

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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1-5-07

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name            Silhan, Mr. Robert, House

other names/site number

**2. Location**

street & number	3728 South Cuyler Avenue	_____	Not for publication
city or town	Berwyn	_____	Vicinity
state	Illinois	code	IL
county	Cook	code	zip code
			60402

**3. 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_\_\_ locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

**Illinois Historic Preservation Agency**

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

Name of Property Silhan, Mr. Robert, House

County and State Cook County, Illinois

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

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I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

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**5. Classification**

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**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

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

Name of Property Silhan, Mr. Robert, House

County and State Cook County, Illinois

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC

Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC

Single Dwelling

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Architecture/

Art Moderne

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Concrete

Roof Rubber over Wood Frame

Walls Brick

Other Metal

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property Silhan, Mr. Robert, House

County and State Cook County, Illinois

**8. Statement of Significance**

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1937

Significant Dates

1937

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Silhan, Robert, Architect

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	16 435097E	4630359N	3	_____
2	_____	_____	4	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

Name of Property Silhan, Mr. Robert, House County and State Cook County, Illinois

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Susan Benjamin and Courtney Gray  
organization Benjamin Historic Certifications, LLC date 09/12/2006  
street & number 711 Marion Avenue telephone 847-432-1865  
city or town Highland Park state IL zip code 60035

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:  
Continuation Sheets

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Ken and Mary Mottet  
street & number 3728 South Cuyler Avenue telephone 708-749-7948  
city or town Berwyn state Illinois zip code 60402

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**SUMMARY**

The Robert Jaroslav Silhan home – an Art Moderne single-family residence – is estimated to have been constructed 1937. The home was built by Robert Silhan, the original owner, and his son, Robert Edward Silhan Jr. Robert Senior's design for his residence was completely original, yet inspired through visits to the 1933-1934 Century of Progress World's Fair. The Silhan Home is located at 3728 South Cuyler Avenue in Berwyn, Illinois, and is constructed almost entirely of white Tiffany Enameled Brick. The home ranges between one and two stories, with the central mass being two stories. Both levels feature characteristic Moderne racing stripes and detailing in a black glazed brick. From the south elevation, the building projects into a single-story semi-circular bay while on the east and north elevation, the first floor walls project out to accommodate the entryway and living room on the east elevation and the attached garage on the north side of the home. The residence is separated from Cuyler Avenue by a small, rectangular front yard. The home can be accessed from the driveway, which lies perpendicular to Cuyler Avenue near the northeast corner of the home, or from the concrete walkway that is perpendicular to the sidewalk and provides direct access to the back yard. This walkway also diverts to the north to access the entranceway at the southeast corner of the home. The main outdoor living space is in the backyard, which is located on the west side of the residence, it contains both a Beaux-Arts style swimming pool and cabana that are shaded by mature trees.

The interior of the home features an open floor plan with flexible living space, what is believed to be Masonite walls in the main living areas, and built-ins and trim work representative of streamlining popular during the late 1930 and early 1940s. Much of the home's original woodwork and floor plan remains, especially on the first floor.

The home has been identified as a Berwyn property recommended for identification as a local landmark in the City of Berwyn Preservation Plan. The School of the Art Institute of Chicago created the Preservation Plan in May of 1999.

**THE CONTEXT**

Berwyn, in which the Silhan home resides, is located within the Berwyn Township of western Cook County, approximately ten miles west of the Chicago Loop. In 2003, the United States Census reported that 52, 534 people were residing in the City

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of Berwyn. Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Berwyn has been considered a western suburb of Chicago. The suburbs surrounding Berwyn include Cicero to the east, Oak Park and River Forest to the north, Forest Park to the west, and Riverside and Stickney to the south. The Silhan home is located less than 1-3/4 of a mile southeast of the central business district running along 26<sup>th</sup> Street and approximately 3-1/3 of a mile south of Interstate-294. In addition, the home is approximately 1-1/3 of a mile southeast of the Berwyn Train Station at 3151 Oak Park Avenue. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe train line, operated by Metra, services the Berwyn Station. Initially, the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad utilized this railroad, during that period an additional commercial district grew to surround the train station. Finally, the Silhan residence is approximately two miles northwest of Interstate-55 and the Illinois and Michigan Canal.

Cuyler Avenue is a north-south oriented street located one block east of Ridgeland Avenue. It is a two-lane road that ends at 39<sup>th</sup> Street to the south while stretching north into Oak Park. The Silhan home at 3728 Cuyler Avenue is located on the west side of the street with its facade facing east.

### **THE SETTING**

The Silhan residence is located on the west side of South Cuyler Avenue between the public sidewalk and rear alley accessible through the back yard. The land area is approximately 7,182 square feet – 58 feet in width and 122 in length. The property is separated from its neighbors in the front yard only by the property line while the backyard has a combination of wood and chain link fencing delineating the boundaries. The Silhan home is believed to have been the first structure erected on the southeast quarter of Lot 18.

The elements from the front yard of the property that remain from the original construction plans include the concrete driveway that runs east to west connecting the garage door on the east elevation with Cuyler Avenue, as well as, the east-west concrete walkway running parallel to the south elevation. The pathway connects the public sidewalk to the gate in the wooden fence that forms the edge of the backyard. The pathway turns directly north approximately halfway between the sidewalk and wooden fence. The north extension provides access to the main entrance of the home, which opens to the south. Both of these access points are now concrete. The layout of the access points is original. While the Silhan family resided at the Cuyler Avenue home, the front



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yard featured a low geometric hedge that ran along the east elevation between the driveway and front entrance. In addition, the home featured three large trees spaced evenly across the front yard. These elements were consistently present in historic photos; however, the home's landscaping would occasionally include additional small trees and hedges. Currently, the Silhan home has four bushes in the front yard – three between the driveway and front entrance and one to the south of the entrance. Small flowerbeds line the perimeter of the home on the east and south elevation and at the southeast corner of the property line.

The backyard of the Silhan home is more historically significant than the front as it contains the original footpath plan as well as a Beaux-Arts style pool with accompanying cabana. The back yard is accessible through a gate in the wooden fence adjoining the south elevation while passage to the backyard along the north elevation is secured with a chain link fence. Along the west elevation of the home is a concrete patio. It is a large rectangular space accessible from the home's west elevation while the smaller, square-shaped patio to the north is accessed through a door from the garage. Adjoining the patio at either end are concrete pathways – the pathway that extends from the smaller patio projects directly west while the pathway extending from the larger patio heads south before connecting with the east-west walkway continuing from the front yard to the alley. These two pathways run almost the full length of the back yard where they are connected by a north-south pathway, which forms a large rectangular walkway around the backyard. The central focus of the backyard is a large Beaux-Arts concrete pool. The pool is a permanent fixture sunk into the ground approximately three-and-a-half or four feet deep. The general shape of the pool can be described as rectangular with the length running east to west; at either end is a projecting semi-circle. The walls of the pool gently slope inward.

At the west end of the pool, opposite the residence, is a small one-story cabana to service the pool. The cabana has a rectangular shape with the longer side running twelve feet north to south, while the shorter side is nine feet in length. The cabana has an approximate area of 108 square feet. This small structure features a band of windows, covered with screens, on the north, east, and south elevations. Entry to the cabana is attained through a wooden door on the east elevation, which is approached by a small rectangular concrete patio protected by an over-hanging eave. Four square wooden posts support the eave along its outer edge. The two central posts have nothing between them and allow access from the pool to the cabana. This pair is connected to the two outer

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poles by a waist-high railing. The underside of the railing, as well as, partial walls on the north and south elevation are composed of trellises. The cabana has a flat roof composed of green fiberglass roofing material. It has been reclad with wood painted green; originally the building was turquoise and white stucco that is still visible under the cladding, although severely deteriorated.

Some of the original Silhan landscaping consisting of a number of pine, spruce, and fir trees is still visible in the backyard. Of particular interest are five pine trees planted within the perimeter of the concrete pathway. The current owners of the Silhan home, Mary and Ken Mottet had the opportunity to speak with the Robert Silhan's son, Robert Jr., who helped his father build the home at 3728 Cuyler. In this interview, conducted in July of 2000, Robert Jr. disclosed that his father spent his money conservatively, as would be expected after the Depression. Robert Silhan selected the pine trees for the backyard because the Berwyn Post Office was having a sale of unclaimed mail items, the trees, which were among the items being sold, have fully matured and provide a nice outline for the concrete pathway, as well as, providing ample shade for the backyard and pool.

### **ARCHITECTURE**

The Robert Silhan residence is comparable in size to surrounding residences, all of which are modest single-family homes. The central block of the home is a two story square mass with two projecting one-story sections. A semi-circular bay projects from the south elevation. The projection on the north and east elevation provides additional space for a formal entry, living room, and the attached garage. The house is approximately forty-three feet long along Cuyler Avenue and approximately twenty-seven feet wide. The residence has eight rooms, two bathrooms, one service space, and attached garage.

### **Exterior**

The Silhan home is an Art Moderne house that features many high-style characteristics, including modern materials, racing stripes, and rounded corners. The home was meant to appear clean, smooth, and streamlined. Much of this was accomplished by the choice of materials employed and through limited usage of color. The goal was strong visual impact. The house is striking in its use of white and black glazed brick, known as Tiffany Enameled Brick, for almost the entire body of the

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building. The glazed brick exterior provides smoothness comparable to other Moderne exteriors. The bricks have been stamped with the Tiffany name and are dated from 1911. The stamp is not indicative of when the home was constructed as Robert Silhan had acquired these bricks through a salvage sale. The exception to the use of glazed brick is visible in a row of soldier course bricks that circles the perimeter of the home at the second-story height and at the top of the chimney. In this decorative element, the bricks used are composed of pressed clay that were been painted black. The windows of the house retain their original double-hung wood interior windows and steel storm windows.

High-style Art Moderne detailing is seen in the rounded corners on every elevation of the home and on each windowsill. Also three racing stripes circle the perimeter of the home at the height of the first story projections. By varying the height between the two-story main block and one-story projections, Silhan created the opportunity for two flat roofs, or one roof and one terrace; both have an approximate two-inch black, overhanging metal coping. The flat roof was a hallmark of the Moderne style, emphasizing the horizontal as well as providing additional outdoor space.

The east elevation, which faces Cuyler, contains three major visual elements – the garage door, vertical brickwork and the profile of the projecting bay. The garage door opening faces onto Cuyler Avenue at the north end of the east facade. The height of the framing of the garage door is equal to the height of the first floor windows. The first floor of the home is raised above ground by four steps. The door and wood framing are black and without design. That framing extends several feet higher than the garage door. The sheer size makes the garage opening the largest visual element on the east elevation. The size, in combination with the orientation facing the street, highlights the modernity of the style as it focuses on the importance of the automobile and its relation to the inhabitants. Immediately next to the garage door is a string of four, double-hung steel windows. The framing of the windows is in a contrasting black color; however, the continuous curved sill is white brick.

Continuing along the first floor level, several feet south of the window band, the house steps back significantly and becomes the main block of the building. This step back from the projected bay is clearly illustrated because of the interruption in the band of racing stripes that runs above the garage door and windows. The step back is also defined by a black, wooden and metal awning that projects over the front door. By looking at historical photos in the current owners' possession, it is clear that the awning

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was a later addition to the house. The small concrete porch, with four concrete stairs that access the entryway, are somewhat hidden from view by vegetation. This home is meant to be accessed by car and by the owners, creating a more private, personal space. South of the entryway on the east elevation of the main block is a single double-hung steel window.

Although the east elevation officially terminates at this corner, the semi-circular projecting bay on the south elevation is partially visible. When viewing from the front yard, approximately three of the seven double-hung steel windows of the semi-circular bay and three of the glass blocked basement windows are visible. In addition, the racing stripes visible at the top of the bay create continuity with the projecting bay on the east elevation.

The second level of the east facade has the only Art Deco element of the home as its central feature. In contrast to the horizontal nature of the residence as seen through the flat roof and terrace, this decorative element contains nine, vertically aligned columns of ceramic black brick. The bricks are oriented with their narrowest side facing Cuyler Avenue. The narrowness of the black vertical columns is further emphasized by the white vertically aligned bricks spaced between them that promote an upward movement of the eye. Although the white bricks terminate at the roofline, the black bricks extend slightly beyond the flat roof. On either side of this Deco element is a pair of double-hung steel window with black framing. The windows are aligned so that the framing connects with the row of black clay soldier bricks that run approximately four inches below the roofline. The row of soldier bricks is topped with a line of horizontally laid black ceramic brick. These two elements combined create a heavy black horizontal band that further pulls down the height of the home, especially when combined with the connected window framing, forming a counter balance with the Deco verticality.

When viewing the Silhan home from the south, the main entry is clearly visible. While the door is not original, the black awning and the black painted cascading stairs with silver edging slightly detract from its inappropriateness for an Art Moderne residence. The current homeowners have the original door in storage, and they plan to reinstall it. The south elevation provides a full view of the semi-circular projecting bay. The bay has seven double-hung steel windows around its perimeter. These windows are the smallest of those used on the home, yet they are proportionally scaled. The bay windows do not form a continuous band but are separated from each other by

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approximately eight or nine inches, approximately a brick and a half wide. Although spaced, they are close enough to each other to create a strong visual impact. Like all other windows on the house, each of these, is encapsulated within black framing and feature a white, curved brick sill. The window framing is separated from the lowest racing stripe so that each window reads as a separate unit. Vertically aligned with each window of the bay is a glass block basement window. Although the glass blocks are not original, they are very appropriate for a Moderne home. The basement windows have no sill but rather terminate in the foundation of the residence, which is concrete painted black. On the second level of the south elevation are two, separate double-hung windows where the framing, like those on the second level of the east elevation, are connected to the row of soldier brick, emphasizing the horizontal.

The two-story central block dominates the west elevation of the home, although the semi-circular bay is visible projecting south. As from the east elevation, three of the double-hung windows and glass block basement windows are visible. In addition, the one-story garage projection on the north side of the house is stepped back from the central block. The west elevation is primarily utilitarian and simple as it opens onto the backyard. It is while viewing the home from the west, we are able to see the drainage system completely. The system consists of an opening in the west side of the semi-circular bay's parapet wall. The scupper connects to a drainage box before entering the downspout and emptying away from the residence. On the north side, a similar gutter system is employed on the north side of the second story parapet wall and west side of the garage parapet wall. Both scuppers empty into a box and eventually connect to the same downspout that is hidden from view on Cuyler by the chimney. All elements of the gutter system are painted black. The main component of the west elevation is the two-story block, which features a centrally located black wooden door with six window panes arranged three over three. The door opens flush to the ground. The door and concrete patio are partially covered with a small-sloped overhang. The overhang is supported by two wooden posts and is not original to the home. The first level has a sliding steel window set within a black frame and has a curved brick sill. The sliding window is not original to the house; historically the window opening held two double-hung windows. The top of the window frame is level with the pitch of the patio overhang. Directly below the sliding window is an original pair of the basement windows that share a black curved sill. The windows are each separated into three vertical panes. The second level has a centered, double-hung steel window with the framing connected to the horizontal row of

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soldier bricks. The only other opening on the west facade is a wooden door with a six-pane window that opens from the garage onto the smaller concrete patio.

The north facade of the Silhan home is very simple. The projecting bay of the garage is dominant as there is no fenestration on the first level. The second level of the north elevation has two, double-hung steel windows located on either side of the chimney. The window framing on this elevation is also flush with the horizontal row of soldier bricks. The chimney design mimics that of the second level, with a row of soldier bricks surrounding the structure's perimeter.

### **Interior**

The interior of the Silhan home features three floors of living space, as the basement is finished. Although each floor retains important historical elements, the most significant is the first floor where the home retains all of its original trim work, three original overhead lighting features, the original Masonite walls, and two original built-ins. The front doorway opens directly into a small entry hall. As the residence is entered from the south, a second, interior wood door opens to the west and permits access to the interior of the house. On the east wall of the entry hall is a coat closet with mirrored doors and separate storage space above. The storage space is accessed through overlapped wooden sliding doors that feature three silver color racing stripes and chrome handles. The ceiling of the entry hall is quite modern, as it appears to have a stamped, geometric design composed of interlocking rectangles laid in alternating directions and joined at the corners by small squares. The panels appear to be Masonite and are gray in color. Finally, the entry hall features an original light fixture – a gold color brass hanging fixture in a circular shape with a shallow bowl whose perimeter is marked with a series of three gold color racing stripes.

The entry hall opens directly into the homeowners' current dining room, which historically was the Silhan living room. The dining room is a large rectangular area from which access to almost all other areas of the home can be obtained through two large open doorways on the north wall, leading to the present living room on the northeast and the kitchen in the northwest, while the south wall opens to the semicircular bay so prominent on the exterior. Also, the west wall has the opening for the stairwell to the upstairs. The dining room is the most central room of the house and, as a result, has no window openings; however, the multiple open doorways provide plenty of light from

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other rooms in conjunction with an overhead light and fan. The floor of the dining room is a gleaming hardwood. The most visually arresting element of this room is the staircase in the south corner of the west wall. The staircase features a hardwood floor and an unusual design. Although the stairs present strong corners, unlike the cascading concrete stairs visible when approaching the front door, there are only two full steps that go directly west before they begin to rotate north. Therefore, from the dining room it is possible to see the north end of the stair becoming thinner while the south side maintains its standard tread depth; this rotation is visible on four stairs before the staircase has completely reoriented itself to the north and becomes hidden behind the dining room wall. Since the turn is visible because a landing is not used, it visually creates a cascading effect. Additionally, as each of these progressional changes occur on the stairs, the baseboard along the stairwell and handrail above, which is affixed onto a wooden rail rather than directly on the wall, adjusts its slope to reflect the movement of the stairs.

The dining room features blue painted Masonite walls; the walls are topped by a thick crown molding and are surrounded by a baseboard with four grooves that are evenly spaced, running the length of the molding. Additionally, there is a picture rail with one groove located approximately one-third from the bottom of the rail. The doorway leading into the semi-circular bay and into the living room has a complex molding. Its design is replicated often on the main living level: horizontally across the top of the door frame is a singularly grooved rail similar to the picture rail while the vertical framing features a thick trim with three grooves running one-third of the way down the moldings height, with the center groove slightly longer. The vertical members extend approximately two inches above the horizontal jamb. All of the molding and trim on this floor has been painted white; however, historic photos in the current homeowners' possession show that historically the wood was painted black while the grooves had a silver metal inlay emphasizing the modern lines and racing stripe motif of the home. The entryway leading from the dining room into the kitchen is not trimmed, as this opening was not part of Robert Silhan's original design. However, the stairwell entry is framed on both the south wall, west wall and ceiling with a solid piece of trim.

The semicircular bay to the south of the dining room features the same hardwood floors, crown molding, picture rail, and Masonite walls of the dining room. The room itself has a semicircular shape. The room features seven individually set windows as well as an overhead light fixture that is original to the home. The light is a chrome hanging fixture with a shallow bowl shape from which a smaller metal apron drops and then

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contains a pointed piece of protruding glass. The pointed glass is the only area from which light is directed down. The glass only accounts for about one-fourth of the actual size of the fixture. This room also features an original built in settee, which runs the length of the three central windows on the south wall. The settee has a curved shape and at each ends an attached table top, or oversized armrest, under which are three shelves. The shelves are wider at the back where they adjoin the wall; however, at the front they sweep into a curve to reflect corners of the room. Underneath the settee, there is a continuous screen that allows heat from the radiator to pass through. Along the back of the settee is a three-level stepped decorative element of slender pieces of wood. Both the stepped ornament on the settee backrest and the front edge of the shelves and tabletop, feature a large groove that originally held a metal inlay. The sitting room also features a chair rail that runs just above the height of the settee. The rail is a thick piece of trim that features three grooves running its length.

The living room, which is accessed through the northeast doorway in the dining room, was originally the Silhan's dining room and was connected to the kitchen through its west wall. Like the current dining room, this living area has original hardwood floors, Masonite walls, crown molding, and baseboards. The living room also features a built-in – a small window seat that runs the length of the two central windows of the four that fill the entire east wall of the room. The window seat has decorative screening under the seat that allows for heat from the radiator to pass through and on either side of the window seat is a two-shelf bookcase. The living room contains additional trim work not utilized in the other rooms on the main level. In each corner of the room are two adjoined vertical members that run the full height of the room and are thick to accommodate three grooves that extend approximately one-third of the distance from the ceiling, with the central groove extending approximately an inch-and-a-half further than the outer grooves. In addition, the picture rail trim is much thicker in this room as it is able to accommodate two grooves. A centered board that runs the full height of the room and contains three grooves further subdivides the east, north, and west walls while a thick, three-grooved vertical member that extends slightly above the height of the picture rail further subdivides each of these sections of the wall again. On the east wall, these divisions serve as a separator between each of the four windows. The living room also has an original light fixture. It is a hanging chrome and black fixture that has a shallow bowl, the underside of which is glass with an additional smaller, shallower bowl protruding from the bottom of the main body. Both bowls are chrome on the top and bottom edge while the space between is a black metal.



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The kitchen is accessible from the west doorway on the north wall of the current dining room. As is very common with older homes, the kitchen was updated circa 1960 and retains very little of its original character. The floor is currently linoleum with counter space and hanging cabinets that form an L-shape along the east and north walls of the kitchen. Along the west wall is an original window opening replete with a later sliding steel window. The inside of the window is enclosed within wood framing not original to the home. The south wall of the room has a door opening that provides access to the concrete patio and backyard as well as access to the stairs leading down into the finished basement. The door that opens from the kitchen onto the staircase has an angular, decorative doorplate and glass doorknob that appear to be original to the residence.

The basement is mostly finished and includes three rooms and a half bathroom. The public rooms in the basement have linoleum floors and some trim work. Decorative brickwork is incorporated into the walls of the finished rooms. The brickwork extends approximately three-fourths of the height of the wall and is crowned with a black wood picture ledge. The majority of the wall is composed of approximately six-inch square blocks; however, as the blocks near the picture ledge standard size bricks create the decorative element. The top row of six-inch square blocks connect with one row of rectangular soldier course bricks that correspond three bricks to each block. The soldier course is topped with one row of rectangular stretchers, each of the stretcher bricks rest atop three of the soldier bricks. Above this is a horizontal row of stretchers of the same height with no vertical joints before the brickwork terminates in the ledge. The bricks have been painted a creamy yellow color.

The main room on the lower level is directly below the dining room and features a similar shaped staircase in the same location as the one leading from the dining room to the upstairs living space, yet the shape of the stairs is reflective of the cascading concrete steps providing access to the front entry. The north edge of the concrete stairs gradually curves in smaller increments as they complete the turn necessary to reorient the stairs north, while the lower stairs are fully curved. The west wall of this main room features a decorative fireplace with a black wood mantel and a small opening just below the soldier course of bricks. The decorative brickwork in this room is visible on the west, south and east walls. The north wall opens directly into the service area of the residence that contains the boiler, water heater and laundry facilities. This area also includes the one original basement window visible on the west elevation. The east wall of the main room

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has a small setback that provides access to the downstairs bathroom. There is molding in this room around the fireplace and the door on the south wall. Two vertical members connect the top of the mantel to the ceiling on either end of the fireplace and are made up of thick pieces of trim that have five grooves each. The trim work surrounding the doorway that connects the main room to the semi-circular bay includes two vertical members that extend from the picture ledge just above the doorjamb and also accommodate five grooves. The horizontal member above the doorway is narrower and includes three grooves. The current homeowners, Ken and Mary Mottet, have begun to reproduce the original decorative intent of Robert Silhan and have replicated the original black color of the trim and installed metal inlays.

The semi-circular bay in the basement features the same decorative brickwork and picture ledge visible in the adjoining main room. The bay features seven tall windows that correspond vertically with those in the sitting room above. The windows had been so damaged over time that they needed to be replaced. The current owners elected to replace them with glass block, which is historically appropriate for the Art Moderne style. The original intent of this room is unknown; however, the current owners have outfitted the space with a curving, glass block bar and black and chrome bar chairs.

The living space on the second floor contains many historic features while others have been removed. The decorative trim work visible on the main level continues to the top of the stairs, at which point the central hallway trim transitions to a simple, yet original, floor edging. The stairwell and hallway still feature the original Masonite walls. In addition, the windows upstairs are still original to the home, as are the doors and door hardware. The wood trim in the bedrooms has been removed and some bathroom fixtures have been changed. The homeowner who possessed the Silhan home between the Silhan family and the Mottets, slightly modified the upstairs floor plan. Originally, the space consisted of a central hallway with two doorways on either side of the hall. The northwest doorway provided access to the bathroom while all other doors opened to small bedrooms. The current floor plan retains the original bathroom location and small bedroom on the north side of the hall; however, the two bedrooms on the south side have been joined to create one larger bedroom. There are no built-ins in the upstairs bedrooms; however, the bathroom retains its original linen closets. The bathroom has the original bathtub centered on the wall with a small built-in closet on either end. A wooden archway that extends over the tub connects the two linen closets.

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### **SUMMARY**

The Robert Silhan home, estimated to have been constructed in 1937, is significant as an excellent example of an Art Moderne residence and, therefore, meets Criterion C for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Small-scale Art Moderne residences are limited in number compared to more traditionally styled homes of the period. The Silhan home incorporates almost all of the high-style Moderne characteristics necessary to be defined as such a structure while retaining a high level of historic integrity. In addition, it is the strongest example of an Art Moderne single-family residence in Berwyn, Illinois – a city that features less than a handful of similarly designed residences and several Moderne commercial and civic structures that help establish the context of the home. The Silhan residence is unusual because it was designed and constructed by the original homeowner and his son, Robert Silhan and Robert Silhan Junior. Silhan Senior received inspiration for his design through multiple visits to the Chicago Century of Progress Exhibition of 1933-1934. He was also indirectly influenced by exposure to modern architecture and art in his home country of Czechoslovakia before immigrating to the United States.

### **HISTORY**

#### **Berwyn Development**

The area that became Berwyn was first settled in the 1830s by Irish immigrants digging the Illinois and Michigan Canal.<sup>1</sup> At that time, Berwyn was located within the thirty-six square mile Cicero Township. In 1856, land developer Thomas F. Baldwin purchased 347 acres of land, which he divided into ten-acre lots. His intention was to develop a wealthy suburb by the name of LaVergne.<sup>2</sup> In 1862, Baldwin sold a strip of LaVergne to the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad, which by the 1870s opened the LaVergne Station at Ridgeland Avenue and Windsor.<sup>3</sup> To the north of LaVergne, the Illinois Central Railroad laid tracks resulting in another nucleus of building and

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<sup>1</sup> Deuchler, Douglas, Images of America: Berwyn. Chicago: Arcadia Publishing. 2005, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 12. Deuchler,

<sup>3</sup> Berwyn Development Corporation. History: Berwyn's Two Beginnings. Retrieved 31 July 2006 <<http://www.berwyn.net/berwyn/history.asp>>.

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commercial development. The two developed areas were separated by approximately one and a half miles of farmland and were connected by only Oak Park and Ridgeland Avenues.<sup>4</sup> After Thomas Baldwin died, his daughter sold a portion of his land holdings to a holding company owned by Marshall Field. Charles E. Piper and Wilbur J. Andrews were attorneys and real estate developers who later purchased 106 acres of this land, which surrounded the railroad. Piper and Andrews advertised their lots and homes by emphasizing the proximity to downtown, public transportation, as well as to churches and schools. They touted the eight miles of streets and sidewalks already laid, selling property for between three and ten thousand dollars.<sup>5</sup> On May 17, 1890, Piper and Andrews officially named their community Berwyn, taken from the name of a scenic Philadelphia suburb. On November 5, 1901, Berwyn and the community of Oak Park solicited and gained their independence from Cicero Township.<sup>6</sup> In 1902, Berwyn was incorporated as a village. Finally, on June 6, 1908, the residents of the Village of Berwyn changed their name to the City of Berwyn in response to the community's growth.<sup>7</sup>

The railroad was extremely important in the development of Berwyn during the late 1800s, while industry in adjacent towns spurred Berwyn's early 20<sup>th</sup> century development. Although Berwyn has been identified as a commuter community because of the absence of industry within the city's limits, surrounding communities provided ample opportunity for employment. A large employer of Berwyn residents was the Western Electric Hawthorne Works. Initially Western Electric was located at 12<sup>th</sup> and Clinton in the Pilsen neighborhood in southwest Chicago. In the late 1800s, Pilsen was an immigrant community with a population that was predominantly Czechoslovakian. In 1903, Western Electric relocated their industrial plant to Cicero, a suburb immediately east of Berwyn where they manufactured all of the telephones used by Bell Electric.<sup>8</sup> A large number of Western Electric employees from the original location followed the industrial plant west. This steady migration first spread into Lawndale and then continued further west into Berwyn along 22<sup>nd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>9</sup> The plant continued to employ a large number of Bohemians, so that it was affectionately called "Bohemian University".

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<sup>4</sup> Deuchler, Douglas, Images of America: Berwyn. Chicago: Arcadia Publishing. 2005, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Berwyn Development Corporation. History: Berwyn's Two Beginnings. Retrieved 31 July 2006 <<http://www.berwyn.net/berwyn/history.asp>>.

<sup>8</sup> Deuchler, Douglas, Images of America: Berwyn. Chicago: Arcadia Publishing. 2005, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

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This moniker was also reflective of the factory's immense size since it incorporated a railroad, hospital and gymnasium.<sup>10</sup> The Western Electric relocation and the existence of streetcars that ran between Chicago and Berwyn as well as within the community, from 1896 to 1948, allowed Berwyn to swell in population.<sup>11</sup> The 1910 census identifies the Berwyn population at 5, 841; by 1920, the population reached 14,150; and by 1930, Berwyn was home to 47, 027 residents – an increase of more than 200% over a ten-year period.<sup>12</sup> To accommodate growth, remaining farmland was subdivided into lots for residential construction. These lots were often purchased as an entire block by developers who would then construct multiple homes simultaneously.

The Silhan home was not built until the late 1930s; however, the family acquired the land in 1922 during the second Berwyn building boom. Emily Butler began to sell off her ownership of the 3700 block of South Cuyler, Lots 16-20, between 1909 and 1911 according to the Cook County Recorder of Deeds. The center of the 3700 block was identified as Lot 18, which was sold by Ms. Butler to John C. Murphy on March 2, 1916. John Murphy sold Lot 18 to Auguste Smith on March 29, 1922. Finally, on April 10, 1922, the Recorder of Deeds shows Auguste Smith selling the south half of his lot to Katherine Silhan. The boundaries of the lot extended from Cuyler to Ridgeland Avenue. The May 1929, Sanborn Map for Berwyn shows little development on the 3700 block of South Cuyler Avenue. The road itself had only been laid in front of Lots 16, 17 and 19, although it had not yet opened for travel. Meanwhile, the 3800 block of South Cuyler had a paved road with four small residences. The 3700 block of South Cuyler contained several small buildings. On the west half of the Silhan property, a single-family residence had been erected at 3725 Ridgeland. Robert Sr. and Robert Jr. built this home together. On August 7, 1929, the Recorder of Deeds shows that Katherine Silhan and husband Jerry subdivided their property into four lots and an alley – the Plat of Survey shows Lots 1 and 2 were on the east of the alley facing Cuyler Avenue while Lots 3 and 4 were on the west side facing Ridgeland. Although unable to confirm the construction date of the Silhan residence, the best estimate of completion is 1937. The Cook County Recorder of Deeds states that Robert and Katherine Silhan had obtained a mortgage in 1934, which may have been to finance the construction of the Cuyler Avenue residence. At this time

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> Berwyn Development Corporation. *History: Berwyn's Two Beginnings*. Retrieved 31 July 2006 <<http://www.berwyn.net/berwyn/history.asp>>.

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the family resided at 3622 Harvey Avenue in a house constructed by Robert. Robert and Katherine sold the Harvey residence to Frank Frala on September 30, 1937. As the Silhan family routinely resided in homes that Robert had constructed himself, it is most likely that the sale of the Harvey home in 1937 marks the completion of construction on Cuyler Avenue. The 1944 Sanborn Map provides information that Cuyler Avenue was open for the full length of the 3700 block, albeit unpaved. In addition, it showed that the Silhan home at 3728 Cuyler Avenue had been erected on the southeast quarter of Lot 18.

**Silhan Family**

Robert Jaroslav Silhan was born March 27, 1879, and died on January 6, 1965, at the age of eighty-five. Robert was born in Radnice, Czechoslovakia, where he met his wife, Katherine Cepelak, whom he married on July 3, 1903. Katherine Silhan was born on November 24, 1882, and died July 24, 1972, at the age of eighty-nine. The 1910 United States Census states that Robert and Katherine had immigrated to the United States in 1901. The City of Chicago welcomed immigrants so that in 1900, three-quarters of the 1.7 million residents were immigrants or children of immigrants.<sup>13</sup> Robert and Katherine gave birth to their eldest son, Jerry Joseph Silhan on April 8, 1904. Their second child, Georgianna Silhan was born in 1906, but passed away in 1907. Robert and Katherine's third child, Sidney Julius Silhan, was born on February 27, 1908, and was followed by Georgianna Libby Silhan on May 31, 1910. Their last child, Robert Edwin Silhan, who assisted Robert Senior in residential construction, was born on December 15, 1911.<sup>14</sup>

It is unknown where the Silhan family lived between their immigration in 1901 and the 1910 United States Census, which provides a Berwyn address. It is possible that during this period the family lived in the Pilsen neighborhood, an early receiving point for Czechoslovakian immigrants. The Pilsen neighborhood was surrounded by 16<sup>th</sup> Street, 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Halsted, and Ashland and was home to 7,000 Bohemians by 1901.<sup>15</sup> Although Pilsen was decidedly still Bohemian in the early 1900s, the Bohemian

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<sup>13</sup> Bekken, Jon. Working-Class Newspapers, Community and Consciousness in Chicago, 1880-1930. Urbana, Illinois: University Microfilms International, 1992, p. 213.

<sup>14</sup> Silhan family information was obtained from the Silhan Family Tree, a document that was provided to the current residents, Mary and Ken Mottet, by Robert Silhan Junior.

<sup>15</sup> Pacyga, Dominic A. and Skerrett, Ellen. Chicago, City of Neighborhoods: Histories & Tours. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986, p. 244.

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community began to migrate away from the crowded tenements and into the more spacious Lawndale area of Chicago as prosperity and public transportation allowed. Fifty-eight trains a day ran from the Burlington Railroad Station on Ogden Avenue in South Lawndale to Chicago.<sup>16</sup>

The 1910 United States Census records show that Robert and Katherine Silhan immigrated to the United States in 1901. The family was residing in Berwyn at 1909 Morton Avenue, now 3627 Highland Avenue, in a Queen Anne style home that Robert had constructed.<sup>17</sup> Robert listed his occupation as an employee of a sash and door factory and his trade as a cabinetmaker. The Silhan family was surrounded by their countrymen; Berwyn's exploding population in the early 1900s was primarily first and second generation Czechoslovakians and Bohemians.<sup>18</sup> The influx of Czechoslovakians as residents and business owners was great enough to warrant the nickname of "The Bohemian Wall Street" for Cermak Road, the community's main business thoroughfare.<sup>19</sup> According to the 1920 Census, the Silhan family was still residing in Berwyn, now at 3627 63<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, and Robert was still the sole source of household income. The 1930 Census shows the Silhan family living at the address of 3622 Harvey Avenue. The residence is Tudor style and was constructed by Robert. Robert's employment remains the same; however, his children have now joined the workforce. Jerry was a carpenter who worked in building construction. Sidney was a barber and Georgianna worked as an office clerk. Robert Silhan Junior is noted as doing experimental work in a manufacturing plant.

The Czechoslovakians sought a better life through immigration. To accomplish this goal, they saved their earnings, and reinvested their time and finances into their community. By 1886, it was estimated that sixty percent of Chicago's Bohemian population were property owners and together supported as much as twenty-eight building and loan associations.<sup>20</sup> So, although the number of properties that Robert Silhan

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 245.

<sup>17</sup> Silhan, Bob. "Berwyn Not Solely Windsor-Oak Park." *The Life*. Wednesday, June 4, 1986, pg. 25.

<sup>18</sup> Deuchler, Douglas. *Images of America: Berwyn*. Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2005, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Berwyn Development Corporation. *History: Berwyn's Two Beginnings*. Retrieved 31 July 2006 <<http://www.berwyn.net/berwyn/history.asp>>.

<sup>20</sup> Pacyga, Dominic A. and Skerrett, Ellen. *Chicago, City of Neighborhoods: Histories & Tours*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986, p. 243.

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built and owned is impressive, it is not unusual. According to the Silhan Family Tree and Records, Robert Senior and his sons built five different residences in such varied styles as Queen Anne, Tudor, a two-flat, and Art Moderne. Silhan property ownership consisted of other types of buildings besides single-family homes. In 1973, Jerry Silhan owned one-fourth of an eight-unit apartment building while Katherine Silhan owned the other three-fourths. The property had been purchased in 1956.<sup>21</sup> Robert Silhan Senior contributed to the City of Berwyn by participation in a number of civic groups. He was a member of the Affiliated Civic Taxpayers Association, an organization comprised of ten civic groups from Cicero, Berwyn, and Chicago. His membership in this association was because he served as President of both the Berwyn Improvement Association and the Social Club Radnice of Berwyn.<sup>22</sup> In addition, Robert Silhan and his family were involved with the Sokol Hall of Berwyn. Sokol Halls were Czechoslovakian centers that hosted social events for members, as well as, places that taught gymnastics, fitness and ideals for daily living.<sup>23</sup>

Robert and Katherine at some point passed ownership of the Cuyler Avenue residence to their son Jerry. This was an informal transaction that was not recorded by the Cook County Recorder of deeds. Jerry and his wife, Lydia, raised their three children in this home before selling it outside the family to its second owner, Richard and Margaret Pechota on March 11, 1977. During the time they owned the property, the Pechotas were responsible for the painting of the interior trim, refiguring of the second floor, and replacement of the front door. Margaret Pechota sold the Silhan home to the current owners, Ken and Mary Mottet, in March of 2000. The Mottets are returning the property to its original design intent.

**Tiffany Bricks**

The Silhan House is a particularly significant and unusual example of Moderne residential architecture because of the use of Tiffany Bricks. The particularly smooth finish of the exterior of the Silhan home is largely because of the enamel finish of the white bricks. Because the Silhans retained the unused stamped brick from construction in their backyard, the name of the manufacturer is known and further research was possible.

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<sup>21</sup> Silhan, Jerry. "33 Per Cent Tax Increase." Chicago Tribune. June 5, 1973: Editorial, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> "Affiliated Tax Groups Choose Officers' Slate." Chicago Daily Tribune. March 5, 1950: W5.

<sup>23</sup> Deuchler, Douglas. Images of America: Berwyn. Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2005, p. 86.



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Chicago was home to twenty independent brickyards that cumulatively employed 1,093 people and created annual sales of \$583,575 by 1870.<sup>24</sup> The Tiffany Pressed Brick Company, whose products were later used to build the Silhan home, was founded in September of 1884. The company name came from Joel Tiffany who invented the Tiffany Refrigerator Car and was the brick company's president.<sup>25</sup> The Tiffany Brick Company began to create glazed brick, in addition to clay brick, around 1894. The enameled brick was so popular that the company was renamed the Tiffany Enamel Brick Company in 1895.<sup>26</sup> After having their headquarters in Chicago since 1884, the company relocated to Momence, Illinois, in Kankakee County in 1901.<sup>27</sup> The Tiffany Enamel Brick Company produced their bricks in a variety of standard sizes including English, American and Roman. The company proclaimed that their bricks were enameled, not glazed, and was therefore capable of "forming a complete and inseparable union with the bricks."<sup>28</sup> The bricks were also advertised as being easy to clean and fireproof. The enamel would wrap around the sides, top, and bottom of the brick and could extend as far back on the brick as the customer desired. The Tiffany Brick Company was able to create the bricks in twelve different shades, including white, cream, ivory, light buff, dark buff, granite, light mottled blue, teapot brown, dark terra cotta, chocolate, silver gray and dark olive.<sup>29</sup> The color came from the materials used as well as the amount of heat the brick received while burning. Tiffany Bricks were available in a number of shapes, including a rounded end or an octagon.

Tiffany bricks were exhibited at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair where the company erected an enameled office building, featuring a variety of colors, which won the Grand Prize for product.<sup>30</sup> The Tiffany Enamel Brick Company recommended using their highly glazed bricks in a variety of settings including light courts, elevator shafts, hospitals, markets, sanitariums, swimming pools, restrooms, kitchens, gymnasiums,

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<sup>24</sup> Achilles, Rolf. Made in Illinois: A Story of Illinois Manufacturing. Chicago: Illinois Manufacturers' Association: 1993, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Ottesen, Kristen McSparren. The Early History of the Manufacture and Use of Glazed Brick in the United States. Chicago: School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1996, p. 48.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Sweet Catalog, 1905.

<sup>28</sup> Ottesen, Kristen McSparren. The Early History of the Manufacture and Use of Glazed Brick in the United States. Chicago: School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1996, p. 48.

<sup>29</sup> Sweet Catalog, 1905.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

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Turkish Baths, mausoleums, and powerhouses, The slightly reflective glaze and impervious surface was essential anyplace where lighting would otherwise be dim or sanitary conditions would be particularly difficult to maintain.<sup>31</sup> Although the Tiffany Enamel Brick Company closed during the Great Depression, it was not before their bricks were used in a multitude of buildings throughout Chicago and the region. In Chicago, Tiffany brick was used in the Marquette Building's light court in 1895, the Illinois Central Suburban Depot in 1896, the Fair Building on the northwest side of State and Adams in 1897, Cook County Hospital in 1897, the Marshall Field Office building at Court and Park Streets in 1899, the Ryerson Office Building, the Chicago and North Western Railway Office Building, and the South Park Toilet Building in 1904, as well as, the Tilton School, Bernhard Moss School and Albert G. Lane Technical High School in 1909.<sup>32</sup> Tiffany Brick was also employed in 1895 at the Chicago and Alton Railroad Passenger Station in Springfield, Illinois, and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad Depot in Rock Island in 1900.<sup>33</sup> Tiffany Brick can be seen in the Hygeai Spring Pavilion at the Belden Spring Hotel in Belden Springs, Indiana. The Hygeai Spring Pavilion's exterior was entirely composed of glazed Tiffany Brick that cost approximately \$100 each.<sup>34</sup>

One of the more interesting and familiar uses for Tiffany Brick was in the early restaurants of the White Castle System of Eating Houses. The team of Walter Anderson and Edgar Waldo "Billy" Ingram got together in 1921, in Wichita, Kansas, and turned the concept of a single restaurant establishment into what is considered the country's first fast food chain.<sup>35</sup> White Castle's initial growth was through five restaurant openings in Wichita. The team expanded to Omaha by 1921, to Kansas City by 1924, to St. Louis by 1925, to Minneapolis-St. Paul by 1926, and to Chicago by 1929.<sup>36</sup> By 1931, White Castle

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<sup>31</sup> *Sweet Catalog*: 1905.

<sup>32</sup> Ottesen, Kristen McSparren. The Early History of the Manufacture and Use of Glazed Brick in the United States. Chicago: School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1996, p. 64-66.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64-66.

<sup>34</sup> Lawson, John. Hygeia Spring. Retrieved 5 July 2006  
<<http://www.lssc.k12.in.us/Projects/Wbaden/hygeia.htm>>.

<sup>35</sup> Jakle, John A. and Sculle, Keith A. Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999, 11.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

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had over 100 restaurants in the Midwest. In 1933, White Castle operated a booth from which they sold hamburgers at the Chicago World's Fair.<sup>37</sup>

The White Castle System relied on quality product, uniformity, and a sanitary environment. To communicate this idea to consumers, the name White Castle was chosen. 'White' made people think of cleanliness and 'Castle' induced people to think of quality and stability. The exterior of the building was made to reflect the name by using a white exterior, a crenellated roofline, and turreted corners inspired by the design of the Chicago Water Tower.<sup>38</sup> In 1925, the first enamel brick White Castle was built in St. Louis; all of their buildings prior to this point had been made of wood or cement block and then painted white. Billy Ingram preferred the appearance of the enameled brick restaurants and was supported by the White Castle Engineering and Construction Superintendent, Lloyd W. Ray, who said "the white glazed brick is the best money can buy, is artistically built...and is very sanitary."<sup>39</sup> The Tiffany Brick Company supplied the white enameled brick used to build the early White Castle restaurants.<sup>40</sup> Sadly, the relationship between White Castle and Tiffany Brick was short-lived. It lasted until White Castle chose to erect a steel substructure with porcelain enamel panels. The use of Tiffany Brick in the Silhan home and the early White Castle restaurants did create a powerful visual connection for some neighborhood residents. Robert Silhan Junior remembered fondly to Ken and Mary Mottet that neighborhood children used to refer to his home as the Castle.

### **Modernism in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

The Art Moderne movement in architecture evolved out of the style that has come to be called Art Deco (after the 1925 Paris Exhibition called L'Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes). After the end of World War I, people were looking to enjoy daily life through music, dance, dress, and literature. The average citizen

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<sup>37</sup> Ingram, E.W. 'All This From a 5-Cent Hamburger!' The Story of the White Castle System. New York: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1970, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Hogan, David Gerard. 'Selling 'em by the Sack': White Castle and the Creation of American Food. New York: New York University Press, 1997, p. 30.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>40</sup> History of Tiffany Brick Company. Retrieved 5 July 2006  
<[http://www.museum.sui.edu/university\\_museum/museum\\_classrooms\\_grant/...rers/school\\_page\\_s/momencehistory/webpages/finishedtiffanybrick.html](http://www.museum.sui.edu/university_museum/museum_classrooms_grant/...rers/school_page_s/momencehistory/webpages/finishedtiffanybrick.html)>.

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who was recovering from the rationing and dark days of the war sought to erase the memory through looser spending and frivolous leisure entertainments. It was felt that this carefree attitude needed to be translated to the built environment in order to reflect the fresh face of society. Austrian architect<sup>41</sup>, Adolf Loos best explained, "The black bottom and the Charleston typify the new rhythm of modern life. An architect of today, to be successful must be able to translate that rhythm into something of beauty in brick and stone."<sup>42</sup> Art movements that coincided with the introduction of the Art Deco style were the Cubist Movement in France and Czechoslovakia and the Futurists in Italy. The Cubist concept of art can be generally described as the viewing of an object from several different perspectives simultaneously.<sup>43</sup> The Cubist movement presents a static piece devoid of fluidity or motion. Meanwhile, the Futurists in Italy were very against the Cubist movement and sought to incorporate a sense of motion or movement into their work. The Futurist Manifesto states, "We, on the contrary, with points of view pertaining essentially to the future, seek for a style of motion, a thing which has never been attempted before us."<sup>44</sup> Both movements, despite their opposing philosophies, contributed elements to Art Deco Architecture, strong lines and planes influenced general building form while Futurist fluidity and movement influenced ornamentation.

Art Deco architecture in Chicago is most apparent in the city's skyscrapers built during the 1930s, which characteristically had a stepped back design and emphasized a soaring verticality through the placement of windows and vertical fluting on the facade. The facade and general design employed a balanced massing and symmetrical floors plans and elevations. Art Deco buildings appeared to have a smooth, thin exterior wall to cover the steel substructure underneath. The smooth walls were ornamented using straight lines, zigzags, chevrons, and low relief sculptured panels for affixed ornamentation. The low relief panels were crucial to emphasize the thin sheathing on the substructure while on the interior thin veneers of expensive organic materials were

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<sup>41</sup> One of Adolf Loos' finest residential designs is the Adolph Muller House, built in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1930.

<sup>42</sup> Gebhard, David. The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America. New York: Preservation Press, 1996, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Varian, Elayne H. "American Art Deco Architecture." New York: Finch College Museum of Art, 1974, p.1.

<sup>44</sup> Hillier, Bevis. "Art Deco of the 20s and 30s." London: Studio Vista, 1968, p. 30.

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applied.<sup>45</sup> Art Deco architects explored new age materials and metal alloys in their designs. The use of bronze, nickel, lead, zinc, and the popular aluminum was employed in door and window framing, spandrels, interior and exterior sculpture as well as for elevators doors.<sup>46</sup> These excellent examples include the Chicago Board of Trade and the Palmolive Building.

American Art Deco architecture, most frequently seen in New York, Miami and California, became widely accepted and its design sensibilities were translated into the design of small appliances and household products to appear new and different. The design elements and angles employed by American Art Deco also began to dominate jewelry, furniture, interior design, posters, and graphic art.

### **Art Moderne**

After the Great Depression, a less exuberant and ornamental architecture was considered more appropriate for a country experiencing economic recovery. The Art Moderne style emerged with ornamentation limited to such elements as the employment of new materials, softened corners, and racing stripes. The Art Moderne also emphasized horizontality, as opposed to Art Deco's verticality, through flat roofs and terraces.

Art Moderne best describes the style of the Silhan House, and it is a particularly fine example of the style. In the 1930s, the Art Deco and Art Moderne were often fused together on larger commercial buildings combining the upward thrust of vertical fluting with horizontally banded windows or layered color schemes. In addition, both styles were in their times equally as well received and translated into household furnishings and accessories. As necessary as the 1925 Paris Exposition was to the acceptance of modernism in America, Art Moderne cannot simply be seen as a smaller division of Art Deco. As integrated as the two modern forms were, perhaps their relationship is better understood as two sides of the same coin – each unique, yet interdependent, the end product drawing inspiration from differing sources. Art Moderne received inspiration from various European art movements, a quickly advancing technological society, and the desire to simplify during the Great Depression.

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<sup>45</sup> McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

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One of the earlier influences of Art Moderne occurred in 1898 when Jan Kotera was appointed professor at the Prague School of Decorative Arts. Kotera then called for Czechoslovakia to “open the windows into Europe” and “to catch up to and outdistance Europe.”<sup>47</sup> In 1908, at the founding of the Association of Architects of the Manes Group, Janak best described the future of International architecture, “The spirit of the new style is already defined...it includes geometric forms, prismatic and cubic, the most intrinsic essentials of all forms, purged of everything secondary...with the function of decoration transposed to only accentuating, which, like framing or underscoring, lacks all independent form.”<sup>48</sup> The Bauhaus/International Style that emerged, including such luminaries as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe, featured curved bays, bands of fenestration, stepped terraces, and square-shaped buildings that were prevalent in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Poland, and Switzerland.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the influence of the ‘new’ European architecture in the United States there was a new focus on transportation and speed. Americans, by the 1930s, had a multitude of high-speed and varied forms of transportation available. By 1933, passenger airplanes had flown in both directions over the Atlantic and had the ability to fly 5,650 miles non-stop.<sup>50</sup> Car travel affected the average citizen more dramatically. In 1910, 181,000 cars were manufactured in the United States, by 1930 there were four million cars manufactured per year. In 1933, there was one car registered on the road for every five Americans. In 1924, these cars traveled on 31,000 miles of paved road, a growth from 2,300 miles ten years prior. Road was being laid at the rate of 6,000 miles a year.<sup>51</sup> The cost of an automobile continued to decrease as production increased, allowing more people to be car owners – in 1908, the cost of a car was \$850, by 1914 it was \$490, and

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<sup>47</sup> Von Vegesack, Alexander. Czech Cubism: Architecture, Furniture, and Decorative Arts 1910-1925. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992, p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> Von Vegesack, Alexander. Czech Cubism: Architecture, Furniture, and Decorative Arts 1910-1925. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992, p. 35.

<sup>49</sup> Bayer, Patricia. Art Deco Architecture: Design, Decoration and Detail from the Twenties and Thirties. New York: Harry N Abrams, Inc., 1992, p. 60.

<sup>50</sup> Burchard, John and Bush-Brown, Albert. The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1967, p. 252.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 253.

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by 1926 it reached the low price of \$260.<sup>52</sup> Until the New York Motor Show of 1926, American cars were available only in black. At the Motor Show pyroxylin paints, including Florentine Cream, Versailles Violet, and Wedgewood Green, were introduced. The opportunity to choose a color helps to illustrate that cars were beginning to be available to everyman and must therefore fit their tastes.<sup>53</sup> Moving places quickly, previously unattainable by most Americans, was now becoming a component of daily life. In doing so, such design concepts as streamlining, the teardrop shape, curvilinear forms, and simplified form became a common part of the designer's vocabulary.

During the 1930s, the profession of industrial design was emerging. The industrial designer in the United States became a key figure in the blending of art and industry in everyday life. These professionals considered their calling as one of social and artistic merit and they took it very seriously. Designer, Walter Dorwin Teague, stated, "Every man who plans the shape and line and color of an object—whether it is a painting, statue, chair, sewing machine, house, bridge, or locomotive—is an artist."<sup>54</sup> Some of the more famed designers of the period included Norman Bel Geddes, Teague, Raymond Loewy, Henry Dreyfuss, Kem Weber, Paul T. Frankl, and Harold Van Dorren.<sup>55</sup> The designers came to understand that Americans since the Depression had reevaluated the frills and luxury of the Art Deco and found them superfluous – simplification, efficiency and economy were of a higher value. Designer Henry Dreyfuss explains the process of product design, "The designer learned a great deal about clean, graceful design. He learned to junk useless protuberances and ugly corners", he also quipped, the process should be called "cleanlining instead of streamlining."<sup>56</sup> Raymond Loewy designed both art and appliances. Loewy moved from Paris to New York, where he opened his design office in 1930, designing graphics for Vogue and Harper's Bazaar while creating eye-catching window displays for department stores. He later worked for various commercial

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<sup>52</sup> Roth, Leland M. A Concise History of American Architecture. New York: Harper and Row, 1979, p. 231.

<sup>53</sup> Bush, Donald J. The Streamlined Decade. New York: George Braziller, 1975, p. 16.

<sup>54</sup> Wilson, Richard Guy; Pilgrim, Dianne H.; and Tashjian, Dickran. The Machine Age in America: 1918-1941. New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1986, p. 40.

<sup>55</sup> Gebhard, David. The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America. New York: Preservation Press, 1996, p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> Arceneaux, Marc. Streamline: Art and Design of the Forties. San Francisco: Troubador Press, 1947, p. 393.

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entities, including Sears, the Pennsylvania Railroad, and Studebaker. While working for these companies, he designed Coldspot Refrigerators, train engines, and car bodies.<sup>57</sup>

One of the more colorful industrial designers was Norman Bel Geddes. Bel Geddes initial area of expertise was theater design. His skills soon encompassed restaurant design and then industrial arts, all of which were inspired by modes of transportation, manufacturing efficiencies, and aerodynamic bodies. Bel Geddes famously entreated twenty of his staff members in their off time to create concepts that had no monetary restrictions, obeyed the laws of physics, and engineering and were beneficial to people. The resulting work was published in his book, *Horizons*, in 1932.<sup>58</sup> The book addressed issues ranging from housing to transportation and took inspiration from the shape of the teardrop and ocean liner.<sup>59</sup> The first streamlined ocean liner concept was actually created in 1927 by Bel Geddes. His plan was executed in 1932 on the Queen Mary which featured two smoke stacks, Art Deco salons, and a shopping concourse.<sup>60</sup>

Other industrial designers dabbled in transportation design. Products included Kuhler's 1928 concept redesign of New York Central's J-1 Hudson Train, Franz Kruckenberg and Curt Stedefeld's forty-passenger 'rail zeppelin' that moved by propeller propulsion, and a Loewy- designed ferryboat for the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1933.<sup>61</sup> Bel Geddes redesigned the Rail Zeppelin in 1932 without a propeller and with a focus on lightweight, smooth finishes, and a low center of gravity in the guise of a ten-car train. This design concept was manufactured by the Pullman Car and Manufacturing Company of Chicago in the form of *The City of Salina* – a 116-seat passenger train that could travel as fast as 110 miles per hours and could cruise at ninety. The train was the first streamlined Zephyr and made a twenty-two state tour that included sixty-eight stops and covered over 130,000 miles, including a visit to the Chicago Fair of 1934 where it was a big hit, attracting over 1.5 million visitors.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Bush, Donald J. *The Streamlined Decade*. New York: George Braziller, 1975, p. 20.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> Bayer, Patricia. *Art Deco Architecture: Design, Decoration and Detail from the Twenties and Thirties*. New York: Harry N Abrams, Inc., 1992, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> Bush, Donald J. *The Streamlined Decade*. New York: George Braziller, 1975, p. 47.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, pages 49-59.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, pages 61-64.



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In addition, *Horizons* addressed modern housing. Bel Geddes suggested that the cost of home ownership was excessive due to inefficient planning and unnecessary ornamentation. He argued that service areas of the home should be organized with the efficiency of the factory and should work as easily, and as much as possible, using the aid of machinery in preparation. He also denounced the loss of garden space usurped by the freestanding garage.<sup>63</sup> Bel Geddes recommended that every room should enjoy direct sunlight and a view of vegetation, that bands of windows are best employed to spread light, that radiators should be placed under windows for energy efficiency, and that built-in furniture should be employed to create a sense of spaciousness and promote sanitation. Also, he felt that pitched roofs should be eliminated as concrete could support the weight of snow or rain while flat roofs would allow additional space for terraces.<sup>64</sup> Curved bays, horizontal bands of windows, terraces and flat roofs became prevalent in Moderne houses although relatively few were actually built. Robert Silhan's design for 3728 Cuyler Avenue is generally less curved and more cubist. However, Silhan incorporated several characteristics promoted by Norman Bel Geddes including an attached garage, flat roofs, ample fenestration, and a projecting curved bay. On the interior, Silhan's home places radiators under windows and incorporates built-ins where appropriate.

The dissemination of the Art Moderne and Streamline Moderne movement was achieved through frequent articles by industrial designers in home and women's magazines espousing the benefits of efficiency and energy savings. In addition, during this time period a renewed interest in the geometric design of Native American handicrafts and culture was ushered in with the assistance of Dorothy Smith's 1936 book, entitled *Decorative Art of the Southwest Indians*.<sup>65</sup> The geometric shape of adobe homes and the ornaments on pottery and blankets were sometimes applied to building form and ornamentation. Owners who wanted to update the look of their property often turned to several Moderne ornamental treatments. These symbols of progress influenced an owner who wished to change the exterior of his building to appear up-to-date, while avoiding the costs of new construction, which was frequently cost prohibitive in the late 1930s. The most widely accepted ornamental archetype of the Moderne modernization

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<sup>63</sup> Geddes, Norman Bel. *Horizons*. Hallandale, Florida: New World Book Manufacturing Co, Inc.: 1932, p. 124.

<sup>64</sup> Geddes, Norman Bel. *Horizons*. Hallandale, Florida: New World Book Manufacturing Co, Inc.: 1932.

<sup>65</sup> Bayer, Patricia. *Art Deco Architecture: Design, Decoration and Detail from the Twenties and Thirties*. New York: Harry N Abrams, Inc., 1992, p. 50.

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movement was the speed stripe, usually in a group of three, along the exterior of the building in a vivid color or chrome.<sup>66</sup> The racing stripe motif was employed in high-style examples of Moderne including Walter Dorwin Teague's design for Texaco gas stations, as well as, Lee Simonson and Raymond Loewy's model for an industrial designer's office exhibited at the 1934 Contemporary Industrial Art Exhibition in New York.<sup>67</sup>

Because the Art Moderne style was applied to a variety of building types ranging from skyscrapers to single-family residences, there is quite a variance in the shape and styling of the buildings created. The general theme of Art Moderne buildings, regardless of their size or usage, was to create a sense of movement while a smooth exterior sheathing was applied to suggest if not that the building was a machine itself that it was at least made by a machine.<sup>68</sup> This smoothness was often accomplished through white stucco; however, smaller commercial buildings often used thin sheets of an opaque, slightly reflective glass, such as vitrolite or Carrara, sometimes a porcelain enamel was employed.<sup>69</sup> In addition to the materials used, smoothness was communicated through rounded corners and, in some cases, rounded projecting bays. Like Art Deco, Moderne architecture utilized materials such as metal alloys for window and door edgings and glass in bands of windows. The horizontal banding window layout was often mimicked in a small coping along the parapet of a roof and in horizontal lines or grooves around the building. The horizontality of the building would also be emphasized through flat roofs and terraces. The obvious focus of Moderne architecture was the horizontal; however, some buildings would also employ a minimum of Art Deco verticality, mostly likely around the building's entrance.<sup>70</sup> The Moderne also utilized reflective surfaces when possible, including mirrors, aluminum, and glass, as well as, more new age materials such

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<sup>66</sup> Greif, Martin. Depression Modern: The Thirties Style in America. New York: Universe Books, 1975, p. 35.

<sup>67</sup> Arceneaux, Marc. Streamline: Art and Design of the Forties. San Francisco: Troubador Press, 1947, p. 363.

<sup>68</sup> Gebhard, David. The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America. New York: Preservation Press, 1996, p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, p. 11.

<sup>70</sup> Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780. London: MIT Press, 1969, p. 241.

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as Bakelite, Formica, chrome, and stainless steel.<sup>71</sup> Glass blocks were often used to provide a diffused light without the transference of heat ordinary glass would emit.

The choice of Art Moderne was more common in small commercial buildings nationwide; however, examples of high-style residences tended to be much more regionally accepted. They were more commonly found in Southern California during the 1930s and 1940s. Examples in other areas, particularly the Midwest, are mostly limited to simply designed structures that have a boxy shape and few other Moderne attributes. The 'of-the-moment attitude' of the Art Moderne and its application to smaller commercial buildings was its primary selling point, it captures a transient style so related to fashion and taste that most Moderne structures have been replaced by buildings more 'of-the-moment' today. As a result of Art Moderne's temporary nature and the use of some cheaper materials, especially in commercial structures, approximately three-fourths of all Moderne buildings constructed during the 1930s have been demolished.<sup>72</sup>

During the years of recovery from the Depression the pared down simplicity of the Streamlined Moderne was utilized for some high profile, high style commercial buildings. In 1936-37, Robert V Derrah erected the elegant streamlined Coca-Cola Bottling Company in Los Angeles.<sup>73</sup> The building employed nautical motifs such as porthole windows, a deck on the second level, a ship's bridge, and surfaces and framing that appeared to be riveted steel. Another beautiful example of Streamlined Moderne is the Johnson Wax Administration Building in Racine, Wisconsin, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright from 1936-39.<sup>74</sup> The tower of the building is a tall rectangular structure with curved corners and alternating horizontal bands of continuous windows and spandrels demarcating the different floors.

Streamlined Moderne was effective as a singular visual landmark, as well as, a formulaic-applied decorative motif to a chain of businesses. A modern, uniform look can be readily identified. The instantaneous recognition that a uniform appearance allows is especially useful for those buildings that relied on a car-culture clientele. These included

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<sup>71</sup> Wilson, Richard Guy; Pilgrim, Dianne H.; and Tashjian, Dickran. The Machine Age in America: 1918-1941. New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1986, p. 25.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>73</sup> Bayer, Patricia. Art Deco Architecture: Design, Decoration and Detail from the Twenties and Thirties. New York: Harry N Abrams, Inc., 1992, p. 17.

<sup>74</sup> Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780. London: MIT Press, 1969, p. 243.

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diners, gas stations and transportation buildings. Diners began to employ chrome and neon signage. Texaco Gas employed Walter Dorwin Teague to create several different, yet consistently themed, designs for their gas stations. By 1940 there were over 500 versions of Teague's 1936 design; most employed racing stripes, curved corners, and curving windows for product display space.<sup>75</sup> The design of Greyhound Bus Depots usually incorporated glass bricks, reflective panels, and racing stripes in various metals.

A large-scale example of a government-subsidized project employing a Moderne characteristic would be Teague's design for Hoover Dam. Hoover Dam was constructed between 1931 and 1935. It featured a large sweeping curve as its main visual component and included four Art Deco intake towers. On the Nevada side of the dam are Art Deco sculptures by Oskar J.W. Hansen called the Winged Figures of the Republic completed in 1940.<sup>76</sup> A streamlined example of a Works Progress Administration building can be seen at the Aquatic Park Casino in San Francisco constructed in 1935.<sup>77</sup> The Casino has curved edges, portholes, and ship railings in its design.

In spite of the commercial, governmental, and artistic acceptance of industrial design and, to some extent Moderne architecture, residential architects were more wary of universally adopting an architectural style perceived to be so 'of-the-moment' and transitory. There was a real dichotomy in the architectural press. Architectural periodicals in the 1930s were featuring Cape Cods and Colonial style residences next to contemporary housing. At the same time that these periodicals were awarding prizes to traditional styles or slight variants, they were also soliciting designs for contemporary residence competitions. At almost the same time that the first building in Colonial Williamsburg was opened to the public (1932)<sup>78</sup>, the Swan Acres subdivision near Pittsburgh (1934-38) and Park Moderne in Los Angeles (1929-34) were restricting home designs to modern architecture.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Bayer, Patricia. Art Deco Architecture: Design, Decoration and Detail from the Twenties and Thirties. New York: Harry N Abrams, Inc., 1992, p. 168.

<sup>76</sup> Bush, Donald J. The Streamlined Decade. New York: George Braziller, 1975, p. 131.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>78</sup> Wilson, Richard Guy; Pilgrim, Dianne H.; and Tashjian, Dickran. The Machine Age in America: 1918-1941. New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1986, p. 38.

<sup>79</sup> Gebhard, David. The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America. New York: Preservation Press, 1996, p. 12.

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The Chicago Century of Progress Fair of 1933-34 was perceived as an opportunity for Chicago to prominently reappear on the architectural scene following several years of comparatively minimal exposure. It also would be an opportunity to update the city's image after its focus on classicism for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The first design meeting, held on May 23, 1928, released the statement that the architecture of the Fair would "illustrate in definite form the development of the art of architecture since the great Fair of 1893, not only as in America, but in the world at large. New elements of construction, products of modern invention and science, will be factors in the architectural composition... The architecture of the world is undergoing a great change. It has shown those signs that indicate the birth of a great fresh impulse."<sup>80</sup> Norman Bel Geddes was originally employed as the visual designer for the fair. Even though he was later released from this position and his Fair Pavilions remained unbuilt, his streamline sensibility appeared in individual exhibitor booths, transportation vehicles used on fair grounds, and was applied to the surface of some of the larger pavilion buildings.<sup>81</sup> Their ornament consisted of racing stripes, moderne lettering, projecting horizontal ledges, curvilinear walls, and low-relief sculptures. These buildings received wide public exposure. Thirty-eight million visitors came during the Fair's seventeen-month run, between 1933 and 1934.<sup>82</sup> When the Century of Progress Fair reopened in 1934, it had more streamlined architecture, including the new Hiram Walker Canadian Club Café, Swift Bridge and Open Air Theatre.<sup>83</sup> The 1933-34 Chicago Fair was the first American exposition to incorporate Moderne architecture.

The most influential exhibit at the Fair was the collection of twelve modern homes that displayed strides made in domestic architecture over the last 100 years.<sup>84</sup> The homes were intended to display either a type of material that could be mass-produced and

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<sup>80</sup> Schrenk, Lisa Diane. The Role of the 1933-1934 Century of Progress International Exposition in the Development and Promotion of Modern Architecture in the United States. Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1998, p. 129.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>82</sup> Bayer, Patricia. Art Deco Architecture: Design, Decoration and Detail from the Twenties and Thirties. New York: Harry N Abrams, Inc., 1992, p. 41.

<sup>83</sup> Schrenk, Lisa Diane. The Role of the 1933-1934 Century of Progress International Exposition in the Development and Promotion of Modern Architecture in the United States. Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1998, p. 266.

<sup>84</sup> "Trends in House Design at a Century of Progress". American Architect. Vol 143. July 1933: 22-29, p. 22.

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fabricated on-site by inexperienced builders or a particular style of living. Of these homes, nine of the ten feature flat roofs; five employed steel structural skeleton; one was made of reinforced brick, and four were wood-framed.<sup>85</sup> The structural steel homes had a secondary applied material that served as sheathing; these were manufactured in larger pieces so as to cut down on construction time and costs. The two homes identified as Moderne were the Masonite House by Frazier and Raftery and the Design For Living Home by John C.B. Moore and Horsley and Wood Associated.<sup>86</sup>

On September 22, 1933, all local business in Berwyn closed at noon so that residents could go the Century of Progress World's Fair during the Fair's "Berwyn Days".<sup>87</sup> It may have been during "Berwyn Days" that Robert Silhan first attended the Century of Progress Fair. His son, Robert Junior, shared that his father had visited the Fair a number of times and had taken inspiration for his residence at 3728 S. Cuyler Avenue during these visits. The elements he adopted from the Moderne houses he had seen at the Fair included the use of Masonite on interior walls, flat roofs, and the use of a projecting bay and terraces.

### **Berwyn Moderne Architecture**

There are some handsome large non-residential buildings in Berwyn that were designed during the 1930s in the Art Deco or Moderne style. The Works Progress Administration constructed the Berwyn City Hall in 1939 from the plans of Burnham and Hammond, Incorporated. The building was built in a simplified Art Deco, sometimes known as WPA Modern. The City Hall has limestone sheathing with engaged triangular columns, Art Deco lettering, and sculptures in low relief above the main entrance. The building incorporates the City Hall entrance on the east elevation, while the Berwyn Public Library entrance was located on the west elevation.<sup>88</sup> Two blocks east of the Berwyn City Hall, or Municipal Building, is the Suburban Health Center. This building was designed by Vladimir J. Novak and was constructed in 1939.<sup>89</sup> This building is

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<sup>85</sup> "Trends in House Design at a Century of Progress". *American Architect*. Vol 143. July 1933: 22-29, p. 22.

<sup>86</sup> Brown, Frank Chouteau. "Chicago and Tomorrow's House". *Pencil Points*. Vol XIV, Number 6. June 1933: 245-251, p. 248.

<sup>87</sup> Deuchler, Douglas. *Images of America: Berwyn*. Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2005, p. 85.

<sup>88</sup> "Berwyn's Municipal Building." *Chicago Daily Tribune*. August 14, 1938: page 16.

<sup>89</sup> "Suburban Health Center." *Chicago Daily Tribune*. August 14, 1938: page 16.

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sheathed in limestone and incorporates both vertical and horizontal design elements. The main facade is centered by a tower that extends slightly above the roofline and is divided by four engaged pilasters that create three recessed vertical bands of windows. The rest of the two-story building is slightly set back from the tower and has horizontal Moderne stripes carved into the limestone; this striping is also on the projecting entrance. Both of these buildings stand on 26<sup>th</sup> Street at the west end of a bustling commercial district. The rest of the buildings on 26<sup>th</sup> Street are not from a consistent time period; however, there are a few small buildings that have Moderne characteristics. A good example of an Art Moderne building is seen at 6642 26<sup>th</sup> Street located on the south side of the street between the Berwyn City Hall and the Health Center. It features a curved wall by the entrance, seven grooved racing stripes on the second level, interrupted by two bands of windows, and above the entrance an octagonal window framed in brick.

Piper School is located in the south side of Berwyn, near the Silhan home. It was designed by the Berwyn firm of Ashby, Ashby & Schulze, and was constructed in 1925.<sup>90</sup> The school is a visual landmark and more characteristically Art Deco than Art Moderne. The entrance on the north elevation features a large, red terra cotta panel with three entrances between four engaged pilasters with vertical fluting. Above the doorways are low-relief panels featuring opposing wings and just above are pairs of spandrels that feature a geometric shape in low-relief sculpture. Pershing School is located at the corner of 37<sup>th</sup> Street and East Avenue, which is approximately six blocks from the Silhan home. Pershing School features a projecting semicircular bay that contains five windows. The windows are each separated by a brick pilaster. The entrance on the south side of the school also features decorative pilasters that soar two stories in height emphasizing Art Deco verticality. Additional ornamentation on the building is confined to carvings on the limestone lentils above some of the windows. The carvings consist of a triangle within a triangle where the base is the bottom of the lentil and the supporting lines feature a soft curve that hints at the Moderne. The school straddles Art Deco and Art Moderne stylistically as mostly clearly evidenced in the limestone lentil and sill that contain the original aluminum windows.

Berwyn is fortunate to have six good examples of single-family houses in the Art Moderne style – the Silhan house on Cuyler Avenue, 3434 Lombard Avenue, 1850

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<sup>90</sup> Historic Preservation Program, Preservation Planning Studio. City of Berwyn Preservation Plan. Chicago: School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1999.

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Ridgeland Avenue, 7108 Riverside Drive, 6938 Riverside Drive, and 6549 28<sup>th</sup> Place. The 3434 Lombard Avenue house is two-stories with a projecting bay for the attached garage on the east elevation. The home is built of clay brick and employs steel windows on all facades. The home features a flat roof and terrace over the garage, both of which have a small metal coping over the parapet wall. Additional ornamentation exists in the use of recessed bricks, creating a dashed horizontal line, over each of the windows. The second floor has a glass block window with recessed bricks on both the vertical and horizontal sides, located just above the garage. On the 3500 block of Lombard Avenue, the same bricklayer employed at 3434 Lombard worked on five houses: 3511, 3513, 3517, 3527, and 3537. The houses all have pitched roofs and three sides of common brick with the front facade being a face brick featuring a limited amount of applied Moderne ornamentation. All of the houses feature racing stripes in a contrasting brick color – the stripes do not run completely across the facade but are a more centralized application with the exception being the line directly under the roof eave. In addition, some of the homes also feature an octagonal window on the second level above the main entrance. These homes are not strong examples of the Moderne style but their applied ornamentation is products of that style.

At 1850 Ridgeland Avenue the house stands two stories tall with a semi-circular, two-story bay projecting off the east elevation. The bay features two large windows composed of glass block. The other windows in this home have been replaced with vinyl but still read as horizontal bands. The front entrance is covered with a curved overhang that has five grooves running horizontally. Additionally, the home features projecting bricks over the windows; these create a dashed horizontal line. The roof is flat, and approximately two feet below the roofline is a horizontal band created by recessing every other brick around the homes perimeter.

The Moderne house at 7108 Riverside Drive is a two story centralized structure with a one story bay for the garage projecting off of the northwest corner of the home. The residence features a two story vertical strip of glass block windows to the right of the main entrance, as well as curved wall to the left of the main entrance that also contains a large glass block window. The entrance is covered by a projecting eave that also connects above the curved wall and terminates at the flat roof of the garage. The eave is intended for use as a terrace with entry gained through an exterior door on the second floor, to the left of the door is the smallest usage of glass block as seen in two block wide vertical window. The terrace is emphasized through the employment of a black pipe railing. The



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house also features a porthole window on the south wall of the garage bay. The flat roof of the garage is not repeated on the centralized structure, which instead features an asphalt shingled hipped roof. Also, the residence has lost much of its historic fabric through the replacement of its original windows with white vinyl windows.

At 6938 Riverside Drive is a two story centralized residence with a projecting garage bay on the southeast elevation of the house. The residence employs centralized racing stripes above the garage door and around the corner of the structure. The residence retains wonderful historic integrity through its original windows and garage door. Similar to the residence at 7108 Riverside Drive, the projecting garage bay has a flat roof while the centralized structure has a hipped roof. In addition, like the other home on Riverside and that on Lombard, the residence has sharp rather than rounded corners.

Finally at 6549 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the residence is a centralized two-story structure. Its Moderne features include a semi-circular projecting bay window on the north elevation and a glass block window on the west elevation. The south elevation has stronger ornamentation including a flat terrace accessible from the second level of the house, a porthole window on the second floor above the main entrance, and a series of three single block vertical windows to the left of the main entrance. This elevation also features two separate bandings of racing stripes – one on the first level and one on the second level – both composed of projecting rows of brick. The structure is capped with a low, hipped roof. Unfortunately, the home has lost much of its integrity through the replacement its original windows with a wooden multi-paned colonial-inspired variant.

Although the residences at 3434 Harlem, both of those on Riverside Drive, and the residence on 26<sup>th</sup> Street, are distinctly different from the bungalows and more traditional-looking housing in Berwyn, overall the Art Moderne characteristics feel applied as opposed to a Moderne building in its entirety. This is a result of the lacking fluidity, so characteristic of the Moderne style, that is absent because of the hard corners of the two story structures and projecting garage bays. The house at 1850 Ridgeland, however, is clearly Art Moderne, featuring characteristic elements and the feel of fluidity. Yet it doesn't read as strongly as an example of a high-style Art Moderne home as does the Silhan home on Cuyler Avenue. The glazed Tiffany brick on Cuyler Avenue creates a smooth exterior that is not found on the clay bricks of the other residences. Additionally, the protruding or recessing bricks of the comparable examples disrupt the smoothness characteristic of Moderne architecture while attempting to add ornament.

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The Silhan home is the only residence to feature rounded corners and to be truly streamlined, while the other properties are squared off and blocky. Finally, the Silhan home is the only property to have fully articulated racing stripes, which in itself is probably the most iconic characteristic of the Moderne style. Despite its comparatively modest size, this residence is truly a strong example of high-style Art Moderne architecture and is eligible for listing on the National Register. The home retains a high level of integrity on the interior and exterior, as a result of having two generations of the Silhan family as owners. The Silhan home is also fortunate to have its current owners who truly value the wonderful piece of architecture they own. The Mottets are returning the original entry door to its rightful location, have begun to replicate the black and silver trim on the home's interior, and plan to reproduce a historically accurate overhanging for the patio in the backyard, and to replace the pipe handrail that was removed from the terrace above the attached garage.

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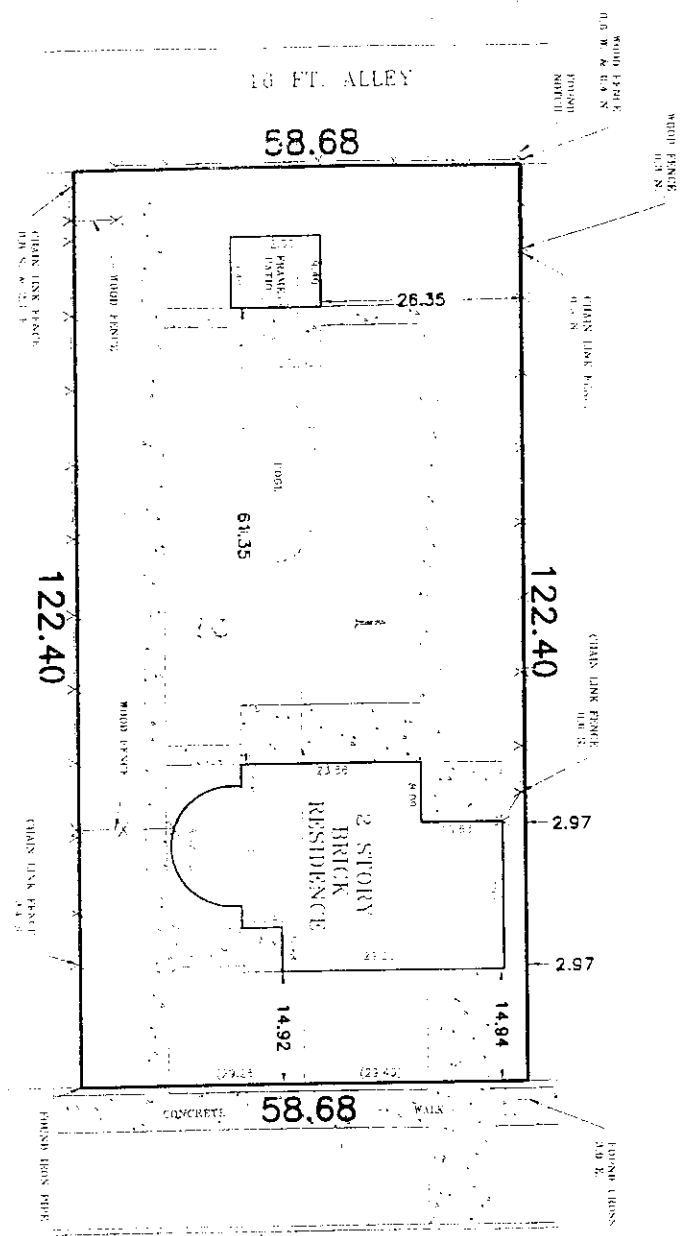
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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lots 1 and 2 in the subdivision of the south half of Lot 18 in Butler's Subdivision of the north half of the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 32, Township 39 North, Range 13, East of the Third Principal Meridian, in Cook County, Illinois.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

The residence being nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places includes the property historically owned by Robert Silhan and currently owned by Ken and Mary Mottet. The boundary is described in the above legal description.



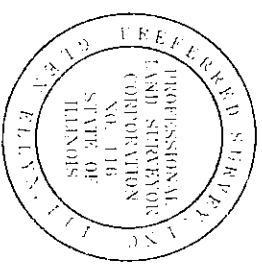
S. CUYLER AVENUE

3728 S. Cuyler  
Berwyn, IL 60402  
PIN 16-32-316-026-0000

LOTS 1 AND 2 IN THE SUBDIVISION OF THE SOUTH HALF OF LOT 18 IN BUTLER'S SUBDIVISION OF THE NORTH HALF OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 32, TOWNSHIP 39 NORTH, RANGE 13, EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

**SURVEY, INC.**

100 S. State, Suite 300/3100, Chicago, IL 60606  
Phone from Home: 0237



THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT WE, FOREFARER, PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR CORPORA THE PROPERTY DESCRIBED HEREON AND HEREON IS A CORRECT REPRESENTATION DIMENSIONS SHOWN HEREON ARE IN THE GIVEN UNDER OTHER HAND AND SEAL AT THIS DAY OF 2005.

*Robert J. Hester*  
ILLINOIS PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR

FOR: MESSRS. A. H. HESTER & SONS  
PROFESSIONAL NATIONAL TITLE





LISTED, 2/21/07  
(Florida's New Deal Resources MPS)

FLORIDA, PALM BEACH COUNTY,  
Northboro Park Historic District,  
Bounded by 40th N, Flagler Dr., 36th St. and Broadway, West Palm Beach, 07000059, LISTED,  
2/20/07

FLORIDA, ST. JOHNS COUNTY,  
Hastings Community Center,  
401 N. Main St.,  
Hastings, 07000057,  
LISTED, 2/21/07

IDAHO, BLAINE COUNTY,  
Ketchum Ranger District Administrative Site,  
131/171 River St.,  
Ketchum, 07000005,  
LISTED, 2/09/07

IDAHO, NEZ PERCE COUNTY,  
Children's Home Finding and Aid Society of North Idaho,  
1805 19th Ave.,  
Lewiston, 07000090,  
LISTED, 2/23/07

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Home Bank and Trust Company,  
1200 N. Ashland Ave.,  
Chicago, 07000061,  
LISTED, 2/21/07

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Silhan, Mr. Robert, House,  
3728 S. Cuyler Ave.,  
Berwyn, 07000062,  
LISTED, 2/20/07

ILLINOIS, MONTGOMERY COUNTY,  
Belevedere Cafe, Motel and Gas Station,  
817 Old Rte 66,  
Litchfield, 07000060,  
LISTED, 2/21/07  
(Route 66 through Illinois MPS)

LOUISIANA, BEAUREGARD PARISH,  
Hudson River Lumber Company General Manager's House,  
411 S. Washington Ave.,  
DeRidder, 07000068,  
LISTED, 2/21/07

LOUISIANA, BEAUREGARD PARISH,  
Sills House,  
211 W. Fourth St.,  
DeRidder, 07000067,  
LISTED, 2/21/07