



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 09/08/2025

REQUESTER: KVJY Trust, Joel Young, Trustee

PRESENTER: Anais Starr, Planner I/Historic Preservation Officer

ITEM TITLE: PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF A RECOMMENDATION OF NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES (NRHP) FOR THE SPANN HOUSE, LOCATED AT 6810 E LINDSEY STREET, NORMAN, OKLAHOMA.

Request: Public hearing for the consideration of a recommendation of nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for the Spann House, located at 6810 E Lindsey Street, Norman, Oklahoma.

Property Location: Spann House, AKA Acorn Knoll
6810 East Lindsey Street
Norman, Oklahoma 73070

Applicant/Owner: KVJY Trust, Joel Young, Trustee

National Register Process

Joel Young, current resident and owner of the Spann house, submitted the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination with assistance from the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office. The State Historic Preservation Office staff has reviewed the nomination and will place it on the October 16, 2025, State Historic Preservation Commission Meeting for consideration.

The National Park Service is charged with administering the NRHP Program. The Park Service, in coordination with the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, requires that all nominations to the National Register of Historic Places be reviewed by the Certified Local Government (CLG) Historic District Commission. The Commission is tasked with listening to any comments from the property owner or public regarding the nomination and then making a recommendation for the listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Background

Jerry and Alice Spann hired Robert L. Thomas, to build their house in 1959. With the completion of the house in 1960, the Spanns named the structure Acorn Knoll. The property is a twenty-

acre parcel located approximately a quarter of a mile west of the intersection of East Lindsey Street and 72nd Avenue Southeast.

Robert L. Thomas was a student in the School of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma from 1950 until he graduated in 1956. This period at the University saw the development of the movement that would become known as the American School of Architecture (ASA). Thomas studied under a key figure of this movement, Bruce Goff. Goff was the chair of the University of Oklahoma Architecture program from 1948 to 1955 and was an internationally recognized architect known for his iconic organic designs. Goff's influence on Thomas's design is evident in the use of creative materials for this Mid-Century house.

As requested by the Spanns, Thomas designed a modern house with materials that could be "hosed-down" to keep housekeeping duties to a minimum. The Spanns also desired a home that would capitalize on views of the landscaped lot. Thomas's design focused on capturing views of the sweeping natural landscape on the acreage, while providing a house with materials requiring minimal upkeep.

Thomas would go on to become a partner at the Edmond architecture firm Nusbaum & Thomas, which eventually became McCaleb, Nusbaum, Thomas (MNT). Over the decades, the firm designed schools and commercial structures in New Mexico, Kansas, and Oklahoma. The Spann House would be Thomas's only residential structure.

Architecture

The Spann House exhibits the influences of well-known architects, such as Bruce Goff and Frank Lloyd Wright. The Spanns' house, with its distinctive architectural elements, reflects the influences of the ASA movement which developed during the 1950s and 1960s at the University of Oklahoma. The movement encouraged creativity and experimentation with materials, which can be seen in the Spann House's unique exterior material.

The Spann House's exterior walls are composed of concrete square blocks, each consisting of two chamfered triangles that create a faceted pattern. The exterior block walls are painted a brilliant white, providing stark contrast with the surrounding landscape. The north elevation or the "front" of the house is comprised of uninterrupted walls with no window openings. The house is situated 150 feet back from the street below on a hill which provides full visibility of the north façade. The south elevation features large windows and sliding glass doors, offering expansive views of the forested property below. The east and west elevations also feature large windows which allow light while providing views of the surrounding land and enclosed patios.

Historic/Cultural Significance

The Spann House exemplifies the architectural style of the American School of Architecture, which emerged at the University of Oklahoma in the 1950s and 1960s.

The importance of listing significant architecture in the National Register of Historic Places can be illustrated by the loss of an iconic structure in Norman in recent decades. Bruce Goff's Bavinger House was demolished in 2016. Fortunately, this structure had been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, thereby ensuring its permanent documentation of this significant architecture.

Listing the Spann House in the National Register will highlight the ASA development period at the University of Oklahoma and the resulting architecture to come out of this movement. Listing in the National Register will also permanently document this significant piece of architecture in Norman, Oklahoma.

Action Required: Motion for recommendation for the nomination of the Spann House to the National Register of Historic Places.