neighborhood. The house is a horizontally sprawling home custom-built on more than one acre of land surrounded by natural woodlands.¹ The asymmetrical home has one-and-one-half stories and is made of steel-reinforced concrete composed of a series of stacked angular boxes. The home’s exterior walls prominently gleam with a skin of smooth white-painted concrete, a popular design element of the Art Moderne style. The house has a flat roof with metal coping, and horizontal multi-paned windows arranged in ribbons and bands that emphasize a mix of curved corners and flat planar wall surfaces. The exterior north facade of the home is articulated with a semi-circular round bay and a curved band of windows located next to the front entrance—both covered by a one-story projecting round-curved flat front porch canopy. The interior of the house has an open, spacious interior with nine-foot-high ceilings, unstained wide-plank wood floors, white walls and ceilings, and vertical rounded corners at partition walls. Although it underwent a remodel in 2018-2020 (see pages 9 and 10 “Modifications”), the Thompson House retains architectural integrity in original location, design, materials, workmanship, association, and is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places.

CURRENT APPEARANCE & CONDITION

Site

The Thompson House is located on roughly 1.3 acres of land at the eastern terminus of Overbluff Road as it intersects South Perry Street. The property’s current tax parcel number assigned by the Spokane County Assessor is 35283.0069. The lot is nearly flat

¹ First American Heritage Title Insurance Company.

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with a slight north-facing slope. It is irregularly shaped, and is approximately 247 feet wide from east to west, and 200 feet deep from north to south.² The house is built in the center of the property and faces north. A black-topped driveway leads southeast to the home from a dogleg-shaped northwest corner of the property at East Overbluff Road. The Thompson House is surrounded by thick stands of deciduous and evergreen trees and expansive barked grounds. Built in 2019, a guest house (approximately 35 feet wide and 30 feet deep) is located east of the Thompson House and faces west. Overbluff Road extends west from the Thompson House property and is lined with architecturally prominent residential homes to South Arthur Street, which is the eastern border of the Rockwood National Register Historic District.

House Exterior in 2020

The Thompson House is roughly 135 feet wide and 30 feet deep. Spokane County Assessor records indicate the home has 3,251 square feet on the first floor, and 988 square feet on the second floor.³ The home's design features a series of stacked angular boxes that are contrasted by rounded walls and corners at the first floor. The one-and-one-half-story house has a flat roof covered with vinyl membrane and is outlined with metal coping. Exterior walls are made of smooth concrete over steel-reinforced concrete and extend down to grade. A small crawl space exists unfinished under the house. All windows and exterior doors at the house are located on the first and second floors and are multi-paned, metal-clad wood units that replaced original 1936 windows in a 2018-2020 remodel.

The north façade of the house is distinguished with a focal point center front entrance and a projecting semi-circular windowed bay next east of the front entrance door. A flat round-curved canopy protects and covers both the front entrance and the semi-circular bay. Two-story angular boxy massing is stepped back from the north façade and west face of the house, and extends east of the front door and semi-circular bay to the south face of the house. The second floor was expanded to both the east and south, and the vent shaft was repositioned.

With a one-story flat roof, the house extends west from the home's center to both northwest and southwest round semi-circular corners each wrapped by a band of multi-paned windows. Deeply lined horizontal grooves are located at cornice level between the windows and the flat roof, and have a streamlined effect as they continue around the home's west face from the north facade.

The south rear face of the house is irregular with a series of one-story projecting box bays west of center, and a series of two-story stacked angular boxes that rise from the first floor to the second floor east of center. Like the first floor, the roof of the second floor is flat. The horizontal grooved cornice lines at from the north and west façades continue across the south and east faces of the house to wrap the house in streamlined horizontal grooves, a prominent architectural element of the Art Moderne style. Windows and

² Spokane County Assessor and First American Title Insurance Company.

³ Ibid.

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doors on all faces of the house match, and feature horizontal multi-paned, metal-clad wood-sash units all installed during the remodel.



2020 photo of the west face with curvilinear corners on the Thompson House



2020 photo of the southeast corner of the Thompson House

The east face of the house is dominated by a one-story, flat-roofed, east-projecting box that contains a large parking area with two side-by-side double-car garages. The garage addition was built during the 2018-2020 remodel (see “Modifications, pages 9 and 10). Overhead garage doors with horizontal rows of frosted obscure glass windows open from the garage’s north façade.

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***2020 photo of the Thompson House and new attached garage addition.
The garage is attached to the east façade of the house, and faces north.
It is setback from the house and is difficult to see from the dogleg-shaped northwest
driveway corner that intersects with the public right-of-way
at Overbluff Road—see the plat map on page 20.***

House Interior in 2020

The interior of the Thompson House was remodeled in 2018-2020. Interior features of the house in 2020 include an open floor plan with a center front entrance, a center hallway that runs east to west, and a central living room with a large multi-pane window that looks south over the backyard. The hall leads west to an office, a bedroom and a walk-in closet on the north wall, and two bathrooms on the south wall. A master bedroom is located at the west end of the hallway.

From the living room, the hall leads east to a marble-faced fireplace built in the center of the house on a short wall at the east end of the living room. The hall continues east to a dining room to the north with a rounded wall and a ribbon of multi-paned aluminum-clad sash windows. The hall continues east to an interior staircase that winds north and up to the second floor with a bathroom and two bedrooms. At the first floor, the hall leads to a large kitchen on the east side of the fireplace. A breakfast room is located on the south wall in the kitchen with a door that opens to a paved patio. The kitchen is appointed with built-in cupboards and cabinets, built-in appliances, and a large center island with a marble counter. The hall leads east to a family room on the north wall, a laundry room on the east wall, and two one-story side-by-side attached garages at the northeast corner of the house.

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2020 photo looking east at the living room.



2020 photo of dining room in semi-circular bay at the home's north front façade.

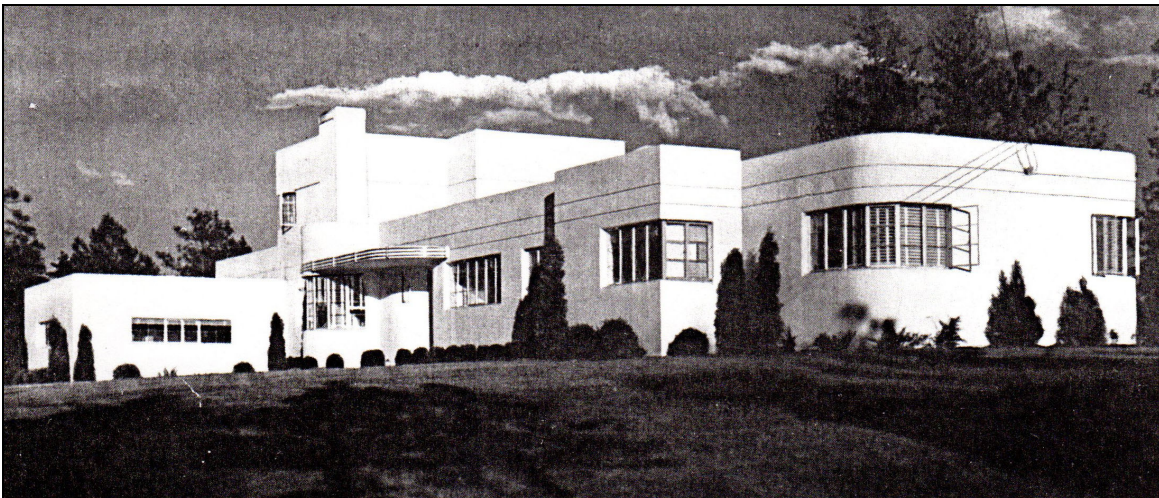
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2020 photo kitchen, looking south.

ORIGINAL DESIGN & SUBSEQUENT MODIFICATIONS

Constructed in 1936, the north façade of the Thompson House is featured below in a 1936 photo taken just after it was built.



1936 photo of the Thompson House, north façade and west face

An extensive remodel of the house was undertaken in 2018-2020. As pictured in the above-referenced 1936 photograph, a chimney at the second floor is visible above the round, semi-circular projecting bay in the center of the home's first-floor north façade.

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The chimney and its ventilation shaft were relocated and re-built on the exposed west face of the two-story angular box in the center of the house. The home's original windows were replaced with horizontal multi-pane metal-clad wood units. Interior partition walls were refinished with round curved vertical corners. Interior walls in the house were repaired and repainted with white paint. The floor was uncovered and refinished with unstained wide-plank wood floors. The large south-facing fixed-sash window in the living room was enlarged with a new fixed-sash window of horizontal multi-paned lights. A free-standing fireplace was built facing west from floor to ceiling at the east end of the open living room with a firebox and marble surround. The east side of the fireplace is finished as part of the kitchen. The original kitchen was remodeled with built in casework, sink, and appliances. A large island is located in the center of the kitchen and is finished with a marble surface that matches the marble fireplace surround. The original staircase on the north wall was replaced with a new staircase that turns and rises to the second floor. A family room was refinished in the original one-story garage at the northwest corner of the house. A large garage was built onto the exterior east wall of the family room. The master bedroom at the west end of the house was enlarged when an original interior wall that divided the room was removed. All four bathrooms in the house were remodeled with new fixtures, mirrors, and floor coverings. The library adjacent west to the front door of the house was remodeled when the library's interior hallway partition wall was removed and rebuilt as a window wall with fixed-sash multi-paned lights. Although the remodel was extensive, the Thompson House retains good to high integrity as an excellent example of an Art Moderne residence with original location, design, materials, workmanship and association.

SECTION 8: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

<i>Areas of Significance</i>	<i>C - Architecture</i>
<i>Period of Significance</i>	<i>1936</i>
<i>Built Date</i>	<i>1936</i>
<i>Architect</i>	<i>Gustav Albin Pehrson</i>

Summary Statement

The Kirk Thompson House is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places for its architectural significance as a prominent example of the Art Moderne style. The property's period of significance is identified as the year it was built in 1936. The home received accolades as an "ultra" of "modernistic design" and as one of the "finest homes in Spokane."⁴ It was acclaimed as the work of master Spokane architect G.A. Pehrson, a prominent architect and engineer responsible for hundreds of commercial and residential designs throughout Spokane and the Inland Empire for more than 55 years. He and homeowner Kirk Thompson garnered honors when a photograph of the Thompson House was pictured on the February 5, 1938 cover of *The Saturday Evening Post Magazine*. With an extensive national and international readership, hundreds and thousands of people were exposed to the new modernistic Art Moderne style of the Thompson House, which included personal ideas and "lines suggested by Mr. Thompson."⁵

HISTORIC CONTEXT

From a small settlement of 500 people in 1881, to almost 37,000 in 1900, and to over 100,000 in 1910, Spokane's evolution as a city was quick. In 1881, the first railroads were laid through the city. Six more national rail lines eventually merged in Spokane and investors laid branch lines in every direction to develop the region's mining, timber and agricultural resources. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Spokane was basking in its role as the gateway between the Midwest and the Pacific coast, and the center of the Spokane region's Inland Empire's commerce and culture. In an era of unrestrained boosterism, Spokane's businessmen did their best to promote the area, and Spokane in turn attracted attention for its unlimited opportunities. Spokane was lavishly praised for its natural beauty and livability.⁶

In 1903, mining railroad developer Jay P. Graves formed the Spokane-Washington Improvement Company with associates Aaron Kuhn of the Traders National Bank, D.T. Ham of the Palouse Land Company, and Fred B. Grinnell, real estate operator. Promising to make improvements and take full advantage of the land he bought east of Manito Park and Grand Boulevard, Fred Grinnell and his brother, Robert Grinnell, developed the acreage as the Manito Park Addition. The area was improved with curvilinear streets and over 300 architecturally prominent homes. By 1998, the residential neighborhood was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the

⁴ *Spokesman-Review*, December 1936, and *Spokesman-Review*, 1938.

⁵ *Spokesman-Review*, 1938, and the *Spokesman-Review*, 1944.

⁶ Yeomans, Linda. *The Rockwood Historic District Historic Resources Inventory*. Spokane, 1997.

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Rockwood National Register Historic District. The historic district's boundaries were determined by the Olmsted Brothers, owners of the nationally famous firm known as the Olmsted Brother's Landscape Architectural Company. Recognizing the neighborhood's hilly, rocky topography and natural irregular boundaries, the Olmsted firm created a footprint that comprised the Rockwood neighborhood. The area was bounded by East 11th Avenue south and uphill to East 29th Avenue, and from South Hatch Street east to South Arthur Street.

From the intersection of Arthur Street and Overbluff Road at the eastern edge of the Rockwood National Register District, the topography follows a natural rise uphill east along Overbluff Road to its terminus at Perry Street. Although the area is land-locked by a high bluff to the north and by Rockwood Boulevard to the south, the land is prominently adjacent to the Rockwood neighborhood and offers superb panoramic views of Spokane. Containing only three city blocks, the area is bounded by East 19th and 20th Avenues to the north (just below the bluff), and East Overbluff Road along the bluff's edge, sometimes called a "shelf".

Platted in 1910, the small plateau on the "Overbluff Road Shelf" is located 1.5 miles southeast and uphill from Spokane's downtown central business district, and was called the Rockwood Terrace Addition. Robert Grinnell proved his prowess as an eager and smart businessman and real estate operator. He developed and promoted the Rockwood Terrace Addition through his firm known as Robert W. Grinnell & Company. A positive believer in advertising, Grinnell placed numerous advertisements in Spokane newspapers, and printed large 18-inch by 24-inch advertisement posters, which were distributed throughout Spokane and the surrounding region. An advertisement in the May 16, 1926 edition of the *Spokesman-Review* filled a half-page with a map and bird's eye view of the Rockwood Terrace Addition. Headlines read, "Rockwood Terrace—One of Spokane's Most Exclusive Residence Districts" with "Jewel-Like Settings on the South Hill Bluff."⁷ The poster claimed that "Rockwood Terrace" was the last of the improved South Hill Bluff sites.⁸

In 1936, two large tracts of land at the east end of the Rockwood Terrace Addition were graded and logged so two homes could be built. One house was built for Kirk Thompson and the other house was built for the Marischal family. Overbluff Road was extended east to the private driveways of the Thompson and Marischal properties. During the 1920s-1960s a cul-du-sac called Park Lane was developed adjacent north of the Thompson and Marischal properties, and adjacent east and southeast of the Perry Street Stairs. Large architecturally prominent homes were built in 1927, 1928, 1930, 1932, 1951, 1954, and 1965 around Park Lane. The properties are assessed and valued in 2020 by the Spokane County Assessor between \$400,000 to \$1 million-plus.

⁷ R. W. Grinnell & Company Advertisement and Map. *Spokesman-Review*, 16 May 1926, Part 1, p. 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*

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The Thompson House

Kirk Thompson and his bride Miss Eckford Cameron, both residents of Gresham, Oregon, secretly married on April 11, 1918 while they attended the Oregon Architectural College (now Oregon State University) in Corvallis, Oregon.⁹ The marriage was short-lived when they divorced ten years later in 1928.

Energetic, Kirk Thompson first worked as the general manager of the Covey Motor Car Company in Portland. By 1926, Thompson was the acting sales manager of the Willys-Overland Pacific Company in Seattle, Washington. In 1927, Thompson relocated to Spokane where he was appointed the Cadillac distributor for Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho, and was the Spokane area distributor for the General Petroleum Corporation. He enlarged his dealership to include distribution of the Oakland-Pontiac line of cars in addition to his Cadillac-LaSalle line. Kirk Thompson retired from selling cars when he and his brother sold to General Motors the full rights for their Synchron-Mesh transmission—a gear-shifting invention the Thompsons developed for shifting gears without noise and without slowing down. In the 1930s, Thompson built up a chain of gasoline stations in Spokane and a gasoline distribution business throughout the state of Washington. In order to transport large amounts of automobile gasoline and oil from Seattle to Spokane for his businesses, Thompson pioneered the transportation of petroleum and wheat on the Columbia River by barge and tugboat, and registered his company as the Tidewater Transportation Company. On September 26, 1936, the *Seattle Sunday Times* announced Thompson’s “134-foot barge” was being launched “to carry 135,000 gallons of gasoline up the Columbia River and about 10,000 bushels of wheat downstream each round trip.” Since tugboats were used to tow the barge into deep water, Thompson named his first tugboat after his daughter, Mary Gail, who later became a director of Thompson’s Tidewater Transportation Company. At age 49, Kirk Thompson died on May 7, 1946.¹⁰

About the same time, Kirk Thompson and his second wife Elizabeth “Lib” Trunkey (of the family-owned McClintock-Trunkey Company in Spokane) commissioned the Thompson House built at 1430 E. Overbluff Road in the larger Rockwood neighborhood on Spokane’s South Hill. In 1910 when the Rockwood Terrace Addition was platted, the area east of Overbluff Road was hilly with a wild tangle of deciduous and evergreen trees. It became available in 1935, when it was auctioned by Spokane County. On March 23, 1936, Kirk Thompson was the “highest and best bidder” for the “highest and best sum” at the public sale, and bought the land for \$275.¹¹ A private road led through the trees from Overbluff Road to the northwest corner of Thompson’s new property. A September 3, 1935 *Spokesman-Review* article described the property as having a “jutting hill and commanding a view of the Spokane Valley”.

Thompson applied for a building permit from the City of Spokane on September 28, 1935 for the construction of his “new eight-room house with a two-car garage, fireplace, and

⁹ “Two Freshman Married.” *Oregonian* (Portland), 1 May 1918

¹⁰ *Spokesman-Review*, May 1946, and the *Oregonian* (Portland), May 1946.

¹¹ Spokane County warranty deed 198541A, dated March 23, 1936

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chimney.” The reported estimated cost of construction was \$9,000.¹² Thompson chose Spokane architect Gustav Albin Pehrson to oversee the job, which included suggestions by Thompson. After years of planning their home, the Thompsons began decorating and appointing the interior.

The Thompson House was completed in 1936 the year it was built. A professional photograph of the house was taken and used in various publications. A very modernistic home for Spokane, the property was described in a caption under the photograph as “included with the ultra of modernistic design.”¹³ The next year in 1937, the *Spokesman-Review* newspaper praised the “indefinable sense of balance and proportion of the designing and supervising architect, G.A. Pehrson of Spokane.”¹⁴ The February 5, 1938 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* magazine printed the magazine’s cover page with the aforementioned professional photograph of the Thompson House. The steel-reinforced concrete block home with a satin “skin” of white-painted concrete was used in the photograph to help promote concrete—advertised on the magazine’s cover as a material that “gives beauty, comfort, fire safety and durability.”¹⁵

In 1942, Elizabeth Trunkey Thompson divorced Kirk Thompson. In 1944, Kirk Thompson sold the Thompson House to Frank & Frances Granger. Thompson died two years later in 1946.

Subsequent Homeowners

In June 1970, professional real estate appraiser Thomas Maher and his wife, Charlene Maher, purchased the Thompson House from the Grangers. In 2011, current owners Charlie and Katherine Reed bought the property. Charlie is a medical practice administrator, and Katherine is a dermatologist.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE—Category C

Gustav Albin Pehrson, 1883-1968

The architect for the Thompson House was Gustav Albin Pehrson, a master Spokane architect who designed a plethora of commercial buildings and family residences in Spokane and throughout Eastern Washington. He was born in Sweden and graduated from Uppsala University before attending Oxford University in England. He arrived in the United States in 1905, worked as a draftsman in Chicago, and came to Spokane in 1913. He worked as lead draftsman for the celebrated architectural firm Cutter & Malmgren for a few years, then established his own practice in the Old National Bank building in downtown Spokane in 1916.

Pehrson proved to be one of Spokane’s most prolific architects, responsible for hundreds of homes and buildings in Spokane and Eastern Washington. Some of these included the Chronicle Building, Paulsen Medical & Dental Building, Culbertson’s Department Store

¹² City of Spokane permits.

¹³ 1936 photograph and caption—no publication name

¹⁴ “Spokane Home Wins Notice.” *Spokesman-Review*, 12 Sept 1937

¹⁵ *Saturday Evening Post* cover, Feb 5, 1938

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(Macys), the Catholic Chauncery, the Rookery Block, Greek Orthodox Temple, the Davenport Hotel (in collaboration with architecture Cutter), and the Roosevelt Apartments. He drew plans for Hanford in Richland, WA and for the Farragut Naval Training Station in Idaho.

Perhaps because he was also an engineer, architect Pehrson enjoyed working with honest and no-frills concrete block construction. Pehrson designed many commercial buildings, schools, hospitals, and warehouses using the Art Moderne style and the style's characteristic elements such as white concrete walls made of reinforced concrete, flat roofs, streamlined cornice grooves, and horizontal bands of windows. A sampling of his commercial work includes the Centennial Flour Mills; the Florence Hotel in Missoula, MT; the public Grace School in Stites, ID; the Old National Bank in Sunnyside, WA; a public school in Culdesac, ID; a public grade school in Osburn, ID; the veteran's hospital in Soap Lake, WA; a public school in Milan-Elk-Chattaroy, WA; a public high school at Spangle, WA; the hospital at Grangeville, ID; a public school at Riverside, WA; a public school at Priest River, ID; a public school at Nespelem, WA; and the hospital at Deer Park, WA.

Art Moderne Style

Architect, professor of architecture and architectural historian Lester Walker defines the Art Moderne style in his book *American Shelter* (1996) and explains how it grew from the International style:

Early in 1932, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City exhibited its first architectural show entitled "Modern Architecture." It was intended to prove that the stylistic confusion of the preceding 40 years was about to come to an end. Photographs and drawings of works by architects practicing in 15 different countries were grouped under the title "International Style." The name became a household word.¹⁶

European International style architects such as Walter Gropius working with the Bauhaus School in Germany, Le Corbusier whose practice was beginning in France, and the German Mies van der Rohe were the early masters. They created a style based on modern engineering principles and materials. Concrete, glass, and steel were the primary materials, and the unadorned, utilitarian factory was the resulting aesthetic.¹⁷

The International style developed as a vigorously functional, stark, unadorned style that was based on modern engineering, utilitarian design, and open flexible planning—opposite of any preceding style. Moldings were eliminated, and doors and windows were made flush with the surface. Eventually climate site differences were good reason to stress

¹⁶ Walker, Lester. *American Shelter: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Home*. Woodstock, New York: Overlook Press, 1996.

¹⁷ Ibid.

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*regional characteristics in building. For example, a white stucco box could incorporate native fieldstone for exterior walls with a cedar roof fascia board—natural material influenced by the rugged character of the site.*¹⁸

Lester Walker taught that “Art Moderne, sometimes called Moderne, Modernistic, or Depression Modern, was a style that consciously strove for architectural expression to compliment the machine age. It was a unique American style although it was part of the International style movement. In a five-year period beginning around 1932, it changed the shape of virtually everything in the American home, including the home itself.”¹⁹

Popular from the early 1930s to the early 1940s, the Art Moderne style was inspired by America’s love of machines—the airplane, the car, the train, and even the toaster and the hair dryer. As new machine art, Art Moderne was honest, simple, and functional. Houses were streamlined like every other machine with rounded corners, flat roofs, horizontal bands of windows, smooth walls with deep horizontal grooves that gave the impression of speed, curved canopies, linear emphasis accentuated by stainless steel details, subdued colors—a true reflection of the country’s growing excitement about technological advancements and high speed transportation.

Rachel Carley defines Art Moderne in her 1994 book, *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture*:

Making a short appearance in America in the 1930s, the smooth-surfaced flat-roofed Moderne style house was an essay in streamlined geometry, stripped of ornament except for an occasional frieze of horizontal grooves designed as ‘speed lines.’ Such streamlining was also reflected in curving wall planes. It expressed not only economy of line but also a fascination with the aerodynamic speed and romance of the locomotive, the airplane, and the ocean liner. In domestic architecture, the Moderne style was used primarily for small, single-family houses...found in residential areas of small cities...and suburbs.”²⁰

In Spokane, the Art Moderne style was usually used for commercial buildings, churches, and schools but rarely for residential housing. The following list contains homes in and around Spokane that emphasize the Art Moderne style:

Thompson House	1430 E. Overbluff Road	built 1936
Marischal House	1420 E. Overbluff Road	built 1936
Moen House	810 E. 28th Avenue	built 1938
Johnston House	924 E. 28th Avenue	built 1940
Greene House	915 E. 24th Avenue	built 1939
Dr. David Cohen House	223 S. Coeur d’Alene Street	built 1940

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Carley, Rachel. *A Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture*, 1994.

The Art Moderne style usually has two or more of the following elements:

- Built date from 1931 to the early 1940s
- Flat roof
- Asymmetrical façade
- Horizontal orientation
- Angular and/or rounded corners
- Stacked angular shapes
- Smooth white walls,
- Steel reinforced concrete block construction
- Coping, sometimes steel or aluminum
- Horizontal grooves, bands, stripes, or rows of windows
- Curved or rounded bays
- Curved or rounded projecting flat porch roofs or canopies
- One or more curved outside curved walls
- Continuous band of windows that follow curved walls
- Large sections of wall designed as horizontal windows
- Frosted glass windows
- Small round windows, similar to porthole windows in ocean liners
- Metal railings, hollow metal pipe railings
- Open floor plans
- No cornices or eaves
- Little or no ornamentation

The Thompson House

The Thompson House, 1430 E. Overbluff Road, is an excellent example of the Art Moderne style and has many of the aforementioned elements. It is one-and-one-half stories with an asymmetrical façade, a flat roof, stacked geometric cubes, and is constructed of steel-reinforced concrete blocks. The blocks are covered with a smooth layer of concrete, unadorned except for two deep horizontal cornice-line grooves that encircle the house. The grooves, called “speed lines” in the above-referenced citation by architectural historian Rachel Carley, represent the style’s popularity with streamlined geometry. Additional Art Moderne elements emphasized in the Thompson House include exterior walls with rounded corners, a round semi-circular projecting bay, a flat rounded canopy, and numerous horizontal windows and bands of windows with metal-clad wood-sash. A feature of the Thompson House that honors the Art Moderne style’s love affair with 1930s transportation is the fact that the home was originally designed with a double car garage to shelter automobiles.

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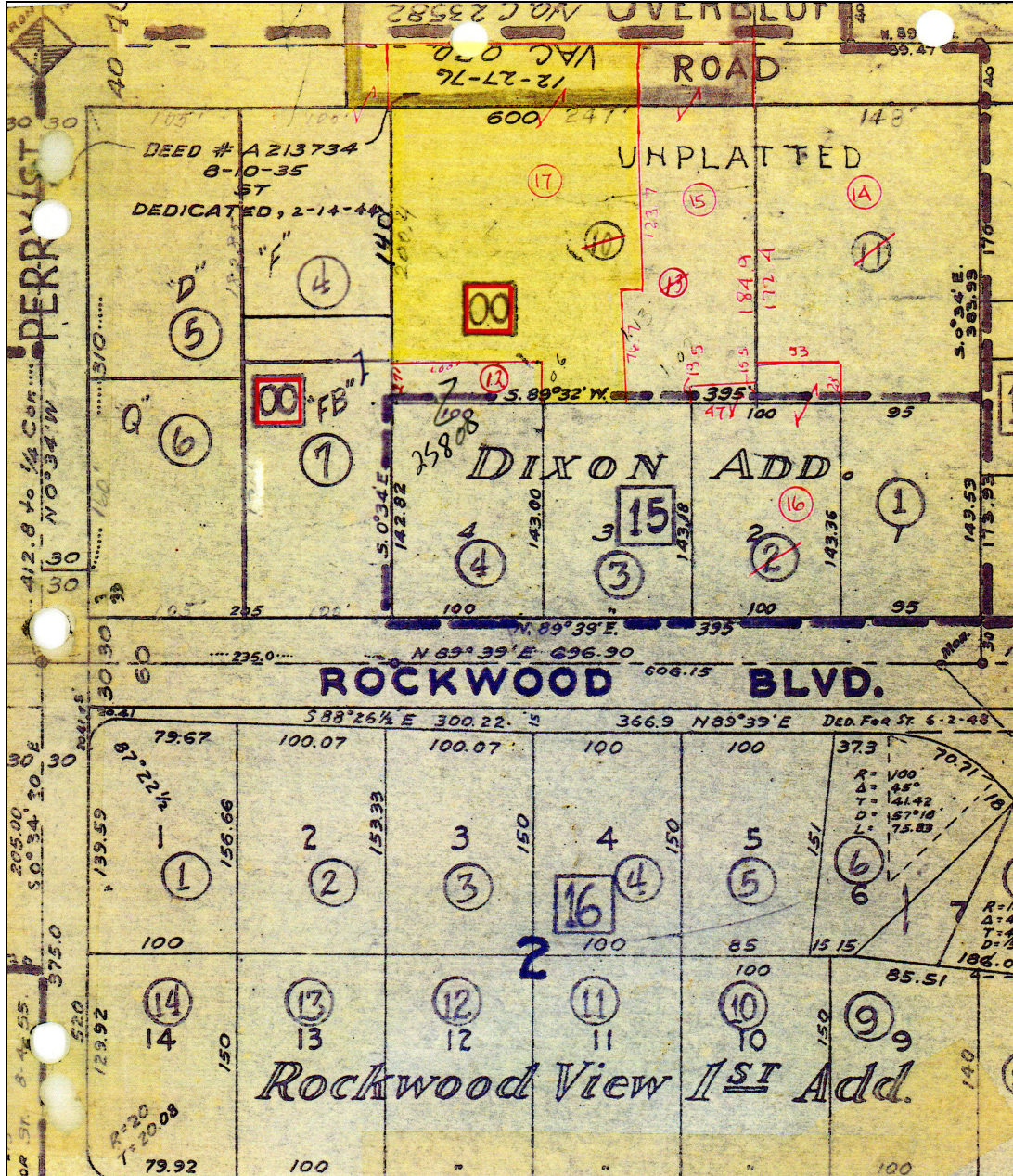
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SECTION 12: MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination
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Spokane County Plat Map
Source: Spokane County Assessor

THOMPSON HOUSE
1430 E. Overbluff Road

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Thompson House
1430 E. Overbluff Road

2019 photograph of the property

Notice the new attached rectangular garage building being built on the east end of the house. The setback garage and garage doors on the attached garage face north but are very difficult to see from the private driveway entrance, which is located at the northwest corner of the grounds.

north

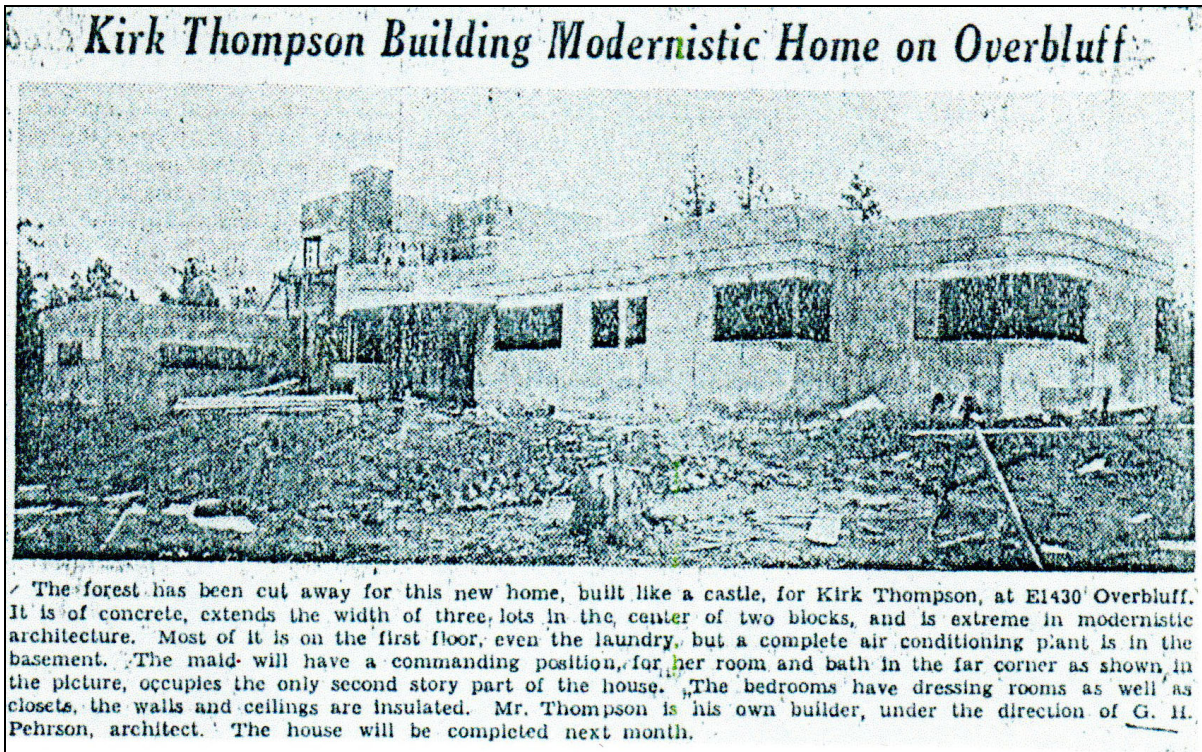


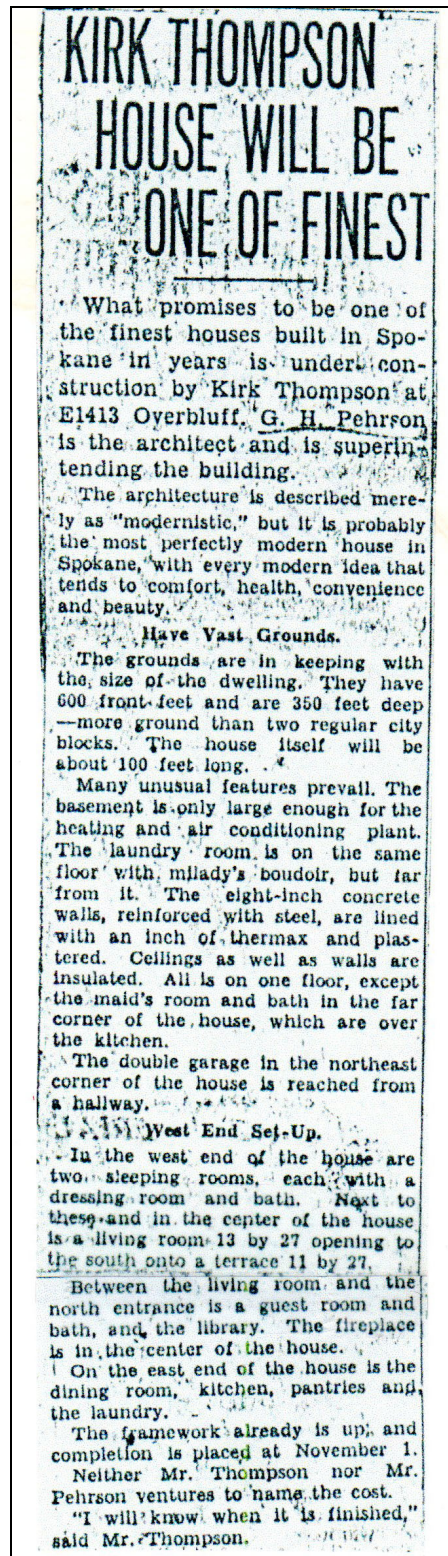
south

Spokesman-Review, 3 September 1935

ALTHOUGH many homes today include one or several rooms decorated in the modernistic style, the first completely modernistic house in Spokane will be that of "Lib" and Kirk Thompson, at the end of Overbluff road and, to the right of Park Lane. Actual construction of the house, planned for years by its owners-to-be and designed by G. A. Pehrson, was begun only a few weeks ago. A private road leads to the site, atop a jutting hill and commanding a view of the Spokane valley. White rugs will cover the floor of every room, and a keynote of white will be used throughout the house for entirely new furniture and draperies. "Lib" has even ordered a crib of modernistic design for her small daughter, Mary Gail! Kirk plans to have a swimming pool built in the back yard, and next year "Lib" will have a garden made up wholly of different varieties of white flowers.

“Kirk Thompson Building Modernistic Home on Overbluff.”
Spokesman-Review, 16 October 1935

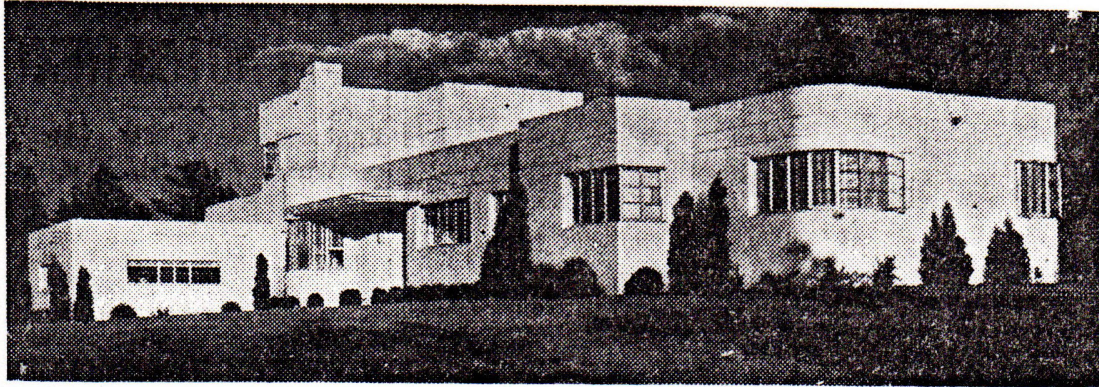




“Kirk Thompson House Will Be One Of Finest.” *Spokesman-Review*, 16 Oct 1935

“Modernistic Home Design Seen in Ultra Mode.”
Spokesman-Review, 20 December 1936

Modernistic Home Design Seen in Ultra Mode



Among the outstanding Spokane Overbluff, described as “included
homes constructed this season is in the ultra of modernistic design,”
that of Kirk Thompson, E1413 the work of Architect G. A. Pehr-

son along lines suggested by Mr. Thompson. All rooms are on one floor except the maid's room and bath in the far corner of the structure over the kitchen. Eight-inch concrete walls reinforced with steel are lined with an inch of thermax and plastered. The ceilings as well as the walls are insulated. The basement is large enough only for the heating and air-conditioning plant. The home with many features is about 100 feet in length. The grounds embrace 600 front feet and a depth of 350 feet. (Copyright, 1936, by Lawrence Evanoff.)

**“Spokane Home Wins Notice:
Kirk Thompson Residence Is Central Picture in Display of Fine Houses.”
Spokesman-Review, 12 September 1937**

SPOKANE HOME WINS NOTICE

Kirk Thompson Residence Is Central Picture in Display of Fine Houses.

A picture of the attractive Kirk Thompson home, 1430 Overbluff, in the exclusive Rockwood residential district of Spokane occupies the central position in the display of beautiful homes in the nation in the national headquarters at Chicago of the Portland Cement association, according to advices to S. Carl Smithwick, district engineer of the association for eastern Washington and northern Idaho.

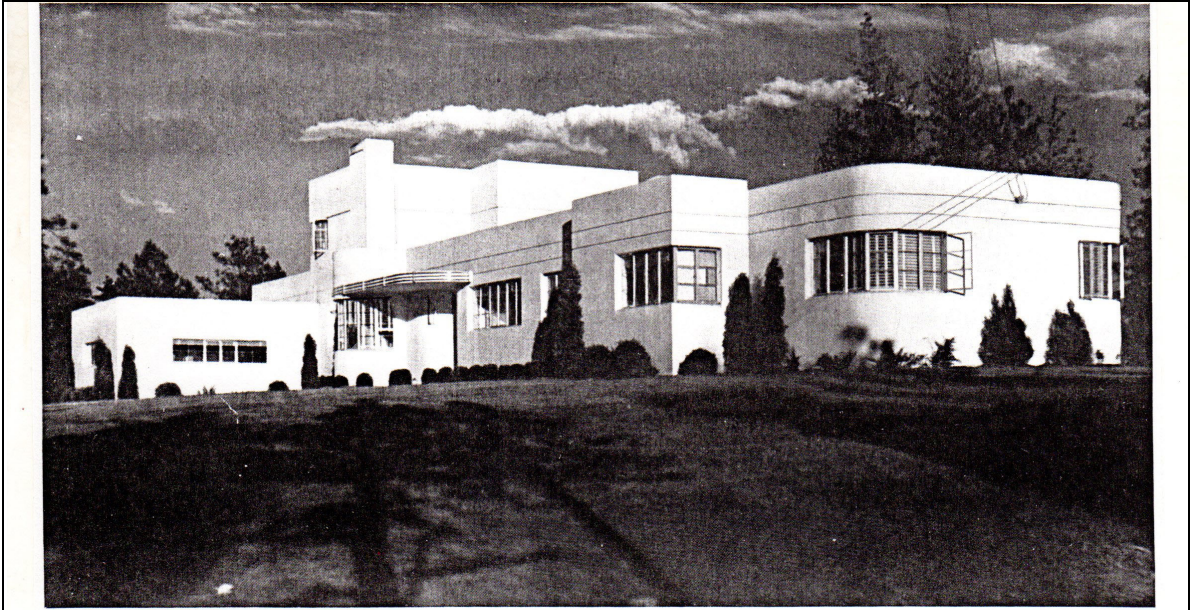
Mr. Smithwick, writing in the current issue of the Pacific Builder and Engineer concerning the Thompson home, an illustration of which recently appeared in the real estate department of The Spokesman-Review, praises highly that “indefinable sense of balance and proportion” of the designing and supervising architect, G. A. Pehrson of Spokane, who “provides one of the best answers to the oft-repeated query “why employ an architect to build a house?”

Construction Innovations.

“All exposed walls were built of monolithic concrete,” continues the article, “adequately reenforced with Thermax insulation provided on the inside of the walls by using it as a liner for the forms. The concrete was deposited against the Thermax as the forms were filled, and as the forms were later removed the insulating board remained to provide an excellent base for plastering.”

After recording 1937 has witnessed a healthy upward swing in home building activity, Mr. Smithwick declared the architect or builder who can sense the “unmistakably definite trend toward a happy blend of beauty and utility will find a secure and definite place in today’s scheme of things, as the day of modern architecture has dawned.”

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"One of the finest homes in Spokane," is the local sentiment about the Kirk Thompson home, recently completed. Long an advocate of concrete construction, G. A. Pehrson, leading Washington architect, attains new laurels in the design and construction of this modern house with walls, appropriately, of architectural concrete.

North façade of Thompson House in circa 1936



South face of Thompson House in circa 1936

Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination
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The Saturday Evening Post Magazine – Portland Cement Ad, 5 Feb 1938

“The modern home of Kirk Thompson, a showplace of Spokane, Wash.
G.A. Pehrson, Architect. Earl Cummings, Builder.”

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST 51



In modern mansion or conservative cottage

CONCRETE

GIVES BEAUTY, COMFORT,
FIRESAFETY *and* DURABILITY



PHOTO BY L. G. EVANOFF

LIVABLE as well as lovely are concrete homes because they are warm and dry in winter – cool in summer. Their rigid strength banishes creaking, uneven floors, sticking doors and windows, sagging walls.

There's mental comfort in the knowledge that you and your family, as well as your dearly prized personal possessions and fine home equipment, are securely sheltered from storm and fire. Concrete doesn't burn or rust or decay. Termites can't eat it.

Modern concrete construction adds only a few dollars to your monthly payments and those dollars come rolling back in lower upkeep and higher resale value. Often the first cost is no greater than for ordinary construction.

CONCRETE FLOORS—sagproof, warm, quiet and comfortable—should be in every home. They end the dread of basement fires. They take any covering—such as wood, carpet, terrazzo and linoleum—different in every room if you like.

How to get a Concrete Home

Ask a manufacturer of concrete masonry units or a concrete contractor for the names of architects, builders, realtors experienced in concrete construction. Write us for a free booklet showing attractive concrete homes and how to build them.

Appealing Cape Cod home of Ralph Seymour in Darien, Conn. Concrete walls and partitions, colored concrete floors and a firesafe roof. Fred J. Wallis, Westport, Conn., architect and builder.

(Top of page) The concrete home of Kirk Thompson, a show place of Spokane, Wash. G. A. Pehrson, architect; Earl Cummings, builder.

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In scientific laboratories, and on construction jobs, the Portland Cement Association is cooperating with engineers, architects and builders to perfect ever safer, more enduring pavements . . . better homes and structures . . . better bridges, dams, sewers and farm improvements. Helpful free booklets available on hundreds of subjects.

"G.A. Pehrson Last Rites on Monday." *Spokesman-Review*, 4 May 1968

G. A. Pehrson Last Rites on Monday

SR 5-4-1968

Funeral services for G. Albin Pehrson, longtime Spokane architect, will be Monday at 11 a.m. at the Smith Funeral Home with the Rev. Dr. Raymond M. Moody officiating. Cremation will follow.

Mr. Pehrson, E719 Twenty-fourth, who died Thursday in a local hospital, was a resident here for 55 years and had designed several schools and hospitals and other buildings throughout the Inland Empire.

With Cutter, Malmgren

He was representative for the firm of Cutter and Malmgren during the building of the Dav-enport Hotel. He designed several landmark buildings here, including the Review Building, the Paulsen Medical-Dental Building, the old Culbertson structure, now part of the Bon Marche Building and the present Catholic Chancery Building.

Born in Stockholm, Sweden, Mr. Pehrson was graduated from Uppsala University and attended Oxford University in England before coming to the United States.

He became a draftsman for an architectural firm in Chicago and then came here. He went into business for himself in 1916.

Richland and Hanford

During World War II he drew up plans for the Richland and Hanford communities. He was responsible for designing such buildings as Edgecliff Hospital here and the Florence Hotel in Missoula, Mont.

Mr. Pehrson was a member of the American Institute of Architects and Associated Engineers, the downtown Kiwanis Club, the Scottish Rite Bodies, El Katif Shrine, Oriental Masonic Lodge, Spokane Club, Spokane Country Club, Hayden Lake Country Club and Manito Presbyterian.

Survivors include his wife Mrs. Bess Pehrson, and a daughter Mrs. Betty Lawrence, both at the home, and four grandchildren.

“Kirk Thompson Taken By Death.”
Spokesman-Review, 7 May 1946

**KIRK THOMPSON
TAKEN BY DEATH**
**Was Former Spokane Region
Business Executive.**

Kirk Thompson, 49, a former Spokane resident and manager of Petroleum Products and Tidewater Transportation companies, died Saturday in an Ann Arbor (Mich.) hospital where he has been a patient since February. Funeral services are being planned in Portland, Ore., the Associated Press was told yesterday.

After owning the Thompson Cadillac company in Spokane for six years, Thompson sold it in 1932 to Eldridge Motors, Inc. He and his brother Earl invented the synchromesh transmission, now used in most automobiles.

Thompson pioneered transportation of petroleum and wheat in the lower Columbia in 1937 with a tugboat, the Mary Gall, named after his daughter now at Walla Walla. He built landing docks at Wallula, Wash.

In 1935 he built a home at E1430 Overbluff for himself and his wife, the former Elizabeth T. Trunkey, who divorced him after 10 years of marriage in 1942. His first wife whom he married in 1918 divorced him in 1928. Thompson came to Spokane in 1927. He attended Stanford and Oregon State.

Survivors beside his daughter are his mother, Mrs. Ella Thompson, and a son, Cameron, of Portland.

“Barge Pioneer Dies in East.” *Oregonian (Portland)*, 7 May 1946

Barge Pioneer Dies in East

Kirk Thompson
Stricken on Visit

Death has ended the colorful career of Kirk Thompson, 49, Portlander who pioneered in the barge transportation of petroleum on the upper Columbia river.



Thompson died at Ann Arbor, Mich., Saturday following an illness of several months. Funeral services are tentatively set for Monday in Portland with interment in Mount Scott cemetery.

With his brother Earl, whom he was visiting at the time of his death, Thompson invented the synchro-mesh transmission which was sold to the General Motors corporation about 20 years ago.

Oil Business Built

For a time Thompson lived in Spokane where he operated an automobile agency and built up a chain of gasoline stations and an oil distribution business in eastern Washington state.

When competition forced him to seek a cheaper means of bringing oil to the Spokane area Thompson devised a barge system. His first boat and barge were built at Seattle in 1936 and with these he made the first commercial oil haul from Portland to Attalia, Wash., now site of the largest oil distribution tank farm on the upper Columbia river.

Barge Firm Organized

Following the initial success in the face of skepticism on the part of the oil companies, Thompson formed the Tidewater Transportation company of which he was manager and chief stockholder, being associated with J. L. Campbell and

Charles Marr. In August, 1944, he sold the company to the Shaver Forwarding company which merged the two businesses into the Tidewater-Shaver Barge Lines. The company operates the largest fleet of boats and barges on the upper Columbia.

Thompson retired from active business following the merger but acted in an advisory capacity to the new company, serving as a director. He was owner of a large ranch near the Idaho border where fine cattle and Arabian horses were bred.

Mother, Children Survive

Survivors, in addition to his brother, Earl of Bloomfield, Mich., include his mother, Mrs. Ella Thompson, Walla Walla; a daughter, Mary Gail, Walla Walla, for whom he named his first tug boat; a son, Cameron, a student at Lewis & Clark college; a sister, Mrs. Stella Long, Attalia; and the following nieces and nephews in Oregon: Lyle Thompson, William Edward Thompson and Mrs. Pauline Field, all of Portland; Mrs. Dorothea Swanson, The Dalles, and Mrs. Vincent Smith, Medford.

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Photos 1 and 2: North façade of Thompson House in 2020, looking southeast

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Photo 3: West face of Thompson House in 2020, looking east



Photo 4: View of southwest corner at rear of Thompson House in 2020, looking northeast

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Photos 5 and 6: View of south rear elevation of Thompson House in 2020, looking northeast in Photo 5 and looking north in Photo 6

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Photo 7: View of rear southeast corner of Thompson House in 2020, looking northwest



Photo 8: View of rear southeast corner patio of Thompson House in 2020, looking northwest

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Photo 9: View of north façade of Thompson House in 2020



View of north façade of Thompson House in 2020

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Photo 10: View of living room in Thompson House from office, looking south in 2020



Photo 11: View of living room of Thompson House, looking south east into kitchen in 2020

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Photo 12: View of dining room in Thompson House, looking northeast in 2020



Photo 13: View of dining room in Thompson House, looking north in 2020

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Photo 14: View of kitchen & breakfast room in Thompson House, looking south in 2020



Photo 15: View of stairs that lead to the 2nd floor in the Thompson House in 2020

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Photo 16: View of hall on 2nd floor of Thompson House, looking north in 2020



Photo 17: View of 2nd floor bedroom in southwest corner of Thompson House in 2020