

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

**1. Name of Property**Historic name: Durst, David and Mary Margaret, HouseOther names/site number: WA0899, The Durst House

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

**2. Location**Street & number: 857 Fairview DriveCity or town: Fayetteville State: Arkansas County: WashingtonNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

   national X statewide    local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

   A    B X C    DSteph Hunt  
Signature of certifying official/Title:4-3-15  
DateArkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official:\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Title :\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒  
Public – Local ☐  
Public – State ☐  
Public – Federal ☐

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s) ☒  
District ☐  
Site ☐  
Structure ☐  
Object ☐

**Number of Resources within Property**



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(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

1

structures

objects

2

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

#### 6. Function or Use

##### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

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

##### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

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

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Mid-Century Modern

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

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

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD, CONCRETE

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has

### Summary Paragraph

The David and Mary Margaret Durst House is located along Fairview Drive in Fayetteville, Arkansas, a modest sized town in the lower Ozark Mountains which is home to the University of Arkansas. The Durst House is a long, narrow, modern, flat-roofed, structure composed of two rectangular masses of different depths. The house also has a small front porch and a large deck along the rear of the house. The house was built using post and beam construction and is cantilevered at the front (north) and rear (south) sides over a poured concrete foundation. The majority of the exterior is composed of beveled edge, tongue and groove, tidewater cypress wood siding with vertical decorative battens that are evenly spaced, following the divisions of a ribbon of awning windows which line the north side of the house directly under the roofline. The flat, tar and gravel roof forms a cantilevered overhang to both the north and south sides of the house. The flat roof was an unusual residential feature at that time. It was made using tar paper over which hot tar was poured and spread, with white gravel added on top. A set of metal chimney pots on the east are joined with a metal weather cap. The house is situated on a wooded lot which slopes steeply toward the rear of the house, concealing the lower level from Fairview Drive.

### Narrative Description

The Durst House was architect John Gilbert Williams' first built residential project. The house was designed for friend and colleague David Durst, who was the Chairman of the Art Department at the University of Arkansas from 1946 to 1967, and his young family. It is one of the earliest examples of the mid-century modern movement in Arkansas, and was the result of a



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collaborative design process between the architect and Mr. and Mrs. Durst, both of whom had distinct ideas about their new home and were unafraid of experimentation.

The house is nestled into the hill along the top of the sloping site. The house is sited on the lot in order to connect with nature and to take advantage of such features as the view of the hills in the distance and the natural woods and yard. The house was deliberately designed to be altered as the family grew and as its needs changed. The Dursts believed that a home was an organic structure and should reflect the growth and changes in needs and tastes of the inhabitants. The addition, completed circa 1957, was part of the original design and plan of the house, allowing for extra space for the growing Durst family. This addition included two bedrooms, a bathroom and a unique spiral stairway.

### **North Façade (Front Elevation)**

The Durst House is situated on a wooded lot steeply sloped downward toward the south. It is cantilevered above a board formed concrete foundation. The imprint of the horizontal boards is visible, emphasizing the horizontality of the house. The front façade is composed of eleven bays, including the front door. Each bay is composed of a cypress, tongue-and-groove, wood panel topped by an awning window below the roofline except for the bay that includes the front door and porch with a window above the doorway. The roofline ribbon of awning windows extending the length of the structure also emphasizes this horizontality, broken only by the front door and an adjacent fixed-pane window which mirrors the size and shape of the door and allows a view through the house to the landscape beyond. Hand-built fieldstone retaining walls terrace the entry, holding the northern edge of the lot into a flat semi-circle driveway and garden areas. A wooden bridge walkway leads to the front door from the driveway paved with small, loose river rock.

The original front door was not covered with a louvered wood screen door, but one was added shortly after construction to allow further breezes inside while being shaded from the sun and for privacy. It has been replaced with the existing exact replica. All solid exterior doors are original, but have weathered to the point of needing replacement; they will be replaced soon with as exact copies as can be found or made, using the existing hardware. Originally, the house had no locks on the doors and no doorbell; the existing ones were added sometime in the 1970s.

A changing assortment of flowers brought color to the beds lining the driveway, and purple phlox dotted the crevices between the rocks of the retaining walls. Flowering vinca covered the shady area of the lower level near the foundation, and Bermuda grass was planted in the rest of the yard. The phlox, vinca, and grass still survive, but since the loss of the gardening talent of Mrs. Durst, the flower beds have suffered.

### **West Façade**

Shaded by trees of the natural, wooded yard on the west, the outdoor mud room is defined by another hand-built rock retaining wall on the lower level. Cypress siding covers the wall except for a ceiling height ribbon of jalousie windows for the lower level bedroom and a triangle pane



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glass window for the upper level master bedroom, following the lines of the inverted truss support within. A convenient outdoor faucet supplies the mudroom.

### **South Façade (Rear Elevation)**

The house is largely glass on the south side. The south exterior is the only elevation that clearly exposes both the upper and lower levels of the house. It is dominated by the deck and roof overhang which stretches across the living and kitchen areas (eastern section) of the upper level. Large fixed-sash panes of hurricane-resistant glass define the interior living room along the upper level deck. Along with the clearstory and baseboard awning windows above and below the panes, this window configuration not only unifies the outdoors with the interior, but also is an essential feature of the passive solar design. In addition, this open-wall structure creates a stark contrast to the opaque street elevation on the north side. The deck includes a door to the kitchen and is wide enough to accommodate outdoor dining as well as entertaining.

The western part of this volume is slightly wider than the living area and is the kitchen and bedroom area. It is slightly wider than the living area at both the front and back. It is cantilevered over the support wall like the front (north) elevation. It continues the southern glass of the facade with sets of double jalousie windows on both levels, with the original cypress siding and decorative battens. Below the deck is a later built (post 1967) enclosure of the original outdoor covered patio (positioned under the living room) which extends to the deck edge and contains an unfinished storage area along with the original patio fireplace matching the one in the living room. The storage addition has fixed-sash pane glass on the south and an entry door on the west where the room juts out under the deck. It is finished in cypress to match the original siding. Beside the lower entry door to the first expansion area downstairs, the south side has a frosted-glass window to the stair/laundry area for light and below that a wood louvered, screened opening with an interior wood awning that opens to allow for air flow during the hot months.

Repairs to the deteriorating original deck changed the roof edge to eliminate the treillage of the original. This was done both to correct drainage issues and to reduce interior heat gain in winter, due to the intense sun from the South. The stretched steel wire mesh balustrade infill was also changed to simple wood posts. Previous to the deck renovation, the wood 2x4 decking was covered with concrete in an attempt to prevent water damage to the cantilever beams and floor joists of the deck.

### **East Facade**

The main feature of the east elevation is a switch-back staircase with a short continuation of the deck wrapping around from the south side and a door to the upper living area. The bottom flight of stairs is concrete and is dug into the hill, serving as a retaining wall. The stairs lead from the lower level to a concrete pad, also serving as a retaining wall, which connects to the upper stairs. The upper flight is wood and connects to the deck. The roofline has fixed-pane glass again following the lines of the interior truss support. A door to the storage area and an unobtrusive wood door leads to a utility room that was added below the deck during the enclosure of the



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lower east basement area. The east side is graced with a large pin oak tree that has been there much longer than the house.

## **Interior**

Several original furniture pieces and Durst's paintings remain in the residence. The home's interior is dominated throughout by south-facing windows offering a views of trees and hills, expressing both the owners' and architect's desires to include the outdoors a part of the experience of daily living. Visual interest in the main living area is created by the large roman brick fireplace on the eastern wall with dual exposed chimney flues, the exposed inverted truss roof supports, extensive windows along the south wall, and a counter-height wall that opens into the adjoining kitchen and playroom. The wall surface of the interior is composed of the same cypress wall panel as the exterior, but it is sanded and shellacked. This further links the inside to the outside of the structure. The downstairs, accessed by an atypical, open spiral staircase, was an addition that was part of the original design plan to add two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a laundry area as the children grew older and the family evolved.

## **Integrity**

The residence has undergone several renovations by the Durst family since 1952. Some of the renovations include the enclosure of the previously open lower level (adding two bedrooms and a bathroom to the home and later, a storage area), the addition of the spiral staircase in the playroom (to access the lower level), the staining of the Tidewater Cypress wood siding, the removal of a second staircase off the deck on the south side of the home, and a wooden balustrade to replace the original wire mesh balustrade infill on the deck. There is a crack in the north retaining wall, and there is also some ceiling sag in the living room near the fireplace. Despite the few cosmetic exterior changes and room additions, the integrity of the design has remained faithful to the original.

The house is in good condition for a house of similar age and construction, but has some potential foundation issues which have yet to be addressed. It also needs a new roof at time of this writing. The neighborhood was formerly an upper middle class residential area containing many faculty homes as well as the home of the university President, but is now dominated by large, utilitarian University of Arkansas buildings. The unpainted and unfinished tidewater cypress exterior was a cause for much comment in the community in the 1950s and following. The raw, unfinished cypress exterior on all four sides of the home was originally intended to turn gray over time. However it became streaked and while some areas turned gray, others remained the light tan raw color or became stained dark brown from water damage. The wood was deteriorating and needed repair, and in 2005 it was repaired and a preservative stain was applied, evening out the color to the light gray that exists today.

The front and west elevations are virtually unchanged. The south (rear) elevation has changed the most with the initial planned addition of the downstairs bedrooms, bath and laundry, and then again with the deck/overhang renovation and with the enclosure of the open patio for storage. The east side has also changed slightly with the renovation of the deck and roof and the storage

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enclosure. However, all changes to the structure were made with the original sensibilities of the home intact, and the home retains the character of its original design.



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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

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

**Period of Significance**

1950-1956

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

**Significant Dates**

February 4, 1952

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

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

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

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

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

**Architect/Builder**

Architect: John G. Williams

\_\_\_\_\_



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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Durst House on Fairview Drive in Fayetteville, Arkansas, is an early example of mid-century modern residential architecture in Northwest Arkansas. This house is exceptional due to the use of new architectural forms and technologies during its construction in 1951. The Durst House was designed and built by Arkansas architect John G. Williams for David and Mary Margaret Durst and their family. The role of David Durst in the history of the University of Arkansas, as the Chairman of the Department of Art from 1946 to 1967, and his early experiences and education played an important part in the creation of his own house. The Durst house became an important gathering place for many of the influential members of the Art and Architecture communities in Arkansas and many of the University of Arkansas's visiting dignitaries. The Durst House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** with **statewide significance** as an early and influential example of mid-century modern architecture designed by architect John G. Williams in Northwest Arkansas.

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

#### **Introduction:**

The Durst House on Fairview Drive in Fayetteville, Arkansas, was built for David and Mary Margaret Durst and is the first built house designed by the notable Arkansas architect John G. Williams. It is located next door to the Hantz House (NR 11.19.2001) which was the first built house of Williams' student E. Fay Jones (American Institute of Architects Gold Medal Award winner, 1990). The Durst House is exceptional due to the use of new architectural forms and technologies during its construction in 1951. It has a number of unusual and experimental features including an exposed inverted truss roof support, open spiral staircase, and solar and thermal design features which set it apart from other homes constructed during this time period. The house's site and grounds are a part of the architectural intent and thus a vital part of the importance of the structure. Mr. and Mrs. Durst were both active in the design of their home as well as in the development of the University of Arkansas and the town of Fayetteville. The Durst House, along with the Arts Center (Edward Durell Stone, architect; NR 3.28.2008), the Noll House (Edward Durell Stone, architect; NR 1.20.2005) and the Hantz House (E. Fay Jones, architect; NR 11.19.2001) created an unusual architectural shift in Fayetteville and the Northwest Arkansas area toward the early adoption of the design principles of the new modern movement not only among regional architects but also among many local builders and developers.<sup>1</sup> By

<sup>1</sup> Williams, John G. *The Curious and the Beautiful: A Memoir History of the Architecture Program at the University of Arkansas*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1984.



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mid-1953, there were 14 buildings and homes in the small town of Fayetteville, Arkansas whose owners and builders had adopted some facet of the modern movement in their architecture.<sup>2</sup>

### **John G. Williams**

The Durst House was designed by architect John G. Williams, beginning in 1950, for local art professor and administrator David Durst and his wife Mary Margaret Durst. John G. Williams was also the designer of the later Clack House in Fayetteville, Arkansas (NR 3.2.2006). A native of Van Buren, Arkansas, Williams graduated from Oklahoma State University in 1940 with a Bachelor of Architecture degree. After teaching at Arkansas Tech and Oklahoma State University for several years each, Williams was hired by the Engineering Department at the University of Arkansas in 1946.<sup>3</sup> During the 1946-1947 school year Williams taught the only two architectural courses as well as several other engineering courses. By 1947, Williams was appointed the head of a newly created architectural division within the Engineering Department. After a series of communication errors within the Engineering Department resulted in a full selection of un-approved architectural courses being inadvertently printed in the official course catalogue for the University of Arkansas, a new Department of Architecture was created in 1948. Under the leadership of John Williams, this department transferred to the College of Arts and Sciences in 1948 with help from the University of Arkansas President Dr. Lewis Webster Jones.<sup>4</sup>

John Williams' place in Arkansas history is secured for founding the current School of Architecture at the University of Arkansas. He is also known for teaching and mentoring a large number of well-regarded, innovative, practicing architects. Williams spent the largest part of his life teaching aspiring architects. In particular, he was the first architecture teacher and mentor to AIA Gold Medal winner E. Fay Jones, before he came under the tutelage of Frank Lloyd Wright. In a fitting twist of fate, Williams' first built house is sited adjacent to the first built house of his most famous student. The Durst House, along with its neighbor the Hantz House (NR 11.19.2001) which was designed and constructed by E. Fay Jones while still a student at the University of Arkansas in 1950, are both important landmarks in the state that mark the earliest moments of the mid-century modernist residential movement in Arkansas Architecture.

### **The Durst House**

At the same time the landmark University of Arkansas Arts Center was being conceptualized and designed with David Durst's active input, the Durst family was finalizing plans for a family home. In May 1950, the Durst family closed on a hillside lot just three short blocks from where the new Arts Center would open to students the following September. David Durst invited his fellow department chair and Arts Center collaborator John Williams to design the structure.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Louchheim, Aline B. "Architecture Unites Art Center: University of Arkansas Building Fosters Group Spirit." *The New York Times* [New York, NY] 1 Nov. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, John G. *The Curious and the Beautiful: A Memoir History of the Architecture Program at the University of Arkansas*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1984. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Williams, John G. *The Curious and the Beautiful: A Memoir History of the Architecture Program at the University of Arkansas*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1984. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence, Dana Durst and Eric Durst. Family Oral History. Little Rock, Arkansas. November 2014.



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The Dursts were the perfect clients for a talented and progressive architect who was willing to listen to his clients. Although Williams had been teaching for several years, he had always focused more on his academic career rather than an independent professional career as an architect. The Durst House would become Williams' first built architectural commission. The Dursts' ideas of a simple, functional, and open design within an organic setting matched Williams' sensibilities and imagination.

The home is sited on top of a steeply sloped lot and is very close to the street right-of-way in order to take advantage of the view and other available natural elements, such as breezes and the sun. The passive solar heating and cooling design features help to control temperatures in the pre-air conditioned 1950s. These features were unusual for the time. These features are still in use, even though there are two window air-conditioning units in the house. The overhangs of the roof were carefully calculated to bring minimum sun to the interior in summer and maximum heating effect in the winter. The entire rear deck is shaded in summer and the sun reaches across the width of the living room floor in winter. Even the width of the house was calculated to take advantage of the sun, especially in the living room. Windows were strategically placed for comfortable breezes; awning windows at the roofline on the north side and at the floor and ceiling on the south side encourage and provide cross-ventilation, with the added benefit that they further emphasize living in concert with nature. The largely buried north foundation wall of the house creates one wall of the south-facing downstairs bedrooms, and is designed to maintain a more constant temperature. This keeps the downstairs cooler in summer and warmer in winter. These seasonal adjustments were rare in homes during this period.<sup>6</sup>

Although there are no outbuildings, there are manmade landscaping features such as terraced rock retaining walls of native Arkansas fieldstone that were hand-built by David Durst over several years. The shade trees and rocks in the yard also became a part of the outdoor space used by the Dursts for sculpture displays and sitting areas of natural rock. The family lived outside almost as much as inside – the lines were blurred.<sup>7</sup> They ate dinner on the deck during temperate weather, had birthday parties and scout meetings outside, and the children spent a good part of the day playing in the woods. The trees and vista of the property are a large part of the beauty and lifestyle experience of the home.

The home resulting from the design process was a low, flat roofed structure set into the hill, without many internal divisions – and without exterior paint or finished siding. It faced its first hurdle, as had the Arts Center, when the Durst family sought to finance the building cost of \$12,000.<sup>8</sup> The concept and design of the house was considered quite revolutionary for its time, although later in the century the Durst House and John Williams would be considered progressive and visionary in the mid-century modern architectural movement in Arkansas, as would David Durst in his field. After being declined for financing by both conventional sources

<sup>6</sup> The multiple passive heating and cooling design features of the home were discussed and used by the Durst Family. Lawrence, Dana Durst and Eric Durst. Family Oral History. Little Rock, Arkansas. November 2014.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Original mortgage provided by homeowner.



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(VA and FHA) for being a "too radical" design, the Dursts' good friends Sam and Henryetta Peck stepped in and loaned them the money to finance their unusual home.<sup>9</sup> Construction was finally able to begin by the summer of 1951 and the Dursts moved in on February 4, 1952. Dana Durst Lawrence remembers that passersby often revealed their contempt with comments about the house looking like a chicken coop and concerns about who on earth would want to live in an unpainted house. For a number of years after the Dursts moved in, people would barge in the front door at all hours and be shocked that anyone actually lived in such a "strange" building.<sup>10</sup>

During the original design of the house, an addition was considered and provisions were made for the eventual addition of a bathroom and two bedrooms downstairs and a laundry area. The Dursts believed that the home, as an organic structure should reflect the growth and changes in needs and tastes of the family.<sup>11</sup> John Williams made sure that the plan for the home included the ability to adapt the home to the Durst family's changing needs. The planned addition was undertaken in 1956, after the family received about \$5000 from the estate of one of Mr. Durst's uncles. In order to increase the living space and provide larger rooms for the growing children, the renovation enclosed the western half of the basement area, leaving the eastern part open. The newly constructed lower exterior matched the original exterior of beveled tidewater cypress siding and jalousie windows used on the upstairs. The remaining unenclosed area was still used as a rainy day outdoor play area, family patio, and launch pad for Fourth of July fireworks in the back yard. Later, this unenclosed area was enclosed using the same cypress on the exterior as in the original construction. The rear exterior was also changed in 1956 by removing the long outdoor staircase from the deck to the concrete area below, leaving only the east staircase from the yard to the deck. This was done in order to accommodate the new downstairs door to the outside. The construction of the spiral staircase altered the upstairs living space, and the playroom and dining space became not only the stairwell but also a den/living area. The children moved downstairs, along with their toys and library.<sup>12</sup>

When the home was featured on the 2012 Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas list of endangered places, the brochure touted it, along with E. Fay Jones' Hantz House, as "a distinctive unit of Mid-Century Modern residences that represent the important legacies of significant figures in art and architecture in Arkansas whose contributions also helped shape the University of Arkansas." - adding that "These modest scaled houses also stand out as fine examples of the adaptation of high style, Modern architecture to the distinctive terrain of the Arkansas Ozarks."<sup>13</sup>

The Durst House exudes modern concepts of organic beauty, simplicity, and minimalism. The public living spaces of the house spill into each other, inviting shared life and community. The

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence, Dana Durst and Eric Durst. Family Oral History. Little Rock, Arkansas. November 2014.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> "Seven to Save," (press release) Arkansas Historic Preservation Alliance, accessed December 19, 2014, <http://preservearkansas.org/what-we-do/most-endangered-places/2013-most-endangered-places/>.



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concepts of architecture and modern life presented by the Durst House soon became more widely used throughout Fayetteville, and were uniquely adopted quickly by many other architects and even builders in the area due to the influence of the new and quickly growing Department of Architecture at the University of Arkansas. The Durst House was one of the earliest influential structures in this movement. In noting this influence of local architectural leaders such as E. Fay Jones, John Williams and Edward Durell Stone, writer and architect A. Richard Williams wrote in the foreword to *The Curious and the Beautiful: A Memoir History of the Architecture Program at The University of Arkansas* that:

“...wholesomeness combined with a desire for and support of extraordinary design talent have been and remain the hallmark of the [University of Arkansas Architecture] school... the influx and outflow of talented faculty and students have left an indelible impression on the community, state, and region. Epitomizing this special quality, rare in America, is the widespread influence of the school on local builders. There seem to be hundreds of houses and other modest buildings reflecting the character of the School of Architecture in their natural “organic” relation to site, in the use of structure and materials, particularly wood, brick, and stone. This close, direct relation of architectural leadership to vernacular building is surely one of the ends [Frank Lloyd] Wright had in mind, but its existence in the Fayetteville community remains strangely unreported in architectural journals, books, and other media.”<sup>14</sup>

The Durst House, along with its neighbor the Hantz House (NR 11.19.2001) which was designed and constructed by E. Fay Jones while still a student at the University of Arkansas in 1950, are both important landmarks in the state that mark the earliest moments of the mid-century modernist residential movement in Arkansas Architecture. These homes, along with the contemporary Willis Noll House (NR 1.20.2005), designed and built in 1950 by Edward Durell Stone along Sequoyah Drive in Fayetteville, stand as the first demonstrations of a movement in architecture toward more modern forms thoughtfully inserted into a natural setting that would eventually filter across the state and influence architectural discussions in the state for years to come.

### **The Durst Family**

In September 1946, David and Mary Margaret Durst brought their infant daughter to settle just south of their home town of Springfield, Missouri, in Fayetteville, Arkansas. It was a small town of about 5,000 people in the hilly northwest corner of the state which was home to the University of Arkansas. Mr. Durst had been hired to chair the University of Arkansas’s newly formed Art Department, which had previously been a part of the Home Economics Department. Both Mr. and Mrs. Durst were political and intellectual progressives, unafraid to push traditional boundaries in aesthetic, philosophical, and personal pursuits. When the time came to build a home, they both took an active role in its design and function. For example, Mrs. Durst insisted

<sup>14</sup> Williams, John G. *The Curious and the Beautiful: A Memoir History of the Architecture Program at the University of Arkansas*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1984. vii-viii.



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that the original concept be changed to eliminate a wall between the kitchen and living room because she wanted full participation in any discussions going on as she prepared meals or party fare. When the downstairs was finished out, Mr. Durst designed the spiral staircase, doing the math and having it built by a local steel fabricator and adding the lumber stairs himself. They also took an active interest in shaping new possibilities at the University and in the town of Fayetteville.<sup>15</sup>

David Durst had studied art at The Art Institute of Chicago and at The Art Students' League in New York City and received his Bachelor's degree from Southwest Missouri State. He came to the University of Arkansas from the State University of Iowa in Iowa City where he both taught and earned his Master of Arts and Master of Fine Arts degrees.<sup>16</sup> He was full of energy and ideas about the teaching and interrelationships of the arts and was ready to try his hand at bringing them into action. He had been hired as Chair of the Art Department at the University of Arkansas with the promise that a new art building was a possibility, and he was eager to help make that happen. Many previous experiences had influenced his belief that art was not just one discipline but a way of looking at things, and involved a number of disciplines. He began dreaming of a grander plan than just a building for art.

Dr. Lewis Webster Jones became the new University of Arkansas President in 1947. In Dr. Jones, Durst found an ally for his ideas about the role of the arts and his desire to reflect those inclusive and collaborative ideas in the curriculum and programs in the Department of Art and the College of Arts and Sciences.<sup>17</sup> After gaining the full support of President Jones, the plan for a new, unified Arts Center began to gather steam. Preliminary plans for an art building were made and discarded. Various financing schemes were discussed and sounded out with trustees and a skeptical legislature.<sup>18</sup> There was even talk of putting a chapel in the building in order to appeal to members of the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees.<sup>19</sup> Herbert Thomas emerged as the Trustee most in tune with creating a progressive art department and a collaborative environment for all the arts. Thomas worked along with Durst and Jones to solidify their vision and find the needed funding. At some point, perhaps with later input from architect Ed Stone, the vision expanded to a building to house all the arts departments, as well as the studios, theatres and other spaces needed to house them.

David Durst is credited with the idea that Edward Durell Stone should design the building, and when Stone got the job, like minds went to work.<sup>20</sup> Stone was a native of Fayetteville and was already a rationally respected architect working out of New York City. Stone had experience with the idea that all the "fine" arts would be joined in the same building and would find collaborative energies in work and thought. Durst shared the belief in the benefits of collective

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence, Dana Durst and Eric Durst. Family Oral History. Little Rock, Arkansas. November 2014.

<sup>16</sup> "David Durst," *Whos Who in American Art*, 1947.

<sup>17</sup> Williams, John G. *The Curious and the Beautiful: A Memoir History of the Architecture Program at the University of Arkansas*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1984. 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence, Dana Durst and Eric Durst. Family Oral History. Little Rock, Arkansas. November 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Albin, Edgar A. "David Durst Gets a Well Deserved Tribute." *Arkansas Gazette* [Little Rock, AR] 17 Mar. 1968.



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energies of the various arts and was a constant collaborator in the design process of the University of Arkansas Arts Center with Stone, John Williams (Chair of the Architecture Department), Kenneth Osborn (Chair of the Music Department), and Virgil Baker (Chair of the Drama Department), as well as Jones and Thomas.

The Durst House was designed and built during an extraordinarily creative period for Mr. Durst in his art, management, and educational roles. The Arts Center garnered national acclaim and by 1953 had appeared in several national publications.<sup>21</sup> There was growing interest in his painting and teaching methods, and he was invited to lecture and exhibit on a frequent basis. He had gathered a talented and creative staff that included professors of his acquaintance such as the sculptor David Smith who had recently received a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship and Edward Millman, Durst's colleague at Iowa.<sup>22</sup> A cooperative exhibit of faculty work was held at the Bertha Schaefer Gallery in New York City where Durst exhibited regularly. Durst was also building a program in Basic Arts for the College of Arts and Sciences as well as collaborating on a Humanities program – both were the type of broad, collaborative effort that were a part of Durst's entire lifestyle and teaching philosophy.<sup>23</sup>

The Durst home became a waypoint for visiting artists, lecturers, educators, and politicians in addition to faculty, students, and friends of the Durst children. Guests were welcomed heartily in the Durst home. Architect Ed Stone was a frequent evening visitor during his Fayetteville trips, as were other visiting luminaries such as architect Eero Saarinen, designer Charles Eames, architecture critic Aline Louchheim and art historian Sir Herbert Read whom Durst befriended when he was a delegate to the International Conference of Art Historians in Venice. Faculty members and visiting professors were as interesting as the out-of-towners and played a large role in filling the Durst home with activity.<sup>24</sup>

Mary Margaret Durst was also a forward-thinking and creative person. She was a founding member of Fayetteville's World Affairs Group and Modern Literature Club. When the preschool education for her children did not live up to her standards, she worked to organize the Co-Operative Nursery School, owned and operated by fellow mothers, many of whom were from University of Arkansas faculty families. Along with her husband, she was a founder of the original Unitarian Fellowship in Fayetteville. She worked for racial integration as a member of the Women's Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools (in Little Rock) and as a member of the Human Relations Council in Fayetteville, working against prejudice in many arenas. As a Girl Scout co-leader, she quietly desegregated Fayetteville's summer Scout Camp with fellow camp co-leader Minerva Hoover, and negotiated the integration of Fayetteville's movie

<sup>21</sup> "New Arts Center for Arkansas," *Life*, May 18, 1953.; "University Art Center: Architect Stone's sure hand with countless details creates a harmonious home for seven arts under one Arkansas roof," *Architectural Forum: The Magazine of Building*, Sept. 1951: 164-69.

<sup>22</sup> "David Smith Chronology," The Estate of David Smith, Accessed December 19, 2014.; <http://www.davidsmithestate.org/chronology.html>.; "Edward Millman, Artist, Dead; Was Professor at Rensselaer," *The New York Times*, 14 February 1964.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence, Dana Durst and Eric Durst. Family Oral History. Little Rock, Arkansas. November 2014.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*.

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theatres.<sup>25</sup> She was politically active in many progressive campaigns, especially to defeat Governor Orval Faubus after 1957, and when no campaign evolved in Arkansas to support George McGovern for U. S. President, she became the chair for Arkansas until she could find a replacement, and then attended the 1984 National Democratic Convention as an Arkansas delegate. At this time, she founded a non-profit printing and design company, Grassroots Communications, to aid her in political and other volunteer work. Later in life, her curiosity and energy continued with the conception of and writing of grants to found a community arts center (resulting in the Walton Arts Center) and a community television station (resulting in Fayetteville Public Access Television), where she produced a show on the Arts in Fayetteville with Miller Williams as host.<sup>26</sup> Her creative talents were also expressed throughout her life in her writing for the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, gourmet cooking, sewing clothing for her family, imaginative party-giving, and her considerable gardening talents on display in the yard of the Durst home.<sup>27</sup>

The impact of growing up in the Durst House is evident in their children. The Durst's daughter, Dana, built the first photography lab at her college and was selected as a college editor by *Mademoiselle Magazine* for her photography. She worked for *Aperture Magazine* beginning in her senior year and later taught Head Start teachers how to use art in the classroom. She also directed the art project for the interior of First Federal Savings and Loan's Little Rock skyscraper by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in 1980, developing the concept for the interior art and working with the architects and artists to bring it to fruition.<sup>28</sup> The Dursts' son, Eric, studied both Architecture and Art at the University of Arkansas before graduating from the California School of the Arts with a degree in Animation. He went on to become an award winning and cutting edge filmmaker and director in the visual effects field. Both Durst children credit their association with the Arts Center, their unique home, and their experiences with their parents and their parents' friends as having a large impact on their lives and careers.<sup>29</sup> In a recent interview with the CG Channel, Eric Durst cited his childhood with an artist father and the experience of the Arts Center as giving him a "sense of interdisciplinary relationships between all the arts" which was "just built into my DNA." This, he says, has led to his interest in and his ability to excel at the multiple demands of his field by communicating with a wide range of artists and craftspersons to take a project from vision to reality.<sup>30</sup>

The Durst House is significant because of its architect John Williams and by virtue of being his first built design. The house's experimental and unusual forms include open, wooden, inverted truss roof supports, its unique location next to the first built house of Williams' student E. Fay Jones, its organic relationship to the site, its early use of passive heating and cooling, and its open concept for both living with others and for living in concert with the natural world, bringing the outside in and the inside out. It was also significant in bringing the modern form of

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> "Interview with Eric Durst, Visual Effects Supervisor," CGChannel.com, <http://www.cgchannel.com/2009/05/eric-durst-interview/>.



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architecture into the consciousness of the local population and helping spread that form to builders as well as more conventional architects in Northwest Arkansas. Because of the high profile of David Durst in the progressive art world, the home's many out of town visitors saw that Arkansas was producing some of the most imaginative and forward-thinking architecture in the country at that time. The Durst House on Fairview Drive in Fayetteville, Arkansas, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** with **statewide significance** as an early and influential example of mid-century modern architecture designed by architect John G. Williams in Northwest Arkansas.

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Williams, John Gilbert. *The Curious and the Beautiful: A Memoir History of the Architecture Program at the University of Arkansas*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1984.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☒ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # AR-55  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** WA0899

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property <1

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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

Or

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 394373 | Northing: 3991692 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

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

The property lies south of Fairview Street in Fayetteville, Arkansas, between Harmon Street and Buchanan Street now closed by the University of Arkansas), comprising the west 22 feet of lot three and lots 4,5, and 6 of J. H. McIlroy's University Addition as platted in 1927.

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

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated the residential structure.



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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dana Durst Lawrence, owner  
organization: Durst Family Trust  
street & number: 28 Pine Manor Drive  
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72207  
date: January 10, 2015

name/title: Callie Williams, National Register Historian (Editor)  
organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
street & number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500, Tower Building  
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72201  
e-mail calliew@arkansasheritage.org  
telephone: 501-324-9880  
date: January 10, 2015

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.



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## Photo Log

Name of Property: David Durst House

City or Vicinity: Fayetteville

County: Washington

State: Arkansas

Photographer: Callie Williams, National Register Historian, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

Date Photographed: May 13, 2014

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

1 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001)  
North (front) elevation, detail of entrance, camera facing south.

2 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001)  
North (front) elevation, camera facing southwest.

3 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001)  
North (front) elevation, camera facing southwest.

4 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001)  
West and south (rear) elevations, camera facing northeast.

5 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001)  
South (rear) elevation, detail of windows and siding, camera facing east.

6 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001) West and  
South (rear) elevation, detail of rear deck and railing, camera facing northeast.

7 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001)  
South (rear) and east elevations, camera facing northwest.

8 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001)  
East elevation, detail of deck and stair, camera facing west.

9 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001)  
East elevation, detail of stair, camera facing south.



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10 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001)

South (rear) and east elevations, camera facing northwest.

11 of 11: (AR\_WashingtonCounty\_DavidandMaryMargaretDurstHouse\_0001)

North (front) elevation, camera facing southwest.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

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



David and Mary Margaret Durst House, Fayetteville,  
Washington County, Arkansas



Google earth

feet  
meters

100 600



UTM

Z: 15

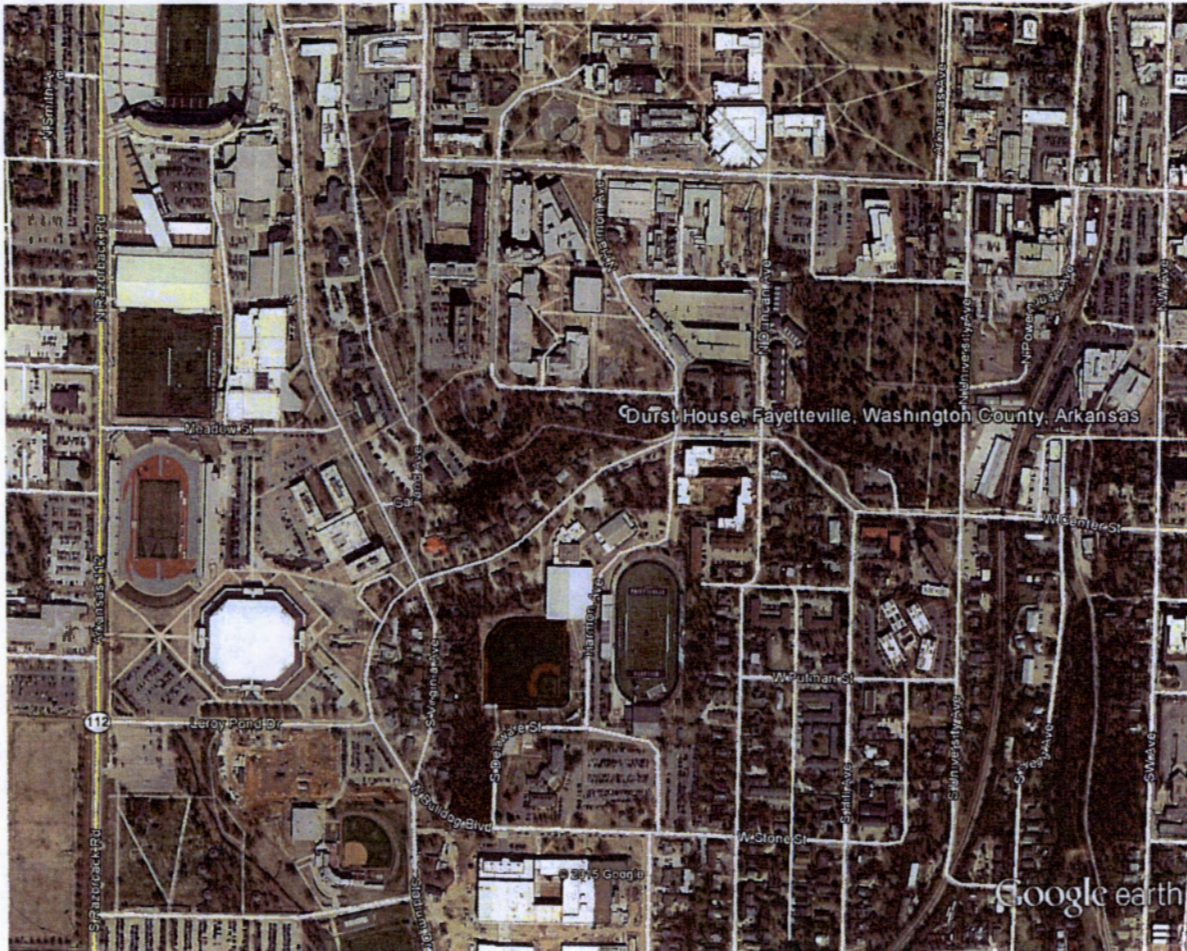
Easting: 394373

Northing: 3991692

NAD83



David and Mary Margaret Durst House, Fayetteville,  
Washington County, Arkansas



Google earth

feet 2000  
meters 700



UTM

Z: 15

Easting: 394373

Northing: 3991692

NAD83











































