



BUILDING CONSERVATION ASSOCIATES INC



Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism

# New Canaan Mid-Century Modern Houses







New Canada

Mid-Century

Modern Houses

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- The Philip Johnson Glass House

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# Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
	Project Goals .....	1
	Project Sponsors & Funding .....	2
2	Executive Summary .....	3
3	Methodology .....	5
	Study Properties .....	5
	Period of Significance .....	5
	Process .....	6
	Phase 1: Discovery .....	6
	Phase 2: Field Survey .....	7
	Phase 3: Report Production .....	7
4	Historic Context .....	9
	Introduction .....	9
	The Modern Movement in the United States .....	10
	New Canaan and the Modern Movement .....	12
5	Study Houses .....	29
6	Significance of Modern Resources in New Canaan .....	369
	Eligibility for National Register of Historic Places .....	370
	Recommended Nominations to National Register .....	372



# Appendices

- A Map of Study Houses
- B Index of Study Properties Sorted by I.D. Number
- C Index of Study Properties Sorted by Address
- D Index of Study Properties With Addresses Removed
- E Index of Demolished Modern Houses
- F Modern House Tours in New Canaan
- G Architect Biographies
- H Builder Biographies
- I Landscape Architect Biographies
- J Lighting Designer Biographies
- K Women and Minority Bibliography
- L Glossary of Modern Architectural Terms
- M Historic Resource Inventory Form
- N House Survey Inventory Forms
- O Bibliography





Leuthold House (1966, Allan Gelbin)



1

# Introduction

The town of New Canaan is considered to have one of the most significant collections of mid-century Modern houses in the United States, including the Glass House (1945-49, Philip Johnson), a National Historic Landmark. Many of the houses are currently under threat of demolition due to extreme development pressure and a lack of awareness of their significance. The New Canaan Historical Society previously completed reconnaissance surveys on some of the buildings with assistance from DOCOMOMO (the international working party for DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the MOdern MOvement), but a comprehensive survey had not yet been undertaken.

The New Canaan Mid-Century Modern Houses survey was designed to provide a more complete study of Modern residences in New Canaan and serve as a national model for surveys of other mid-century houses in the United States.

## Project Goals

The project sponsors outlined the following objectives for the survey:

1. To identify and document the range of mid-twentieth-century architect-designed Modern houses in New Canaan;
2. To develop and promote consistent methodology and nomenclature for the study of mid-century Modern residences; and
3. To adapt and apply standard criteria for evaluating the integrity and significance of Modern residences and related resources in a replicable manner.

To meet these goals, the study included a field survey of accessible properties using a specifically tailored survey form, historic research, the creation of a glossary of Modern architectural terms, and an evaluation of the resources

using the National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation.

## Project Sponsors & Funding

The New Canaan Mid-Century Modern Houses Survey was sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation Northeast Office, the New Canaan Historical Society, the Philip Johnson Glass House, and the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. An Advisory Board, whose members were John Johansen, John Black Lee, Toshiko Mori, Theo Prudon, and Robert A.M. Stern, provided additional guidance. Support was provided by the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism with funds from the State of Connecticut.





2

# Executive Summary

The New Canaan Mid-Century Modern Houses survey is a comprehensive study of mid-twentieth-century, architect-designed, Modern domestic properties located in New Canaan, Connecticut. The study was completed in 2008 with financial support from the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism with funds from the State of Connecticut.

In the post-World War II period, an informal network of Modern architects later known as the “Harvard Five”—Marcel Breuer, Landis Gores, John Johansen, Eliot Noyes, and Philip Johnson—moved to the bucolic town of New Canaan and established what would become a center of experimental Modern residential design.

Suburban expansion in the United States exploded in the post-World War II period as housing shortages pushed families out of cities and into the countryside, which was touted as more healthful for growing children. New Canaan, a town known briefly as a shoemaking center in the mid-nineteenth century and later as a desirable spot

for summer homes for the wealthy, was ideally located for development. Only an hour from New York City but set apart from industrial development, major rail lines, and highways, New Canaan offered acres of former farmland ripe for house sites. In this context, the Harvard Five, along with other Modern architects like Willis N. Mills and Victor Christ-Janer, began advertising their architectural services through the construction of their own Modern homes.

The completion of Philip Johnson’s Glass House in 1949 caused an immediate nationwide sensation and the architects capitalized on the attention by participating in a series of Modern House tours that showcased their work. By the end of 1952, over thirty Modern houses had been constructed throughout New Canaan. The tours attracted a second wave of architects and by the end of the 1970s, over one hundred Modern houses had been constructed in New Canaan.

The goals of this project, as outlined in the introduction to the report, were to systematically document the Modern

houses, place them in a historic context, and assess their architectural and historical significance. To meet these goals, the study included a field survey of properties using a specifically tailored survey form; historic research; the creation of a glossary of Modern architectural terms; and an assessment of the resources using the National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation.

## Findings

New Canaan has one of the largest and most concentrated collections of individually designed Modern residences in the United States. The study concluded that this unique collection is nationally significant both for espousing the design principles of the Modern movement and as a reflection of the changing needs and desires of the post-World War II family. Although the houses differ significantly in their appearance, they share common Modern ideas about plan, siting, the softening of the division between indoor and outdoor spaces, and creating functionally related zones within the household for improved efficiency. The collection of houses appears eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a multiple resource nomination and specific houses also appear eligible as individual resources.

## Recommendations

Recommendations for further work include the completion of a National Register of Historic Places nomination for a multiple resource listing as well as nominations for significant individual houses. Recommendations for further study include investigating the relationships among the architects and how they influenced each other, the relationships between the architects and homeowners and how the homeowners influenced house design, and the homeowners' experience of living in a Modern house in New Canaan. Since there is little or no existing documentation on these subjects, oral histories and interviews would provide the most information. In terms of field survey, accessing the properties that were not available for this study would provide a more complete picture of the Modern houses in New Canaan.

The New Canaan survey establishes a methodology and criteria that can be applied to Modern resources in other Connecticut cities and towns and in other states. Through further research and comparison, the New Canaan survey can help define the range and extent of the Modern movement and contribute to a more informed discussion regarding preservation of the recent past.



3

# Methodology

## Study Properties

The New Canaan Mid-Century Modern Houses Survey was designed as a targeted thematic survey. It was not intended to be an overview of all mid-century houses in New Canaan and does not include any commercial, religious, municipal, or other non-domestic structures.

The New Canaan Historical Society has been documenting significant Modern houses in New Canaan over the last fifty years. Many of these houses were included in Modern house tours during the mid-twentieth century and were featured in architectural journals and shelter magazines, providing a solid basis for their potential as historic resources. Therefore, the houses catalogued by the New Canaan Historical Society serve as the primary properties for this study. Additional houses identified by the Philip Johnson Glass House supplement this list. Traditional “windshield survey” methods, in which potential historic resources are identified in a block-by-block canvass of

a neighborhood or area, were not used in identifying properties to include in the survey.

## Period of Significance

In order to evaluate properties within a standard context of the development of the Modern movement, a period of significance was defined. DOCOMOMO defines the Modern period as extending from the 1920s to the 1970s. For this project, it was determined that the period of significance should extend from 1937—the construction date of the first documented Modern house (no longer extant) in New Canaan—to 1979—the end date of the Modern period as roughly defined by DOCOMOMO. All of the houses in the study were constructed during the period of significance. This range of dates is specific to New Canaan; the development of Modernism in other communities would likely lead to a different period of significance.

# Process

As discussed above, the study was designed as a thematic survey, rather than as a traditional neighborhood or local survey. Since this survey is intended to be a model for other mid-century architectural surveys in Connecticut and throughout the United States, it is more comprehensive and detailed than a typical reconnaissance study. The guidelines discussed in *National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys—A Basis for Preservation Planning* were consulted in devising a basic survey methodology, but the demands of the project called for a more customizable and flexible format.

The survey project was designed in three phases: discovery, field survey, and report production.

## Phase 1: Discovery

### Archival Research

Archival research was conducted to establish a historic context for the Modern movement in New Canaan. Research into the history of New Canaan focused on twentieth-century developments that influenced and were influenced by the rise of Modern architecture; the overall history of the town and earlier periods of architectural development are briefly summarized. The broader development of the Modern movement in the United States was examined to place New Canaan in a national context. Research was conducted at repositories including the New Canaan Historical Society, the New Canaan Assessor's Office, the New York Public Library, and the Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library at Columbia University

The histories of the individual properties were studied through research into the construction and alteration chronology of the houses, outbuildings, and landscapes; the architects, landscape architects, designers, and builders; and the original owners of the homes. Research built upon the extensive Modern house archives assembled by the New Canaan Historical Society.

### Development of Evaluation Criteria

Evaluating Modern resources using established historic preservation methods and standards poses some challenges. Since Modern resources have not been widely studied and documented in the historic preservation field, it

can be difficult to find a field of comparison to determine the significance of an individual property or historic district.

The National Register of Historic Places criteria were developed during a period when Modern architecture was not yet considered historic. Integrity of Modern resources may need to be viewed differently; for example, the replacement of machine-made materials intended to have a relatively short lifespan may have less of an effect on the integrity of a Modern resource than replacement of historic handcrafted materials in an earlier building.

The goal in developing criteria for this project was to create defensible arguments for the significance of New Canaan mid-century Modern houses. Conducting a thematic survey made it possible to evaluate each individual resource within the context of New Canaan Moderns as an assemblage. However, evaluating the significance of a potential New Canaan district in comparison with other post-World War II districts has proven to be difficult since few other collections of Modern houses have been studied in the United States and many of the studied collections are planned subdivisions that do not display the diversity or breadth of the New Canaan Moderns.

Criteria for assessing the significance of the buildings was developed using *National Register Bulletin No. 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* and *National Register Bulletin No. 22: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years*. In addition, the selection qualifiers and six-point criteria developed by DOCOMOMO to evaluate Modern buildings and sites were also consulted. DOCOMOMO defines six criteria:

1. Technological merit: Does the work employ innovative modern technology to solve structural, programmatic, or aesthetic challenges?
2. Social merit: Does the design reflect the changing social patterns of 20th century life? Did the designer attempt to improve either living or working conditions, or human behaviors through the work's form or function?
3. Artistic and aesthetic merit: Does the work exhibit skill at composition, handling of proportion, scale, material and detail?
4. Cannonic [sic.] merit: Is the work and/or architect famous or influential? Is it exemplary work?
5. Referential value: Did this work exert an influence on subsequent designers as a result of one or more of its attributes?

6. Integrity: Is the original design intent apparent? Have material changes been made which compromise the architectural integrity of the structure or site?<sup>1</sup>

After completing the survey, it was determined that the National Register of Historic Places criteria were broad enough to be used in evaluating the significance of the properties both individually and as a group. Although specifically tailored for Modern resources, the DOCOMOMO criteria intersect with the National Register criteria. For example, DOCOMOMO criteria 1, 3, 4, and 5 correspond with National Register criterion C (resources “that embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values...”), and DOCOMOMO criterion 2 corresponds with National Register criterion A (resources “that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history”). DOCOMOMO criterion 6 corresponds with the integrity requirement for all properties listed in the National Register. Using previously codified criteria allows Modern resources to be regarded in the same light as older buildings and follows a unified structure for determining the significance of a resource regardless of its age.

## Compilation of Data

After the study research was gathered, relevant information was compiled into a Microsoft Access database. This database was formatted so that it can be converted into a menu-driven, user-friendly database in a future project. Photographs and drawings were digitized whenever possible.

## Phase 2: Field Survey

### Survey Preparation

Before beginning the field survey, a dossier on each property was compiled that included historic photographs, drawings, maps, site plans, property field cards from the New Canaan Assessor’s Office, and other relevant information. This dossier was brought into the field for reference.

Survey forms specifically designed for the project were programmed into laptop computers prior to the commencement of the fieldwork. A preliminary design vocabulary was established to ensure the buildings were recorded in a consistent manner, although this glossary

evolved considerably as new discoveries were made during field survey.

### Scheduling Fieldwork

Since the properties in this study are privately owned, permission from the homeowners needed to be obtained prior to commencing fieldwork. The Philip Johnson Glass House staff contacted individual homeowners to arrange for site visits. BCA was able to survey sixty of the ninety-one properties on the survey list. In addition, three houses were surveyed that were ultimately not included in the study because they were constructed after 1979. The remaining houses were photographed from public ways when possible, but this did not provide sufficient information to determine integrity. In addition, several of the houses were not visible from a public way.

### Survey

Information gathered during the field survey was recorded directly into a Microsoft Access database using a laptop computer. The survey encompassed houses, outbuildings, and significant landscape features. Recorded information included character-defining features, materials, alterations, setting, and general condition. Digital photographs recorded all exterior façades of the houses and outbuildings and significant landscape features. Although some homeowners provided access to the interiors of the houses to facilitate understanding of the overall design of the building, the survey focused solely on exterior elements.

## Phase 3: Report Production

After all of the information was gathered, it was compiled into an illustrated report. The report includes a survey methodology; a historic context statement; a description and history of each surveyed house and a history of each house that was not available for survey; an inventory form for each property; recommendations for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, including a preliminary evaluation for a potential multiple resource district; a map of the study properties; an index of study properties with a blind identification system to mask property addresses; biographical information for architects, landscape architects, builders, and designers; a list of demolished Modern houses in New Canaan; a glossary of architectural terms associated with the New Canaan Modern houses; and a general bibliography and a bibliography outlining the role of women and minorities.

<sup>1</sup> DOCOMOMO, “how to evaluate modern buildings and sites,” [http://www.docomomo-us.org/register/how\\_to\\_evaluate](http://www.docomomo-us.org/register/how_to_evaluate).





Evans House (1961, James Evans)



4

# Historic Context

## Introduction

During the mid-twentieth century, the small suburban town of New Canaan, Connecticut, became renowned as a hotbed of Modern architecture. Five architects associated with Harvard University's Graduate School of Design—Eliot Noyes, Marcel Breuer, Philip Johnson, Landis Gores, and John Johansen—moved to New Canaan in the post-World War II period and soon became known as the “Harvard Five.” Imbued with post-war optimism and eager to work with like-minded peers, the Harvard Five—along with architects Victor Christ-Janer and Willis Mills—altered the architectural landscape of the town with innovative houses. The architects promoted the Modern aesthetic through designs for their own residences in New Canaan and showcased their work in house tours to attract new commissions and demonstrate the freedom and flexibility in the Modern way of living.

The “Next Station to Heaven,” as New Canaan was nicknamed, was startled by these Modern houses scattered throughout town, and many residents resented the intrusion into their bucolic, traditional New England countryside. Despite this local opposition, the movement continued to grow throughout the 1950s and early 1960s as other architects, attracted by the hugely successful Modern house tours and published accounts in leading architectural journals and shelter magazines, moved to New Canaan to join the experiment. By the late 1970s, the Modern movement in New Canaan and throughout the United States was in decline, but New Canaan was left with an extraordinary legacy of over one hundred unique Modern houses designed by several noted architects.

# The Modern Movement in the United States

The Modern movement in the United States in the context of architectural design is an aesthetic movement defined by a period of time, roughly the 1920s to the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> Modern architects sought to reject the eclectic revival styles popular at the turn of the century in favor of architecture of the ‘new age.’ The new age was defined by the great human tragedies witnessed in World War I and the resulting social upheaval; innovations in electricity, transportation, and communication; and mass production of materials like reinforced concrete, glass, and steel. Literature, industrial design, and the fine arts reflected and inspired the architects of the age and collaborations resulted in designs for furniture, interiors, and the built environment.<sup>2</sup>

The tenets of Modern design were first announced abroad, although the early work of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) preceded and directly influenced the development of Modern design in Europe. In 1910, the Wasmuth Portfolio, a folio containing 100 lithographs of Wright’s designs from 1893-1909, was published in Germany and quickly disseminated in architectural circles throughout Europe. In a similar vein, many of the principles or manifestos developed in Europe during the early twentieth century were translated into English and circulated in the United States. Major manifestos included *Ornament and Crime* (1908) by Viennese architect Adolf Loos (1870-1933); the *Futurist Manifesto of 1914* (1914) by Italian architect Antonio Sant’Elia (1888-1916), which outlined the concept of “Futurism”; *The Conception and Realization of the Bauhaus* (1923) by German architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969), which described the objectives for educating architects in the “New Architecture” and methods of the Bauhaus movement; and *Towards a New Architecture* (originally published in French in 1923) by Swiss-born French architect Le Corbusier (born as Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, 1887-1965).

The Modern movement was considered a social and even political movement, with some of its practitioners (particularly those at the Bauhaus in Germany) working towards utopian ideals. A distillation of much of the scholarly literature on the topic marks the Modern movement in architecture as a paradigm shift and as a progressive phase of design evolution, with clear emphasis on the Darwinian principle that it was more advanced and better suited for contemporary man than the historical eras that preceded it and that all other modes of design and planning would gradually ‘die off’ in the face of Modern hegemony. It was believed that Modern design could enable more functional, economical, healthful, and democratic lifestyles by eliminating the need for servants, introducing fresh air and light, and creating more efficient and scientific households through the reorganization of floor plans; in other words, the houses would become “Machines for Living,” as Le Corbusier described them. Some of these same goals were pursued on a broader urban planning scale by the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM), established in 1928 by a group of architects including Le Corbusier to study theoretical urban planning issues in the context of social progress.

Despite the didactic voices of the leading architects of this style and their followers, the Modern movement was less rigid stylistically than prior modes of design. Rather than following a strict style formula or mode, Modern designers in architecture, furniture, industrial design, and graphic arts sought cleanly expressed lines or forms over embellishment, functionalism and rationality in planning and arrangement of features over traditionalism, and in some, but not all cases, transparency or lightness over solid surfaces or heavy details.<sup>3</sup> In *Ornament and Crime*, Adolf Loos wrote, “Do you not see that the greatness of our age resides in our very inability to create new ornament? We have gone beyond ornament, we have achieved plain, undecorated simplicity.”<sup>4</sup> Refinement in Modern design was executed with restrained and precise architectural details, texture, massing, and color.

1 The defined period of time for the Modern movement in the United States is a highly debated issue. DOCOMOMO defines the Modern period as extending from the 1920s to the 1970s, and we have used these dates as a broad outline for this study. There were earlier buildings in the United States that influenced the architecture of the Modern movement—the most notable examples being Frank Lloyd Wright’s early buildings—but the real impetus of the Modern movement did not begin until the 1920s.

2 It is worthwhile to note that although the conditions vary, these social and material reflections and artistic collaborations were also certainly true for earlier design movements, including the Beaux Arts movement.

3 Some styles that are sometimes considered to fall under the umbrella of the Modern movement do not follow all of the principles outlined above. The Art Deco and Art Moderne (or Streamline Moderne) aesthetic movements were popular from about 1920 to the beginning of World War II. In contrast to most Modern styles, the Art Deco movement did not reject ornament. Brutalism, a design mode that relied on rough concrete and heavy rather than transparent surfaces—popular from the 1950s to the 1970s—is another exception. Yale University’s Art and Architecture Building (1963, Paul Rudolph) and Boston City Hall (1963-1968, Kallman, McKinnell and Knowles) are two notable examples of this style.

4 Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays* (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1998), 168.



Although any summary of the characteristics of a style can be readily and easily disputed, the architectural designs of the Modern period are characterized by shell or curtain wall façades, open floor plans, avoidance of applied ornament, and cantilever construction.<sup>5</sup> The development of structural steel framing systems for skyscrapers gradually eliminated the need for massive, masonry load-bearing walls. These steel skeletons allowed for a separation of the wall and structure and reduced or eliminated the need for interior columns and piers. The separation of wall and structure facilitated the development of curtain wall design, which evolved from masonry cladding to glass and metal cladding. In addition to allowing the exterior wall surfaces to be expressed as light shells or even transparent glass partitions between the interior and the exterior, the reduction of structural elements to relatively slender steel columns enabled designers to create open floor plans. Cantilever construction also sprang from engineering developments in steel. The Barcelona Pavilion, considered to be one of the seminal buildings of the Modern movement, expressed many of these design features. Designed by Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) to serve as the German National Pavilion at the 1929 Barcelona International Exhibition, the Barcelona Pavilion featured a steel structure, glass and stone walls, a flat roof, and an open floor plan. The building was hugely influential in Europe and America and inspired a host of imitators. Two of the most famous American houses of the Modern movement—Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth house (1945-51) in Plano, Illinois, and Philip Johnson’s Glass House (1945-49) in New Canaan, Connecticut—were later expressions of this design aesthetic.

In America, Modern architecture was shaped by structural and material innovations, nineteenth-century industrial and commercial architecture, and the designs of master architects like Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright’s development of the Prairie Style during the early twentieth century introduced many ideas that influenced post-World War II house design. The Prairie Style, which took its inspiration from the prairie landscape of the Midwest, was characterized by low, horizontally oriented masses, low-pitched roofs with deep eaves, geometric ornamentation, and an open floor plan anchored by a central fireplace. Prior historic styles were largely rejected in favor of a more “organic” architecture.

<sup>5</sup> The first process for inexpensively mass-producing steel was invented by Englishman Henry Bessemer (1813-98), who secured a patent in 1855 for “a decarbonization process utilizing a blast of air.” The relatively low cost of steel produced by Bessemer’s process enabled building loads to be supported by an internal steel skeleton rather than by massive masonry walls. Skeletal construction, used in the world’s first skyscraper, the Home Insurance Building in Chicago designed by William Le Baron Jenney (1832-1907) and built in 1884-85, was well developed by the 1920s.

During the 1930s, Wright further investigated the relationship between the house and the land in his designs for low-cost houses he called “Usonian,” which utilized natural materials like wood and stone and were designed to reflect and blend with the landscape. Wright was also influential in his establishment of the Taliesin Fellowship program in 1932 at his home in Spring Green, Wisconsin. The Taliesin Fellowship was a community of apprentice architects who received hands-on training as they lived and worked on the property. Between 1935 and 1937, Wright designed Fallingwater in Bear Run, Pennsylvania, one of the most iconic Modern houses in America. With its flat roofs and dramatic balconies cantilevering over a waterfall, the design of Fallingwater inspired an entire generation of Modern architects in America and abroad.

As the architecture of the Modern movement began developing in America, it was coined the “New Tradition” by Henry-Russell Hitchcock Jr. in *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (1929) and later the “International Style” by Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* (1932). Hitchcock and Johnson’s landmark book describes the tenets of the architecture movement as expressed in three principles: architecture as volume as opposed to mass (encompassing surface material and plan), regularity (allowing for the expression of the regularly-spaced structural steel members and the repetitive forms of mass-produced building elements), and the avoidance of applied decoration.

Some of the earliest Modernist architects in America were European immigrants, including Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius from Germany, and Richard Neutra (1892-1970) and Rudolph Schindler (1887-1953) from Austria. Mies van der Rohe immigrated to the United States in 1938 to escape Nazi oppression; he had served as director of the Bauhaus in Germany until the Nazis closed it down in the early 1930s. He became director of the Department of Architecture at the Armour Institute of Technology (later the Illinois Institute of Technology) in Chicago, establishing a curriculum based on Modern practices, much as Gropius would transform the department of architecture at Harvard University. Mies van der Rohe became one of the most influential architects of the Modern period, coining the famous phrase “less is more” to describe his stripped-down designs. The term “Miesian” became associated with buildings typified by rectilinear forms, structure that is expressed but not necessarily exposed, the use of steel and glass, and flat roofs. Philip Johnson’s Glass House (1945-49) in New Canaan was heavily influenced by Mies’s work,

and the two architects partnered to design the Seagram Building (1954-58) in New York City. Unfortunately, Mies's work inspired a proliferation of cheap copycat steel-and-glass towers that lacked the refined proportions, elegant details, and careful execution of the originals, eventually leading to a backlash against the Modern movement.

Austrian immigrants Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler both worked for Frank Lloyd Wright after arriving in America but soon relocated to California. Rudolph Schindler developed the Modernist design principle of "Space architecture," which emphasized space as the primary defining characteristic of Modern design rather than structure or function. The earliest example of his space form design principal is his first solo project, the Kings Road House (1921-22) in West Hollywood, California, which was designed as a cooperative live/work space without rooms designated for specific purposes. Neutra's Lovell Health House (1927-29) in Los Angeles, California, was included in The International Style and is considered a monumental work of residential Modernism for its plan, use of innovative materials like factory-made steel components and sprayed concrete wall surfaces, and proto-cantilever construction.<sup>6</sup>

Neutra was involved in the groundbreaking Case Study Houses program, inaugurated in January 1945 by the architectural journal *Art & Architecture*. The program hired eight architecture firms to design and construct Modern single-family homes in Los Angeles, California, as innovative prototypes for the post-World War II single-family housing boom. The architects were J.R. Davidson, Richard Neutra, Sumner Spaulding and John Rex, Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons, Ralph Rapson, Whitney Smith, Thornton Abell, and Charles Eames. The architects demonstrated to the approximately 400,000 visitors that well-designed single-family homes could be made from inexpensive materials, outdoor spaces were integral to design, and Modern design was appropriate for contemporary living.<sup>7</sup> The Case Study Houses program, in which model houses were open for public view to promote the ideas behind Modern living, would be echoed in New Canaan with the series of Modern house tours held from 1949 to the late 1960s to showcase Modern architecture in the town.

# New Canaan and the Modern Movement

## Settlement to Shoemaking

The New Canaan area was originally settled around 1715 as part of the towns of Norwalk and Stamford. In 1731, the Connecticut legislature approved a petition to create a Congregational parish named Canaan Parish to accommodate families who lived far from the existing parishes. Members of Canaan Parish remained residents of Norwalk or Stamford until the town of New Canaan was finally incorporated seventy years later in May 1801. The name "New Canaan" was chosen because a town named Canaan had already been incorporated in Connecticut in 1739.

At the start of the nineteenth century, New Canaan was characterized by a scattering of settlements with no established town center due to its history of being split between Stamford and Norwalk. Agriculture and milling were the town's primary industries; the milling industry included fulling mills, grist mills, and saw mills. Shoe manufacturing, introduced in 1818, rapidly expanded to become the town's dominant industry. The growth of the shoemaking industry led to the establishment of a downtown area as new roads were laid out and land subdivided for development; by 1831, the downtown "village" was referenced in town records.<sup>8</sup>

In 1850, at the height of the shoemaking boom, New Canaan had a population of 2,600 residents: 335 of the 729 males over 16 years of age were employed in shoemaking and 231 were farmers.<sup>9</sup> However, the failure of New Canaan shoemakers to install new automatic sewing machines during the mechanization of the shoe manufacturing industry in the period immediately before the Civil War caused the local industry to flounder. The New Canaan shoemakers could not keep up with the wartime demand for shoes.<sup>10</sup> The last shoemaker would close in 1913.

The downfall of the shoemaking industry caused New Canaan to enter a period of economic decline during the 1860s and 1870s, a decline deepened by a nationwide depression during the mid-1870s. In an effort to attract businesses and new employment opportunities, local businessmen financed the construction of a railroad spur

6 True cantilevers were not used in the house.

7 Esther McCoy, *Arts & Architecture Case Study Houses: 1945-1962* (Santa Monica, California: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1977), 9.

8 Mary Louise King, *Portrait of New Canaan: The History of a Connecticut Town* (New Canaan, CT: New Canaan Historical Society, 1981), 121-22, 149, 151.

9 *Ibid.*, 183.

10 *Ibid.*, 190.

from Stamford in 1866. The first train arrived in New Canaan in 1868, but the businesses never followed. The New Canaan Railroad fell into bankruptcy by the end of the 1870s. It was reorganized as the Stamford and New Canaan Railroad in 1882, purchased by the Consolidated Railroad Company in 1883, and became part of the New York, New Haven & Hartford railroad in 1890.

### Summer Tourism to Bedroom Community

By the 1880s, an influx of summer tourists began to help stem New Canaan's decline. Although the railroad had failed to bring in new businesses, the increased accessibility made the town desirable as a vacation retreat. Large summer estates were constructed along Oenoke Ridge and Smith Ridge. The summer people—who largely traveled in separate circles from the full-time residents—organized various sporting and social clubs and established the New Canaan Country Club in 1904.<sup>11</sup> The Country Club became the center of social life for this group; a 1911 article in the *New York Times* reported that the summer residents of the “delightful inland resort” of New Canaan were “expecting a jolly time at the Country Club on Independence Day. There will be matches on the tennis courts and the golf links, a dance, and a display of fireworks.”<sup>12</sup> By the end of the 1920s, increasing demand for summer homes raised the prices for both residential and business properties.<sup>13</sup>

Many of the summer people decided to become permanent residents of New Canaan and encouraged their friends and families to relocate. By the end of World War I, the town had transformed into a suburban bedroom community. Between 1920 and 1930, the population increased from 3,895 to 5,431; 50% of the working males in 1930 commuted to New York City.<sup>14</sup> Although its location away from the main railroad lines had hampered New Canaan's growth during the nineteenth century, the town's relative seclusion and bucolic character would prove to be assets during the post-World War II population boom.

### Early Twentieth-Century Architecture in New Canaan

The residential architectural landscape of New Canaan in the early twentieth century was fairly typical of a small New England town, ranging from eighteenth-century farmhouses to period revival summer estates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Architectural journals and shelter

magazines from the 1910s to the 1930s showcasing New Canaan projects feature an eclectic mix of period revival styles, including Cape Cod saltboxes, Federal Revival, Tudor Revival, and a Norman cottage.<sup>15</sup> One of the most prominent estates in New Canaan, Waveny House (1912), constructed for Lewis Lapham, was a very large Tudor Revival house designed by W.B. Tubby with extensive gardens designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

The downtown commercial and civic area was characterized by the Colonial Revival style. During the early twentieth century, the increase in population had spurred a building boom in downtown New Canaan. New public and commercial buildings were constructed, including a new town hall (1909), a new library (1913), and a movie theater called the New Canaan Playhouse (1923). The competition to design the new town hall was won by architect Edgar A. Josselyn, who envisioned a Colonial Revival brick structure with a prominent cupola. The design was featured in the 1909 issue of *Architecture* and the February 1912 issue of *Architectural Record*.<sup>16</sup> The New Canaan Playhouse, designed by architect Calvin Kiessling, was also a red brick Colonial Revival building with a cupola and was featured in the November 1924 issue of *The Architect* (Figure 1).<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 1. New Canaan Playhouse** (1923), designed by Calvin Kiessling (*The Architect*, November 1924)

11 *Ibid.*, 222, 244-246.

12 “New Canaan: A Jolly Time Planned for the Fourth at the Country Club.” *New York Times*, 2 July 1911, X4.

13 “New Canaan Popular,” *New York Times*, 2 June 1929, RE14.

14 King, 293-294.

15 Harriet T. Bottomley, “An Architect's Country House,” *Architectural Record* 27 (January 1915): 49-63; “Residence of P.J. Gossler, Esq., New Canaan, Conn.,” *Architectural Record* 41 (June 1917): 550-553; “Residence of Lewis H. Lapham, Esq., New Canaan, Conn.,” *Architectural Record* 42 (August 1917): 179-183; “Remodeled House at New Canaan, Conn.,” *American Architect* 125 (February 1924): 180; “Stone and Slate in the Midst of a Connecticut Apple Orchard,” *House & Garden* 59 (January 1931): 79-81; “A Forecourt from Normandy,” *House & Garden* 54 (November 1928): 74-79; “House of Charles C. Bellows, New Canaan, Connecticut,” *American Architect* 143 (May 1933): 77-82; “Hamilton Residence, New Canaan, Connecticut,” *Architectural Record* 75 (February 1934): 132-135; “Garden House, Estate of Samuel H. Watts, New Canaan, Connecticut,” *American Architect* 146 (March 1935): 21-22.

16 “Accepted Competitive Design, Town Hall, New Canaan, Conn.,” *Architecture* 19 (1909): 68-69; “New Canaan Town Hall, New Canaan, Conn.,” *Architectural Record* 31 (February 1912): 174.

17 “The Playhouse, New Canaan, Conn.,” *The Architect* 3 (November 1924): 38-39.



Kiessling designed several other Colonial Revival commercial buildings along Elm Street. He also created several plans for the downtown area that were never implemented. Described as a “firm believer in modern adaptation of colonial motifs” in his obituary, Kiessling specialized in remodeling early American houses like the nineteenth-century Weed-Vanderhoef-Adams House, featured in the February 1924 issue of *American Architect*, a 1927 issue of *House and Garden*, and the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.<sup>18</sup>

### Depression to World War II

Although New Canaan felt the effects of the Depression along with the rest of the country, real estate prices remained steady. On February 27, 1932, the town established its first zoning controls with the creation of the Town Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeal. The first zoning map was approved in May; the town center was to have three residential zones, one business zone, and one industrial zone. Areas outside the town center were zoned for residential development with a minimum lot size of two acres.<sup>19</sup>

Approximately twenty new roads opened in New Canaan during the 1930s, including Turtleback Road, Sunset Hill Road, Wood’s End Road, and Briscoe Road. Chichester Road, which had become impassable, was reopened by architect Robinson Ward. The completion of two state roads—Route 123 in 1935 and the Merritt Parkway in 1938—provided greater access to New Canaan, which had previously only been linked to Route 1.<sup>20</sup>

### *The First Modern Houses*

As discussed above, new construction in New Canaan during the early twentieth century remained solidly entrenched in traditional architectural styles despite the burgeoning Modern movement springing up in California and other parts of the United States. Signs of the changes to come became apparent in the construction of two remarkable houses in the late 1930s: the Kirkbride House (1937, Robinson Ward, no longer extant), also known as “Five Wells,” and the Willis N. Mills House (1938-39, Willis N. Mills). Both houses were considered avant-garde at the time of their construction; “Five Wells” was nicknamed the “Fairfield County Jail,” and the Willis N. Mills House—according to Mills’ wife Esther—“attracted the stares and amazed comments

of New Canaan” during its construction.<sup>21</sup> In 1951, both houses were included in *Landmarks of New Canaan* along with Philip Johnson’s Glass House and Marcel Breuer’s first home, a testament to their role in the transition of New Canaan architecture from traditional to Modern.<sup>22</sup>

The Kirkbride House was designed by local architect Robinson Ward with an interior color scheme by William Muschenheim (Figure 2).<sup>23</sup> It is considered to be the first



**Figure 2. Kirkbride House** (1937), designed by Robinson Ward (Ford and Ford, *The Modern House in America*, 1945)

Modern house constructed in New Canaan. The Kirkbrides rented a house on Chichester Road when they first moved to New Canaan and became neighbors with Robinson Ward, choosing him to design their house because “his houses were planned to fit the sites on which they were built.”<sup>24</sup> The house was sited on a hill above the Rippowan Brook, necessitating six different levels on the interior, although the structure was essentially a two-story house with a basement.

Ward designed the house by laying out the floor plan and never drew an exterior elevation; “The rooms which were planned were just covered with walls and roofs.”<sup>25</sup> According to Franklin Kirkbride, Ward had never designed a Modern building, and it was neither the architect’s nor the owners’ intention to construct a Modern house:

21 Franklin B. Kirkbride, “The Kirkbride House, ‘Five Wells,’” *Landmarks of New Canaan* (New Canaan, CT: The New Canaan Historical Society, 1951), 289; Esther Mills and Willis N. Mills, “House of Willis N. Mills,” *Landmarks of New Canaan* (New Canaan, CT: The New Canaan Historical Society, 1951), 339.

22 New Canaan Historical Society, *Landmarks of New Canaan* (New Canaan, CT: The New Canaan Historical Society, 1951).

23 Robinson Ward attended M.I.T., Columbia University, and Harvard University before opening his own practice in Boston in 1921. Between 1927 and 1938, he worked in the New York area and lived in New Canaan for at least part of this time. Most of his work in the New York area was residential, although the Woolworth Memorial Chapel (1938) at Woodlawn Cemetery is attributed to him. After 1938, Ward’s practice centered largely on hotel developments in Mexico and the Caribbean. He later hired New Canaan architect Frederick Taylor Gates of Gates and Ford to become a partner in his firm in the Bahamas.

24 Kirkbride, 288.

25 *Ibid.*, 289.

18 “Calvin Kiessling, Architect, Dies,” *New Canaan Advertiser*, [July 1956]; “Calvin Kiessling, Retired Architect,” *New York Times*, 2 July 1956, 21.

19 King, 309.

20 King, 310-311.

The objective was to make the house functional, using appropriate materials such as aluminum window sash, slate window sills, steel baseboards, cantilever construction in the big bay window overlooking the stream, omitting plaster picture mouldings under the ceilings, making the entire stairwell of aluminum and glass...The flat Barrett roofs and the awning covered roof deck were in 1937 non-conforming too.<sup>26</sup>

Historic photographs show a large house with concrete-block walls, a flat roof, extensive glazing—including a curved window wall at the stair tower—metal casement windows, roof decks, and intersecting planes. Over sixty windows and glass doors provided connections to the outdoors. Concrete block walls and concrete floors and joists were used to make the house fire resistant.

Even if Ward never intended to design a Modern structure, the idea to allow the site and plan to dictate the design was very forward-looking. In fact, the Kirkbride House would be included in the 1940 book, *The Modern Houses of America*, which defined the elements of a contemporary dwelling: “The outer form of the modern house becomes the outgrowth of a plan built about the interests, routine activities, and aspirations of the client and his family... new appropriate and beautiful forms may emerge from an architecture which, discarding styles, lets the house grow from the inside outwardly to express the life within.”<sup>27</sup> The house was also featured in the November 1938 issue of *Architectural Record* and the April 1939 issue of *House and Garden*.

The Willis N. Mills House (1938-39), designed by architect Willis N. Mills for his family, was less radical than the Kirkbride House and could accurately be described as a transitional, rather than a Modern structure (Figure 3). Mills would later



**Figure 3. Mills House 1** (1938-39), designed by Willis N. Mills (*Pencil Points*, May 1944)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>27</sup> James Ford and Katherine Morrow Ford, *The Modern House in America* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1945), 8, 119.

come to prominence as a partner in the firm of Sherwood, Mills & Smith and would design several residences and public buildings in New Canaan. Mills graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1929 where he received a traditional Beaux-Arts education, unlike many of the architects who would come to New Canaan in the post-World War II period who were taught by founding members of the Bauhaus movement.

Mills' simple house had a gable roof, horizontal beadboard and flush wood siding, and a fairly standard plan, although the living room and dining room were open to each other. The most unusual aspects of the house were the steel casement sash, corner window units, glass block, brise soleil, the cut-out second-floor corner porch, outdoor living space and exterior fireplace, and the extensive use of glass at the rear, more private side of the house.

The May 1944 issue of *Pencil Points*, published six years after construction began, featured a four-page spread on the house, remarking on the careful planning of the interior: “[U]nusual attention has been given to improved arrangement and location of familiar facilities. A good instance is the placement of laundry equipment on the ground floor...a convenient arrangement of utilities that are too often relegated to the basement for no obvious reason.” The article also pointed out that the house design was suited to the area: “[M]ore and more new New England houses have been built that are both congenial with the region and suited to the tastes of twentieth-century livers. It is agreeable to publish such a house that an architect designed for his own family.”<sup>28</sup>

## Post-World War II Period

During World War II, new construction in New Canaan largely came to a halt due to shortages of materials and labor. With the return of the GIs and the resulting baby boom, the town faced a housing crunch. In response, a Town Housing Authority was established, and four barrack buildings were moved to Route 123 in 1947 as temporary apartments. Private development was even more efficient: veterans' housing was constructed on newly opened Gower Road and Douglas Road in 1945-46; Fairty Drive and Orchard Drive were laid out in 1948.

Like many communities in the United States, New Canaan saw a growth in population during the post-World War II period, from 6,221 residents in 1940 to 7,968 in 1950. Many

<sup>28</sup> “Country Home in Connecticut.” *Pencil Points* 25 (May 1944): 65, 67.

of these new residents had young families as evidenced by the rapid growth in the school population from 414 students in 1945 to 1,450 students by 1950.<sup>29</sup> The first Modern-style school in New Canaan, South School, was designed by Sherwood, Mills & Smith and constructed in 1950.<sup>30</sup> South School was noted for its innovative design in the August 1951 issue of *Architectural Record*.<sup>31</sup> As the population continued to grow, additional roads opened, including Bayberry Road, Rippowam Road, Hidden Meadow Lane, Cecil Place, and Wahackme Lane. By 1950, thirty-five farms consisting of over 4,000 acres of farmland—still extant in 1930—had disappeared.<sup>32</sup>

In the aftermath of World War II, Americans began moving away from urban cores and into suburban areas to raise their families in what was perceived as more wholesome surroundings. With a housing shortage in full effect, rental prices for urban apartments rose, pushing young families into areas where cheaper land was available. In an effort to remake a world out of the destruction of the war, returning GIs and their wives wanted to create a new life by moving into a newly constructed dream house complete with all of the modern conveniences. A 1945 poll in the *Saturday Evening Post* reported that a mere 14% of the population would be willing to live in an apartment or existing house.<sup>33</sup> It was in this spirit of the times that the architects later nicknamed the “Harvard Five” decided to relocate to New Canaan during the late 1940s.

### *The Harvard Five and Walter Gropius*

The “Harvard Five” was a group of architects associated with Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design during the leadership of Bauhaus founder Walter Adolph Gropius (1883-1969). Four of the architects—Eliot Noyes, John Johansen, Landis Gores, and Philip Johnson—were graduates of the program; the fifth, Marcel Breuer, was an Associate Professor of Architecture at Harvard and shared an architectural practice with Gropius until 1941.

Walter Gropius revolutionized the architectural education program at the Graduate School of Design based on his earlier experiences with the Bauhaus in Germany. Gropius founded the Bauhaus in 1919 to unify the teaching of all branches of the arts—including the fine arts, crafts, and

architecture—with the primary objective of designing products for standardization. The Bauhaus operated until 1933 under three separate directors: Gropius, Hannes Meyer, and Mies van der Rohe. After opening in Weimar, the school moved to Dessau and then briefly to Berlin to escape political oppression. It finally closed in 1933 because of Nazi oppression, and many of its faculty and students—including Gropius and Breuer—immigrated to the United States.

Gropius served as the Chairman of the Department of Architecture at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design from 1938-52. Students who had been training under traditional Beaux-Arts methods were soon subjected to a complete rejection of the past. In the *New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, Gropius wrote, “A breach has been made with the past, which allows us to envisage a new aspect of architecture corresponding to the technical civilization of the age we live in; the morphology of dead styles has been destroyed; and we are returning to honesty of thought and feeling.”<sup>34</sup> Although he believed that machines were the modern mediums of design and that designers ought to work with their functionality in mind, he did not reject hand craftsmanship as a way to connect artistic endeavors with practical production. He also considered the “abolition of the separating function of the wall” through increase in window sizes to be one of the crowning achievements of the New Architecture.<sup>35</sup>

The house that Gropius designed for his family in Lincoln, Massachusetts, completed in 1937, demonstrates how he adapted the Bauhaus design tradition for typical New England materials and building systems. Gropius designed the house with assistance from Marcel Breuer as a wood-frame structure clad with vertical wood siding; brick and fieldstone are also utilized in its design (Figure 4). New



**Figure 4. Gropius House** (1937), Lincoln, Massachusetts (courtesy of Philip Greenspun, <http://philip.greenspun.com>, copyright 1997)

<sup>29</sup> King, 314, 319-320.

<sup>30</sup> David H. Finnie, ed., *New Canaan: Texture of a Community, 1950-2000* (New Canaan, CT: New Canaan Historical Society, 2001), 74.

<sup>31</sup> “New Canaan, Conn., Elementary School Attracts Professional Attention,” *Architectural Record* 110 (August 1951): 98-105.

<sup>32</sup> King, 317.

<sup>33</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 253.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1965).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.



materials such as glass block employed as an exterior treatment and acoustical plaster at the interior were used in concert with traditional materials. Given the similarities to many of the early Modern houses designed by the Harvard Five in New Canaan, it appears that the students at the Graduate School of Design were strongly influenced by Gropius and Breuer's teachings.

### *Harvard Five in New Canaan*

Although later grouped under their famous moniker—the “Harvard Five”—Noyes, Johansen, Gores, Johnson, and Breuer were not all at Harvard University during the same time period. Instead, they became acquainted with each other during the period before World War II through intersecting professional and personal circles. For example, both Noyes and Johnson worked at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) during the early 1940s; Noyes was the first director of the Industrial Design Department and Johnson served as the director of the Department of Architecture. By 1946, despite being scattered by the war, all five architects had all ended up in New York City.

Eliot Noyes was the first architect to leave the city and move to New Canaan. Noyes had a growing family and was starting his own firm after securing an industrial design contract for the IBM typewriter account. He began searching Fairfield County for a suitable piece of land where he could build a house. Noyes chose New Canaan because it was conveniently close to New York while being protected from the industrial development around the New York Central and New York, New Haven & Hartford railroad lines and because of the town's small size, zoning, and availability of land.<sup>36</sup>

Noyes built his first house (no longer extant) for his family on Lambert Road in 1947 (Figure 5) and opened an office in downtown New Canaan. Marcel Breuer and Philip Johnson soon followed. Breuer built a house for his family on Sunset Hill Road in 1947, and Johnson completed the Glass House on Ponus Ridge Road in 1949. Unlike Noyes, Breuer and Johnson kept their main residences and offices in New York City and used their Connecticut houses mainly as weekend homes. Johnson later said, “I came [to New Canaan] because Breuer and Noyes were here and I wanted to be in a community of architects and the laws here in Connecticut regarding licensing were not as strict as in New York.”<sup>37</sup>

Johnson's architectural partner, Landis Gores, purchased four acres on Cross Ridge Road in 1947 and completed his house in 1948. Both Johnson and Gores were attracted by the more lenient licensing laws in Connecticut because there was no requirement for a three-year apprenticeship to a registered architect. The fifth member of the Harvard Five, John Johansen, moved to New Canaan in 1949 after visiting Noyes. Johansen opened a practice in town and purchased nine to ten acres on Ponus Ridge Road, completing his house (no longer extant) by 1951.<sup>38</sup>

Although it seems surprising that five architects would choose to leave New York City and relocate to a relatively sleepy town in Connecticut in such a short period of time, John Johansen later explained, “After the war we held together—we didn't know where to go, no one to talk to... the country was trying to get on its feet again—not just financially but culturally.”<sup>39</sup> In addition, Marcel Breuer was a mentor and inspiration to many of the students at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. Philip Johnson recalled of his experience at Harvard that “Breuer was my teacher, and I learned more from him than from Gropius,” and Landis Gores remembered the “subtly stimulating and ever thought-provoking influence Breuer cast across the whole school.”<sup>40</sup> The students had visited and studied Breuer's and Gropius's houses in Lincoln, Massachusetts, during graduate school and were inspired by their ideas.<sup>41</sup> In 1948, Breuer had been awarded the distinguished commission to design an exhibition house in MoMA's garden, exposing tens of



**Figure 5. Noyes House 1** (1947), designed by Eliot Noyes (photographer: Nina Bremer, source: New Canaan Historical Society)

36 “What's going on in...New Canaan, Conn.,” *House & Home* 3 (January 1953): 135; Jean Ely, “New Canaan Modern: The Beginning 1947-1952.” *The New Canaan Historical Society Annual* 5 (1967): 12.

37 Ely, 12, 15.

38 *Ibid.*

39 Gordon Bruce, *Eliot Noyes* (New York and London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2006), 95.

40 Isabelle Hyman, *Marcel Breuer, Architect: The Career and the Buildings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2001), 100.

41 John Johansen, *John M. Johansen: A Life in the Continuum of Modern Architecture* (Milan, Italy: l'Arca Edizioni, 1995), 17-18.

thousands of Americans to their first Modern house.<sup>42</sup> The opportunity to work with and live close to Breuer must have been very enticing. The availability of relatively cheap land would also be appealing to a fledgling architect; the idea of constructing a home in a semi-rural town instead of New York City mimics Breuer's and Gropius's choice to build homes in rural Lincoln, Massachusetts, instead of Boston.

During this same time period, Yale University-trained architect Victor Christ-Janer coincidentally stopped in New Canaan after his car broke down on the way back from New Haven to New York City. While he and his wife were driving around trying to find the highway, his wife saw a piece of land on Frogtown Road where she wanted to live. A week later, the Christ-Janers purchased the lot on which they constructed their house starting in 1949.<sup>43</sup> Although Christ-Janer did not know the Harvard Five architects, he became an integral part of the first wave of Modern architects in New Canaan along with Willis Mills and his firm, Sherwood, Mills & Smith.

### *New Canaan Moderns Attract Attention*

By 1952, all seven architects had constructed strikingly different homes for themselves in New Canaan. Noyes's first house (Figure 5) hugged a hillside, while Breuer's first house (Figure 6) featured a dramatic cantilever. The Gores House



**Figure 6. Breuer House 1** (1947), designed by Marcel Breuer (photographer: Pedro Guerrero, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)

was clearly reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's work, while Johnson's Glass House was influenced by Mies van der Rohe. The houses attracted the attention of the architectural press: the Breuer House was published in the October

1948 issue of *Architectural Record*, the Noyes House was featured in the December 1949 issue of *Interiors*, and the Glass House was written up in *Architectural Forum*, *Life*, the *New York Times*, and other publications.

Without question, the house that generated the most interest was Johnson's Glass House. It caused such a furor that local police officers were called in to control traffic jams while the house was under construction: "Week-end crowds have been blocking traffic...with hundreds of residents turning out in holiday mood to inspect Philip C. Johnson's all-glass house...startled, uninvited visitors tramp about to view the results with mingled expressions of awe, wonder and indignation."<sup>44</sup> In a pattern that would repeat even today in New Canaan, residents were sharply divided in their opinion of the Glass House. One of the workmen constructing it reportedly said, "At first we thought this was crazy...But every day we are here we have come to like it more!"<sup>45</sup> The crowds did not disperse even when the Glass House was completed, and Johnson was forced to put up a sign that read: "This house is now occupied. Please respect the privacy of the owner. It will be open to the public on specific days."

In 1949, likely in response to the immense interest in the Glass House, the first Modern house tour in New Canaan was organized. Held on May 14, the first tour featured Noyes House 1 (1947, Eliot Noyes), the Gores House (1948, Landis Gores), the Glass House (1949, Philip Johnson), Breuer House 1 (1947, Marcel Breuer), the Rantoul House (1948, Sherwood, Mills & Smith), and the Kniffen House (1949, Breuer and Noyes) (Figure 7). The tour attracted



**Figure 7. Kniffen House** (1949, no longer extant), designed by Marcel Breuer and Eliot Noyes (photographer: Wayne Andrews, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Ely, 12, 15.

<sup>44</sup> Mabel C. Haeberly, "All-Glass Home on Ponus Ridge Startles New Canaan Residents," *New York Times*, 12 December 1948, 1.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



1,000 visitors and raised \$2000 for the New Canaan Library building fund. A review of the houses in the *New York Times* commented that “[f]our of the houses are of special significance because they were built by modern architects as their own homes...All the others...were designed for average family living and are well supplied with children and dogs.”<sup>46</sup>

By 1952, there were about thirty Modern houses in town, and New Canaan was prominently featured in architectural journals and shelter magazines. The architects were designing both for wealthy clients and those of more moderate means. One advantage the architects had over traditional builders was their choice of sites; Modern architects would embrace rocky, hilly sites that many contractors viewed as unbuildable, allowing them to often find relatively inexpensive lots. Regardless of the terrain, the Modernists preferred sites that afforded privacy and stunning views; this allowed the homeowners to take advantage of the large amounts of glazing in Modern houses without feeling exposed. As Sandy Isenstadt writes in *Forum Journal* about mid-century houses, “All of their internal spatial flow was predicated on having a view, since an open plan would mean little in a closed setting.”<sup>47</sup> Even Philip Johnson’s Glass House was sited on a very secluded spot on an extensive estate; the house would not be workable in a more developed setting.

Tensions arising from the increasing numbers of Modern houses and the accompanying crowds erupted in the spring of 1952 with a debate that raged in the letters-to-the-editor section of the *New Canaan Advertiser* between anonymous residents and the Harvard Five architects. The first poem, written by “Ogden Gnash-Teeth” and titled “Cantilever Heaven or Wearing Out Your Welcome,” stated that the Harvard Five architects

...Have graciously condescended to settle here and ruin the  
countryside with packing boxes  
And partially-opened bureau drawers set on steel posts and  
stanchions—  
An architectural form as gracious as Sunoco services stations.  
It seems to be there are about seventy-nine hundred out of  
our eight thousand population  
That wish to hell that Harvard and the Modern Art Museum  
Had provided padded cells for their brilliant graduate architects,  
Complete with air-conditioned functions and cantilevered  
sundecks—  
Windowless, doorless, charmless and escape-proof

46 Mary Roche, “New Canaan Holds Modern House Day,” *New York Times*, 14 May 1949, 10.

47 Sandy Isenstadt, “Three Problems in Preserving the Postwar Landscape,” *Forum Journal* 15 (Spring 2001): 37.

We wouldn’t care if Cambridge or 53<sup>rd</sup> Street were covered  
with one big flat roof,  
So long as Breuer, Gores, Johnson, Noyes, Johansen  
Were under it instead of in the station next to heaven.<sup>48</sup>  
Landis Gores responded with another poem:

We see by the Advertiser of March 13, Page 4, Column 6,  
That in the craw of Mr. Gnash-Teeth modern architecture sticks,  
Allergic to glass, steel, bureau drawers and cantilevers,  
A stuffy old stuffed-shirt with green myopic fever  
Undulant, ruminant, tobacco on his vest,  
Grandiloquent grandson of a grandson of the best,  
Who latterly has failed, we fear, to grasp in the slightest  
That that which was found good in the past is no longer today  
the object of affection of the brightest—  
That pigeons chalk his widows’ walk, while widows chauffeur-  
driven  
In sportscars pop from soda to lingerie shop, next the Station  
Next to Heaven.<sup>49</sup>

Several other letters followed, but the controversy died down by the time the second house tour was held in May of that year.<sup>50</sup> A 1952 review in the *New York Times* titled “Modern Man Judges the Modern House” reported that the tour attracted 1,100 visitors despite a driving rain. The article stated that most visitors were not as concerned with the aesthetics of the house exteriors as with their functionality:

Homeowners appear to have usurped the architect’s role of ‘functionalist.’ When, for example, today’s prospective homeowner rejects large glass areas, it is because he suspects an increase in heating and cleaning costs, rather than because he objects to an unusual facade. Clumps of indoor planting in several of the houses, although accepted as appealing to the eye, were criticized by observers as a potential breeding ground for ants. Hard on the feet if easy on the eyes and easy to clean was the verdict on flagstone floors.<sup>51</sup>

The house tours were important not only to raise awareness of Modern architecture but also to drum up business for the architects. By the early 1950s, New Canaan had attracted an influx of white-collar workers and business executives in the upper income brackets who were looking to construct dream houses for their families.<sup>52</sup> The house tours exposed potential residents to the work of the architects; other clients were friends or business acquaintances. For example,

48 The “Next Station to Heaven” is a nickname for New Canaan. “Cantilever Heaven or Wearing Out Your Welcome,” *New Canaan Advertiser*, 13 March 1952, 4.

49 Reprinted in “What’s going on in...New Canaan, Conn.,” *House & Home* 3 (January 1953): 138.

50 See Appendix F for a list of houses included in the tour.

51 Betty Pepis, “Modern Man Judges the Modern House,” *New York Times Magazine*, 8 June 1952, 44.

52 “What’s going on in...New Canaan, Conn.,” *House & Home* (January 1953): 136.

Eliot Noyes designed the Stackpole House for his Harvard University undergraduate classmate (Figure 8).



**Figure 8. Stackpole House** (1951, no longer extant), designed by Eliot Noyes (photographer: William Earls, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)

Despite the success of the house tours and the acclaim from the press, many of the Modern architects continued to be shut out of public work in New Canaan during the early 1950s, possibly because some of the residents objected to the Modern aesthetic. In August 1952, Gores, Johansen, Christ-Janer, Johnson, Severin Stockmar, and landscape architect James Fanning formed a group called Fairfield Associated Architects and put in a proposal to design the new high school; Noyes submitted a separate proposal. Neither group won the project, which was awarded to an out-of-town firm. In another example, a proposal to construct commercial buildings in the downtown area in the Modern style was opposed by the local paper, the *New Canaan Advertiser*, because “[b]alustrades, fanlights, gables, cornices and other trim in Elm Street building are more pleasing to the eye than straight stark lines.”<sup>53</sup>

In August 1952, *Holiday Magazine* wrote an article titled, “They Raised the Roof in New Canaan,” featuring the Glass House, Breuer House 2, Noyes House 1, the Christ-Janer House, the Johansen House, and the Gores House. The article stated:

What is a house? Most Americans...would probably draw a picture—white clapboards, peaked shingled roof, red brick chimney, flagstone walk and green shutters...But the residents of New Canaan, Connecticut, a 300-year-old Colonial village with an extremely high percentage of white clapboard and green-shutter houses, would not be so positive. They would be more likely to launch into an enthusiastic discussion of Mies van der Rohe, dropped girders, Thermopane glass and “planned environment,” or into a disgusted denunciation of

“cantilevered crackerboxes”...New Canaan, to its considerable surprise, has become an architects’ battleground, and everyone talks houses.<sup>54</sup>

The author noted that the houses were “so startlingly modern while being so startlingly different [from each other]. They represent just about every direction in contemporary U.S. architecture.”<sup>55</sup>

An extensive article on New Canaan in the January 1953 issue of *House & Home* posited that one reason that people objected to Modern architecture was that it was difficult to understand because the houses were very different from each other and there was no clearly defined style. In addition, many people were not opposed to Modern houses necessarily, but to poorly designed Modern houses. In answer to the question “Do only cranks live in modern houses?” the article stated:

Most of the owners of New Canaan’s 30-odd modern houses are professional men, businessmen, stockbrokers, advertising executives...most are well within the upper 10% income bracket...Most of the wives have college degrees, some have had (and continue to have) active professions... Far from being strangers to New England...Several come from old New England families.<sup>56</sup>

Overall, the article found that the Modern houses were gaining some acceptance. The resale value of Modern houses in New Canaan was high and did not affect overall real estate prices. Architects had convinced local builders that Modern houses were viable; Victor Christ-Janer persuaded local builder Robert Roles to construct two speculative houses on Wahackme Road, and Roles said, “I now think we can do a good modern speculative house in this area. I don’t care whether it has a flat roof or not; give me the plans of a house that makes sense and I’ll build it.”<sup>57</sup>

In October 1953, a third Modern house tour was held to benefit the New Canaan Community Nursery School.<sup>58</sup> An unnamed architectural magazine editor reportedly said that the tour is “an unparalleled opportunity for professional and general public alike to become acquainted with the work of men who are at the top of contemporary architecture.”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-37.

<sup>54</sup> “They Raised the Roof in New Canaan,” *Holiday Magazine* (August 1952): 49.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

<sup>56</sup> “What’s going on in...New Canaan, Conn.,” *House & Home* (January 1953): 136.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>58</sup> See Appendix F for a list of houses included in the tour.

<sup>59</sup> “Modern House Tour Sunday,” *New Canaan Advertiser*, 15 October 1953.

The excitement building around New Canaan as a center for Modernism drew other architects to town, including John Black Lee, Allan Gelbin, Evans Woollen III, Frederick Taylor Gates and Russell Ford, and Hugh Smallen. Frank Lloyd Wright and Edward Durell Stone both designed houses in New Canaan in the late 1950s. The work of these new architects was soon included in the Modern house tours. Tours were held in 1955, 1957, and 1959.<sup>60</sup> Interestingly, an article in the *New Canaan Advertiser* about the 1959 tour called Noyes House 2, the Glass House, and the Johansen House as “the three ‘old’ contemporary dwellings,” perhaps marking a shift from the first generation of Modern architects to a new wave.<sup>61</sup> The 1950s would prove to be the most prolific decade in New Canaan for the construction of Modern houses, with over sixty houses constructed during this time period.

As the Modern movement grew, some of the architects eventually became involved in real estate development. As mentioned above, Victor Christ-Janer partnered with builder Robert Roles on several homes. In 1953, they embarked on an ambitious development plan to build speculative houses on a 150-acre parcel along Frogtown Road between Weed Street and Ponus Ridge Road. Known as “Frogtown Terrace,” all of the houses were to be designed by Christ-Janer and constructed by Roles. The houses were to be on lots sized from one acre to four acre and were projected to cost \$35,000 to \$60,000. Roles’s own house on Wahackme Road was constructed as the model house. The *New York Times* remarked that the plan was a “marked departure from the usual speculative home building in the area and reflects a direct influence of New Canaan’s much publicized contemporary architecture.”<sup>62</sup> It appears that Frogtown Terrace was never developed, but Christ-Janer remained involved in speculative developments through the 1980s, including a development along Laurel Road.

Also in the mid-1950s, John Black Lee purchased twenty acres of land along Chichester Road in partnership with Hugh Smallen. The land was subdivided into six lots with the provision that all of the owners had to build Modern houses. Lee and Smallen both built houses for themselves in the development (Lee House 2, 1956, and Smallen House, 1957, Figure 9), and Smallen also designed the Becker House (1963) and Parsons House (1964). The System House (Lee and DeSilver, 1961) may also have been part of this development.

### *The Post-World War II Modern House in New Canaan*

The Modern houses constructed in New Canaan during the late 1940s and 1950s shared a number of defining characteristics which reflected larger patterns of development in mid-century homes in America. This grew out of changing family structure and domestic requirements during the mid-twentieth century. Writers during this time period, including Katherine Morrow Ford, James Ford, and Thomas H. Creighton, noted that extended households had been reduced in size to nuclear families.<sup>63</sup> Specialization, mechanization, and mass production of goods or services reduced the types of domestic responsibilities and the need for servants, eliminating specifically designated spaces for some tasks and household members like maids.

“The New House for Family Living” was described by Lawrence Kocher in *The Second Treasury of Contemporary Houses* (1959):

The contemporary house has a “new look.” It consists of a more open grouping of rooms, usually all on one floor. Its facing of masonry and weatherboarding has been largely replaced by the window wall, and, in some instances, by a complete encirclement of glass. In addition, a new system of fabrication is being introduced which makes use of steel or wood framework, and has an infilling of glass or factory-made panels.<sup>64</sup>



**Figure 9. Smallen House** (1957, Smallen) in 1969 (photographer: E.J. Cyr, source: New Canaan Historical Society)

<sup>63</sup> See Katherine Morrow Ford and Thomas H. Creighton, *Quality Budget Houses: A Treasury of 100 Architect-Designed Houses from \$5,000 to \$20,000* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1954), and James Ford and Katherine Morrow Ford, *The Modern House in America* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., Inc., 1945).

<sup>64</sup> Lawrence A. Kocher, “The New House for Family Living,” in *The Second Treasury of Contemporary Houses* (New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1959), 19-20.

<sup>60</sup> See Appendix F for a list of houses included in the tours.

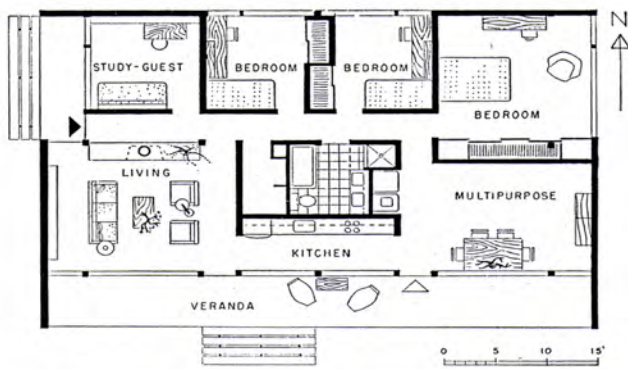
<sup>61</sup> “Chichester Road Contemporary,” *New Canaan Advertiser*, 14 May 1959.

<sup>62</sup> “Connecticut Home in Modern Design,” *New York Times*, 22 February 1953, R1.



Although there were variations in the pattern, many of the post-World War II houses in New Canaan were generally one-story structures with flat roofs and fairly modest in size. Often the houses were constructed on a hillside to provide livable basement space. The most common exterior wall materials included vertical wood siding, fieldstone, and glass. Although some houses had custom-made windows and doors, architects generally used products that were readily available to save on costs. Most houses included a carport or garage.

The interior spaces were designed with open plans but strictly zoned (Figure 10). There were three main categories of spaces: social/public spaces like living rooms and dining



**Figure 10. Plan of Lee House 1.** Note the utility spaces clustered in the center and the separation of public and private spaces (source: "Post and Beam: Its frame must be braced and balanced," *House & Home*, June 1954, 106-110.)

rooms, private spaces like bedrooms and baths, and utility spaces like kitchens, laundry rooms, and storage space. Adult spaces (bedrooms and studies) were often separated from children's spaces (bedrooms and playrooms). Most houses did not include live-in rooms for servants, although several houses did have rooms for maids, housekeepers, or nannies; these rooms were zoned with the utility spaces or children's rooms.

Many homes in New Canaan were designed with a central core containing utility space, kitchens, and bathrooms to save on construction costs; these rooms were often lit with skylights. Kitchens were connected to other rooms through pass-through windows or other devices to allow the homeowner to socialize with guests or oversee children in adjacent playrooms or family rooms. Social spaces were informally divided by partial-height partition walls, cabinets, or fireplaces to facilitate the flow of movement. Despite having technically advanced heating systems, homes also included fireplaces or central stoves.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the New Canaan houses was the blending of the division between exterior and interior spaces to create a link to nature. This was achieved by the use of extended end walls of fieldstone, brick, or wood, which continued beyond the exterior wall plane into the landscape; the extension of ceiling beams through the wall plane to continue along the soffit; the use of the same materials at both the interior and exterior spaces, like using the same floor tile in a living room and the adjacent outdoor terrace; the extensive use of glass; and floor plans that had planned views through the house to the landscape beyond (Figure 11). Defined outdoor spaces



**Figure 11. Melville House, service entry, 2008.** Architects Gates and Ford used extended end walls of fieldstone at the entry and living room to create a connection between interior and exterior spaces. Note how the fieldstone wall extends through the glass wall into the entry (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)

like terraces or wood decks emphasized the connection to nature. On hillside houses, the decks often were above grade and extended over the basement level of the house.

Many Modern houses in New Canaan were meticulously detailed and included extensive use of reveals at the edges of building elements like walls to create the sensation of floating

surfaces. Contractors had to be willing to be flexible and creative in constructing these houses, which often included structural elements or finish details unfamiliar to builders accustomed to working on more traditional homes. As explained in *The Second Treasury of Contemporary Houses* (1959):

[T]he architect of today has become more daring, and more, what we may term, “industrial minded”; his methods of construction are more technical and complicated than a generation ago. Newer building operations require a close partnership of architect, engineer and industry. The combination of steel, glass, plastics and other materials make it urgently necessary that all parts be fitted together as a delicate and complex mechanism.<sup>65</sup>

Houses were sometimes designed on a modular system. For example, each bay would be 6’ wide and could accommodate a window, a door, or a wall panel. Architect John Black Lee noted that contractors had to understand how to work with the specified module and sometimes had to cut materials to fit the module. They would also have to specify and cull higher-grade lumber for detail work; for example, a reveal at a wall or door jamb would require clear, straight lumber because part of it would remain visible.<sup>66</sup>

Although the Modern houses were seemingly easier to construct than a traditional house with extensive ornamentation, the simple finishes and exposed details required painstaking work because there were no base moldings or other elements to hide mistakes. Many of the Modern houses in New Canaan were constructed by a select group of builders, including Borglum & Meek, Theodore Hobbs, Ernest Rau, and John C. Smith. Architects or homeowners chose these builders because they were experienced in finding and managing subcontractors who were able to execute challenging details and finishes.<sup>67</sup>

#### *The Post-World War II Modern Landscape in New Canaan*

Landscape was an important and unifying component in the design of Modern houses in New Canaan. Architects were closely involved in the selection, siting, and design of New Canaan’s Modern residential landscapes. As discussed above, one of the goals of the architects was to seamlessly integrate indoor and outdoor living. Landscape architects played a small role in this process and were only involved in the design of the most lavish properties.

In some cases, architects accompanied clients to view available building sites and advised them on which parcel to purchase. Architect Richard Bergmann described looking at many sites with the Lathams before choosing a “wooded six acre site...complete with rock outcroppings, a stream and sixty foot ridge commanding a view of a pond.”<sup>68</sup> Architects could also assist in finding less expensive lots—for example, sites that had steep grade changes or granite outcroppings—because most developers would find these lots unbuildable. Jane Teaze looked for land with architect John Black Lee before finding “a difficult piece which had been abandoned by Miles Olson who had intended to put up a traditional colonial but was stymied by the rocks & couldn’t get a full cellar.”<sup>69</sup>

After the land was chosen, the architect carefully considered the best location for the house. Bergmann said that before designing the Latham House (1966), “much time was spent ‘walking’ the site and getting a feel for the wedding of the house to the land. The house was then carefully formulated from the owner’s program and the nature of the selected building area.”<sup>70</sup> At Eliot Noyes’s second house (Noyes House 2, 1954-55), Noyes originally intended to build the house approximately 300’ east of its present location. As the trees began to be cleared, Noyes realized he could take better advantage of a key landscape feature—a small river with a natural pool and an old stone dam—by placing the house closer to the river in the middle of a pine grove.<sup>71</sup> The orientation of the house was also a key element in the design of the property. Architects sited houses to take advantage of views and light while protecting the privacy of the homeowners. For example, heavily glazed walls used in living rooms or bedrooms were oriented away from the street and shielded by dense woodland or grade changes. Street-facing façades often had minimal fenestration.

Very few Modern houses in New Canaan had formal landscapes designed by landscape architects, and these houses were generally larger and more expensive than the average mid-century Modern house. In this way, Modern house design follows earlier architectural periods in which formally designed landscapes were generally reserved for high-end properties. It appears that most Modern homeowners either did their own landscaping or worked with local nurseries.

65 *Ibid.*

66 John Black Lee, interview by Martin Skrelunas, Philip Johnson Glass House, April 2008.

67 David Borglum, interview with Martin Skrelunas, Philip Johnson Glass House, 22 April 2008.

68 Richard Bergmann to Martin Skrelunas, Philip Johnson Glass House, 1 November 2007.

69 Jane Teaze to Janet Lindstrom, 28 March 2001. Letter on file at the New Canaan Historical Society.

70 Richard Bergmann to Martin Skrelunas, Philip Johnson Glass House, 1 November 2007.

71 Frederick Noyes, “BCA Edits, Noyes House, New Canaan, CT,” 3 March 2008.

Houses that did have landscapes designed by landscape architects included the Glass House (1945-49, Johnson), the Warner House (1956, Johansen), and the Celanese House (1959, Stone); all three landscapes were designed by James Fanning, who also likely collaborated with Philip Johnson on other houses in New Canaan. These houses could all be considered high-end properties, and the Celanese House is particularly an exception since it was designed as an exhibition home. Most of the landscape architects who worked in New Canaan were local practitioners, including Paschall Campbell, Charles Middleleer, and Friede Stege. Many of the existing formal Modern house landscapes in New Canaan were commissioned by later owners; these houses include Tirranna/Rayward House (1956, Wright), which had a landscape designed by Charles Middleleer and Frank Masao Okamura in the late 1960s, and the Ford House (1954, Gates and Ford), which had a landscape designed by Friede Stege in the 1960s.

### 1960s and 1970s

The population of New Canaan continued to grow through the 1960s and 1970s from about 8,000 residents in 1950 to 18,000 in 1980. Two new elementary schools, a junior high school (converted from the former “new” high school), and a high school opened to accommodate the student population.<sup>72</sup> In 1963, New Canaan established one of the earliest historic districts in the state; the district was known as “Church Hill,” or “God’s Acre.” This early historic preservation movement was spurred in part by the construction of the first Modern church in town, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church (1961), on a lot very close to “God’s Acre.” St. Mark’s was designed by Sherwood, Mills & Smith, who designed several Modern houses in New Canaan.<sup>73</sup> In 1967, another Modern church, St. Aloysius Roman Catholic Church, was constructed in the downtown area to a design by architect Robert W. van Summer.<sup>74</sup>

### Second-Generation Architects

By the late 1960s, some members of the Harvard Five had become disillusioned with New Canaan and the progress of new Modern architecture in town. Johnson said that the Modern movement was history in New Canaan, and Johansen compared the town to an old married wife.<sup>75</sup> In 1967, *The New Canaan Historical Society Annual* lionized

the Harvard Five architects despite protests from some members of the Historical Society. The article, which is one of the best sources on the history of the Harvard Five in New Canaan, stated:

Since the late 1940’s New Canaan has come to be known for a new kind of architecture—a modern architecture outside of the tradition of colonialism and the past. The modern movement—with its experimentation in material, construction methods, space, and form—is an architecture of the present. Like the clapboard colonial, the modern house is built as an expression of its time. The colonial clapboard is today’s history. The modern house is the history of tomorrow.<sup>76</sup>

House tours continued throughout the 1960s, attracting even more architects to New Canaan. Many of the new architects worked with Eliot Noyes or Victor Christ-Janer as they established their careers. Alan Goldberg came on a 1959 house tour and moved to New Canaan in the mid-1960s to join Eliot Noyes’s firm.<sup>77</sup> Richard Bergmann arrived in New Canaan around the same time and worked for both Christ-Janer and Noyes.<sup>78</sup> Other architects who worked on projects in New Canaan in the 1960s included Gary Lindstrom, Lazlo Papp, Eduardo Faxas, and James Evans. Modern house tours were held in 1961 (Figure 12), 1963, 1965, and 1967. An article in the *New Canaan Advertiser* about the 1963 tour stated that the Glass House and Noyes House 2 were considered “the most ‘far-out’ of all contemporary dwellings” but were also “among the most popular features on the biennial Modern House Tours.”<sup>79</sup>



**Figure 12. System House** (1961, Lee and DeSilver), historic view of front façade taken during Modern House Tour, ca. 1961 (photographer: Syd Greenberg, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)

<sup>72</sup> King, 320.

<sup>73</sup> David Anderson, “New Canaan Group Acts to Save Town’s Historical ‘God’s Acre,’” *New York Times*, 2 April 1961, 74; “New Canaan to Get Its First Church of Modern Design,” *New York Times*, 8 November 1958, 18.

<sup>74</sup> “Connecticut Church Shaped Like Omega,” *New York Times*, 4 September 1966, 205.

<sup>75</sup> Ely, 19.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas A. DeLong, “The high rise of a ‘school’ in New Canaan,” *The Advocate and Greenwich Time*, 27 April 1986, D1, D11.

<sup>78</sup> Martin Cassidy, “New Canaan’s modern slice of history,” *The Stamford Advocate*, 15 November 1999, A8.

<sup>79</sup> “‘Far-Out’ Stops on House Tour,” *New Canaan Advertiser*, 9 May 1963.



An article in *County* described the tours as attracting more than 3,500 visitors, necessitating “devising a special pattern of one-way traffic, printing of special maps for visitors, arranging for picnic facilities, and training of personnel to serve as hostess-guides at the houses.”<sup>80</sup>

### *The End of Modernism in New Canaan*

By the end of the 1960s, the Modern movement in New Canaan was slowing to a halt as it was all over the United States due to a backlash against the tenets of Modernism and urban renewal led by Jane Jacobs, Robert Venturi, and Peter Blake. Part of the decline was due to a glut in construction of cheap, poorly designed “glass boxes,” which had the outer trappings of a Modern building but were removed from the ethos of the Modern movement. Postmodernism was embraced as a more humanist approach to architecture, and Modern architects either transitioned to the new movement, as Philip Johnson did, or were pilloried for their association with the Bauhaus, as was Marcel Breuer.

Some of the Modern houses of the late 1960s and 1970s in New Canaan reflected the rise of Postmodernism in their design. Flat-roofed glass boxes began to give way to houses with pitched roofs, wood shingle or clapboard siding, and smaller areas of fenestration. The energy crisis in the United States encouraged architects to design more energy-efficient houses, and solar principles—like creating south-facing light monitors to bring light and heat into the interior of structures—became important factors in house design (Figure 13).



**Figure 13. Branch House** (1979-80, Christ-Janer), ca. 1981 (photographer: Branch family, source: New Canaan Historical Society). Victor Christ-Janer used solar principles in the Branch House for energy efficiency. The angled bay windows were designed to bring light and heat from the south while blocking cold from the north. The bay windows have now been removed.

A few of the original Modern architects continued to design houses in New Canaan in the 1970s and 1980s, including Eliot Noyes (1977, Chivvis House), Landis Gores (1978, All Seasons House, no longer extant), and Victor Christ-Janer (1979, Branch House, and 1981, Grant House), but the peak of their work in New Canaan had ended.

In the last few decades, new houses have been constructed in New Canaan that are contemporary in design, representing a continuum of modern design in the town. These include the Rhee House (1987, Duk Rhee), the Fowler House (1988, Peter L. Gluck and Partners), Lee House 3 (Lee, 1990), and the Prutting House (2003, Kaehler/Moore Architects), which was built upon the site of Noyes’s Brown House, resulting in its demolition. With the exception of Lee House 3, the new houses differ substantially from the original Modern buildings in terms of their size and elaboration of interior spaces, which are more in line with current standards of house construction.

### *New Canaan: Demolition and Preservation of the Moderns*

The decline of the Modern movement in New Canaan and throughout the United States increased the threat of demolition for the Modern houses. The Kirkbride House (1937) was likely demolished in the late 1960s or early 1970s, and John Johansen’s first house was demolished in the late 1970s. The Glass House continued to be viewed as iconic by many critics and writers, due in part to Philip Johnson’s success as an architect during this time period, but the other houses fell into obscurity. Some New Canaan residents seemed relieved to be out of the spotlight; in 1967, architect Paul Rudolph resigned his commission to design a new high school for the town after residents complained about his previous work. The first selectman of the town said in a remarkable statement, “We don’t want a monument or an architectural landmark...Citizens here want to be left alone...[they] were afraid that if we let Rudolph do the school, people would read about it in national magazines and say, ‘Look what Rudolph did in New Canaan; let’s move there.’”<sup>81</sup>

The New Canaan Historical Society recognized the significance of the Modern houses almost from the beginning of the movement, collecting information on the houses for their extensive archives. In 1951, four Modern houses—the Kirkbride House, the Willis N. Mills House, the Glass House, and Breuer House 1—were included in a publication titled

80 “‘Modern House Day’ in New Canaan May 21,” *County*, May 1967, 17.

81 William Borders, “Architect Quits School Project,” *New York Times*, 1 February 1967, 41.

*Landmarks of New Canaan*.<sup>82</sup> In 1967, Jean Ely's article on the Harvard Five, "New Canaan Modern: The Beginning 1947-1952," was published in *The New Canaan Historical Society Annual*.<sup>83</sup> According to New Canaan Historical Society member Nancy Finnie, who pushed for the inclusion of Ely's article, "[t]here were a lot of people who disagreed with this idea that the Modern Movement was important. They hoped that these little glass boxes would just go away, and we could become a nice little New England village again."<sup>84</sup> With the support of other members of the New Canaan Historical Society and Philip Johnson, the article was published, but the controversy underscored the tension in town about the legacy of the Moderns.

The booming real estate market at the turn of the twenty-first century increased the teardown rate of the houses, accelerated in part by more houses being put on the market as many original owners died or decided to move away. In 1999, the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation listed International Style Teardowns in New Canaan as one of the "Most Important Threatened Historic Places" in the state.<sup>85</sup> The New Canaan Moderns are under threat for a number of reasons:

1. The sites are generally very desirable because the houses are often on large lots with landscaping and water features. The houses are also relatively small and easy to demolish. The land is worth more than the buildings.
2. Many of the Moderns are not yet fifty years old. Because of this, they are not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places unless exceptional significance can be established, and therefore, are not protected under Connecticut's Environmental Protection Act.
3. New Canaan has a very robust real estate market and "McMansions" are increasingly popular, endangering not only the Moderns, but also other small houses from all periods of development in New Canaan; houses from the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been lost.
4. Current house standards call for larger and more elaborate interiors than the simple Moderns possess. Modern houses can be difficult to expand because adding an upper story will often destroy the design of the building, and zoning can prohibit adding a wing or second building. New Canaan has now amended its zoning laws to grant special permits to allow sensitive expansion.

5. New Canaan's zoning is fairly strict, allowing 4% lot coverage for a five-acre parcel. Coverage is determined by the footprint of the building, which generally includes covered outdoor spaces and overhangs unless they extend less than 24 inches from the building. The Modern houses, with their generous overhangs and courtyards, often have a much smaller amount of livable space than footprint. In the 2007 zoning regulations, special provision has been made for the preservation of Modern houses, allowing exemptions for houses that are recognized as "worthy of continued preservation," but a special permit is still required to receive an exemption.<sup>86</sup>
6. Potential owners can be concerned about resale value since Modern houses are often priced lower than traditional houses.
7. Modern houses were often constructed with experimental materials, which can perform badly or fail. In New Canaan, the majority of houses were constructed with more traditional materials, but elements like single-glazed fixed sash or sliding doors can make the houses prohibitively expensive to heat and cool. Many contractors are not familiar with the construction methods or materials of Modern houses and do not know how to make repairs. Machine-made materials can often be impossible to replace if they are no longer being manufactured.
8. The Modern houses are generally hidden from the street and thus remain invisible to most residents. Even if the houses are visible, it is difficult to understand or appreciate them without walking around the site or going inside. As Richard Longstreth stated about New Canaan, "Even in communities that possess an abundant collection of noteworthy examples...little is known about this legacy except through individual encounters with domiciles owned by friends."<sup>87</sup> This makes it difficult to increase awareness about the significance of the Modern houses.

To date, approximately twenty-six Modern houses in New Canaan have been documented as demolished; eleven houses by the Harvard Five architects, two houses by Victor Christ-Janer (Trench House, Johnson House), and one house by Sherwood, Mills & Smith (Knoll House). The Harvard Five losses include one house by Breuer (Mills House), one house jointly designed by Breuer and Noyes (Kniffen House), five other houses by Noyes (Noyes House 1, Tallman House, Brown House, Mosely House, and Stackpole House), one by Gores (All Seasons House), and four by Johansen (Johansen House, Dunham House, Dickinson House, and Goode House) (Figure 14). One other Noyes house (Weeks House) and one by Johansen (Campbell House) have been essentially demolished through extensive alterations. The first houses that Noyes and Johansen designed and lived in have both been lost.

In 1986, Philip Johnson donated the Glass House to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, arranging for the

<sup>82</sup> New Canaan Historical Society, *Landmarks of New Canaan* (New Canaan, CT: The New Canaan Historical Society, 1951).

<sup>83</sup> Ely, 8-19.

<sup>84</sup> Gwen North Reiss, "In the shadow of the Glass House: New Canaan's other modern houses," *Journal / International Working-Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement* 25 (July 2001): 50-51.

<sup>85</sup> "The Most Important Threatened Historic Places," *Connecticut Preservation News* 22 (September/October 1999): 1.

<sup>86</sup> Town of New Canaan, "New Canaan Zoning Regulations," 16 June 2007, Section 3.6.

<sup>87</sup> Richard Longstreth, "I Can't See It; I Don't Understand It; and It Doesn't Look Old to Me," *Historic Preservation Forum* 10 (Fall 1995): 9-10.



property to be transferred at his death. At the time, the concept of preservation of mid-century resources had barely been addressed and was considered by many in the field to be antithetical since the historic preservation movement had begun in response to urban renewal and mid-century sprawl. The National Park Service had published *Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years* in 1979, but few properties were nominated.

By the late 1980s, that attitude began to change. DOCOMOMO (the international working party for Documentation and CONservation of buildings, sites, and neighborhoods of the MODern MOVement) was founded in 1988 in the Netherlands; the DOCOMOMO Working Party for the United States was established in 1995. That same year, ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property), and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) held a seminar on twentieth-century heritage. In 1998, Arapahoe Acres in Denver, Colorado, became the first post-World War II residential subdivision to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district, even though the houses were less than fifty years old. In 2000, the Recent Past Preservation Network was founded, and in 2007, APTI (Association for Preservation Technology International) established a Technical Committee on Modern Heritage.

In New Canaan, renewed interest in the Modern Houses first surfaced in 1992, when the Cooper-Hewitt Museum organized a tour of the Modern houses. During the 1990s, the New Canaan Historical Society and Richard and Sandra Bergmann organized talks, private tours, and events to

raise awareness. In 2000, the New York/Tri-State chapter of DOCOMOMO hosted a Modern House Tour; the New Canaan Historical Society held a second tour in 2001. DOCOMOMO and the New Canaan Historical Society began a joint survey of the Modern houses in 2001. The Glass House opened to visitors in 2007 and received an immense response, bringing renewed attention to the Modern movement in New Canaan.

Three of the Modern houses are currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Glass House (National Historic Landmark, listed 1997), the Gores House (listed 2002), and the Hodgson House (listed 2005). Six of the houses are listed on the Connecticut Register of Historic Places: the Glass House (Johnson), the Hodgson House (Johnson), the Boissonnas House (Johnson), Breuer House 2 (Breuer), Noyes House 2 (Noyes), the Gores House (Gores), and Tirranna/Rayward House (Frank Lloyd Wright). The Johansen House (Johansen) was listed on the State Register but has since been demolished. According to the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, with the exception of Tirranna (listed in 1978), the remaining houses were listed in the Connecticut Register of Historic Places in 1974 as part of a thematic survey titled “Twentieth Century Architecture.”



**Figure 14. Dickinson House** (1953) being demolished in August 2000 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)





Hodgson House (1950-51, Philip Johnson)





5

# Study Houses

Organized by Architect & Date





Latham House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley).



Latham House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



ID Number
1

# Latham House

Richard Bergmann, 1968

The Latham House is located on a secluded lot and sited at the top of a hill that slopes sharply down at the rear to a pond. The house is dominated by its deeply overhanging, steeply pitched hipped roofs terminating in shed-roofed light scoops formed by two opposing pitched roof planes that do not intersect but were originally connected by a vertical pane of glass; the glazing in the light scoops has been removed and shingled over. The house is finished in natural materials like vertical wood siding, brick veneer at the basement, and wood shingles on the roof. A knoll with cutstone retaining walls at the driveway supports a wood bridge with stone footers that leads to the upper floor of the house. Cantilevered decks extend from the front and rear of the house. The rear of the house, which faces the pond, has large window walls fitted with fixed and casement sash. The Latham House typifies the later period of Modernism in New Canaan when the International Style began to give way to designs evoking more traditional elements.

## Significance

The Latham House was designed by architect Richard Bergmann for the Latham family. Ernest B. Latham II worked for Greeff Fabrics in Port Chester, NY, and became vice president of sales in 1974. His wife Chaillie owned a business called Quail Hill Designs with Susan Carney. The Lathams had four children.





Latham House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Latham House, detail of front entrance, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Ernest B. and Chaillie W. Latham purchased property overlooking the Noroton River in 1967 after spending a great deal of time looking for an appropriate site with the architect. The Latham House was Bergmann's first commission and the first house he ever designed. The Bergmanns had been renting a house from the Lathams, and Ernest Latham asked if he would design a house for him in exchange for ownership of the rental house. Bergmann agreed, but had to resign his job with Eliot Noyes's firm since moonlighting wasn't allowed, but Noyes was supportive and began sending him commissions that he didn't have time to work on (Bergmann, 2007).

According to Bergmann, after finding a site and determining the program for the house, the client gave him a fair amount of freedom. Bergmann left the rugged natural landscape untouched. He designed the house as two joined pavilions, using natural materials including brick and cedar shakes. Light was an important factor, and "light scoops" were included on the roofs to bring light into the house at different times of day. Bergmann described the house as "a contemporary style with steeply pitched roofs...I went to school in the International Style, but I never liked flat roofs on houses. The roof sits like a hat on a house" (Ross, 2003, 15). The house was designed to accommodate four growing children. The youngest children had bedrooms at the upper floor with a bridge to a hill on the driveway (which served as a fire escape), while the older children were in the lower level with a separate entrance down to the river.

The Latham House was designed in 1967 and finished in 1968 for \$125,000. The structural engineer on the project was Arne Thune Associates and the primary contractor was Theron Thurston of Danbury.

In 1981, Ian Zwicker acquired the house. In 1983, two acres of the site were sold to a neighbor, and Bela J. Garet became owner of the house. In 1984, a permit was filed for interior alterations, which were completed in 1985. In 1985, Donald S. and Jean N. Lamm acquired the property. In 1995, Darryl Neider became owner of the property. In 2005, David G. Scannell, Trustee, purchased the property. The original cedar shakes on the roof were replaced with wood shingles in 2007. Scannell hired Richard Bergmann to design an addition to the house, which will be constructed in 2007-2008.

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Hurlburt House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Hurlburt House, historic view, 1957 (photographer: E.J. Cyr, source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number
2

# Hurlburt House

Leroy Binkley, 1958

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Hurlburt House was designed by architect Leroy Binkley and completed in 1956. Allen F. Hurlburt et. ux. acquired the property in 1955. The assessor property street card shows a footprint consisting of two rectangles offset from each other and a fieldstone patio. One of the main façades was largely clad in stone; all or some of the remaining façades were clad in glass. In 1959, a flat-roofed carport with one stone façade was constructed. An inground swimming pool was built in 1965.

By 1970, Daniel P. Wood had purchased the Hurlburt House. In 1978, Thomas S. Carroll acquired the house. A wood pool deck was completed in 1983 and an L-shaped addition containing a master bedroom and bath suite was constructed in 1986. In 1993, two wood decks were completed. The house transferred within the Carroll family through a series of quitclaims during the 1990s and early 2000s. In 2003, Bahar Tavakolian purchased the property.

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Breuer House 1, side façade showing addition at rear, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Breuer House 1, historic photograph showing original cantilevers, unknown date (photographer: Pedro Guerrero, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)

ID Number
3

# Breuer House 1

Marcel Breuer, 1947

Breuer House 1 is set on a rise overlooking a gently sloping lawn area planted with large ornamental trees including Japanese maples and weeping hemlocks. The house, which has strong horizontal lines, originally featured an upper floor that cantilevered dramatically over the smaller ground-floor base of the building, including a deep corner porch suspended from cables. Currently, the ends of the main façade and the porch are supported by fieldstone walls, minimizing the effect of the overhangs. The concrete-block base of the building was clad in fieldstone in the late 1980s, altering the somewhat utilitarian aesthetic of the original house. The upper floor is clad in vertical and diagonal wood sheathing. At the second floor, ribbon windows shielded by a wood brise-soleil extend across the main façade. A cantilevered metal stair with wood treads leads to the corner deck. At the rear of the house is a one-story addition clad in similar materials as the remainder of the building.

## Significance

Breuer House 1 was designed by Marcel Breuer for his family in 1947. It was the first house he designed in New Canaan. According to Breuer's wife Constance, they decided to build a house to provide more space for their son (Breuer, Constance, 1951). The Breuers chose New Canaan in part because architect Eliot Noyes and his family had recently moved there. Marcel Breuer acquired the property on Sunset Hill Road in May 1947 and hired builder Irving Wood to construct the house. In August, Breuer left for South America, leaving the construction management to Eliot Noyes and Harry Seidler. Breuer was





Breuer House 1, main façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Breuer House 1, detail of stair, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



concerned about the experimental cantilevers and adjustments had to be made to the cable strengths and fittings during construction, but by September 12, Noyes reported that the porch was hanging “and looks very exciting to us.” However, by October, temporary shoring had been put under the house (Hyman, 348). The landscape around the house, which consisted of a rolling meadow, a large sycamore tree, and several apple trees, was essentially left untouched; Constance Breuer wrote that they did not do much to the landscape aside from planting a few trees (Breuer, Constance, 1951). The house was completed in October 1947 at a cost of \$17,300.

In October 1948, the Breuer House was featured in an eight-page spread in *Architectural Record*: “The irresistible appeal of the cantilever is here developed to the ultimate degree. What Breuer has done, in effect, is to build a small basement story above ground, and then balance a full-size one-story house nearly atop it, cantilevered on all sides, with really long cantilevers at the ends. It looks as if the lower floor has been planned for its relatively small space needs, and the main floor planned separately for its needs, and then the two combined. And that is exactly what happened” (*Architectural Record*, October 1948, 94-95). The cantilevers were constructed using typical frame construction, rather than steel or concrete.

The primary living spaces were on the main, upper floor: the kitchen and laundry room were in the center flanked by sleeping and studying/working spaces at one end, and living and dining spaces at the other end. The kitchen was connected to the dining room by a pass-through, providing for easy transfer of dishes between the two rooms and allowing the cook to converse with guests. The living room and dining room flowed into each other and were only separated by a fireplace. Bedroom closets were placed in the hall to provide additional wall space, which allowed the Breuers to have a piano and desks in the bedrooms. The lower floor of the house contained utility space, a workshop and guest room, a child’s bedroom, a playroom, and a bath. The interior was finished with painted plywood, cypress boarding, and natural gum plywood. The floors were covered in Haitian mattings, bluestone, and black asphalt tile. Strongly painted surfaces in selected locations were used for effect; for example, the north wall in the living room was painted cobalt blue.

In 1949, Breuer House I was included in the first Modern House Tour in New Canaan and was featured in *Architectural Review*. In 1951, Marcel Breuer inserted a fieldstone wall under the sagging cantilevered porch. The assessor’s notes from the 1940s and 1950s indicated that the basement wall had cracked and the roof leaked. After the Breuers moved, Lally columns and posts were placed under the cantilevered ends to provide support. In 1951, Breuer moved his family to Breuer House 2. Russell Roberts became the new owner. In 1964, Peter M. and Gertrude M. Robeck purchased the house. In 1969, a two-car garage was constructed and an in-ground swimming pool was added in 1971. Current owner John Horgan stated that sometime in the 1960s, the owners purchased \$70,000 of mature trees for the property.

Between 1985 and 1988, architect and former Breuer partner Herbert Beckhard was hired to design interior and exterior renovations to the house. Beckhard replaced the Lally columns and posts under the cantilevered ends of the house with fieldstone walls. The foundation was clad in fieldstone and the basement windows were enlarged. The brise-soleil may have been replaced at this time; the new brise-soleil extends further east but no longer covers the cantilevered porch, which is now shielded by an awning. The most significant alteration was the construction of a new addition at the rear, but it is set back to be largely invisible from three façades. On the interior, the kitchen and dining room were expanded, the stair was moved, and new bathrooms, dressing rooms, and a laundry room were built. John P. Horgan purchased the property in 1994.

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor’s Office field cards.



Breuer House 2, historic view, ca. 1956 (photographer: E.J. Cyr, source: New Canaan Historical Society)

ID Number
4

# Breuer House 2

Marcel Breuer, 1951

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

Breuer House 2 was designed by architect Marcel Breuer for his own family after they decided to move from their original house in New Canaan on Sunset Hill Road. Marcel Breuer et. ux. purchased the property in 1951 and the house was completed by the end of the year. The landscaping and terraces were completed in 1952.

Unlike his first house on Sunset Hill Road, Breuer's second house was designed to be grounded rather than floating, and the flat-roofed, one-story structure was clad in fieldstone veneer and glass. The property also had a flat-roofed carport. The house had an U-shaped plan enclosing a courtyard with a flagstone terrace. The plan concentrated the public living spaces (living room and dining room) and master bedroom and bath at one end, the utility spaces (kitchen, utility room, heating room) in the center, and the children's room, bath, and guest rooms at the other end of the house. As in his first house, Breuer used neutral colors on the interior with splashes of bright color provided by artwork and by painting individual walls primary colors.

Breuer House 2 was featured in the *New York Times* and *Holiday Magazine* and included in the 1952, 1955, 1957, and 1962 Modern House tours in New Canaan.





In 1975, Gerald O. and Nancy F. Bratti acquired the property. The Brattis hired architect Herbert Beckhard, a longtime associate of Breuer's, to design extensive renovations to the property, which were completed between 1975 and 1982. The renovations were featured in *Architectural Record Houses of 1981*. The interior of the house was essentially gutted; a 22'x43' one-story children's wing was constructed and connected to the main house by an enclosed glass-and-stone corridor (1976); and a new garage (1976), swimming pool (1980-81), and a 27'x29' underground poolhouse/guesthouse (1980-81) with an attached greenhouse (1982) were also constructed.

In 1990, Edward N. and Jeanne S. Epstein purchased the house. In 1997, Arlene H. Stern acquired the property. In 2004, development company 628 West Road LLC purchased the house. Robert Bishop acquired the property in 2005, saving it from demolition. The current owners are removing the addition designed by Herbert Beckhard and constructing a new freestanding addition designed by Toshiko Mori.

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Christ-Janer House, view from road, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Christ-Janer House, view from road, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)

ID Number
5

# Christ-Janer House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1949-52

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Christ-Janer House was designed by architect Victor Christ-Janer for his family. Christ-Janer had moved to New Canaan in the late 1940s after stopping in town by chance when his car broke down on the way to New York City from New Haven. While he and his wife were driving around trying to find the highway, his wife saw a piece of land on Frogtown Road where she wanted to live. A week later, in August 1948, Victor and Elizabeth W. Christ-Janer purchased the lot (Ely, 12, 15).

From an examination of the assessor property field cards, it appears that the Christ-Janer House was completed between 1949 and 1952, possibly in two distinct phases. The chronology of construction is difficult to ascertain without viewing the house. The earlier field card shows a long, narrow footprint with a slight L-shape. The house was clad in vertical wood siding and glass. Notes on the cards read: "Oct. 1, 1949 incomplete" and "1952 complete house." A sketch plan from the early 1950s shows an expanded house with curving stone retaining walls extending perpendicular from the center of the house on both sides, three grape arbors with trellises supported on posts, and new stone walls on parts of the exterior of the



Christ-Janer House, view from road, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



building. A 1955 note in the assessor property street card states, "very attractive use of low cost materials." The builder for the property was Borglum & Meek.

The Christ-Janer House was featured in an August 1952 article in *Holiday Magazine* along with Noyes House 1, the Johansen House, Breuer House 2, the Glass House, and the Gores House. The Christ-Janer House was described as follows: "Victor Christ-Janer gets an extraordinary feeling of space in [a] small house by making it possible to see through glass in three or four directions from almost any point in the house, and by a long, sweeping hall which carries across a 'bridge' above an open patio on the lower floor. This opening can be made into an additional children's room; when the children have grown up and left, the patio can be restored" (*Holiday Magazine*, August 1952, 50).

Between 1958 and 1959, a 15'x16.5' wing and crushed stone terrace shielded by a stone wall were added to the house. In 1961, an A-frame children's playhouse was constructed. In 1966, a two-story concrete-block studio was completed. The assessor noted that the exterior concrete block "is a special type of blk. & constr." The studio contained a sleeping loft and a kitchenette. Between 1982 and 1983, a flat-roofed, concrete-block workshop was constructed. In 1984, a greenhouse was added to the property.

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Roles House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Roles House, front façade, photograph of house before alterations, 1985 (photographer: Sara Perkins, source: Sara Perkins)



ID Number
6

# Roles House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1953

The Roles House has been significantly altered at both the interior and exterior.

As built, the one-story-plus-basement, symmetrical, brick-clad Roles House had white painted wood trim and a flat roof. Floor-to-ceiling fixed plate glass windows and sliding windows were symmetrically and strategically arranged to bring natural light into the load-bearing masonry structure.

Two single car garages flanked the primary entrance. The entry hall had flagstone pavers and a reflecting pool. The entry space opened up to a flagstone-paved indoor terrace, which was separated from the adjacent living space by a curtain. Rolling storage partition walls were strategically placed in living, dining, and family areas to create more intimate settings. The exterior materials were brought inside, with the fireplace and select interior walls finished with brickwork.

The plan, arranged on a rectangular footprint, was designed to have a central utility core with living spaces at the perimeter. The kitchen, bathroom, mechanical equipment, and staircase down to the basement level were located at the core of the house, freeing the perimeter spaces, with their window walls, for living and sleeping. Daylight was introduced to the utility areas through skylights and a raised roof area above the kitchen containing clerestory windows. Bedrooms were lined up along the back wall of the house.





Roles House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Roles House, side façade, photograph of house before alterations, 1985 (photographer: Sara Perkins, source: Sara Perkins)



In the 1980s, the Perkins family extensively remodeled and altered both the interior and exterior of the house. Major alterations include wholesale demolition of the primary entrance, entry lobby, and fish pond at the front of the house, partitioning the open living area into smaller rooms, and demolition of the sliding partition walls. Several windows and doors were also replaced at this time. A family room addition with a fireplace was built at the side of the house.

## Significance

The Roles House was designed by Victor Christ-Janer for Robert Roles, his wife, and their two children. Roles was a prolific builder and developer of Modern houses in New Canaan and often partnered with Christ-Janer; he also acted as builder for his own house. The Roles House was completed in 1953. The house was intended to be a model home for a speculative development proposed by Roles and Christ-Janer for a 150-acre parcel on Frogtown Road between Weed Street and Ponus Ridge Road known as Frogtown Terrace. Frogtown Terrace does not appear to have been developed.

Christ-Janer's plan for the house clustered utility spaces at the core of the rectangular footprint and moved living and sleeping uses to the perimeter to take advantage of the natural light from the window walls. An interior terrace with a reflecting pool and rolling partition storage walls were also character-defining features for this highly individualistic house. The Roles House was one of six houses shown on the 1953 Modern House Tour.

The 1950s property street card for the Roles House was not available at the New Canaan Historical Society, so early alterations and ownership changes are unknown. In 1966, George W. Peck IV bought the parcel. In 1984, Maurice and Sara Perkins purchased the house. The Perkins family remodeled the house as described above, significantly altering the character and integrity of the house. The parcel is still owned by the Perkins family.

### Sources

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Gratwick House, side façade showing altered second-floor decks and rear addition, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Gratwick House, historic view from realtor pamphlet, ca. 1989 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number
7

# Gratwick House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1953

The Gratwick House is set on a slight rise overlooking a flat lawn area terminating at an oval swimming pool. Sections of solid fencing formed of V-channel wood siding on fieldstone bases provide privacy at targeted areas around the property. The yard is divided by a sunken stream in a fieldstone channel with a “bridge” covered in grass in the center that is level with the remainder of the lawn. At the side of the house is a square ornamental pool with mortared stone walls and flagstone copings set in a brick patio. Most of the landscaping does not appear to be original.

The house is a two-story, flat-roofed structure clad in vertical wood siding painted white. The plan is rectangular with a rectangular addition (1988) at the rear. A two-car garage is located in the lower level of the building. The main entrance to the house is at the top of the rise, so the entry is at the same level as the upper stories of the remainder of the building. This entrance—which was modified in the last twenty years—is accessed by a set of wide wood steps shielded by a wood pergola and consists of a glazed wood door flanked by fixed sidelights and oversized wood planting boxes. The remainder of the front façade is blank, but visual detail is provided by wood latticework applied to the wall. The remaining three façades are heavily fenestrated. Many of the windows form geometric patterns consisting of square openings each containing large rectangular fixed sash over two side-by-side awning windows.





Gratwick House, front façade showing altered main entrance, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Gratwick House, rear façade showing addition and landscape features, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



# Significance

The Gratwick House was designed by Victor Christ-Janer and constructed in 1953. Christ-Janer acquired the property from builder Robert Roles in 1952 and may have designed the dwelling as a speculative house. Although no builder is specifically identified, the house was likely constructed by Roles, who worked with Christ-Janer on a number of projects in New Canaan. According to the assessor records, it appears that Christ-Janer filed for a permit in September 1952 and completed drawings in April 1953. Mitchell Gratwick acquired the property from Victor Christ-Janer, Trustee, in either early 1953 or early 1954 (the assessor records are contradictory and list both dates), indicating that it was a speculative house.

In 1959, the property was acquired by Erik Simonsen et. ux. A swimming pool was constructed around 1969. In 1973, Vibeke Simonsen became owner of the Gratwick House. Harvey Kaufman and Geraldine M. Gregg purchased the property in 1983. In 1988, the wood deck off the back of the house was removed and replaced with a two-story addition measuring 16'x24'. Originally, the house had wood decks shielded by canopies at the front and rear of the house offset to each other. The house has been further altered since this time. The side porches, which were originally open second-floor decks supported on thin piers, were enclosed on the second floor and the piers were entombed. Fenestration on the building was altered, and the front entry was also modified with a new pergola, wood latticework along the front wall, new stairs, and planter boxes. All work on the house since 1983 was completed by Harvey Kaufman. The landscaping was also altered with new solid wood fences, an ornamental pool, and a stream running across the backyard through formal fieldstone channels.

## Sources

"Christ-Janer, Victor, Gratwick House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



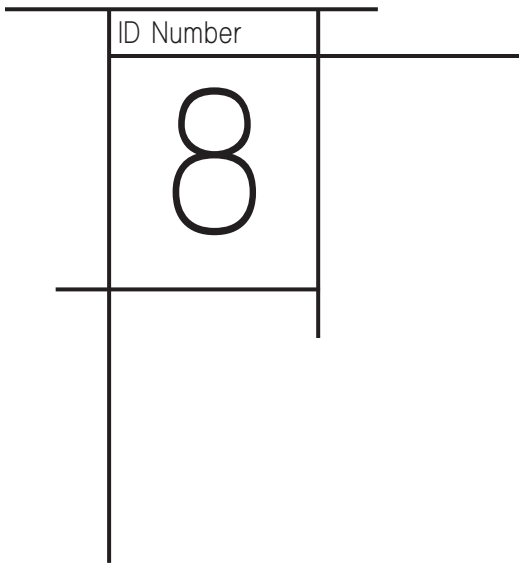


Irwin House, view from driveway, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Irwin House, ca. 1956 (photographer: E.J. Cyr, source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Irwin House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1953

The Irwin House is set on a steep hill on a densely wooded site. The upper floor of the flat-roofed structure extends beyond the base of the building on two opposing sides; the side facing the driveway is cantilevered with a deck on the upper floor and the opposite side is supported on wooden piers set into concrete footers. The front and rear façades are almost identical; each façade has a set of wood stairs at the center of the wall leading to an entryway consisting of a narrow-stile door with a large fixed sidelight sheltered by a cantilevered canopy, while the remainder of the façade is blank. The side façades are heavily glazed with fixed and casement sash and narrow-stile doors. The base of the building is finished with stucco and the upper floor is clad in flush vertical cypress wood siding. At the driveway is a two-car garage with an upper-floor studio. A brick patio and flagstone pavers connect the house to the studio. The property also includes an in-ground swimming pool.

## Significance

The Irwin House was designed by Victor Christ-Janer as a speculative house in partnership with builder Robert Roles. Christ-Janer and Roles purchased the property in 1953, which overlooked a neighboring bird sanctuary. The two worked together on several projects in New Canaan. The Irwin House was almost certainly one of the houses referred to in a January 1953 article in *House & Home*, in which Christ-Janer remarked that he had convinced Roles to construct two Modern speculative houses on Wahackme Road, and Roles responded, "I now think we can do a good modern speculative house in this area. I





Irwin House, rear façade and garage/studio, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Irwin House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)

don't care whether it has a flat roof or not; give me the plans of a house that makes sense and I'll build it" (*House & Home*, January 1953, 137).

The Irwin House was purchased by William A. Irwin, Jr., et. ux. in 1954. It was included in the 1955 Modern House Tour in New Canaan and described as one of the most "spacious" homes in the tour. A newspaper article on the tour remarked on the house's open planning: "Living areas are separated from sleeping rooms by the utility corridor and kitchen. The home can be modified to include three or six bedrooms, and the children's play area, with its own terrace and access from the lower level, can be completely isolated from the living area" (*New Canaan Advertiser*, 5 May 1955).

In 1961, Irwin sold the house to John H. and Jane Temple. In 1963, it was sold to Jarvis B. Cecil, a vice president at the Continental Oil Co. An additional bathroom was constructed in 1964. On January 3, 1972, a fire destroyed the main floor of the Irwin House. The basement level suffered water damage but was salvageable, and the separate two-car garage was untouched. By October 1972, the house had been largely rebuilt to the original plans with only minor changes.

In 1973, Howell D. and Linda K. Wood acquired the property. The Woods added a second-story studio over the garage in 1976, which the current owner believes was also designed by Victor Christ-Janer. In 1979, John H. Masters purchased the house, which was then acquired by Joseph W. Powell III and Cynthia M. Powell that same year. The Powells built a swimming pool and a one-story frame shed in 1984.

At an unknown date after the early 1980s, some alterations were made to the porches and balcony on the house. Historic photographs show that both the front and back porches used to have metal balustrades and offset narrow stairs that extended off the front of the porches, rather than the wide stairs of the current configuration. In addition, the second-floor balcony on the side façade facing the driveway used to have a metal balustrade and was supported on non-structural piers that extended up through the second floor. Currently, the porch cantilevers and there is no balustrade. It is unknown when these alterations took place. In 1999, Douglas H. Marshall purchased the property.

#### Sources

Barlow, Beth. "Dragon Gets New Body in Reconstructed Home." *Stamford Advocate*, 9 October 1972.

\_\_\_\_\_. "New Canaan Fire Destroys House." *Stamford Advocate*, 4 January 1972.

"Christ-Janer, Victor, Irwin House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

"Modern House In May 22 Tour." *New Canaan Advertiser*, 5 May 1955.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

"On Museum Board." *New Canaan Advertiser*, 2 March 1972.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.

"What's going on in...New Canaan, Conn." *House & Home*, January 1953, 137.



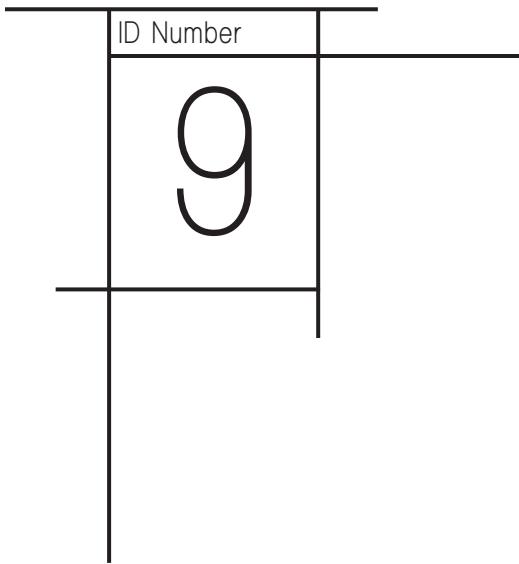


Daine House, front façade, December 2007, (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Daine House, rear façade, December 2007, (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)





# Daine House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1953-54

Situated towards the center of a gently sloping six-acre site, the Daine House was originally a one-story, flat-roofed structure with a rectangular footprint, a partial basement, a wide porch, and a detached two-car garage connected to the main house by a pergola. The house was clad in vertical wood siding and the roof was clad in wood shakes. Two additions—a two-story addition at the back corner of the house and a small entry vestibule—have only slightly altered the original appearance of the Daine House.

Using a palette of traditional New England building materials, architect Victor Christ-Janer designed this modest house to blend into the surrounding landscape, but its flat roofs, floor-to-ceiling fixed plate glass sash (looking out on the porch), and an open plan mark the house as clearly Modern.

## Significance

In June 1953, Robert Roles, a well-known developer and contractor in New Canaan, bought four acres of land on the west side of Briscoe Road from Richard and Wynne Bolton. By September 1953, a house designed by architect Victor Christ-Janer was under construction on the site. Roles and Christ-Janer worked together on several speculative house projects in New Canaan. In the spring of the following year, Isabelle Daine purchased the property from Roles. In 1959, Daine sold



Daine House, rear and side façades, December 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Daine House, stable, December 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



the property to Horton Heath, who bought two additional acres for the site in 1962. Heath added two outbuildings to the property: a playhouse (c. 1960) and a stable (c. 1963). In 1963, the Heath family remodeled the original house and built a discreet two-story addition at the back corner of the structure. In 1968, a concrete swimming pool was built. By 1976, Nadine and James Sweeney, Jr., owned the property. At the time of the survey, the property was still in the Sweeney family.

**Sources**

"Gelbin, Allan, McCarthy House" (architect and house name misidentified in file), Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Christ-Janer Speculative House, front façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Christ-Janer Speculative House, rear façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number
10

# Speculative House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1959

The Christ-Janer Speculative House is set on a flat, wet site overlooking a shallow pond. A stream runs along the side of the property. Christ-Janer designed the house by moving three existing identical 21'x26' gable-roofed structures to the site and arranging them around a new central structure. Christ-Janer's interest in experimenting with modules is evident in his design for this house; he envisioned the house as having a central living room/dining room/foyer core with three radiating wings: a master bedroom wing (two bedrooms, bath, dressing room); a children's wing (three bedrooms, play area, bathroom); and a service wing (kitchen, breakfast and utility area, two maid's rooms, and bath). Each wing was contained in an existing building. The central building has multiple gables to allow the gables of the secondary structures to nestle under the main building while providing space for clerestory windows to light the core space.

Although the exterior of the house has a traditional feel overall, Christ-Janer's influence is evident in the entry, which has two adjacent doors set at an angle to each other with fixed sidelights and transoms, and the rear wall of the 1959 structure, which is entirely glazed with sliding glass doors and clerestory windows. The rear wall overlooks a pond and a deck with an in-ground swimming pool.





Christ-Janer Speculative House, detail of main entrance, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Christ-Janer Speculative House, 1975 addition, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



# Significance

This speculative house was designed by architect Victor Christ-Janer using three existing surplus government buildings set around a new central building that he designed himself. This is one of several speculative houses that Christ-Janer built in New Canaan. He purchased the property for this house in 1954. By 1959, the foundation had been poured and the rest of the building was erected and assembled between 1959 and 1960.

The house was put up for sale in 1960, but ownership of the house during the 1960s is unknown because the assessor property cards from the 1960s are currently being conserved. A two-car garage and concrete patio were constructed in 1962. In 1969, an in-ground vinyl pool was added to the property.

In 1972, Elisabeth H. Null purchased the house. In 1975, Null added a 35'x36' flat-roofed addition that contained a recording studio. The addition altered the symmetry of the three wings and muddied the readability of the house. In 1990, Gregory R. Faillaci and Deborah L. Gerber (later Faillaci) purchased the property. In 2006, John R. Mastera became owner of the house.

## Sources

"Christ-Janer, Victor, Unknown Prefab," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Birkenstock House, rear façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Birkenstock House, historic view of rear façade, undated realtor pamphlet (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number
11

# Birkenstock House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1962

The Birkenstock House is a two-story dwelling sited on a flat lot overlooking a pond at the rear of the property. The original design of the house has been lost due to extensive alterations, including the construction of a second floor and the elimination of the original eave overhangs. Although the current design of the house is influenced by the Modern aesthetic, the house no longer retains a mid-century Modern appearance or feeling.

The current flat-roofed house is heavily fenestrated, especially on the pond-facing façade, with sliding glass doors, fixed sash, and awning and ribbon windows. The footprint is staggered to allow multiple rooms to have views of the pond. The main entrance faces the driveway and the entry porch is covered by a pergola. A shed-roofed garage is attached to the house.

## Significance

The Birkenstock house was designed by Victor Christ-Janer for James W. Birkenstock, who purchased the land along Blueberry Pond in 1960. The house was completed in 1962. Birkenstock worked at IBM as the vice president of commercial and industry relations. Historic photographs show that the original house was a one-story structure with a wall of glass facing the pond. A large, curving concrete terrace fronted the pond-facing façade of the house.



Birkenstock House, front façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Birkenstock House, side façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



In 1970, the rear half of the house was destroyed in a fire and rebuilt that same year. By 1976, Jean L. Birkenstock owned the property. In 1990, the house was acquired by Fairfield University. Current owners David M. and Nadine W. Chang purchased the house in 1994 and undertook major renovations, which included the addition of a second floor and the complete remodeling of the first floor, essentially altering the original house beyond recognition.

**Sources**

"Christ-Janer, Victor, [address redacted]," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

"New Canaan: Fire Guts Half of Home," n.p., 6 April 1970.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Arnold House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Arnold House, historic realtor photograph, ca. 1967 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number
12

# Arnold House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1965

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Arnold House was completed in 1965. According to information on file at the New Canaan Historical Society, the architect was Victor Christ-Janer and the builder was Bill Frank. The L-shaped house was built with an attached two-car garage and a large wood deck. It appears that the original owners were Joyce and Robert Arnold, but this is unconfirmed since the assessor field cards for the 1960s are currently being conserved and are unavailable. In 1967, the Ostrandors purchased the property and constructed a swimming pool.

In 1972, the house was purchased by Kenneth and Cary Robert. In 1979, Jawad S. and Hawa S. Idriss acquired the property (later transferred to Hawa S. Idriss in 1997). The wood deck was replaced in 1992. In 2002, Barbara M. Bellacosa purchased the property.

### Sources

"Christ-Janer, Victor, Daine House" (house name misidentified in file), Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Ackerman House, front façade, looking towards garage with main entry at right, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Ackerman House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

13

# Ackerman House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1975

The Ackerman House is set on a hill overlooking a valley, allowing for a full-height basement at its rear façade. As with many of Christ-Janer's houses from this time period, he essentially takes the form of a traditional New England house and manipulates it by experimenting with different roof planes. The Ackerman House features his typical right-angle dormers (essentially shed-roofed dormers turned at a 90-degree angle so that the dormer windows face the gable end of the building, reminiscent of a sawtooth roof); this design device is also used at Christ-Janer's Branch House (1979) and the Grant House (1981). The right-angle dormers are intended to act as clerestory windows, bringing light into the interior of the building. At the Ackerman House, the dormers give a geometric appearance to the façade and break up the symmetry of the house. Other notable features include wood clapboard siding, large picture windows with small rectangular sublights, deep overhangs, the use of brick veneer at the basement, and the intersecting geometric planes between the house and the garage.

## Significance

The Ackerman House was constructed in 1975 for Don E. and Joan M. Ackerman. The Ackermans began planning their house by 1974 and acquired the property in the spring of 1975. A set of handwritten notes written by one of the Ackermans indicates that they were considering both Victor Christ-Janer and John Black Lee to design their house. In a document that compares the two,





Ackerman House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Ackerman House, garage, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Christ-Janer is described as having a superior reputation, being cost conscious, charging a lower fee, fast, and poetry-oriented, while John Black Lee was described as having a good reputation, being less cost conscious, charging a higher fee, slow, and engineering-oriented. Both were considered to be creative. In other comparisons, it was noted that Christ-Janer delegated details, was maybe difficult to communicate with, and had designed fewer houses, while Lee worked on both the concept and details, had designed more houses, was easy to communicate with, and had a compatible philosophy with the owners.

Ultimately, the Ackermans chose Christ-Janer. In a second set of notes on a meeting with the architect, Christ-Janer apparently said that architects were going through a depression which had compelled him to return to house design. He wasn't "wedded to any specific style" but would not design a Colonial house because he didn't know how. Christ-Janer suggested using Lee Construction or Borglum & Meek as contractors. Ackerman described Christ-Janer as an "honest & open man, enthusiastic about designing exciting things" ("Meeting with Victor Crist Janner [sic]," handwritten notes dated 22 July 1974, Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society).

In 1986, the property was purchased by Don Ackerman. Guy S. and Margaret M. Brossy purchased the house in 1998 and undertook significant interior and some exterior renovations. The renovations were intended to make the house more "traditional" and less Modern. The exterior renovations included the removal of a huge two-story stained-glass window, painting the brown exterior walls and red brick veneer a grey color, replacing the exterior flush doors with Colonial-style paneled doors, replacing most of the wood casement windows with aluminum casements, and replacing the exterior lighting fixtures. The wrought iron railings on the exterior stairs are also likely replacements. The current flagstone pavers may not be original, since the original specifications called for brick paving, but this could have been a change made during the construction phase.

#### Sources

"Christ-Janer, Victor, [address redacted]," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society. File includes building documents donated by the original owners: specifications dated 18 July 1975, select drawings, bid forms, and handwritten notes.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Brandon House, view from street, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Brandon House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



ID Number
14

# Brandon House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1977

Field survey was not conducted on the Brandon House.

## Significance

The Brandon House was constructed in 1977. Architect Victor Christ-Janer designed the house to incorporate a mid-nineteenth structure already on the site. This house, which the assessor dates to 1846, was a two-story, 28'6"x46' structure that may have originally been a barn. It was remodeled in 1928. By the mid-twentieth century, it contained living quarters and a two-car garage on the first floor. In 1959, a carport was constructed and the garage was converted to living space.

In 1973, the house was purchased by Arthur Brandon. Permits for additions and alterations to the structure were filed in 1975 and 1977. It appears that Christ-Janer removed the carport and converted the existing house into a two-story family room with exposed beams and rafters, nicknamed the "barn room." The new house was designed to encompass the original structure. In 1987, the house was acquired by Robert C. Koloday. A swimming pool was added to the property in 1988. The property was sold to John A. and Mary C. Griffin in 1998.

### Sources

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Robinson, Nancy. "More Than Meets the Eye." *New Canaan Advertiser*, 9 January 1997.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.

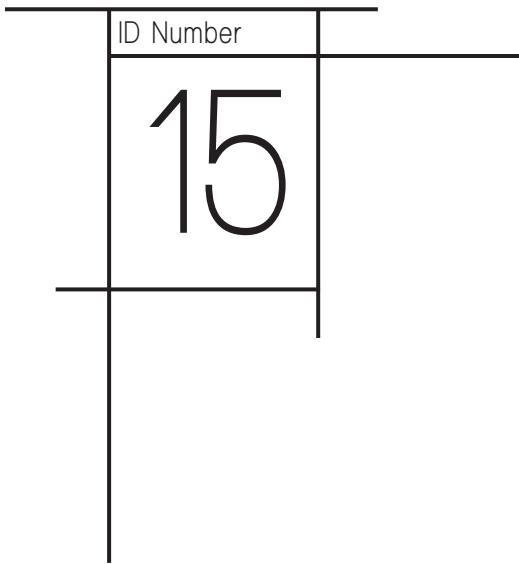


Branch House, front (east) façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Branch House, historic view of front (east) façade, ca. 1981 (photographer: Branch family, source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Branch House

Victor Christ-Janer, 1979

The Branch House is set on a slight hill on an open site. In plan, the one-story house is square with a two-story, gable-and-hipped-roofed light monitor at the center of the square. A square-plan garage wing is attached to the north end of the house; a swimming pool with a flagstone patio is at the south end. The main entrance is sheltered under a gable-roofed porch with square columns; this entrance originally was covered by a wood pergola.

As with many of his houses from this time period, Christ-Janer experimented with different roof planes and angles in the Branch House. The Branch House features his typical right-angle dormers (essentially shed-roofed dormers turned at a 90-degree angle so that the dormer windows face the gable end of the building, reminiscent of a sawtooth roof); this design device is also used at the Grant House (1981) across the street and the Ackerman House (1975). Originally, most of the Grant House windows on the west and east façades were designed to be angled bay windows with glazing at only the south-facing side of the bays, but these have been removed and replaced with windows flush with the wall plane.

The Branch House does not have expansive areas of glass except at the south façade, which has three levels of fenestration: sliding glass doors at the basement and first-floor levels, and fixed and horizontal sliding sash in the right-angle dormers. Wood decks and stairs lead from the first floor to the swimming pool at the south end of the house.





Branch House, south façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Branch House, rear (west) façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



# Significance

The Branch House was designed by Victor Christ-Janer in 1978 for David S. and Elizabeth T. Branch. Although the assessor field cards indicate that the Branches purchased the lot from Arthur W. Hooper, Jr., Trustee, in 1979, Elizabeth Branch stated that they acquired the land from Christ-Janer for \$120,000 in 1978, a price that included his architectural design fee. Christ-Janer owned a 24-acre parcel and intended to divide the land into five building lots with the remaining land going to the New Canaan Land Trust (eventually transferred to the Audubon Society instead). Christ-Janer put in a new road and designed at least three houses in the development, including the Grant House (1981), located across the street from the Branch House.

According to Elizabeth Branch, Christ-Janer designed the Branch House to use “passive solar energy” to address the energy crisis of the late 1970s in the United States. He did not place any windows on the north side of the building and shielded the windows on the east and west by creating angled bay windows with sash that faced south, a design he called “horse-blinder windows.” The majority of the fenestration on the building was on the south façade, and three solar panels facing south fed a hot water system (later removed because of roof leakage). On the interior, Christ-Janer used ceramic floor tiles and a stone wall to retain heat. A two-story atrium (expressed as a gable-and-hipped-roofed light monitor on the exterior) contained a fan to circulate warm air throughout the house. The basement level was set below ground level to keep it cool in the summer.

The Branch House was constructed between 1979 and 1980 by Landworks Associates, Inc., a Southport, Connecticut-based company recommended by Christ-Janer because he had taught one of its principals, Roger P. Ferris, at the Columbia University School of Architecture. The construction cost was \$255,000. A swimming pool was constructed on the site between 1984 and 1985. The Branches also finished the basement as a suite for their teenage child at an unknown date.

Eric L. Straus purchased the property in 2004. Eric and Adriane Straus altered the front porch by removing the pergola and replacing it with a gable-roofed porch. They also removed the angled bay windows (i.e., “horse blinder windows”), replacing them with windows set flush with the exterior walls, and painted the exterior siding, which had originally been stained grey. The kitchen and bathrooms were also upgraded.

## Sources

Branch, Elizabeth. “[Address redacted], New Canaan, CT, Designed by Victor Christ-Janer,” 2008. Collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.  
Town of New Canaan, Assessor’s Office field cards.





McKay House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



McKay House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



ID Number
16

# McKay House

James Evans, 1960-61

The McKay House is a sprawling, two-story frame house sited at the top of a sloping, wooded parcel. The gable-roofed house is clad in vertical wood siding and has deep eaves and exposed rafter beams.

As built, the house was originally smaller in size. It had a rectangular footprint with an open living/dining area, three bedrooms, and a detached carport connected to the house by a breezeway. Terraces and a balcony off of the second-floor spaces encouraged indoor/outdoor living.

In 1978, a one-story addition was built off of the living/dining space, transforming the footprint of the main house to an L-shape. The addition enclosed one side of the breezeway connecting the main house to the carport. A second story was built on top of the carport and a corridor was built above the breezeway at the second floor to connect the space over the carport to the main house. Aside from the addition of a new screened-in porch and landscape improvements, the house retains its 1978 configuration.

## Significance

The McKay House was designed by architect James Evans. Evans's own home (1961, Evans House) was built next door. Emily B. McKay acquired the property in 1957 and the house was completed between 1960 and 1961. The two-story house



McKay House, detail of soffit, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



had a rectangular plan with a 3' roof overhang and a second-floor wood deck along one side. A stone wall partially enclosed two sides of the house. A flat-roofed, two-car carport was set at an angle to the main house. The original sketches in the assessor property street cards are unclear, but it appears that the house and garage were connected by a breezeway. The house was constructed with a concrete block foundation, vertical wood siding, and a gable roof clad in asphalt shingles.

In 1968, an addition was constructed on the house-facing end of the carport, presumably necessitating the remodeling of the original breezeway. In 1978, a one-story, gable-roofed addition was constructed at the rear of the house. A small fieldstone patio adjacent to this addition may also have been added at this time.

In 1998, Elisabeth R. and Richard W. Taylor acquired the property. In 2003, George F. DuPont purchased the property. At some point after 1988, a small second-floor wood deck was added at the front of the main house and a circular flagstone patio was constructed at the side of the house.

**Sources**

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Evans House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Evans House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



ID Number
17

# Evans House

James Evans, 1961

The Evans House is sited on wooded parcel set off of the road. Using a thin shell structural system, Evans designed his soaring one-story (plus basement) house with a hyperbolic paraboloid roof. This structural roofing system allowed for a completely open floor plan at the interior since no intermediary columns or supports were necessary. The thin shell roof rests on two concrete piers at the corners (low points of the soaring roof) of the house; otherwise, the façades are primarily floor-to-ceiling, wood-framed window walls. The airy effect of the house is especially pronounced since the ceiling height is nearly two stories tall at its highest points. The roof projects beyond the plane of the walls, protecting the window walls from weathering.

The house, which has a square footprint, is built into a gently sloping site. The primary entrance and living/dining room and kitchen are at grade on the first floor and the five bedrooms are located on the fully exposed basement level at the back of the house. There is a wrap-around deck off of the first-floor living spaces at the back of the house, which extends the square footprint of the house. The designer's intent to mesh indoor and outdoor living spaces is further emphasized through the living/dining room's six sliding glass doors. There have been very minor alterations to the house. The wrap-around deck was originally designed with a wrap-around bench rather than a railing. For code and safety reasons, the bench was replaced with a railing. The basement sliding sash windows were replaced with aluminum sliding sash units in 1986.





Evans House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Evans House, detail of deck, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



# Significance

The Evans House was designed by architect James Evans for his own family and completed around 1961. The Evans House was included in the 1961 Modern House Tour in New Canaan before it was finished. In an article about the tour, the *New Canaan Advertiser* wrote about the Evans House: “The form of the house [is] influenced by a design naturally complimentary to the hillside itself and that picks up the slope of the land gently to make use of it for habitation...the house opens out to the view as well as the hillside, allowing the sky to enter and yet gives a feeling of shelter and containment on its low sides with unencumbered space on the upper levels” (*New Canaan Advertiser*, 27 April 1961).

The Evans family lived in the house until the late 1970s. In the next few decades, the house had a number of owners: Robert and Araxy Jezairian (purchased 1978), Gerry S. Culpepper (purchased 1979), Michael G. and Maureen M. Wilhelm (purchased 1980), the Employee Transfer Corp. (purchased 1982), James and Evelyn Gregory (purchased 1983), Frank J. and Katherine S. Genovese (purchased 1986), and James O. and Faye E. Flynn (purchased 1994). In 2000, Herbert & Dorothy Kunstadt purchased the house.

## Sources

“Among Six Stops on Tour of Modern Homes.” *New Canaan Advertiser*, 27 April 1961.

“Evans, James, James Evans House,” Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor’s Office field cards.





Amato House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Amato House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

18

# Amato House

James Evans, 1966

The Amato House is set on the top of a hill that drops down steeply at the rear to a stream. Fieldstone stairs lead down the hill to an arched wood bridge set on fieldstone footers that spans the stream. At the side of the house is a circular stone patio overlooking the drop-off. The landscaping also includes several curved stone walls and concrete retaining walls.

The one-story, gable-roofed house has a T-shaped plan and a full basement level at the sides and rear due to the topography of the site. The house is clad in V-channel vertical wood siding with flush horizontal wood siding used as an accent at the window openings. A wood deck supported on metal piers wraps around the side and rear of the house and cantilevers over the drop-off at the rear of the property; this portion of the deck is fitted with fixed wood benches along the railing. Openings in the floor of the deck adjacent to the house provide light to the basement level below. The main entrance has arched paneled wood doors with inset diagonally laid beadboard panels and fixed sidelights. The rear façade contains the most notable exterior feature of the house: a two-story window wall fitted with long, narrow fixed sash with fixed and awning sublights and fixed transoms that follow the angle of the gabled roofline.

## Significance

This house was designed by architect James Evans and constructed by builder Tom Shaw. It was completed in 1966. The original property card for this building does not appear to be on file at the New Canaan Historical Society, so it is unknown





Amato House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Amato House, detail of main entrance, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



who the original owners were. In 1971, according to a realtor listing on file at the New Canaan Historical Society, Mr. and Mrs. V.W. Amato sold the house to someone named Krzywicki-Herbert. In 1975, Ernest C. Waco purchased the house. In 1979, Victor F. Zackay acquired the property, which was transferred to joint ownership with Lillian M. Sherdal in 1986. Sometime after 1988, a wood deck was added to the second floor at the rear of the garage.

**Sources**

"Evans, James, [address redacted]," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





McDonnell House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



McDonnell House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

19

# McDonnell House

Eduardo Faxas, 1968-69

The McDonnell House, designed by architect Eduardo Faxas, is a two-story, gable-roofed house clad with wood weatherboards and reddish-brown brickwork. Gable-roofed dormers and projecting balconies break up the lines of the steeply pitched roofs, which extend far beyond the plane of the walls to form dramatic eaves. The house has an irregular rectangular footprint and asymmetrical massing.

Faxas designed the house using a 4' square module. The wood-frame house had a poured concrete foundation and a masonry core. Exterior cladding was 1"x10" rough square cedar boards resembling weatherboards, which were finished with two coats of Cabot's bleaching oil and then intended to weather naturally. The window and door glass was single-pane, solar grey, 1/4" polished plate glass. The ground floors were poured concrete with integral copper-tubing radiant heat; the floors at the upper levels were wood. The brick masonry core contained three fireplaces. A small basement contained a boiler room. Finishes included 5/8" painted gypsum board, varnished clear Douglas fir wood trim, and ceramic tile for bathroom walls and floors. Faxas custom-built all of the windows, glazed doors, screens, and kitchen cabinets in his shop (Faxas, 1).

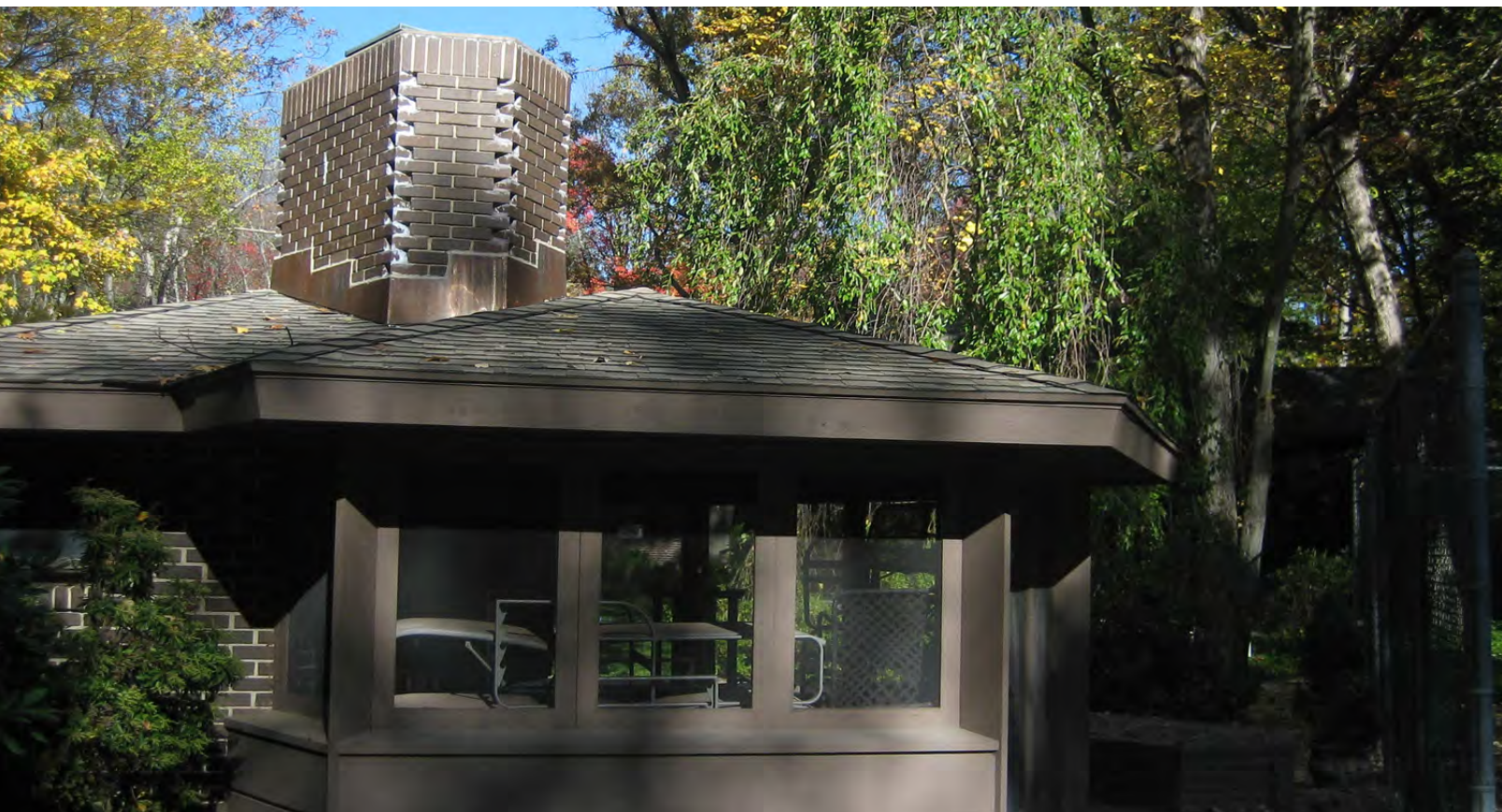
## Significance

The McDonnell House was completed in 1969 for owners Donal and Marge McDonnell. The house was designed by architect Eduardo Faxas in 1968 and constructed by builder Paul J. Murphy. The house cost approximately \$283,000. Faxas began





McDonnell House, rear façade and gazebo, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



McDonnell House, gazebo, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



designing the house while working for architect Eliot Noyes's firm, which he had joined in 1966. During the design phase, the owner's investment firm, McDonnell & Co., had a financial crisis, requiring the house budget to be cut by \$30,000. Brick was substituted for the original fieldstone, and asphalt shingles were used on the roof instead of wood shingles (Schweitzer, 51).

In 1976, the house was sold to John B. Ford (ownership was conveyed to John B. and Jill H. Ford in 1982). That same year, the tennis court was built. In 1977, the original three-car carport was converted into a garage. In 1979-80, a gazebo and deck were completed. Faxas designed all of these additions and alterations. The swimming pool was also likely added at this time. In 1987, the house was sold to Gerald L. Cohen. The Cohens made changes to the interiors of the house: a new kitchen was constructed, the master bedroom was expanded, the radiant heating system was replaced using plastic tubing instead of the original copper, which had deteriorated, and new tile floors were installed. Faxas consulted on the alterations but owner Gerald Cohen acted as designer and builder.

**Sources**

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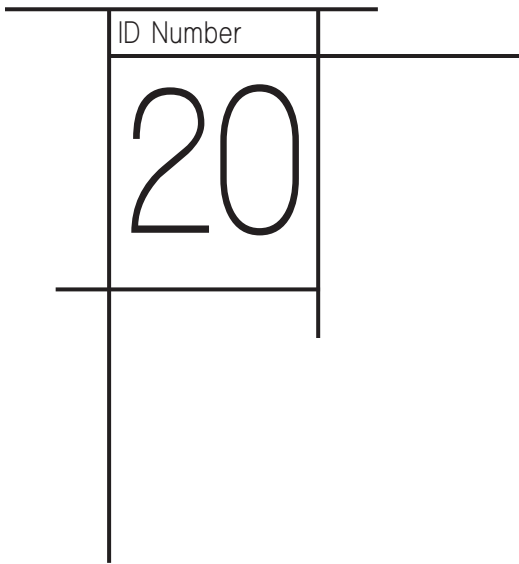


Gates House, front façade, December 2007 (photographer: Mark Markiewicz)



Gates House, side façade, December 2007 (photographer: Mark Markiewicz)





# Gates House

Frederick Taylor Gates, 1952

Built as a small, one-story, flat-roofed house with a square footprint, the Gates House was designed with vertical wood siding, fixed plate glass floor-to-ceiling sash, and glazed wood post-and-rail doors. According to the records of the New Canaan Assessor, the roof cantilevered 3' beyond the plane of the wall at all four façades of the house. The overhang remains at two façades and has exposed wood rafters.

Since its construction, the house has had many additions and alterations. A separate carport and guest cottage (demolished in 2007) were added to the parcel. A corridor was then built to connect the auxiliary structures to the main house. The corridor addition (extant) is set on concrete block foundations with vertical wood siding and fixed clerestory and plate glass windows. Later, the primary entrance was modified to have a dramatic entry canopy supported by a single column and a fin-shaped roof. The entry also has beveled corner glass windows and fixed plate glass sash. A stone wall frames a planting area at the front of the house. Alterations and additions dating from 2007 include a large in-law apartment with two bedrooms, a combined living/dining/kitchen space, separate bathroom, and closets. Also, the original carport was enclosed to become a garage, and the space formerly built as a guest cottage was replaced with an office space.



Gates House, rear and side façade, December 2007 (photographer: Mark Markiewicz)



# Significance

In 1951, architect Frederick Taylor Gates of the firm Gates and Ford Architectural and Planning Associates purchased a parcel of land to build his own house. By 1952, the small, three-bedroom house with a separate wood-frame, flat-roofed tool shed was complete. In 1955, Gates added a carport and guest cottage with two bedrooms.

In 1961, Jason D. Floria purchased the parcel. In 1965, the property was transferred to Audrey A. Floria, who maintained the property until it was purchased in 1992 by the current owners, Mark and Katherine Markiewicz. Mark Markiewicz is an architect and has made several additions and alterations to the house. Although the original house is still relatively intact as one wing of a much larger house, the original, modest Gates House property has been altered too much to meet integrity requirements for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## Sources

"Gates, Fred & Ford, Russell, Gates House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Ford House, view towards main entry, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Ford House, historic view from realtor pamphlet, undated (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number
21

# Ford House

Gates and Ford, 1954

The Ford House is set on a highly manicured, flat site with extensive landscaping. The property includes a main house, a separate guesthouse/garage, a swimming pool flanked by a poolhouse and pergola, a shed, a stream, pond, and small waterfall, and a barn at the rear of the site that predates the house.

The main house and guesthouse/garage are set low into the site and meld with the landscape. Both are flat-roofed structures finished in darkly stained V-channel vertical wood siding and fieldstone. The exterior walls of the main house are heavily glazed, although some have been altered by the addition of attached greenhouse structures. Extended end walls provide a connection between the house and the landscape, and are a design element used by Gates and Ford in other houses in New Canaan, including the Melville House (1958). Deep overhangs supported on thin piers provide shade to flagstone terraces adjacent to the house.

## Significance

The Ford House was designed by architects Gates and Ford of Gates and Ford Architectural and Planning Associates for architect Russell Ford's parents, Elinor and Sherman Ford. Elinor Ford was the daughter of Lewis H. Lapham, who built the Waveny Estate in New Canaan. Elinor and Sherman Ford were married at Waveny on June 17, 1915.



Ford House, garage/guesthouse, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Ford House, swimming pool and pool house, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



According to the current owners, the Fords originally lived in an older mansion on the site. At an unknown date, Russell Ford designed a Modern-style addition containing a living room as an addition to the house. After discovering that the family spent all of their time in the new addition, the Ford family decided to demolish the mansion and build a Modern house on the stone foundation of the original house. The assessor records appear to collaborate this story; Elinor L. Ford purchased the property in 1940 and the original house on the site was removed sometime in the early 1950s. Some remnants of the original estate remain on the site, including the stone posts at the property entrance.

By 1954, the property consisted of the Gates and Ford-designed residence, an existing garage/quarters, a two-room “studio” used for garden supplies, a well house, and a new swimming pool, flagstone terrace, and pool house (also likely designed by Gates and Ford). In 1955, the garage/quarters building was removed and replaced in 1956 with a new guesthouse/garage designed by Gates and Ford. In 1957, a 22.5’x17’ greenhouse was constructed.

In 1963, the property was purchased by Ely R. Callaway, Jr. Callaway became president of textile company Burlington Industries in 1968 and would establish Callaway Golf Co. in the early 1980s. Callaway commissioned landscape architect Friede Stege to design much of the current landscape for the house (Strassmann, 2008).

In 1969, a 20’x8.5’ greenhouse was added on to the main house. Mona J. Strassman purchased the house in 1975. In 1978, the screened porch was converted into a laundry room. Around 1986, a sunroom was added that wrapped around the front of the house. An addition was added to the guesthouse/garage at an unknown date, but possibly in 1978.

**Sources**

“Gates, Fred & Ford, Russell, Ford House,” Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Strassmann, Paul A. to Martin Skrelunas, Philip Johnson Glass House, email correspondence, 19 May 2008.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Attwood House, front and side façades, May 2008 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Attwood House, detail of courtyard at front façade, May 2008 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



ID Number
22

# Attwood House

Gates and Ford, 1958

BCA did not complete field survey for the Attwood House.

## Significance

The Attwood House, designed by Gates and Ford Architectural and Planning Associates, was constructed in 1958 for William and Simone Attwood. William Attwood purchased the property in 1955 from his cousin Edwin Hoyt. The Attwoods chose architects Gates and Ford after seeing their sign on the street; Simone Attwood said she chose a Modern design because she “didn’t like the other kind of houses” (Attwood, 2008). The house was constructed by builder Ernest Rau. According to the assessor records, the house was occupied by June 1958 even though it was not yet completed.

William Attwood was a prominent figure in magazine publishing. He served as foreign correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune* and the UN bureau. By 1968, he was editor-in-chief of *Look Magazine* after working as the European editor of the publication from 1957-61. In 1970, Attwood became president and publisher of *Newsday* and was one of the first journalists to visit China after it became a Communist country. He also worked on the staff of President John Kennedy’s presidential



Attwood House, detail of courtyard, May 2008 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Attwood House, detail of fascia and soffit, May 2008 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



campaign and served as the U.S. Ambassador to Guinea and Kenya. Simone Cadgene Attwood worked as a real estate broker starting in 1968 and established her own firm, Real Estate Services of New Canaan, with two other brokers in 1978.

The Attwood House has undergone some alterations. In 1960, a "sun shade porch" with a trellis roof was added to the house. In 1967, architect Victor Christ-Janer designed alterations to the property: the incorporated carport was enclosed and converted to a family room and a bedroom was added. A new separate one-car garage was also constructed. In 1968, a swimming pool was constructed at the rear of the house. According to a 2008 realtor listing, Thermopane windows were installed in 1984 and the roofs were replaced in 1986 and 1995. In 1996, the original lot was subdivided, reducing the property in size from 5.855 acres to 3.094 acres, necessitating construction of a new driveway.

William Attwood died in 1989. The house is still held in the Attwood family. At the time of the survey, the property was for sale.

#### Sources

Attwood, Simone. Interview with Martin Skrelunas (Philip Johnson Glass House) and Janet Lindstrom (New Canaan Historical Society), 28 April 2008.

"Editor Speaks At Cherry Lawn Commencement." *Stamford Advocate*, 5 June 1968.

Ferguson, David P. "Publisher shuns 'fine tuning,' seeks challenge." *Fairpress*, 20 Sept 1978.

"Gates, Fred & Ford, Russell, Attwood House," Modern House file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

Hill, Susan. "The Lives of 3 Corporate Wives." *Advocate/Greenwich Time, Business and Economic Review* 1979, 62.

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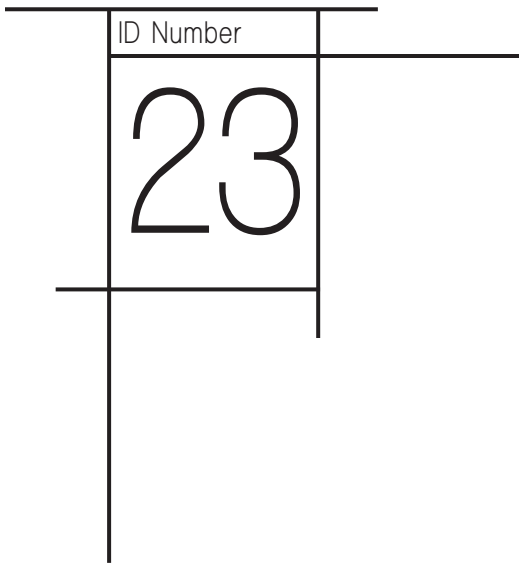


Melville House, front façade, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Melville House, side façade, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)





# Melville House

Gates and Ford, 1958

The Melville House is located at the top of a hilly site ringed with trees. Architects Gates and Ford designed the house to be closely tied to nature through the use of extended end walls of fieldstone that continue from the exterior of the building through the glass walls to the interior rooms, and multiple defined outdoor spaces, including a partially covered masonry terrace at the west façade, a screened-in porch at the south façade, an open balcony at the east façade, and a covered wood deck and masonry terrace connected to the garage at the north façade. The floor plan of the house is rectangular with the longer sides facing north and south, but the exterior living spaces create an irregular footprint overall.

The most distinct feature of the house is its unusual “butterfly” roof, which slopes down in the middle to form an asymmetrical “V.” It is supported by steel beams that run through the roof to steel columns in the center of the home. The “Y” construction makes possible the “spread wings” of the house. The interior spaces flow from one area to another, unbroken by the walls or columns that support traditional roofs. According to a 1959 article in the *New Canaan Advertiser*, the roof originally had a built-up construction consisting of tarpaper, tar, and crushed marble laid over 4-1/2” cedar beams, which are visible from the interior (*New Canaan Advertiser*, 16 April 1959). The exterior walls of the house are clad with painted vertical wood siding. The foundation is constructed of concrete block.

Texture and color are provided to the house by materials such as cedar, gray cypress, walnut, and weathered Connecticut stone. The living spaces are separated by changes in levels rather than walls. The planned outdoor living spaces, glass walls,





Melville House, side façade, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Melville House, courtyard, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



and fieldstone walls that run through the house from the exterior create a home whose interior environment is closely linked to the exterior wooded surroundings.

## Significance

The Melville House was designed by Taylor Gates of Gates and Ford Architectural and Planning Associates. The house was constructed for David Melville by builders Borglum & Meek and completed in 1958. It was included in the 1959 Modern House Tour in New Canaan. In 1962, the property was purchased by Maxwell Bassett, an aeronautical engineer who appreciated the design and soaring character of the building. The property is still held in the Bassett family.

### Sources

"Gates, Fred & Ford, Russell, Detmer/Bassett House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

"Modern House Tour May 24." *New Canaan Advertiser*, 16 April 1959.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Murphy House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Murphy House, front façade of addition, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



ID Number

24

# Murphy House

Allan Gelbin, 1964

The Murphy House is set on a relatively flat, wooded site at the end of a long gravel drive. The most dramatic landscape feature on the property is a large pond at the rear of the house which has a concrete spillway leading to a stream. Recent landscape additions include an extensive set of pathways that meander through the woods, and an ornamental stone ring constructed of gravel and river rocks at the entry to the house.

The Murphy House has a very irregular plan and evokes organic shapes as it sits low and long on its site. Natural materials like wood shingles, wood trim, fieldstone chimneys finished with thickly laid mortar, and wood doors and sash are used throughout the house. At the Murphy House, architect Allan Gelbin used angles as a motif, in contrast to his Leuthold House in New Canaan, which features curves. The angle motif is carried throughout the house in its plan and down to details like door handles and light fixtures. Walls meet at sharp angles, creating prowlike elements. The house has a deeply overhanging roof with openings cut into the eaves to allow light to penetrate to planters adjacent to the building. An angled cantilevered wood deck with built-in benches at the rear of the house juts out precipitously over the pond, reminiscent of the deck at Frank Lloyd Wright's *Tiranna* (1956) in New Canaan, where Gelbin acted as master-of-the-works. A studio addition designed by Gelbin in the 1970s terminates in a full-height angled window wall with mitered glass corners.





Murphy House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Murphy House, side façade of addition, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



# Significance

The Murphy House was designed by architect Allan Gelbin for Peggy and Charles Murphy. Peggy Murphy established the highly successful New Canaan High School girls' swimming team in 1973 along with Carol McVeigh. Architect Allan Gelbin was an apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin East and oversaw the construction of the Wright-designed house in New Canaan before designing at least three houses of his own in New Canaan.

Peggy R. Murphy acquired the property in 1963. According to the assessor records, the house was 75% complete in July 1964, suggesting that it was finished in late 1964 or 1965. An 8'x20' wood shed with a flat roof was constructed in 1964. In 1974, the Murphys again hired architect Allan Gelbin to alter the house. The incorporated carport at one end of the house was converted into a sunroom with a fireplace and the house was extended by about 57 feet off the carport to create a studio. A partial second-story addition containing a bedroom was constructed above the former master bedroom. It also appears that the wood decks around the houses were extended either prior to 1974 or at this time.

In 2001, Ronald Meckler and Jacqueline Shapiro purchased the house. Meckler and Shapiro made some interior alterations between 2001 and 2004, including converting the sunroom into a master suite (necessitating the partial burial of the floating stair to the second floor and inserting a wall to create a hallway to the studio), converting the master bedroom and music room into a living room, and converting the wetbar in the studio into a bath. The decks around the house were rebuilt in kind and the deteriorated gypsum soffit was replaced with cement board. The landscape was redesigned in 2002-04 by landscape architect Wesley Stout and included the replacement of a deteriorated outdoor space constructed of railroad ties at the side of the house with cement and fieldstone terraces bordered by stone walls consistent with the style and technique of the original stonework.

## Sources

"Gelbin, Allan, [address redacted]," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

"New Canaan Women Build." *New York Times*, 22 April 1979.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Leuthold House, front façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Leuthold House, side and rear façades, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

25

# Leuthold House

Allan Gelbin, 1966

The Leuthold House is set on a gently sloping site with an extensive open lawn area at the front of the house. A large curving pond sits at the front of the house with a curved swimming pool set above it in a raised terrace. Large contemporary sculptures are placed throughout the landscape. Terraces paved in quarry tile face the pond and lawn area; the lawn area contains a cut stone terrace with an outdoor kitchen. A utilitarian storage shed, which does not appear to have been designed by architect Allan Gelbin, is set away from the house and partially hidden by trees.

The Leuthold House is defined by an irregular plan and curving walls, in contrast to Gelbin's Murphy House in New Canaan, which features angles as a motif. The Leuthold House consists of a main house connected to a guesthouse by a breezeway with an attached carport. The flat-roofed structures are finished in stucco with mahogany trim, doors, and windows. The flat roofs are placed at different heights to create intersecting planes. Some of the fixed windows have mitered corners and rest directly on the quarry tile paving, which continues from the interior to the exterior terraces, blurring the line between interior and exterior spaces. The window sash itself is not curved, but the casings that run parallel to the soffit are curved to follow the line of the wall.

The breezeway between the house and guesthouse has quarry tile paving and openings cut into the flat roof to allow trees to grow through the roofline. The carport roof is supported on heavy concrete tapered piers at one end, then cantilevers deeply



Leuthold House, carport, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Leuthold House, guesthouse, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



and is detailed with exposed mahogany beams. The guesthouse is also detailed with exposed mahogany beams that extend beyond the face of the building.

## Significance

The Leuthold House was designed by Allan Gelbin for the Leuthold family. The engineer on the project was C. Foti, and the builder was Walter Smith of Wilton. In 1964, Adolph Leuthold purchased the property. At that time, according to the assessor records, the lot contained a bath house and a tennis court (considered to have little to no value), and three artificial pools measuring 6'x10', 60'x15', and 105'x30'. According to architect Allan Gelbin: "The original 5 acre site contained a large pond and a host of magnificent old trees, oak, maple, birch, etc. The house was created to wrap around the pond facing south and turn it's [sic.] back to the north. A combination of circles, parts of ellipses and rectangles blend together harmoniously to form an entirely original sense and flow of space. The various site levels are used to obtain changes in floor elevation. Upon entering one views a beautiful interior pool which was originally on the site and built around, spring and run-off water fed... Large, beautiful lawns carpet the floors beneath the stately trees. Mr. Leuthold did much of the original landscaping, if not all of it" (Gelbin, August 1978).

A building permit for a new house was filed on June 9, 1965 and the house was completed in 1966. Gelbin later described the construction details of the house: "Main walls are of cement block, insulated, stuccoed and of wood stud, stuccoed inside and out. The floor is a slab laid over with Swedish dark brown tile. Cantilevers are of wood and steel frame, roofs flat of tar and gravel. The wood fascia, often curved, is of solid mahogany and all trim throughout of mahogany. Much furniture is built in throughout. Walls and ceilings are mainly of sheetrock, textured, painted. All lighting integral. Doors and windows are custom wood, plate glass. Heating and air-conditioning are from perimeter ducts beneath floor" (Gelbin, August 1978). The main floor of the house was designed to contain a living room, master suite (bedroom, dressing room, and bath), study, dining room, workspace, playroom, powder room and laundry, and utility room. The upper floor contained four children's bedrooms, a maid's room, and three baths. The property also had a three-car carport, a guest house, and a work studio and tool shed.

The Leuthold House was included in the 1967 Modern House Tour in New Canaan. At that time, Gelbin was quoted as saying: "Owner and architect were determined to create an atmosphere free of past, imitative, cliché-ridden forms" (*County*, May 1967, 17). The Leuthold House became very significant to architect Allan Gelbin, who later wrote, "[n]o study of my work is complete without this project. It was my first opportunity to be able to use a little imagination...My opportunities were great as my budget was limited" (unattributed clipping in "Gelbin, Allan, Leuthold House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society).

In 1977, Joseph and Jeanne Spielman purchased the house. A storage building was added to the property in that same year. In 1982, a small addition to the studio in the guesthouse was constructed. In 1997, Lionel N. Sterling, Trustee, became owner of the property.

### Sources

"A Stop on Modern House Tour." *New Canaan Advertiser*, 13 April 1967.

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"Gelbin, Allan, Leuthold [sic.] House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

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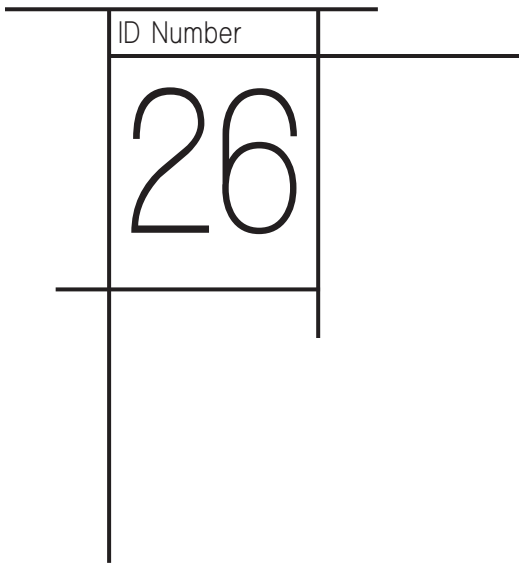


Whitlow House, front and side façades, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Whitlow House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)





# Whitlow House

Allan Gelbin, 1969

The Whitlow House is built on a sloping three-acre site with a small pond and views of the Five Mile River. It is a two-story house with Wrightian design influences, including a clear emphasis on horizontality and intersecting planes (expressed by the intersections of the house's multiple flat roofs with the façades and chimney), ribbon windows, and use of natural materials. The flat roofs cantilever beyond the façades to form deep eaves. The exterior walls are clad with painted clapboard and vertical wood siding.

## Significance

In 1966, Robert S. Whitlow commissioned architect Allan Gelbin to design a house for his family. Construction was completed in 1969. In 1985, the property was transferred to Jerry Davidoff. A year later, the property was sold to Lawrence and Barbara Kessler, who still own the property. The Kesslers built a small, one-story bedroom addition at the side of the house in 1987 and enclosed the original tractor shed to serve as a garage or enclosed storage space at an unknown date. Aside from the bedroom addition and the alterations to the tractor shed, the house retains high integrity.

### Sources

"Gelbin, Allan, Whitlow House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Spotts House, front and side façades of original house, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Spotts House, front façade of additions, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

27

# Spotts House

Richard Henderson, 1972

The Spotts House is located on a hilly, rocky site. Due to later additions, the house currently has two driveways and two primary entrances; because of the hilly terrain, it is very difficult to walk between the driveways on the property without going through the house.

The Spotts House was constructed in three phases. The original house (1972) was a one-story, flat-roofed cube clad in vertical wood siding set on a massive rock outcropping overlooking a wooded valley. Fieldstone walls that predate the house run throughout the property. The street-facing west façade is largely blank, while the remaining walls contain large fixed sash, narrow-stile doors, and sliding glass doors. Semicircular projections were originally placed to the west of the doorways on the north and south façades, but the north projection was removed when the first addition was constructed. Wood decks extend off the north and south façades.

The first addition (1979-80) extended the house to the north by adding a one-story structure with a rectangular plan but retained the form and massing of the original house.

The second addition (2000) is a one-story-plus-basement, flat-roofed structure with a three-car garage at the basement level. A wood deck extends around three sides of the upper floor. Although clad in the same vertical wood siding as the remainder of the house, this addition is differentiated by its squat massing, overhanging roof, foundation clad in stone veneer, and



Spotts House, rear façade of original house (at left) and of additions (at right), November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Spotts House, rear façade of original house (at left) and side façade of addition (at right), November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



strongly defined window and door frames. The fenestration on the second addition is very geometric and includes square and rectangular windows.

## Significance

The Spotts House was designed by architect Richard Henderson. The current assessor property card lists the date of construction as 1972, but since the 1960s property cards are currently undergoing conservation and are unavailable, further investigation is required to firmly establish a construction date and original owner for this house.

Wendy Spotts acquired the property in 1975. In 1979-80, an addition designed by Alan Goldberg containing a master suite was added to the north side of the house.

In 1986, David R. and Barbara W. Waters purchased the house. Roy A. and Janice E. Abramowitz acquired the property in 1997. That same year, the house was featured in the movie, "The Ice Storm." The Abramowitzes hired architect John R. Mastera & Associates to construct a large addition containing a three-car garage and master suite, which was completed around 2000.

### Sources

"Goldberg, Henderson, Mastera, Spotts House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

Keyser, Elizabeth. "Modern age: These Connecticut houses are worth another look." *New York Post*, 16 November 2006, 56.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Historic view of John Johansen's Campbell House, which was largely demolished for current Goldberg House on site, unknown date (photographer: Ben Schnall, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)



Goldberg House, front and side façades, May 2008 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



ID Number

28

# Goldberg House

Alan Goldberg, 1977

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Goldberg House is located on the site of the former Campbell House, which was designed by John Johansen, constructed by Ted Haupt, and completed in 1952. The Campbell House was built for Paschall and Betsy Dawley Campbell. Paschall Campbell was a landscape architect who designed the landscape for Lee House 2 (1956, Lee) and for his own house. The Campbell House was featured in an August 1956 article in *House & Home*. The one-story, flat-roofed house was set on piers on a stone platform and had an H-shaped plan with a recessed entry porch and a rear courtyard. The entry and courtyard divided the house in two, with the public spaces (living room, dining room, and kitchen) on one side, and the private spaces (master bedroom and bath, and two other bedrooms and a bath) on the other side. The house was clad in glass and plywood.

In 1966, Alan E. and Gertrude S. Goldberg acquired the property. According to Alan Goldberg, around 1976, he essentially demolished the house, only leaving the rough framing, partly to increase the amount of living space and partly because of





Goldberg House, rear façade, May 2008 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Goldberg House, new addition, May 2008 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



recurring maintenance problems. The original house had apparently been designed with low-cost materials to keep the budget low (*Fine Homebuilding*, June/July 1981, 51).

Goldberg designed a new house more than double in size to the original and had it constructed by builder Fredrick De Finis. The Goldbergs lived on site while the house was being reconstructed. Goldberg planned a new design that would be reminiscent of the original house: "We decided that the new house should be designed in the same spirit as the existing house. Even though it was a small house with a simple plan, I appreciated the thought that went into the original design" (*Fine Homebuilding*, June/July 1981, 52). The Goldberg House was completed in 1977. This house has an off-set H-shaped plan with wood decks on three sides. In the center of the house is an entry vestibule and a family room (the former courtyard). One side contains the living room, dining room, kitchen, and study, and the other side contains a master bedroom and bath, and two other bedrooms and a bath. This plan is similar to the original plan of the house. A carport was constructed on the site in 1979. In October 2007, construction began on an addition designed by Goldberg that will be connected to the house by a glassed-in bridge.

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Brooks, Pat. "Rebuilding a House While Living In It." *New York Times*, 21 August 1980, C1, C8.

"Goldberg, Alan, Goldberg House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

Lelen, Kenneth. "Rebuilding a Modern House." *Fine Homebuilding* (June/July 1981): 51-55.

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

"Patio in Connecticut: A Buffer that Divides the House in Two." *House & Home*, August 1956, 136-137.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Alcoa House, view from street showing garage addition at right, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



ID Number

29

# Alcoa House

Charles Goodman, 1958

Field survey has not been conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Alcoa House was constructed in 1958 as a showcase house for the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa). Alcoa had hired architect Charles Goodman to design the “Care Free House” to demonstrate the use of aluminum in a dwelling. Approximately forty houses were completed in the United States. The houses utilized aluminum roofing, siding, and windows.

The assessor property street card at the New Canaan Historical Society does not list an owner for the property prior to 1959, but notes that the “Model House” was completed in 1958. The lot was acquired by the Thompson Realty Corp. in 1959 and sold to Kenneth H. and Mary R. McClure on the same day. The assessor noted that the house had a concrete block foundation, a gable roof clad in aluminum, and a glass and aluminum exterior. The house was rectangular in plan with a flagstone terrace screened by a brick wall at the front and a second flagstone terrace at the side. It appears that the original house had three bedrooms and two baths at one side, and a family room, kitchen, and living room on the other side.



Alcoa House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Between 1964 and 1965, addition and alterations were completed, including the construction of an interior swimming pool by E.L. Wolner Co. Inc. Although the assessor property cards are unclear, it appears that the addition was 42'x36' and included the swimming pool enclosure and an additional bedroom and bath. An attached garage was also constructed at this time. The terrace and brick wall may have been extended.

In 1981, William R. and Joan P. Martin acquired the property, which was sold to Robert M. Dewey, Jr., and Harriet B. Dewey in 1982. Between 1982 and 1983, a small sunroom was added on to the 1964-65 bedroom addition. In 1987, a second floor was added to the central part of the house along with a 24'x6' wood deck. In 1997, Anil and Enid B. Prasad purchased the property. Sometime in the late 1990s or 2000s, a new three-car garage and entryway were constructed to extend at a right angle off of the front terrace.

**Sources**

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.

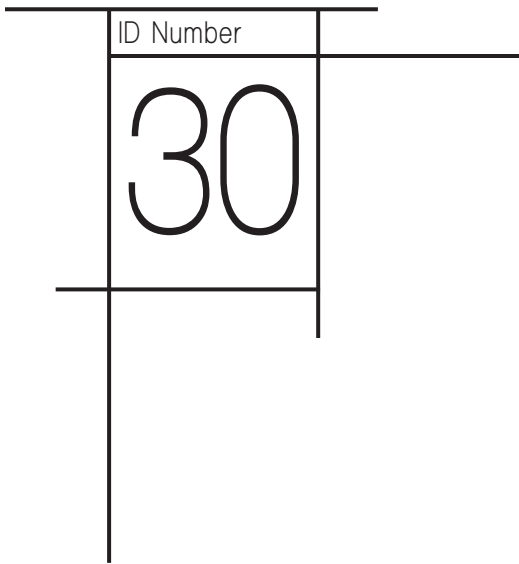


Gores House, front façade, December 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Gores House, historic view, unknown date (photographer: Robert Damora, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)





# Gores House

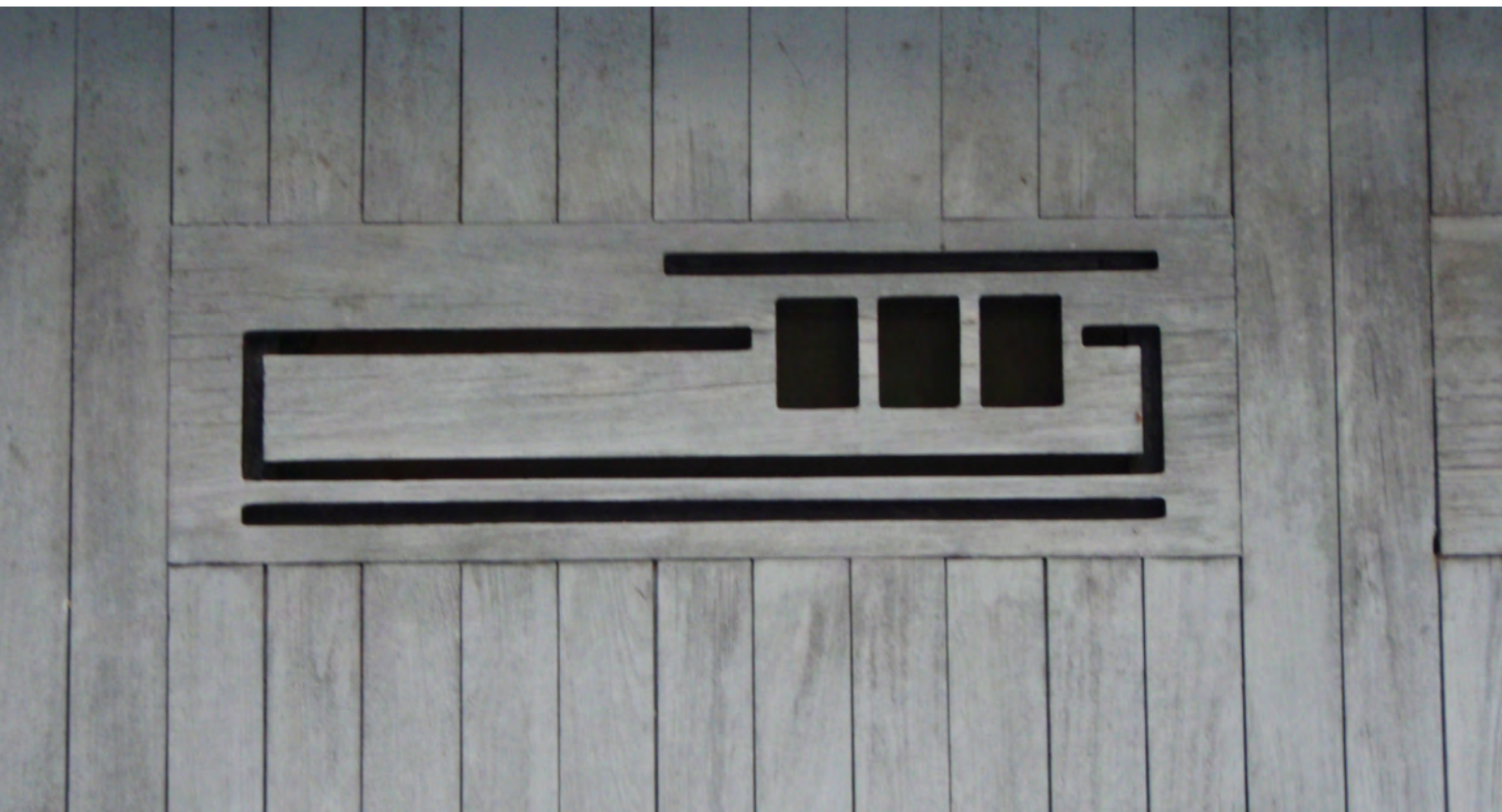
Landis Gores, 1948

The Gores House is large, single-story, flat-roofed, wood-frame house that is stylistically related both to the International Style and to Wrightian rectilinear or organic architecture. The 130'-wide house is sited on a platform on a large wooded lot and is set back from the road. Wall materials include floor-to-ceiling fixed plate glass sash, narrow vertical tongue-and-groove cypress siding stained grey, and stone. The house is divided into three major wings: at the south end is a low bedroom wing, at the center of the house is a wide block with a raised roof to accommodate the tall ceiling of the living/dining area, and the north end contains the kitchen and utility areas. The main entrance, which has three wide glass doors and is sheltered by a cantilevered roof with large skylights, is situated between the bedroom wing and the living/dining area. A separate garage, connected to the main house by a sheltered walkway, has a clerestory roof.

The Gores House has undergone minor alterations. In 1970, the carport located to the north of the kitchen/utility area was enclosed as living space and a new two-car garage was constructed. Between 1983 and 1985, Landis Gores designed an extension to the terrace at the rear of the house to include two circular seating areas and an oval swimming pool.



Gores House, rear façade, December 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Gores House, detail, December 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



# Significance

In 1946, Pamela and Landis Gores purchased a four-acre lot to construct their first home in New Canaan. Designed by Harvard Five architect Landis Gores, the house is one of the first Modern houses built in New Canaan. The house was constructed by John C. Smith with lighting design by Richard Kelly and was completed in 1948.

The Gores House was featured in national publications including a large spread in the January 1952 issue of *House & Home* and an article in the *New York Times Magazine*. It was part of the 1949 and 1952 Modern house tours in New Canaan.

The Gores House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. The nomination states: "The Landis Gores House is significant because it epitomizes the 'modern' architecture of post-World War II America...Among the distinguishing characteristics of the type embodied in the Gores House are its flat-roofed single-story form, emphasis on horizontal planes, extensive use of full-height glass walls, informal open plan, the absence of any reference to historical precedence, and a close relationship between the house and its environment. Leavening the International style's glass-walled austerity with natural wood and stone in the manner of Frank Lloyd Wright, the house was considered avant-garde...when built."

The property is currently still held in the Gores family.

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Irwin Pool House, front façade, October 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Irwin Pool House, side façade, October 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



ID Number

31

# Irwin Pool House

Landis Gores, 1960

The pool house is a wood-frame Palladian structure on a concrete foundation with painted wood siding and slate-clad hipped roofs. The roofs project beyond the planes of the walls to create deep overhangs, which are supported in many locations by cross-shaped columns.

The structure is symmetrical and has a shallow cruciform-shaped plan. On the primary façade, the core is marked by double-height expanses of glass; the flanking wings are more solid, each four bays wide and clad with vertical wood siding. Slender, cross-shaped wood columns divide the bays and narrow windows at eye level relieve the solid wall surfaces. The secondary façades are more utilitarian. They are clad in wood siding and have painted hollow wood doors that open onto terraces with flagstone pavers. There is a slight grade change, so the west terrace is several feet above grade and the east terrace is at grade. The rear façades of the flanking wings are treated with the same finishes and arrangement as the primary façades. The central portion of the back façade projects beyond the face of the building and has three sliding glass windows with fixed transoms.

The core of the building contains an open double-height space with a living room that is anchored by a fireplace at the center of the room. The living space opens onto a terrace through very tall, rail-and-stile glazed doors. There is a small kitchen at the opposite end and two bathrooms in between the kitchen area and the living area. The core areas are flanked by one-story changing areas with built-in benches.



Irwin Pool House, side façade, October 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Irwin Pool House, detail of front façade, October 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



# Significance

Built to the designs of architect Landis Gores as a pool house for Jane Irwin (1915-71) and John N. Irwin II (1913-2000), the Irwin Pool House was completed in 1960.

John Nichol Irwin II was a lawyer who served as the Deputy Secretary of State (1970-73) and the United States Ambassador to France (1973-74). Jane Watson Irwin was the daughter of Thomas J. Watson, the founder of International Business Machine Corporation (IBM).

In 1949, Jeanette K. Watson, wife of Thomas J. Watson, bought an improved parcel of land on Weed Street. The parcel contained a two-and-a-half story single-family residence, built in 1908, a garage and staff quarters, and a pump house. In 1950, the Watson family built a swimming pool. In 1952, they constructed a separate bathhouse (demolished when the Gores-designed pool house was built) and two tennis courts.

In 1957, Jeanette and Thomas Watson transferred the property to their daughter Jane and her husband John N. Irwin II. The Irwins commissioned architect Landis Gores to design a pool house (known as a cabana in the assessor's records) for their estate. Mrs. Irwin was familiar with Gores' design work through his work with IBM and his longstanding relationship with her family. To celebrate the completion of the pool house, the Watsons surprised Landis Gores with a housewarming party attended by such luminaries as Philip Johnson, Eliot Noyes, Paul Rudolph, I.M. Pei, and Edward Larabee Barnes.

In 2005, the Irwin family sold the estate to the Town of New Canaan for use as a public park.

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





ID Number

32

# Doggett Jackson

Charles Jacobs, 1967

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Doggett Jackson House was designed by Charles Jacobs and constructed around 1967. The house was designed for graphic designer Jane Doggett, who collaborated with Jacobs on the design of the house. The property, which overlooks the Norwalk Reservoir, was acquired by Jane D. Doggett in 1963. The original house had an indoor pool with a waterfall.

At some point before 1982, the separate garage was converted into a guest studio. In 1982, Leonard and Claire L. Tow acquired the property. An addition consisting of a vestibule, a sunroom, a porch, and a deck was constructed in 1983. In 1985, a two-car attached garage was completed. In 1986, a pool was constructed. Sometime after 1988, a 24'x16' greenhouse addition was completed.

### Sources

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.

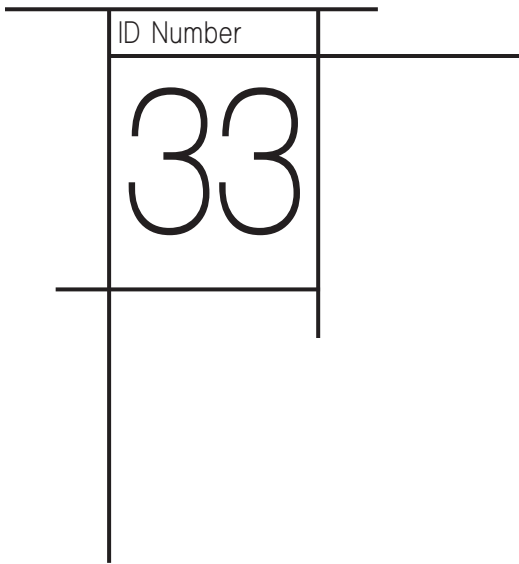


Barlow House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Barlow House, undated John Johansen drawing (source: Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University)





# Barlow House

John Johansen, 1950

Sited on a wooded parcel fronting the Five Mile River, the Barlow House has been substantially altered since its original construction. The house was built as a modest slab-on-grade, one-story frame house with vertical wood siding and broad expanses of glass. The house had two bedrooms and a large combined living/dining space that opened onto a paved terrace. In an original rendering by Johansen, the house is shown as having a flat or shed roof with deeply cantilevered eaves, but was constructed with shallow gable roofs composed of redwood trusses as suggested by builder Hobbs Inc. to allow complete freedom in the interior layout.

Johansen designed the earliest alterations and additions for the house, which were completed in 1953. The work substantially expanded the modest house and included additions to accommodate a dining room, a den, and a master bedroom suite. A freestanding, one-car garage, connected to the house by a breezeway, was also built at this time.

In 1971, architect Zane Yost designed a new master bedroom suite for the house and expanded the kitchen and garage. The terrace at the back of the house and the stone walls at the front of the house were rebuilt in 1988. In 2005, the original windows were replaced, the terrace and front patio were reconstructed, the landscaping was redesigned, and the interiors were remodeled by the current owner, an architect.



Barlow House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)

Barlow House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



# Significance

Built to the designs of architect John M. Johansen for Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Barlow, the Barlow House was completed in 1950 and was one of Johansen's first house commissions in New Canaan. Because of the extensive changes to the property, Johansen no longer feels that this house reflects his design. The original property cards for the house do not appear to be in the files of the New Canaan Historical Society, so it has not been possible to trace the early history of alterations and ownership.

In 1979, Stephen and Jane Raye purchased the parcel. It was then sold to Richard and Marianne Thomas in 1989. The Thomas family still owns the property today.

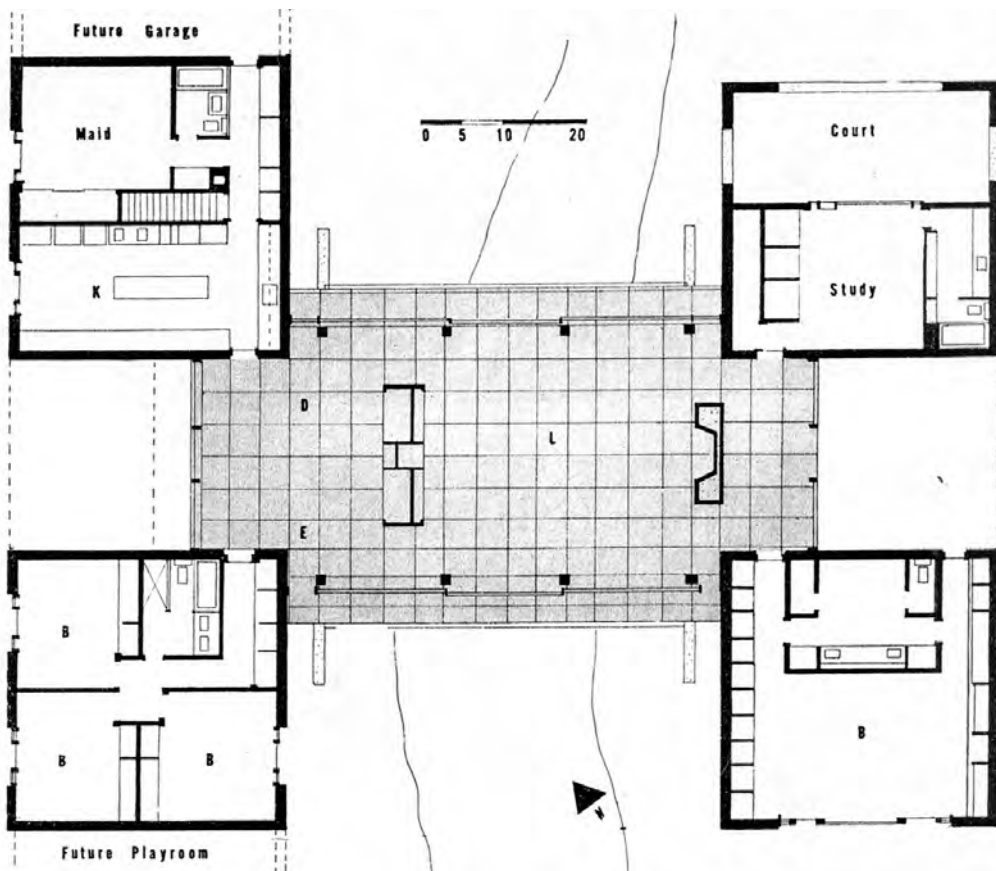
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"Johansen, John, Barlow House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Warner House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Warner House, plan of original house (source: *Architectural Record Houses of 1958*)



ID Number

34

# Warner House

John Johansen, 1956

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Warner House was designed by John Johansen for Mary Ann and Rawleigh Warner, Jr. Mary Ann de Clairmont Warner acquired the property in January 1955 (transferred to Mary Ann and Rawleigh Warner, Jr., in 1956). According to Rawleigh Warner, Jr., work began in August 1955 and was completed in June 1956. The contractor was Wenzel, Co., Inc., the lighting consultant was Richard Kelly, and the landscape architect was James Fanning.

Rawleigh Warner, Jr., was born in 1921. He graduated from Princeton University in 1943 and served in the Army during World War II. In 1946, he married Mary Ann de Clairmont, who had studied at Vassar College. They had two daughters. After the war, he started an investment firm called Warner Bard & Co. After the company failed, he joined Continental Oil Company and then took a job with Socony Mobil Oil (now Mobil Oil) around 1952. In 1965, he became president of Socony, and by 1970, he would become the chairman and CEO of the Mobil Oil Corporation.

Johansen designed the Warner House as a Neo-Palladian structure during what he called his "Neo-Classical Period." He described the house as follows: "Of my designs, the Villa Ponte or Warner House, 1957, most elegantly interpreted the



Warner House, historic view, unknown date (photographer: Robert Damora, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)



Palladian ideal: the central pavilion was the bridge that spanned the stream, its three bays covered by arched vaults. Flanking this bridge were secondary pavilions rendered in pink stucco decoratively embossed with my designs. Gold leaf was used in the arches and on the living room ceiling, and on the exterior spurting off rainwater to the stream below were eight gilded gargoyles designed by the sculptor Robert Engman. Is this not enough classical revival in the 1950s to raise the envy of most postmodernist architects some 20 or 30 years later!" (Johansen, 1995, 22).

The Warner House had an H-shaped plan with the Rippowam River running under the glassed-in central portion of the building. Each wing had a separate function: the parent's pavilion contained the master suite; the children's pavilion contained two bedrooms and a bath; the service pavilion contained the kitchen, storage area, a servant's bedroom, and a basement playroom; and the guest pavilion contained a guest bedroom, bath, and courtyard. The center part of the house contained the social space: a living room, dining room, and balconies overlooking the river. Provisions were made to extend two legs of the "H" for a garage and playroom, but this never occurred.

The Warner House was chosen as one of the best contemporary homes of 1958 by *Architectural Record*. It was also featured in the *New York Times*, *House & Home*, and *Architectural Design*.

In 1962, the courtyard outside the guestroom was enclosed. In 1969, a natural outdoor pool was constructed. Between 1968 and 1970, a separate 3-car garage/poolhouse was completed. In 1993, living quarters over the garage were constructed. According to Rawleigh Warner, Jr., the alterations were designed by Johansen and built by T.M. Hobbs.

At the time of the survey, the property was for sale.

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Philip Johnson Glass House, front façade, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Philip Johnson Glass House, view of Brick House, Glass House, and swimming pool, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

35

# The Glass House

Philip Johnson, 1945-49

The Glass House was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1997. Given the depth of research already completed on this property, resources were devoted instead to the remainder of the Modern houses in New Canaan. The follow timeline excerpted from the Philip Johnson Glass House website outlines the basic history of the property.

- 1945: Philip Johnson began schematic design of the Glass House
- ca.1945: Johnson purchased five acres in New Canaan, CT
- 1947: Johnson finalized design of the Glass House
- 1948: Groundbreaking for the Glass House and Brick House
- 1949: The Glass House and Brick House completed
- 1953: Brick House floor plan remodeled
- 1955: Pool completed
- 1960: David Whitney and Philip Johnson met, Whitney visited the Glass House
- 1962: Lake Pavilion completed
- 1965: Painting Gallery completed
- 1970: Sculpture Gallery completed
- ca.1980: Entrance Gate completed
- 1980: Library/Study completed





Philip Johnson Glass House, rear façade of Brick House, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Philip Johnson Glass House, view of Lake Pavilion (in foreground), Sculpture Gallery (at left in rear), and Glass House (at right), March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



- 1981: David Whitney purchases Calluna Farms
- 1981–2005: Calluna Farms remodeled
- 1984: Ghost House completed
- 1985: Lincoln Kirstein Tower completed; Brick House bathroom remodeled
- 1986: Philip Johnson donates the Glass House to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, retaining a life estate
- 1990: David Whitney purchases Grainger
- 1995: Da Monsta completed
- ca.1996: Popestead remodeled
- ca.1999: Grainger remodeled
- 2005: Philip Johnson dies on January 25, at age 98
- 2005: David Whitney dies on June 12, at age 66; as directed, his New York and Connecticut estates support the National Trust's preservation and programming of the Philip Johnson Glass House
- 2007: The National Trust for Historic Preservation opens the Philip Johnson Glass House to the public

**Sources**

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Hodgson House, front façade, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Hodgson House, historic view, 1957 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number

36

# Hodgson House

Philip Johnson with Landis Gores, 1950-51

The Hodgson House, sited on a slight knoll on a property that has both wooded sections and grassy fields, is a one-story, flat-roofed, brick-and-glass-walled building constructed in two phases to the designs of architect Philip Johnson. The main part of the house, completed in the first phase of construction in 1951, is U-shaped in plan and surrounds an open, landscaped courtyard. A bedroom addition with a rectangular floor plan was completed by 1957 and is connected to the main part of the house by a glass-walled corridor.

The brickwork is light gray, iron spot brick set in a Flemish bond pattern. Floor-to-ceiling glass surfaces are comprised of fixed plate glass sash and sliding doors set in steel H-shaped columns. The only operable windows in the house are small transoms above secondary doors. The walls terminate in a flush wood fascia.

## Significance

The Hodgson House was designed for Richard and Geraldine Hodgson by architect Philip Johnson with Landis Gores acting as associate. The engineer on the project was the Eipel Engineering Company and the builder was John Smith. According to Bill Earls, Johnson received the commission for the house after introducing himself to a couple who was looking at the site across the street from his Glass House (Earls, 112).



Hodgson House, rear and side façades, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Hodgson House, bedroom wing, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



At the time that the house was constructed, Richard Hodgson (1917-2000) was president of the Chromatic Television Laboratories, a division of Paramount Pictures Corporation that he had founded to research color television technology. Hodgson received a B.A. from Stanford University in mechanical engineering in 1937 and an M.B.A. from the Harvard Graduate School of Business in 1939. He later worked at the MIT Radiation Laboratory and the Atomic Energy Commission before joining Chromatic in the late 1940s. In 1955, he took a job with Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corporation, eventually becoming President and CEO. At Fairchild, he was in charge of the establishment of the Fairchild Semiconductor division (*New York Times*, 18 March 2000). In 1968, he left to become a senior executive with the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation (*New York Times*, 5 September 1968). He later served on the board of the Intel Corporation. In his obituary, Richard Hodgson was noted as “play[ing] a role in the events that led to the creation of Silicon Valley” (*New York Times*, 18 March 2000). His wife, Geraldine Reed Hodgson, was a vice president at advertising agency Ellington & Co. until she retired in 1962 (*New York Times*, 19 January 1975). The Hodgsons had four children.

Richard and Geraldine Hodgson acquired the site for their future house in November 1949. After having trouble getting a mortgage for a Modern house, the Hodgsons decided to build the structure in two phases: the main house followed by a bedroom wing (Earls, 114). Until the bedroom wing could be completed, the Hodgsons would use the guest bedroom as their bedroom and the children would stay in the study. Construction of the main house began in August 1950 and was largely completed by May 1951. During construction, builder John Smith placed a cocoon around the house to protect the masonry during the winter, causing much curiosity about the project. When asked by a reporter to describe the unique aspects of the house, Smith replied, “The whole danged thing is unique” (*New York Times*, 6 May 1951). The Hodgson House won the first prize in residential design at the 1954 International Exhibition of Architecture in Brazil and the 1956 First Honor Award from the American Institute of Architects. It was published in 1952’s *Built in USA: Post-war Architecture*, and the March 1953 issue of *Architectural Record*. The Hodgson House was included in the 1952 and 1961 Modern house tours in New Canaan.

The bedroom addition and connecting glass bridge were completed between 1956 and 1957 by builder E.W. Howell Co. In 1960, the combination stable/carport was constructed, and the swimming pool was added in 1961. The courtyard was altered in 1970 by Zion and Breen Landscape Architects: the fountain was removed and the original brick paving was replaced with granite pavers. Between 1991 and 2005, the house was transferred within the Hodgson family through a number of quitclaims. In 2006, Craig Bassam and Christopher Scott Fellows purchased the property.

The Hodgson House is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is protected by easements administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The easements restrict major alterations to the exterior, parts of the interior, and the landscape.

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Wiley House, view from street, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Wiley House, historic view, unknown date (photographer: Ezra Stoller, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)



ID Number

37

# Wiley House

Philip Johnson, 1952-53

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Wiley House was designed by Philip Johnson for the Wiley family. Robert C. Wiley acquired the land in 1952 from John C. Smith, likely the same John C. Smith who ended up as contractor for the Wiley House. The engineer on the project was Eipel Engineering and the lighting designer was Richard Kelly. The house was completed in 1953. Robert C. Wiley was a real estate developer. In 1954, he would convince Johnson to design a prototype speculative house down the street from the Wiley House for the Wiley Development Corporation.

Johnson designed the Wiley House to try and reconcile, as he said, "the (perhaps) irreconcilable: modern architectural purity and the requirements of living families. Why can't people learn to live in the windowless spheres of Ledoux or the pure glass prisms of Mies van der Rohe? No, they need a place for Junior to practice piano while mother plays bridge with her neighbors" (*Architectural Record*, June 1955). To achieve this, he cantilevered a glass pavilion above a stone-and-glass podium, setting the pavilion at an 180-degree angle to the base. The roof of the podium provided terraces outside the glass box. The pavilion contained public spaces, including the living room, dining room, and kitchen, and the podium contained



Wiley House, ca. 1956 (photographer: E.J. Cyr, source: New Canaan Historical Society)



the private spaces, including four bedrooms, baths, a sitting room, a studio, a small kitchen, and utility space. Johnson also designed a swimming pool to sit adjacent to the existing barn on the site.

Johnson described the glass pavilion in 1955: "The effect from inside - quite opposite of my glass house - is that of a cage. No indoor-outdoor nonsense. The 15 foot high ceilings free the view into the high hickories that surround the house which at night make fantastic tracteries against the black sky" (*New Canaan Advertiser*, 7 April 1955). Exterior awnings on the pavilion provided shade. The Wiley House was included in the 1955 and 1957 Modern House tours in New Canaan and was featured in the June 1955 issue of *Architectural Record*.

In 1960, the existing barn was altered to include a playroom, bathroom, and dressing rooms for the adjacent pool. In 1978, the house was purchased by the Archbishopric of New York. In 1979, Howell D. and Linda K. Wood acquired the property. Frank P. Gallipoli purchased the house in 1994.

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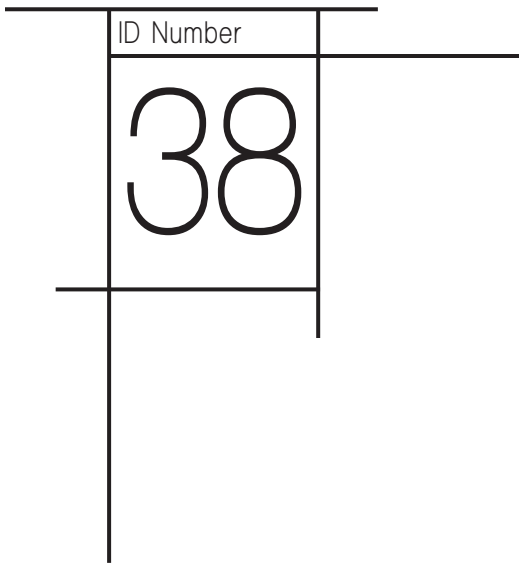


Ball House, view from street, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Ball House, historic view, July 1959 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Ball House

Philip Johnson, 1953

Although field survey was not conducted on the Ball House, examining the exterior of the house from a public way combined with a study of the original drawings provided information about the house's original appearance. In the tradition of Mies van de Rohe's courtyard homes, Philip Johnson designed the Alice Ball house as a modest one-story, two-bedroom home with an offset axial plan, a flat roof, symmetrically arranged terraces with slate paving, and pink stucco wall surfaces relieved by linearly grouped and symmetrically arranged painted entrance ensembles. The entrance ensembles were glazed wood-frame window and door configurations including fixed plate glass windows, glazed narrow-stile doors, fixed or operable transom windows, and screen doors with bronze rails. Skylights above the hall and kitchen provided additional light to interior spaces. A stucco finish chimney projected approximately 3' from the east end of the north façade.

The indoor spaces were constrained by a relatively small rectangular plan measuring 57' north to south and only 24' east-to-west on the approximately 2.2-acre site. The off-set axial plan becomes evident when the 18' x10' entry terrace at the north end of the west elevation and the 18' x10' backyard terrace (directly opposite the entry terrace off of the east elevation) are considered with the rectangular form of the indoor spaces. A tall, stucco finish garden wall, sited 6' to the west of the west elevation, stretches approximately 70' to the south, where it returns 14' to the east to screen the bedroom wing from the adjacent parking area. The low profile and grounded appearance of the house communicates well with the low-lying nature of the site, largely a wetland.





Ball House, view of side façade from side yard, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Ball House, view of main entrance from street, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



The original layout of the first floor included an open living/dining room at the north end of the house; a kitchen to the south of the entry doors, separated from the living/dining area by built-in cabinetry (designed by Johnson); and two bedrooms and a bathroom. The north wall in the living/dining room has a large fireplace with a soapstone surrounding mantel which floats approximately two feet above the floor line. The floors were finished with slate pavers, which along with the floor-to-ceiling glass, reduced the distinction between exterior and interior spaces.

## Significance

Alice Ball purchased the property from John Mulliken for \$7,000 in 1952. It appears that Mulliken subdivided a larger parcel and sold the portion fronting the street to Alice Ball, retaining the adjacent land to the north and east. By early 1953, Ball commissioned Philip Johnson to design a small house for the site. Johnson's drawings for a "Residence for Mrs. Alice Ball" are dated February 1953, and were revised in June and July 1953 (Johnson, "Residence for Mrs. Alice Ball," February 1953). A 1951 article about Johnson's Hodgson House (1951), mentions that his next project would be a "'pink palace' with a hanging fireplace," most certainly referring to the Ball House (*New York Times*, 6 May 1951). The assessor records describe the Ball House as a "Modern" one-story, single-family residence.

The 1954 and 1955 town directories do not list the Ball House, but this could simply be because no one was home during the neighborhood canvass. The 1956 directory lists "Mary C. Ball" as residing at the house and running a clothing store called "The Wharf" at 75 Elm Street. In the 1957 directory, "Mrs. Hougen Ball" is listed as living at the house with two grown children: Mary T. Ball, who still owned "The Wharf," and James, who was in the U.S. Air Force. Mrs. Hougen Ball was presumably Alice Ball. She is not listed as a widow in the directories, so it is unclear if she was divorced or widowed.

In 1959, the assessment on the land was reduced by 20% because the lot was "low & wet" with "cattails in rear." In 1960, the property was purchased by F. Jay Ward, Jr., et. al. A garage was constructed on the property in 1962. In 1965, the house was sold to Margaret Mary Ward (no apparent relation to F. Jay Ward, Jr.), the wife of Commodore Sir Melville Ward, Baronet. In 1969, Marjorie K. Macrae purchased the property. In 1977, Janet T. Phipers acquired the property. On July 20, 1977, a permit was filed to convert an existing room in the garage into a bedroom and bathroom for \$9,000; this work was completed in 1978. It also appears that the bathroom addition off of the master bedroom was constructed between 1969 and 1977. In 2005, current owner Cristina A. Ross purchased the house. Ross completed restoration work on the building in late 2007.

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Wiley Speculative House, view from street, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)

Shown in background a den that fairly radiates intimacy and warmth...

Bed Room 11'-5" x 11'-5"

Study 10'-0" x 11'-0"

Living Room 30'-0" x 14'-0"

Dining 10'-0" x 10'-0"

Kitchen 10'-0" x 11'-0"

Terrace 80'-0" x 8'-0"

Garage 22'-0" x 11'-0"

Bed Room 12'-0" x 11'-0"

Bed Room 10'-0" x 11'-0"

Bed Room 11'-0" x 11'-0"

Cl. (Closets)

Bath

W.C. (Water Closet)

Lo. (Lobby)

Designed by Philip Johnson, A.A.A.  
Furnishings by The New State  
New Canaan, Conn.

A room for children or just privacy, looking into the countryside.

Sunshine or starlight, living or sleeping, children or guests.

A spacious master bedroom with adjoining bath and a grand view of the courtyard.

A wide two-car garage, conveniently adjacent to the living quarters.

A modern, sun-bathed kitchen with a snack bar facing the terraced court.

A really spacious living room with an unusual fireplace.

Wiley Speculative House, promotional pamphlet, ca. 1955 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number

39

# Wiley Speculative

Philip Johnson, 1954-55

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Wiley Speculative House was designed by Philip Johnson for the Wiley Development Corporation of New Canaan. It was Johnson's first speculative house design (*Progressive Architecture*, October 1955). R.C. Wiley, Trustee, acquired the property in 1954. Robert Wiley was the owner of the Wiley House (1952-53), which was also designed by Johnson and located down the street. Construction began in 1954 and was completed in 1955.

The one-story house was of post-and-beam construction on a concrete block foundation with plywood exterior sheathing. Because the house was designed as a prototype, it needed to be private and versatile: "The plan had to be flexible since the needs of the future owners were unknown; it also had to be easily adaptable to other sites...an important factor if the same plan were used on the average suburban lot" (*Architectural Record*, November 1955). Johnson achieved this privacy by designing a L-shaped plan sheltering a terrace with a separate garage enclosing the third side of the terrace. One wing of the house contained the den, living room, dining room, and kitchen, while the other wing contained a master bedroom and bath, and two children's bedrooms and bath.



Wiley Speculative House, view from street, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



The Wiley Development Corporation offered to build the prototype anywhere in Fairfield County for \$45,000, but it appears that the Wiley Speculative House was never reproduced. The Wiley Speculative House was featured in *Progressive Architecture* in October 1955 and *Architectural Record* in November 1955.

In 1956, the property was acquired by Roland W. Rodegast et. ux. In 1958, E. Wyatt Hicks et. ux. purchased the house (transferred to E. Wyatt and Shirley M. Hicks in 1960, and E. Wyatt Hicks and the Estate of Shirley M. Hicks in 1987). E. Wyatt Hicks was an executive at the J. Walter Thompson Company in New York; he and his wife Shirley had four children. In 1963, two additions were constructed adjacent to the garage: one connected the garage to the house, and the second was attached to the end of the garage, creating a U-shaped plan for the house. A note on the 1975-87 assessor property street card noted that the house was made of "inferior materials." In 1992, Peter A. Kanter purchased the property (transferred to Peter A. and Regina A. Kanter in 1994). In 2003, Joyce D. Flaschen, Trustee, and Robert J. Miller, Trustee, acquired the house.

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- "Johnson, Philip, Speculative House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.
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- Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Boissonas House, historic view of rear façade, unknown date (photographer: E.J. Cyr, source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number

40

# Boissonas House

Philip Johnson, 1956

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Boissonas House was designed by Philip Johnson for Eric Boissonas and his family. Boissonas was a geophysicist and an executive at a French engineering firm based in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Eric H. Boissonas et. ux. acquired the property in 1954. The house was completed in 1956. The contractor for the project was E.W. Howell, Co. and the structural engineer was the Eipel Engineering Company. The landscape was apparently designed by Johnson. Johnson later said the Boissonas House was his favorite and his best house (*Metropolitan Home*, March-April 2001).

The original house, located on a 33.3-acre lot, was designed as a series of pavilions constructed of steel, brick, and glass. The house plan was zoned into three areas: a bedroom wing containing four bedrooms, three full baths, and a half-bath; a service wing containing the kitchen, two maid's rooms, and a bath; and a social wing containing the living room and dining room. All three wings were joined by an entry foyer. In the basement were the laundry room, playroom, a half-bath, storage rooms, utility space, and a 3-car garage. The two-story living room contained an organ and was designed as an "acoustical chamber" with the organ pipes hidden in the floor (*New York Times*, 23 June 1957).



Boissonas House, rear façade, unknown date (photographer: William Earls, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)



The Boissonas House was included in the 1957 and 1967 Modern House tours in New Canaan and featured in the September 1959 issue of *Architectural Forum*. In the article, the house was described as “deriv[ing] from the rigid components of checkerboard, square bay, and pier...The checkerboard, eight units across by five units deep, was marked off on an artificial earth terrace overlooking a landscape of woods and water. Once the 16 ft. squares were established, the composition grew into three dimensions by enclosing some of the rectangular building bays as rooms and leaving others open as outdoor space...The rectangular piers, two bricks wide and four bricks long...are columns when seen head-on and slabs when viewed from the side. As columns they mark points in space; as slabs they direct the eye from the entrance to the rear terraces in accordance with the plan” (*Architectural Forum*, September 1959).

In 1960, the Boissonas family sold the house to the Logan Road Realty Corp. and moved to France, where Johnson had designed another house for them. John F. Hennessy Jr. acquired the property in 1963. The 33.3-acre parcel was subdivided at some point, likely by the Logan Road Realty Corp., leaving the house with a 8-acre lot. In 1969, a swimming pool was installed. In 1971, William S. and Ann T. Gilbreath purchased the property, which was then sold to interior designer Jay Spectre in 1983 with four acres of land. After Spectre’s death, the house remained vacant for about three years. In 1994, the property was sold to Bill Matassoni and Pamela Valentine. Matassoni and Valentine restored the deteriorating house and made some alterations, including replacing the plate glass with insulated glass, rebuilding the roofs, and updating the systems.

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor’s Office field cards.





Talbert House, front façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Talbert House, side façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number
41

# Talbert House

William G. Jones, 1951

The Talbert House is sited on a hilly rock outcropping, allowing for a full-height basement level at either end of the building. The house is heavily fenestrated with glass openings divided by muntins into horizontal panes in groups of twos, threes, or fours. Unlike many of the Modern houses in New Canaan, which feature vertical wood siding, the Talbert House has horizontal tongue-and-groove wood siding. The main part of the house has a shallow gable roof with the primary entrance at the side gable. A narrow wood deck shaded by a wood brise-soleil extends across the front of the building. At one gable end is a wing with a steeply pitched shed roof that stands in sharp contrast to the massing of the rest of the building. At the other gable end is a screened-in porch supported on V-shaped metal piers on concrete footers. This porch was originally open and extended over the basement garage openings, now enclosed as living space.

## Significance

The Talbert House was constructed in 1951 for Merrill E. Talbert, an executive with American Houses in New York City, and his wife Annette (Andy), a copy group head at Benton & Bowles Advertising Agency. Their architect, William G. Jones, was the New York architect for American Houses.

According to current owner Allan Mitchell, who was friends with the Talberts and was present during the construction phase, neighbors nicknamed the building “the glass house” during construction. The house was one of the earliest Moderns. Because





Talbert House, rear façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Talbert House, side façade showing original garage entrances at ground level, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



of the hilly property, which was formerly part of a tree nursery, a notch had to be blasted through the rock outcropping to construct the house. Mitchell remembered the interior as being finished with expensive wallpaper, “[giving] the interior a unique character. Much of the paper had bold colors and designs, including art deco.” The basement living space was intended as a mother-in-law’s apartment. The house originally had a Sarcotherm heating system. Mitchell remembers the Talberts being very happy with their Modern house: “The choosing of the hard-to-build-on site...the blasting through the ledge...the international style...the upstairs living area reached by exterior wooden stairs...the saving and use of trees..and so many other things indicated a bold willingness to try things new...and to satisfy one’s own desires...I remember...[t]heir thrill in this new creation of theirs” (Mitchell, 13 October 2001).

After the Talberts divorced, Annette Talbert sold the house to John P. and Helen M. Winandy in 1964. The Winandys sold it to Catherine S. Kniffen in 1965. Alan J. and Nancy C. Mitchell purchased it from someone named Hahn in 1971. Allan Mitchell is a well-known photographer and has photographed many Modern buildings in New Canaan. Sometime after purchasing the house, the Mitchells converted the basement into a studio, darkroom, and office. The basement originally contained a two-car garage, a bedroom, a den with a fireplace, a bathroom, and a furnace room, pump room, and a storage room. At an unknown date, but likely early in the house’s history, the porch at the east end was enclosed as a screened porch, and the original wood stairs, which led to the deck at the southeast corner of the house, were removed and replaced with the current marble stairs and brick walkway.

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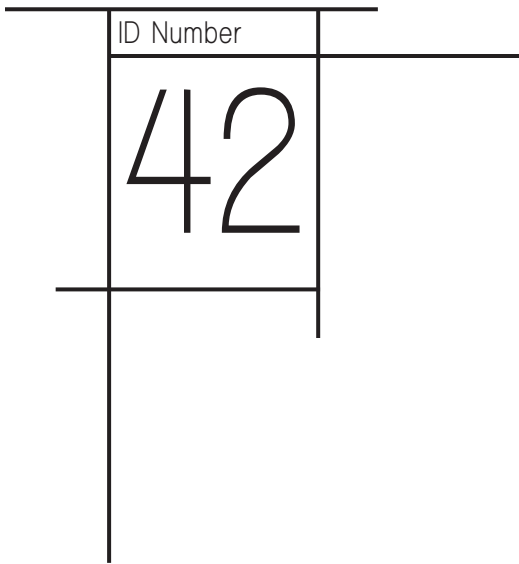


Kehm House, front and side façades, November 2007. Original house is to left, 1962 addition is in center, 1967 garage is in foreground, and 1998 addition is to right (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Kehm House, side and rear façades of original house, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)





# Kehm House

Bimel Kehm (unconfirmed), 1951

The Kehm House is a long, sprawling structure composed of a small 1951 house and multiple additions. The low-lying site is relatively flat and is largely encircled by the Mill River. A large flagstone terrace, an outdoor swimming pool, and an outdoor grill area/kitchen extend along the rear of the house, partially bordered by a curving mortared fieldstone wall.

The original house (1951) is located at one end of the structure. It is a two-story, shed-roofed building with irregularly laid concrete block at the ground floor (possibly designed to resemble stone) and vertical wood siding at the second floor. At the rear of the building is a corner window assembly consisting of vertical openings containing fixed sash bordered on both sides by five small wood awning windows set in a vertical line that operate concurrently like louvers.

Adjacent to the 1951 house is a small, one-story, flat-roofed hyphen (1962) set at an angle to the house that connects the house to the former garage. The former garage (1962) is a two-story, shed-roofed structure with irregularly laid concrete block at the base and vertical wood siding at the second floor. At the main façade, large openings that originally contained garage doors are now infilled with sliding glass doors. At the rear of the building is a second-floor deck.

Next to the former garage is a one-story, flat-roofed structure containing the current garage (1967). This building has a concrete foundation and is clad in vertical wood siding. At the rear, this building is connected to an indoor pool structure (1998) with a shed-roofed skylight and wall of sliding glass doors separated by fieldstone-clad piers. The indoor pool structure





Kehm House, rear façades of original house and 1962 addition, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Kehm House, rear façade of 1998 addition, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



leads to the flagstone terrace (1998) and outdoor swimming pool (1998). The final structure is a two-story studio building (1998) with a flat roof, a concrete foundation, and vertical wood siding.

## Significance

The lot for the Kehm House was purchased in 1950 by Bimel and Rowena Kehm (ownership was transferred to Rowena Kehm in 1951). Bimel Kehm also designed the Kelly House (1954) in New Canaan. Although the current owner notes that Kehm built the house, he was likely the architect. The house was completed in 1951 and originally had an C-shaped plan with a projecting 1-story screened porch at the rear with a roof deck. A 2-car garage was in the ground floor of the 2-story portion of the house. This original house is now difficult to see because of later additions.

In 1954, the property was sold to John S. Bainbridge and his wife. A 1959 realtor listing shows that house had a 2-car garage and carport, although it does not show up in assessor records at that time. In 1961, Dorothy H. Gary purchased the property. In 1962, a new garage/studio building and a new bath were added. The new building had a 2-car garage and 1-car carport on the ground level and a studio above with a balcony overlooking the back of the property. A narrow diagonal hyphen connected the house to the garage. The assessor noted at the time that a flagstone terrace at the rear and a garage were added to the assessment since they had not been previously noted. It is unclear if this existing garage was replaced or renovated in 1962.

In 1967, Francis and Anna L. Gress purchased the house (later transferred to Francis Gress in 1978). Major renovations by architect Dan Kistler were undertaken around 1967. The garage was converted to living space and a new 2-car garage was constructed adjacent to this building. The diagonal hyphen between the house and original garage was expanded. A new fieldstone patio was constructed at the front of the house. The open deck above the porch was likely enclosed at this time. According to the Gresses, the living room, dining room, kitchen, playroom, and patios were all enlarged in this renovation. In 1998, the Gresses undertook another major renovation using Kistler. The upstairs rooms, bathrooms, and office were renovated, and a new addition containing an indoor lap pool and sculpture studio were constructed. A 60' x 7' terracotta wall sculpture by owner and artist Sue S. Gress was constructed along the wall near the indoor pool. The garage was also altered slightly. An outdoor in-ground pool and fieldstone terrace were added at the rear. All of the renovations were completed by Marek Bil, Old World Construction.

### Sources

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.

"Unknown, Gress House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.





Kelly House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Kelly House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

43

# Kelly House

Bimel Kehm, 1954

The Kelly House is set on a flat site with a lawn at the rear. The house consists of a two-story, gable-roofed structure with a one-story, gable-roofed ell that originally contained the garage. The house has been heavily altered with poorly designed additions. The main part of the house is clad in wood clapboards, while the ell and altered areas are clad in V-channel vertical wood siding. A freestanding, gable-roofed, two-car garage with an open shed at the rear is set next to the house. Unlike most of the Modern houses in New Canaan, the Kelly House was designed as a traditional Colonial Revival structure with some vaguely Modern elements, most notably in the design of the fenestration. The hopper windows on the first floor have heavy, strongly defined mullions and are either grouped into squared-off bay windows or are adjacent to fixed sash or doors.

## Significance

The Kelly House was designed by architect Bimel Kehm as a speculative house. In 1954, Bimel Kehm and R.R. Austin acquired the property from West Hills of New Canaan, which may have been a development company; a note on the assessor records states "West Hills Dev" and the street appears to be a post-World War II development. Kehm designed a one-family house with incorporated garage for the site. By October 1954, the house was 40% finished and was completed by 1955.



Kelly House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Kelly House, detail of bay window next to main entrance, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



The house was sold to Dean McCune Kelly in 1955. Between 1958 and 1959, the incorporated garage was converted into a playroom (the original door openings are now filled with large windows) and a new freestanding two-car garage with attached open shed was completed. In 1961, the house was purchased by Vincent A. and Ruth M.W. Tauber. In 1968, the screened porch at the rear was enclosed and converted into living space. At least some of the original porch columns are still visible on the interior. The fieldstone patio at the back may have also been installed at this time, since it does not appear in earlier assessor records. In 1987, a second floor was added above the former screened porch. Around 1992, a small 12'x8' addition was built at the side of the house; it appears that the window on this addition was moved from another location on the house since it matches the original windows and the moldings do not line up with the window moldings on the adjacent façade. Kevin M. and Sally S. Sweeney purchased the house in 1992.

**Sources**

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Techbuilt House/Swallen House, front façade, May 2008 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Techbuilt House/Swallen House, side façade, May 2008 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



ID Number
44

# Techbuilt/Swallen

Carl Koch, 1954

The Techbuilt House/Swallen House is situated on a heavily wooded lot, which runs north-to-south on the north side of a hill. The lot slopes upwards towards the west and north. The hill has been terraced to fit the house, patio, and play area.

This house has an irregular plan consisting of a rectangular structure connected by a hyphen to a cross-shaped addition. The wood-framed house has a concrete foundation and the walls are clad in redwood siding. The gabled roof is clad in asphalt shingles. Windows dominate each façade of the original structure. The hyphen attaches to the original building at a perpendicular angle, but then tapers as it turns towards the addition, which is rotated at an angle to the rest of the structure. The center of the addition is a square, but the projecting segments at each elevation create a slightly trapezoidal structure, which tapers towards the southwest. At each corner of the addition is a slightly projecting, floor-to-ceiling, rectangular window bay. The main elevations of the addition are composed of floor-to-ceiling windows as well. A flagstone patio is located to the south of the original structure and the hyphen.

## Significance

The two-story rectangular portion of the Techbuilt House/Swallen House was constructed in 1954 for James Swallen. A carport was also constructed south of the home at this time.





Techbuilt House/Swallen House, rear façade and addition, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Techbuilt House/Swallen House, detail of addition, May 2008 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



The Techbuilt House was designed by architect Carl Koch in 1953 as a pre-fabricated house prototype. At least two other Techbuilt Houses were constructed in New Canaan: the Techbuilt/Aderer House in 1954-55 and the Techbuilt/Wilson House in 1958. Koch designed several affordable prefabricated housing prototypes starting in the late 1940s. The Techbuilt House was one of the most successful and would eventually be available in twenty-two models. When first designed, the Techbuilt House could be constructed (on average) for \$7.50/square foot, as compared to \$10/square foot for a conventional builder's house and \$15/square foot for a custom-built house.

The exterior design of the Techbuilt House was characterized by a pitched roof, large plate glass windows on the gable ends, and deep eaves. Koch had determined that the most economical use of space was achieved by a two-story plan that was essentially an "attic" with high side walls stacked on a partially recessed "basement," allowing for adequate light and ventilation at both levels. The shell of the house was composed of stress skinned panels on a four-foot-wide module. The main entrance could be located either at the gable ends or on the side walls, depending on how the building was situated to the street. The utility core and stairs were located at the core of the house to allow for flexible use of the interior spaces.

The pre-fabricated shell of the house, which included wall panels, end panels, floor panels, roof panels, and beams, girders, and trim, was designed for shipment in a single truckload delivery to a site with a prepared foundation. Once on site, four men could unload the components, frame the house, and roof it within two days. All of the finishing work could then be completed inside. The primary cost savings were created through the delivery method and fast pace of construction. The Techbuilt House could be customized to different sizes and floor plans and allowed owners to finish the interiors to individual taste and budget.

In 1960, two sheds were added to the property. In 1964, a corridor and one-story addition were added to the west of the home. Harvard Five architect Landis Gores designed the addition. The elevated plinth where this house sits offers a feeling of security and privacy, which allows the outdoor living spaces to be located on the front side of the house and facilitated the extensive use of glass in the construction of both the original building and the addition.

#### Sources

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The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Techbuilt House/Aderer House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



ID Number

45

# Techbuilt/Aderer

Carl Koch, 1954-55

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Techbuilt House/Aderer House was completed between 1954 and 1955. Alexander P. Aderer et. ux. acquired the property for the house in 1954. Aderer attended City College (NYC) and Columbia University and served in the Army and Navy during World War II. After the war, he worked for the Atomic Energy Commission. By 1966, Aderer was president of Victor O. Kubas, Inc., a color lithographic plant in New York. His wife Janice was a guidance counselor. Alex, Janice, and their daughter Noel all ran for State Senate at different times, but none of them were successful.

According to notes on the assessor property field cards, the house was one of architect Carl Koch's prefabricated Techbuilt houses. When completed, the Techbuilt House/Aderer House had a rectangular plan, a concrete block foundation, a gable roof, and was of plywood and glass construction. The house was 80% complete by October 1954 and finished in 1955. The Techbuilt House was designed by architect Carl Koch in 1953 as a pre-fabricated house prototype. At least two other Techbuilt Houses were constructed in New Canaan: the Techbuilt/Swallen House in 1954 and the Techbuilt/Wilson House in 1958.



Techbuilt House/Aderer House, historic view, ca. 1954 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



Koch designed several affordable prefabricated housing prototypes starting in the late 1940s. The Techbuilt House was one of the most successful and would eventually be available in twenty-two models. When first designed, the Techbuilt House could be constructed (on average) for \$7.50/square foot, as compared to \$10/square foot for a conventional builder's house and \$15/square foot for a custom-built house.

The exterior design of the Techbuilt House was characterized by a pitched roof, large plate glass windows on the gable ends, and deep eaves. Koch had determined that the most economical use of space was achieved by a two-story plan that was essentially an "attic" with high side walls stacked on a partially recessed "basement," allowing for adequate light and ventilation at both levels. The shell of the house was composed of stress skinned panels on a four-foot-wide module. The main entrance could be located either at the gable ends or on the side walls, depending on how the building was situated to the street. The utility core and stairs were located at the core of the house to allow for flexible use of the interior spaces.

The pre-fabricated shell of the house, which included wall panels, end panels, floor panels, roof panels, and beams, girders, and trim, was designed for shipment in a single truckload delivery to a site with a prepared foundation. Once on site, four men could unload the components, frame the house, and roof it within two days. All of the finishing work could then be completed inside. The primary cost savings were created through the delivery method and fast pace of construction. The Techbuilt House could be customized to different sizes and floor plans and allowed owners to finish the interiors to individual taste and budget.

Between 1956 and 1957, a two-car gable-roofed garage with an upstairs studio was constructed on the property. Between 1982 and 1983, a 10'x16' glass-and-steel greenhouse and a 8.5'x13' entrance vestibule were constructed on opposite sides of the house. At an unknown date, a 10'x8' second-story wood deck at the side of the house was completed. According to a 1985 realtor notice, the roof was replaced (1979), the chimney and flashing were redone (1984), and new "thermo" windows were installed in the living room and master bedroom. In 1985, the property was sold to Marilyn H. Love. In 1998, the house transferred to John P. Love. By the 1990s, the studio above the garage had been determined unlivable.

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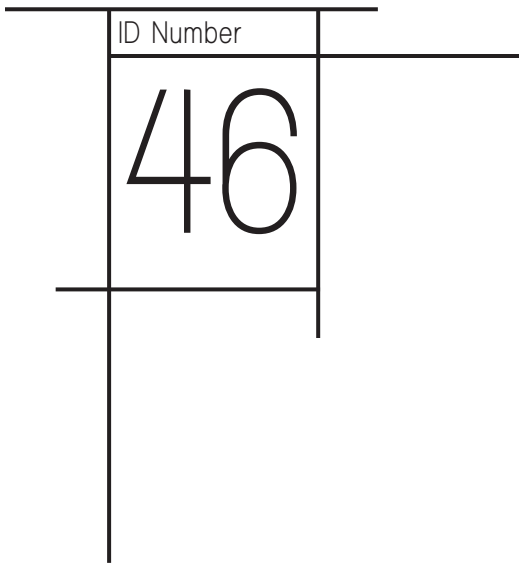
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Techbuilt House/Wilson House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)





# Techbuilt/Wilson

Carl Koch, 1958

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Techbuilt House/Wilson House was designed by architect Carl Koch and constructed in 1958. The property was acquired by Charles E. and Frances E. Wilson in 1956. Frances Wilson worked for SMS Architects (formerly Sherwood, Mills & Smith) in Stamford. In 1970, she was elected president of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Institute of Interior Designers. In 1971, she became the head of SMS Interiors, an offshoot of SMS Architects. The original house had a rectangular plan with a second-floor wood deck on one end and a screened porch at the rear. The house had a concrete foundation, vertical wood siding, and an asphalt-shingled gable roof.

The Techbuilt House was designed by architect Carl Koch in 1953 as a pre-fabricated house prototype. At least two other Techbuilt Houses were constructed in New Canaan: the Techbuilt/Swallen House in 1954 and the Techbuilt/Aderer House in 1954-55. Koch designed several affordable prefabricated housing prototypes starting in the late 1940s. The Techbuilt House was one of the most successful and would eventually be available in twenty-two models. When first designed, the Techbuilt House could be constructed (on average) for \$7.50/square foot, as compared to \$10/square foot for a conventional builder's house and \$15/square foot for a custom-built house.





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The pre-fabricated shell of the house, which included wall panels, end panels, floor panels, roof panels, and beams, girders, and trim, was designed for shipment in a single truckload delivery to a site with a prepared foundation. Once on site, four men could unload the components, frame the house, and roof it within two days. All of the finishing work could then be completed inside. The primary cost savings were created through the delivery method and fast pace of construction. The Techbuilt House could be customized to different sizes and floor plans and allowed owners to finish the interiors to individual taste and budget.

In 1959, a flat-roofed, two-car garage was completed. An addition was constructed in 1963. In 1980, Frances E. Wilson became the sole owner of the property. In 2000, Garrett A. Camporine acquired the house.

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Crichton House, side and rear façades, December 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Crichton House, front façade, December 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



ID Number

47

# Crichton House

William Landsberg, 1961

Sited on a two-acre parcel with mature trees and stone walls, the Crichton House is a one-story, slab-on-grade, wood-frame house with vertical wood siding, a flat roof, and an attached carport. With the attached carport, the five-bedroom house has an L-shaped floor plan.

Glass surfaces were incorporated into the façades with the inclusion of sliding glass doors, fixed plate glass sash, sliding sash, and casement windows. Although the roof is flush with the plane of the walls, it cantilevers beyond the plane of the exterior walls over window bays, including the bays of sliding glass doors at the back of the house. The terraces at the back of the house are paved with square concrete pavers.

Minor alterations include replacement of some original casement sash with aluminum windows. Between 1982 and 1998, two solar panels were added to the roof over the utility room adjacent to the carport.

## Significance

In 1959, John Crichton purchased an unimproved parcel from Chichester Estates, Incorporated. Crichton and his wife Zula commissioned architect William Landsberg to design a house on the parcel for themselves and their four children. Ted Hobbs





Crichton House, carport, December 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Crichton House, rear façade, December 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



was the contractor for the project. The house was completed in 1961. Landscape architects James Fanning and Richard Bergmann are credited for work at the site, but details regarding their designs are not known at this time.

John Crichton passed away in 1977. John and Zula's son, Michael Crichton, was a physician and a popular author; his notable books include *Jurassic Park*, *The Andromeda Strain*, *Prey*, and *State of Fear*. The house is still held in the Crichton family. No major alterations have been made to the house since its construction and it retains remarkable integrity at both the exterior and the interior.

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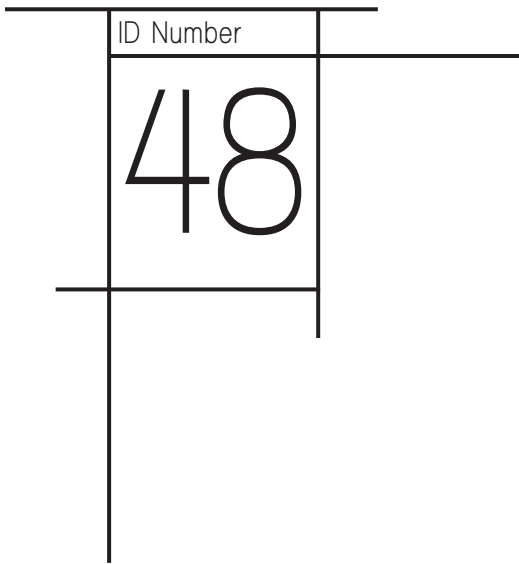


Lee House 1, north façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Lee House 1, historic view of south and east façades, undated (source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Lee House 1

John Black Lee, 1952

Lee House 1 is a one-story rectangular structure set on pins on a massive stone ledge overlooking a heavily wooded valley. The house is clad in tongue-and-groove v-channel vertical wood siding and has a flat roof. The main entrance to the house is located in the street-facing west façade, but the primary view from the driveway is of the north façade. The north façade has a large area of fenestration in the center of the wall consisting of two large fixed sash windows each flanked with fixed glass and awning windows stacked vertically. The west façade has a recessed entry accessed by a wood deck at the northern end and a blank wall at the southern end; the entry consists of sliding glass doors and an opening filled with glass block located in the north wall.

The southern façade is entirely glazed with sliding glass doors and fixed sash located under a deep overhang which has cantilevered beams at the soffit that extend from the interior of the house; a wood deck extends off of this façade. The east façade, where the land drops off steeply, has sliding glass doors leading to a cantilevered deck.

## Significance

Lee House 1 was designed by architect John Black Lee as a home for his family, which included his wife and two children. It was the first house designed by Lee in New Canaan. Lee purchased the property in 1951 and filed for a building permit in 1952. Ernest Rau was the contractor. According to the assessor records, the house was 85% completed by October 1952.





Lee House 1, south façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Lee House 1, west façade and garage, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



and was likely completed by the end of the year or in early 1953. Lee drew inspiration from the work of Mies van der Rohe in the design for his own house (Lee, 2008).

Lee House 1 was included in the 1953 Modern House Tour in New Canaan and featured in the June 1954 issue of *House & Home*. The article described the house as remarkable in its construction, in part because the house was supported on 15 pins on top of a rock ledge: “Nobody, as far as we know, has yet figured out a smaller foundation for a four-bedroom house.” In addition, “Lee closely integrated plan and structure, was able to use interior partitions and solid exterior wall panels to brace some of the bays in his open grid frame...and use[d]...freestanding posts...to help support a built-in piece of furniture” (*House & Home*, June 1954, 106-110).

The one-story house had a rectangular plan. The center of the house contained utility space and the bathroom. The northern part contained the study/guest room and three bedrooms. The southern part contained the living room (which had a metal fireplace), the kitchen, and a multipurpose/family room. *House & Home* was enthusiastic about the inclusion of this multipurpose room: “The room also works as a dining area, as a laundry and workroom, and as a playroom. It is so placed that it can be controlled from the kitchen” (*House & Home*, June 1954, 106-110). A large deck, sheltered by the cantilevered roof overhang, extended across the southern façade of the house.

After the Lees sold their house and moved to Lee House 2, the property had several different owners: John Morton Poole IV (1955 acquisition), Kathlyn C. Thurrott (1964 acquisition), Tyrus L. and Kathryn V. Homewood (unknown, acquired between 1964 and 1971), C. Kleinsinger (1971 acquisition), and Donald Swisher (1977 acquisition). Swisher, an architect at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), reversed some alterations made by earlier owners, returning the house to Lee’s original design, although the fireplace was moved to a new location (Lee, 2008). In 1978, Katrina Giuriata purchased the house, and in 1991, Suzanne Cerny acquired the property.

In 1993, Peggy S. McConnell purchased the property. During this same year, McConnell completed some interior alterations, constructed a two-car garage on the property, and extended the existing wood deck to create an uncovered wood deck at the southeast corner of the house. When McConnell was selling the house, a note in the realtor listing stated “house rebuilt from studs up since 1993.” It appears that this is referring to the interior alterations. In 1997, Eugene A. and Roseanne C. Diserio acquired the property.

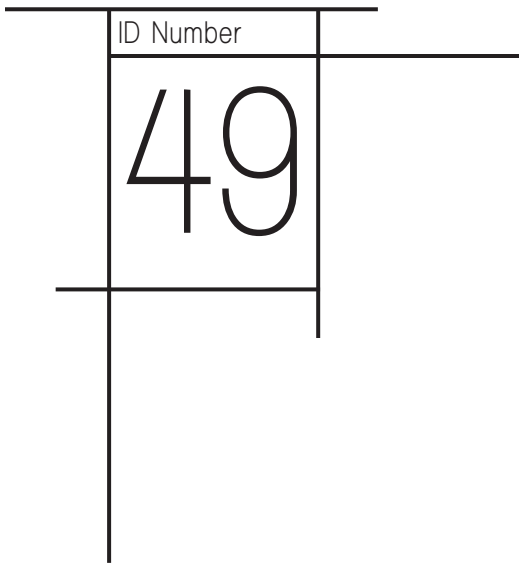
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Lee House 2, historic view, unknown date (photographer: Joseph W. Molitor, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)





# Lee House 2

John Black Lee, 1956

Lee House 2 is a rectilinear one-story house with a flat roof and a veranda that wraps around the house. The roof extends beyond the plane of the walls to cover the veranda and is supported by columns at the outside perimeter of the veranda. At the center of the house, the roof is raised above rectangular clerestory windows. The plan and façades of the house are largely symmetrical. The house is currently clad in vertical wood siding and characterized by extensive glass walls. The house was originally clad in 5'x 8' and 3/4"-thick ping-pong tables painted white.

In 2006, a storm felled a large tree on the property, which crashed through the roof of the house. The damage to the house was substantial. The owners of the house decided to use the damage from the storm as the impetus to redesign the landscape and house itself. Many of the tall pine trees surrounding the house, which is set on a terrace in the center of an irregular-shaped and sloping site, were cleared away to open the house to the rolling landscape beyond its glass walls. The plan of the house was redesigned. The original open kitchen was removed, leaving the central portion of the house a wide-open space set between two window walls. One of the four bedrooms (originally located at each corner of the house) was converted to open space. A new glass pavilion with a large kitchen, formal dining room, and master bedroom suite will be built to the designs of architect Kengo Kuma. The addition will be connected to the house by a glass-walled corridor extending from one side of the house.



Lee House 2, proposed design for alterations to house by architect Kengo Kuma (source: Susan Pollish)



# Significance

Lee House 2 was designed by John Black Lee for his family after they had outgrown their first house on Laurel Road. Lee acquired the lot in 1955 (transferred to John Black and Clara S. Lee in 1974) and the house was completed in 1956. This lot was part of the twenty acres on Chichester Road that Lee had purchased in 1954 to be subdivided into six parcels with the provision that the new houses built on the lots were of Modern design. Lee chose a low, flat site for his house because it provided a different challenge than the site of Lee House 1 (Brooks, *Fairfield County*, n.d.). The house was built by Ernest Rau. The landscape was designed by Paschall Campbell, who lived in the Campbell House designed by John Johansen (1952, largely demolished and rebuilt as the Goldberg House).

Lee House 2 had a rectangular footprint with a veranda extending around the perimeter of the house. The roof extended over the veranda and was supported on wood columns. The plan of the house was very symmetrical. In the center of the house was the living space, including the entry, the living/dining room, and the kitchen, all of which were open to each other. A clerestory window provided additional light to the living space. Two bedrooms and a bath were on each side of the house: one side contained the children's bedrooms, and the other side contained the master bedroom and guestroom/study. The bathrooms were lit by skylights. Sliding glass doors provided access to the veranda from each room. The basement contained a playroom. In an article in *New York Times Magazine*, Lee said he placed the family living space in the center of the house because "my wife, three children and I like being together most of the time" (*New York Times Magazine*, 3 November 1957, 82-83).

The house was featured in several publications, including the *New York Times Magazine*, *Architectural Record*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *House & Home*. In 1959, Lee House 2 won an award of merit from the American Institute of Architects. The house was included in the 1963 Modern House Tour in New Canaan.

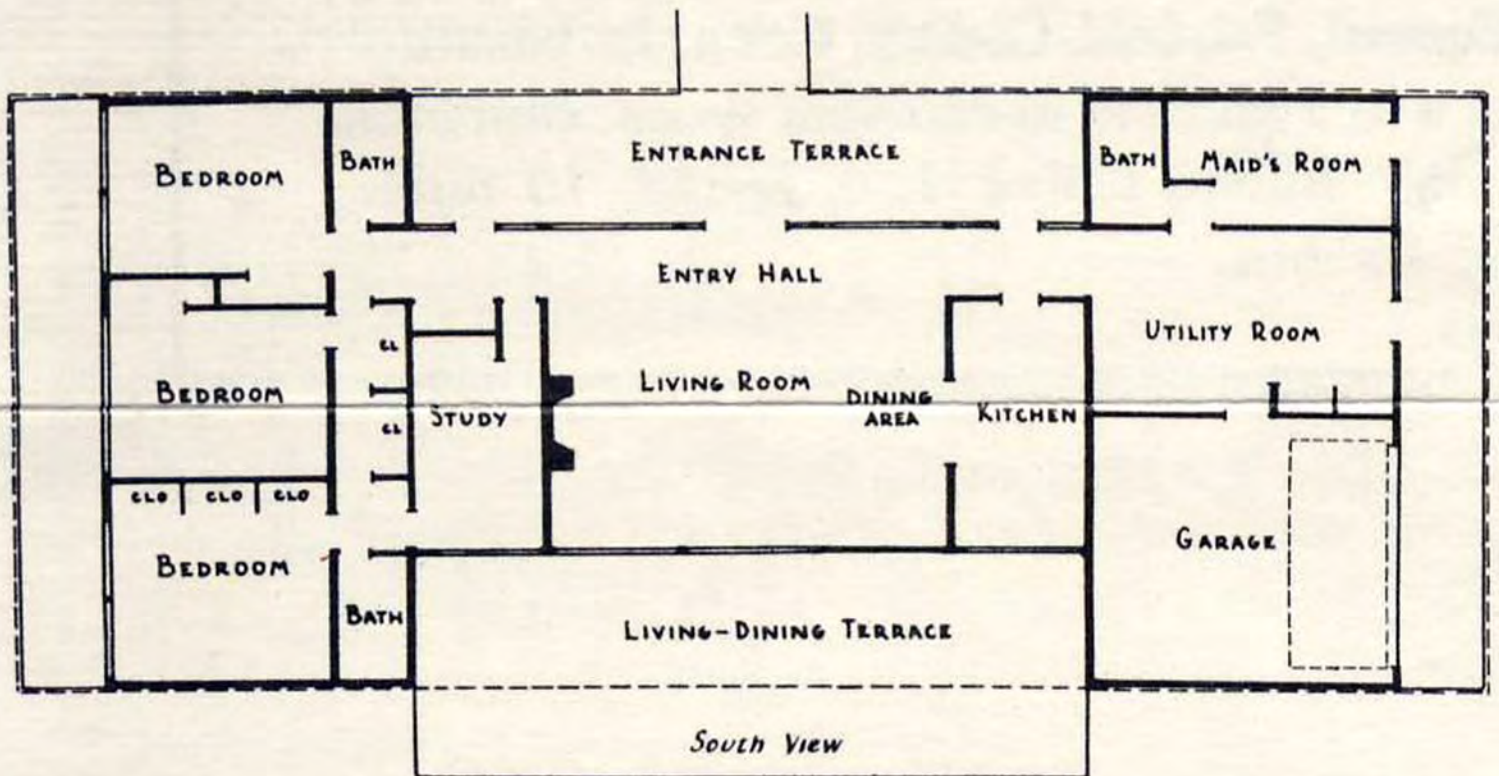
In 1990, Susan L. and L. Eric Pollish acquired the property. The Pollishes hired architect Toshiko Mori to renovate the house and design a new studio/garage building. The renovations included raising the upper roof by 18 inches, thereby creating a larger clerestory window; replacing the rotting wood columns with T-shaped sandblasted stainless-steel posts; replacing the sliding doors and large plate glass fixed sash with stainless-steel pivoted doors and stainless-steel insulated fixed sash; replacing the skylights; extending the width of the bedroom windows; and updating the baths and kitchen. The original aluminum sliding doors were reused in a new freestanding glass-and-steel pavilion containing a studio, bath, and two-car garage. The renovations were completed in 1992. In 2004, Thomas Phifer and Partners designed a new family room for the basement, accessed through a stair in the main floor. Currently, the house is undergoing extensive renovations, as outlined above.

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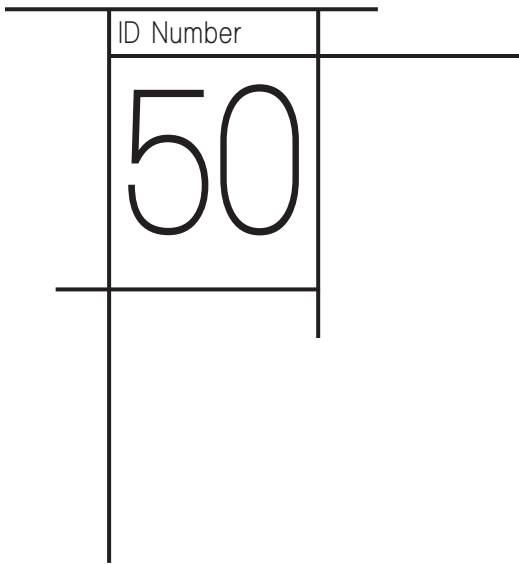


Rogers House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Rogers House, house plan from realtor pamphlet, ca. 1959 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Rogers House

John Black Lee, 1957

The Rogers House is a one-story, A-frame structure clad with vertical tongue-and-groove wood siding painted white and a shallow-pitch gable roof. The house originally had a symmetrical H-shaped floor plan. An entry terrace and a larger backyard terrace, each finished with rectangular concrete pavers, are sited at the center of the house off of the setback portions of the north and south façades.

The roof extends beyond the planes of the east and west walls, forming deep eaves. At the north and south façades, the roof is flush with plane of the wall except over the setback portions of the façade, where the roof cantilevers deeply to partially cover the entry and backyard terraces. The setback walls of the north and south façades each have five bays defined by mullions which line up with exposed rafters at the soffits. These walls are largely finished with floor-to-ceiling glass.

As with many of the Modern houses in New Canaan, the house plan was divided into zones: the central part of the building, which opens onto the entry and backyard terraces, contained the social spaces, including the entry hall, study, living/dining room, and kitchen, with a passthrough between the dining room and kitchen; the west wing contained the sleeping areas, including three bedrooms and two baths; and the east wing contained the utility spaces, including the garage, multipurpose room, and maid's room and bath. The garage was originally incorporated into the east wing of the main house.



Rogers House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Rogers House, side façade at bedroom wing, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



In 1973, the house was extended to the east with the construction of a new incorporated two-car garage. The existing garage was converted into a family room. Sliding glass doors were installed between the new family room and the terrace. The maid's room at the northeast corner of the house was also enlarged. The sliding glass doors in the bedroom wing were replaced with insulated units in 1974.

## Significance

The Rogers House was constructed in 1957 for Virginia D. and Theodore Rogers. Theodore Rogers was a producer for the "Today Show." Virginia D. Rogers acquired the lot in 1956. The house was designed by architect John Black Lee and constructed by Ernest Rau. Landscape architect Charles Middleler designed the landscaping. A note on the assessor property street card notes that the building was assessed at 25% in July 1957, suggesting that it was finished in late 1957 or 1958.

The Rogers House was featured in the 1959 Modern House Tour in New Canaan. *The New Canaan Advertiser* described it as "exemplif[ying] an imaginative use of symmetry and the architect's fondness for oriental detail" (*New Canaan Advertiser*, 30 April 1959). According to this article, Lee intended the multipurpose room to act as a decompression space where a person could leave the western world behind after exiting the garage before entering the eastern serenity of the main space. The multipurpose room functioned as a laundry room, storage space, and an area for crafts, sewing, or flower arranging. Lee included a similar room in his first house, Lee House 1. The article also noted the bedroom wing: "Of particular interest in this wing...is the 'master suite' arrangement made possible by the strategic placement of doors in the connecting hall and the use of brilliant color in an unexpected way on the cabinet, closet and connecting doors." Sliding fiberglass shoji screens, made by a Japanese resident of neighboring Darien, provided privacy to interior spaces without blocking light (*New Canaan Advertiser*, 30 April 1959).

In 1959, Jason D. Dana et. ux. purchased the property (transferred by quitclaim to Bertha B. Dana in 1965). In 1965, Janet F. Rowley acquired the house. In 1968, David R. and Alice E. Jennings bought the house from J. Clifford Norby and Eunice R. Norby. The Jennings family still owns the house today.

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Teaze House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Teaze House, historic view of front façade, ca. 1967 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number

51

# Teaze House

John Black Lee, 1960

The Teaze House is set on a hill overlooking the Noroton River. The house was heavily remodeled beginning in 2001. Although the original house had a minimalist, stripped-down aesthetic, the remodeled house is more opulent with an extensive use of mahogany and deep eaves. The redesign was influenced by Japanese architecture, heightened by the landscaping which includes Japanese-style gardens with raked gravel beds and plantings including Japanese maples, bamboo, and azaleas.

The flush vertical wood siding at the front of the current house is designed to “float” by raising the siding above the foundation and copper drip and projecting it out slightly. This may be an homage to architect John Black Lee’s original design, which had “floating” rectangular panels in the front glass wall formed by the rear walls of closets and bookshelves in the hallway. This “floating” quality was more pronounced in the original construction. The front of the house is largely blank with the exception of the glazed front doors and the clerestory windows that run under the eaves.

At the rear of the house, which faces the Noroton River, the façades are characterized by an extensive use of glazing. The landscaping is terraced to accommodate a stone patio adjacent to the house and a swimming pool located slightly downhill from the house.



Teaze House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Teaze House, detail of main entrance, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



# Significance

The Teaze House was designed by John Black Lee for David A. and Jane Teaze. According to Jane Teaze, she started looking for land with Lee in 1958 and “found a difficult piece which had been abandoned by Miles Olson who had intended to put up a traditional colonial but was stymied by the rocks & couldn’t get a full cellar” (Jane Teaze to Janet Lindstrom, 28 March 2001). The land was acquired by the Teazes in 1959 and the house was completed in 1960. The Teaze House was included in the 1967 Modern House Tour in New Canaan.

Jane Teaze wrote in 2001, “it’s been a heavenly house to live in. The symmetry of John [Black Lee]’s design make for a very harmonious life! His balance is peaceful, the way he placed it on the land isolated us from other lights & noise, & the expanses of glass brought all the season in” (Jane Teaze to Janet Lindstrom, 28 March 2001).

The original house had an H-shaped plan with narrow wood decks running along the front and rear. The living spaces were zoned with the bedrooms at one end and the public spaces (living room, dining room, and kitchen) at the other end. At the glass wall at the front of the house, Lee placed built-in closets and bookshelves on either side of the front door which appeared to be floating masses from the exterior. In 1968, two 20’ x 18’ additions designed by John Black Lee were built at the front of the house. These additions were clad in translucent plastic panels and wood slats to allow light to pass through while maintaining privacy. In 1975, a new wood deck (no longer extant) was added at the rear of the house.

In 2001, Carter F. and Lillian W. Wolfe acquired the property. The Wolfes undertook an extensive remodeling of the house beginning in 2001. The roof was raised in height from 7’6” to 9’, clerestory windows were inserted, and overhangs were added. A new addition containing a master bedroom and bath on the first floor and an exercise room and bath at the basement level was constructed. New windows, doors, trim, and likely new wood siding were installed. A new two-car garage was added and attached to the house with a new breezeway. The interior was largely gutted and remodeled. Japanese-style landscaping, a swimming pool, and a stone terrace were all installed. The house was expanded in size from 2,500 to 3,900 square feet.

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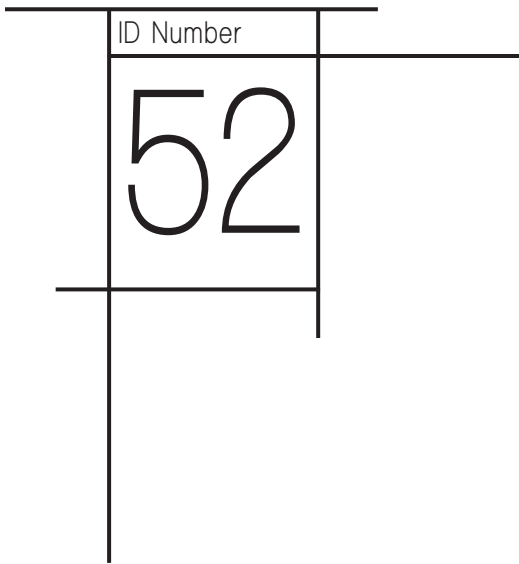


System House, front façade and garage, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



System House, historic view of house during construction, ca. 1961 (photographer: Syd Greenberg, source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# System House

John Black Lee & Harrison DeSilver, 1961

The System House is set on a terraced site with the house placed at a lower grade than the driveway and outbuildings. It is accessed by a wood bridge leading to the front door. The two outbuildings, a garage and a workshop, are located on either side of the driveway.

The house has a square-shaped footprint and is very symmetrical. The roof of the building extends beyond the wall plane on all four sides, creating a deep overhang that provides shelter for the ground-level patios and second-floor balconies, and sun protection for the large windows and doors. The outer edge of the roof is supported on thin piers. The house has a bi-level plan: the main entrance opens onto a stairway that leads upstairs to the bedrooms and downstairs to the public living spaces.

## Significance

The System House was constructed in 1961 and designed by John Black Lee and Harrison DeSilver. The house was built to show that good design and construction could be completed at a reasonable price by building on a modular system, in this case, a 6' module. The System was devised to use stock materials to keep costs down. The exterior wood panels were prefabricated in two designs: a solid wall panel and a glass wall panel designed for fenestration. Both panels were 6' in width



System House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



System House, detail of bridge to main entrance, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



and two stories high. To cut down on expensive finishing costs, structural elements were designed to be exposed. The deep overhangs allowed for simple and inexpensive glazing details.

One of the architects, Harrison DeSilver, was the first occupant of the house. DeSilver came to New Canaan in 1960 after attending a Modern House Tour, and the System House was one of his first projects. He purchased the lot in 1960 and the house was completed in 1961 in time to be part of the 1961 Modern House Tour in New Canaan.

In March 1963, the house plans were featured in "Better Homes For All America," published by *Better Homes & Gardens*, and were offered for sale at \$15. Over 1,000 plans eventually sold. In 1964, the house won a "Homes For Better Living" award in a program sponsored by the American Institute of Architects, *House & Home* magazine, and The American Home. The article in *House & Home* stated that the sloping land was bulldozed 5' below grade before construction began, and John Black Lee confirmed that he designed the site to be terraced, a technique he often used in sloping lots (Lee, 2008). Each room in the house opened to a terrace or balcony and the interior had a flexible floor plan. The house was priced at \$32,000 without the cost of land (*House & Home*, July 1964, 66-67).

In 1969, Donald R. and Barbara A. Homer acquired the house. The house lot was subdivided from 4.97 acres to 2.97 acres probably during the 1960s. A workshop was added to the property in 1975. In 1997, Benjamin S. Thompson and Rebecca A. MacDougall purchased the property. Robert M. Pederson and Andrew Mersmann acquired it in 2002. The windows and doors were replaced in 2006. It appears that no other major alterations have been made to the exterior of the house since its construction.

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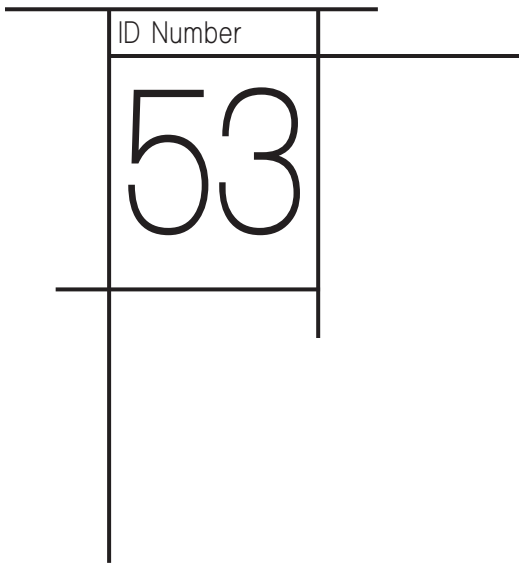


Day House, oblique view of the front and side façades, January 2008 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Day House, historic view, unknown date (photographer: Allan Mitchell, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)





# Day House

John Black Lee, 1965

Located off a long winding driveway running through a nature preserve, the flat-roofed, one-story Day House is set on a platform placed in a clearing on a gently sloping, wooded site. The primary entrance is three steps above grade and the basement is fully exposed at the rear of the house. The house originally had a square footprint with an upside-down, squared-off Y-shaped floor plan. Balconies and terraces, all paved with red Welsh tiles set in a herringbone pattern, are covered by the deep cantilevers of the flat roof. At the front of the house, the roof extends 21' beyond the plane of the walls and is supported by two square-shaped, brick-clad piers. The red bricks of the exterior walls and piers are handmade and rubbed with white paint (Lee, 2008).

The primary entrance to the house is off of a courtyard through paired, floor-to-ceiling, carved wood paneled doors centered on the façade and set back 26' from the projecting, parallel wings of the squared-off Y. The doors are flanked by broad, floor-to-ceiling expanses of fixed plate glass. Secondary entrances facing the entry courtyard, each a single floor-to-ceiling carved wood paneled door flanked by fixed plate glass sidelights, are found on the projecting wings. The end walls of the projecting el's are solid brick-clad surfaces. Sliding glass doors and sliding windows symmetrically define the bays of the brick-clad walls at the other façades at both the first floor and exposed basement level.



Day House, swimming pool addition (foreground) and side façade, January 2008 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Day House, entry terrace, January 2008 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



In 1993, an indoor swimming pool addition was built at the southeast corner of the building. The addition is clad with brick to match the original brickwork and has a flat roof. An open terrace at the basement level of the southeast corner of the house was also enclosed at this time. In 2006, the open terrace at the basement level (northeast) was enclosed to become a garage.

## Significance

In 1957, Lafayette Page III sold an unimproved parcel to Lee G. Day, Jr., who later commissioned architect John Black Lee to design a house to be built on the site for his family. By 1965, the house was completed. The parcel and house stayed in the Day family until Conway M. Day sold the property to Gary and Judith Witkin in 1992. The Witkins built an indoor pool addition and enclosed one of the open terraces at the back of the house. In 1996, the Witkins sold the parcel to Thomas McCaughey, who enclosed the second basement level terrace to create a garage in 2006.

John Black Lee designed the Day House with a Palladian-influenced plan and siting and rich finishes at the interior and exterior, marking it as a high style example of mid-century Modern residential design. Despite minor changes, the house retains a very high degree of integrity at both the interior and exterior.

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Monroe House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Monroe House, side façade and swimming pool, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



ID Number

54

# Monroe House

John Black Lee, 1968

The Monroe House is a long, low-slung, one-story house constructed on a steep hill overlooking a valley and the Five Mile River. The hipped roof originally cantilevered dramatically at both ends; one end sheltered a deck, and the other end sheltered a carport. The carport was enclosed as a two-car garage at an unknown date.

The house features a full-height basement level at its south and west sides. A deep overhang extends around the perimeter of the building. The long west elevation has a cantilevered deck that serves as an overhang to protect the lower level of the house. A spiral staircase leads from the deck to the ground-level patio, swimming pool, and a playhouse/poolhouse.

## Significance

The Monroe House was constructed in 1968 on a stretch of Brookwood Lane that was extended in 1964 for new development. All of the houses in the new development had to conform to an easement that protected the view of the valley from a house on Country Club Road. The original owner, Andrew P. Monroe, Jr., was a vice president of Uniweb International, Inc.



Monroe House, deck at rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Monroe House, detail of deck at side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



The Monroe House was designed by architect John Black Lee. Lee devised an innovative roof framing system consisting of steel and wood fitch plates and a three-dimensional truss hanging off of two chimneys. This allowed for uninterrupted views of the valley below. According to Lee, the system caused some controversy with the local building inspector (Lee, 2008).

The Monroe House was part of the "Bicentennial House Tour" held by the New Canaan Historical Society in 1975.

In 1969, a swimming pool was constructed on the property. In 1971, a small addition at the basement level under the cantilevered deck was completed. At an unknown date, likely after 1988, the carport was enclosed to create a two-car garage, altering the symmetrical cantilevered roofline.

According to the assessor records, the property title is as follows: James M. and Susan R. Dillon acquired the property in 1988; Peter M. and Diane E. Thom purchased the property in 1998, and Alan M. Engelson acquired the house in 2000.

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Lindstrom House, front and side façades, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Lindstrom House, main entrance and studio (at left), March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

55

# Lindstrom House

Gary Lindstrom, 1963-64

The Lindstrom House is set on a sloping site below street grade. A stream runs from the street down the hill through the lot. The property consists of multiple structures connected by wood decks and flagstone paths. The structures include the main house, a studio, a garage/workshop, and a tool shed. The main house and studio are set on tall concrete piers because initial porosity tests indicated that the soil absorbed water very slowly, increasing the potential damage from a flood; the remaining structures have concrete block foundations (Janet Lindstrom, 13 May 2008). All of the structures have shed roofs and are clad in wood shingles.

The main house is accessed by a wood bridge leading to an enclosed shed-roofed vestibule. Recessed clerestory windows are placed at the peak of the main shed roofline to project light down into the house. The main house also has a large opening cut into one wall to expose a brick chimney set at an angle to the wall plane. The design of the house creates a modular effect with rooflines set at different intersecting angles and heights.

The studio has a partially false front (the main wall extends beyond the intersecting side wall at one end) and a greenhouse window. The studio connects to the main house by a wood drawbridge. The garage/workshop is placed on the hillside so that the garage is at the level of the driveway and the workshop is below the garage but opens at grade. The workshop has a large skylight. The tool shed has large wood barn doors installed on an overhead track that extends beyond the width of the building; the doors open by sliding to the sides.





Lindstrom House, side façade with addition at right, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Lindstrom House, rear façade, March 2008 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



# Significance

The Lindstrom House was designed by architect Gary Lindstrom for his wife Janet and their young daughter. The Lindstroms were able to acquire the land fairly cheaply because it was sloping lot that would have required a large amount of fill for a traditional house. The Lindstroms were attracted to this particular piece of land because it was originally filled with native dogwoods of which seven trees still survive (Janet Lindstrom, 13 May 2008). Janet E. Lindstrom acquired the lot in 1963. The house was built by Emil Toikka of Greenwich and finished in 1964. Landscaping on the site was completed by the Lindstroms and the Pound Ridge Nursery.

Architect Gary Lindstrom had worked for noted lighting designer Richard Kelly and designed the house with solar principles in mind to allow for natural lighting and ventilation. Trained as a carpenter, Lindstrom designed many of the furniture, artwork, and lighting fixtures in the house. Janet Lindstrom graduated from Penn State University and received a master's degree at Columbia University. She was a teacher at several schools in New Canaan. She later served as president of the New Canaan Historical Society before becoming executive director in 1985. She was named "Woman of the Year" by the New Canaan branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) in 2004. The Lindstroms eventually had two daughters.

The original house was 30'x36' with a wood walkway leading to the main entrance. A separate 9'x11' building containing the furnace sat just adjacent to the house. Between 1966 and 1967, a garage with a basement workshop was constructed on the site. It appears that a freestanding tool shed was also constructed at this time. In 1969, the house was expanded with a 28'x27'6" addition at the rear containing a family room/game room on the first floor and a master suite on the second floor. The family room featured a conversation pit with a brick fireplace designed to radiate heat. Also around this time, a small addition containing an eating area was constructed between the house and the furnace building, along with a wood deck.

In 1976, a freestanding studio was constructed on the property. It was connected to the house by an elevated wood deck with a drawbridge to allow a tractor to pass through, necessitating the removal of an earlier wood deck at this side of the house.

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Bremer House, historic view, unknown date (photographer: Nina Bremer, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)



ID Number

56

# Bremer House

Eliot Noyes, 1951

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Bremer House was designed by architect Eliot Noyes for Nina and Paul Bremer. According to Nina Bremer, her husband Paul had been injured while serving in the Navy and was bedridden. While he was recuperating, they decided to build a house and wanted something modern but weren't sure exactly what that meant. She reached out to her friend Eliot Noyes, who drew up a conservative plan for a house, thinking that's what the Bremers wanted. When Nina told him she didn't think it was interesting, Noyes was elated and tore up the plan. The next day, he had drawn what she called the "upside-down house," which they loved. Nina said, "El was a lot like the rest of us - young, had been through the war, had young kids...He understood us" (*Fairfield County Magazine*, October 2000, 58). The Bremer House was constructed by builders Borglum & Meek and was completed in 1951.

Noyes was inspired to create the "upside-down house" by Le Corbusier's Villa Savoie in Poissy, France (*House & Home*, February 1953). The Bremer House has a deeply overhanging upper floor supported on thin columns. The house was designed on a modular plan with 11'6" bays. Concrete-filled pipe columns partially supported the roof. The upper floor





was zoned into public and private spaces: one half contained the kitchen, living room, and dining room, and the other half contained four bedrooms, a dressing room, and two baths. The lower floor contained the service spaces: an entryway, bedroom, bath, playroom, laundry room, dumbwaiter, and heating room. A partially covered open porch extended across the front of the upper floor with a terrace below. One half of the open porch is a deeper, room-sized volume, open to the sky.

The Harvard Five often congregated at the Bremer House for parties. It was included on the second Modern House Tour in New Canaan in 1952. The Bremer House was featured in the February 1953 issue of *House & Home*, which noted its practical aspects, including placing the living spaces upstairs for a better view; recessing the lower level so it was shaded and provided with a covered play terrace for use in the rain; stacking the kitchen above the utility space so the two could be connected by a dumbwaiter; and using an “economical flat roof, sloped gently toward a central drain, the only kind of roof that is drip and icicle-proof in New England winters and requires no messy gutters” (*House & Home*, February 1953).

Around 1953, a 24'x24' guesthouse designed by Eliot Noyes was completed. The kitchen and bedrooms were remodeled around 1968. In 1969, a pool was constructed. In 2004, Stephen Dayton acquired the property.

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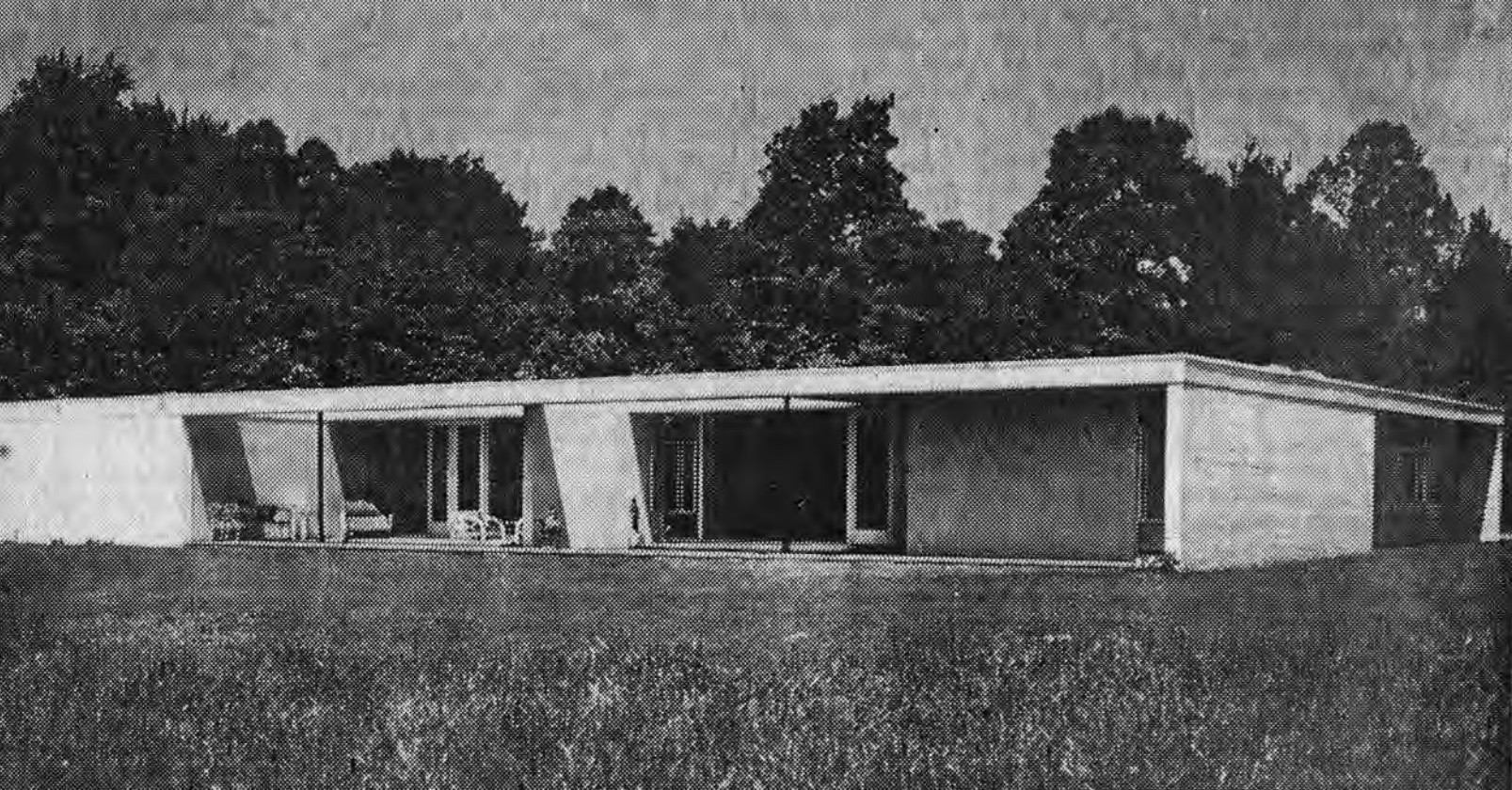
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Ault House, historic view, 1953 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number

57

# Ault House

Eliot Noyes, 1952

Field survey was not conducted on this property.

## Significance

The Ault House was designed by architect Eliot Noyes and constructed in 1952 by Borglum & Meek. Lee A. Ault et. ux. purchased the property in 1951 (transferred to Dorothy Ault in 1958). Lee Ault was the editor of *Art in America* and owned an extensive art collection. Noyes designed the house with a glass-walled gallery along an open courtyard to display the collection. The flat-roofed house had an H-shaped plan with an incorporated 2-car garage. According to the assessor property street card, the exterior materials were glass, brick, and vertical wood siding. The assessor described the house as “very modern.”

The Ault House was included in the 1953 Modern House Tour. An article about the tour stated: “Designed to permit full appreciation of their art collection, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lee A. Ault...has freely flowing indoor and outdoor spaces. Living areas are in the center with bedroom and service wings flanking them. The home was designed by Eliot Noyes to permit the spatial aspects of an open plan while preserving privacy for the inhabitants” (*Stamford Advocate*, 17 October 1953). The Ault House was featured in the November 1958 issue of *Architectural Record*.





In 1959, William Feick, Jr., et. ux. purchased the property, which is still held by the Feick family. Around 1970, an outbuilding with a C-shaped floorplan was constructed. An oval in-ground pool was added to the property at an unknown date, possibly around 1980. In 2005, the house was on the “Architects, Designers and Artists in the Garden” tour that benefited the Silvermine Guild Arts Center. According to an article on the tour, the Ault House has a landscape designed by noted Modernist landscape architect Thomas Church (*Ridgefield Press*, 16 June 2005).

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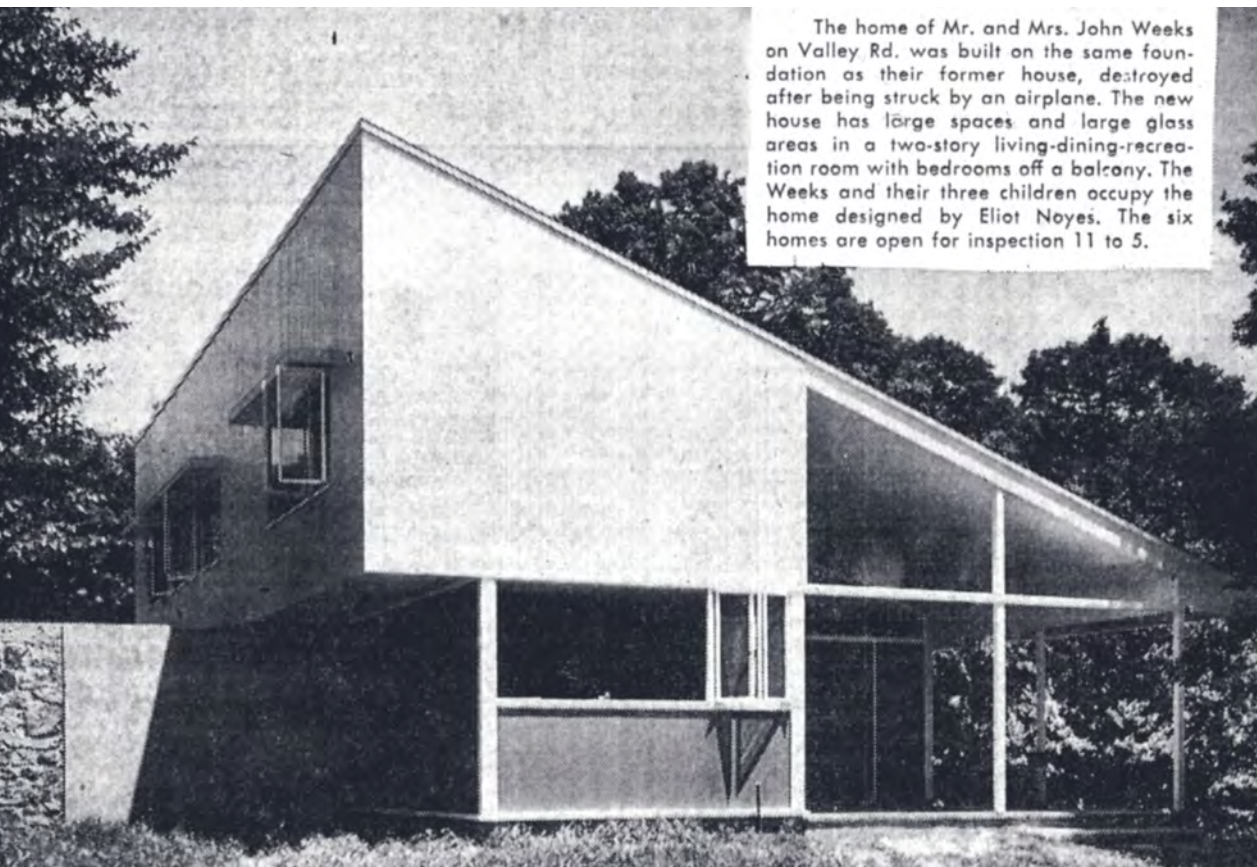
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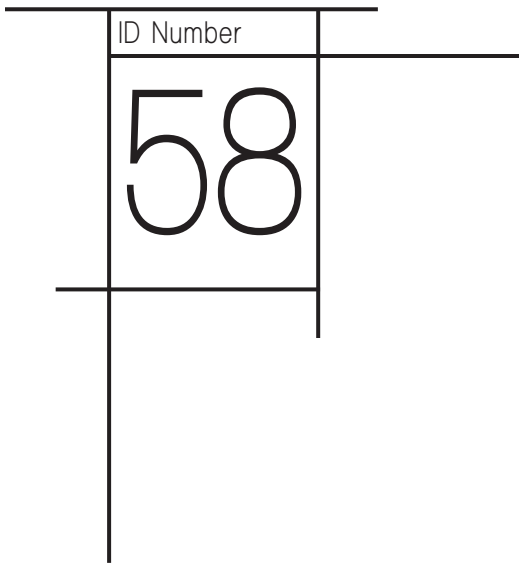


Weeks House, entry walkway and garage addition, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Weeks House, undated clipping from the *Stamford Advocate*, ca. 1953 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Weeks House

Eliot Noyes, 1952

The Weeks House is situated on a very open, manicured site bounded by fieldstone walls to the south and east. The site is ringed with mature hardwood trees that predate the house and formal elements that regulate the landscape. The lot is situated with its longest dimension running parallel to the street; the house was constructed with its longest dimension running perpendicular to it.

The house, as Eliot Noyes designed it, had a rectangular plan. Renovations by Alan Goldberg in 1988 include a semi-circular addition at the west end of the south elevation, complemented by an interior curved wall that encloses a wet bar. The expansion also created a new master suite above the family room, a larger living room, a new kitchen and bathrooms, and a separate two-story guesthouse studio that is connected to the house by a courtyard patio. At this time, the main entrance to the house was relocated and offset from the entrance point of the driveway. A floating stair was added in the new entry to access the second-floor balcony that was enclosed to create privacy for the bedrooms.

The current two-story house was constructed with large expanses of glass. The foundation is constructed of stone. The house is wood-framed with a rolled asphalt roof that slopes down towards the south. A fieldstone chimney and a curved clerestory window puncture the roof. The walls are clad with vertical redwood siding, which has been painted white. A flagstone terrace runs the length of the south elevation. To the north are a courtyard and a three-car garage, which were constructed during the 1988 construction campaign. This garage has a roof that slopes down towards the north; the southeast corner of the





Weeks House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Weeks House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



garage is cantilevered over the terrace. A well house is located on the east edge of the terrace. An older garage structure is located northeast of the house.

## Significance

Originally, this lot was the site of a 18th-century salt box farmhouse owned by Ruth and John Weeks. After a plane crashed into their home and destroyed it in 1942, the Weeks commissioned Eliot Noyes to design a new house. The simple massing and exterior treatment of his design focused attention on the site. The house was completed in 1952 and constructed by Borglum & Meek. It was featured in the *New York Times Magazine* and included on the 1953 Modern House Tour in New Canaan

In 1977, James P. and Flora L. Lee acquired the house. From 1988 to 1990, the house was extensively renovated and expanded by Alan Goldberg, a partner of Noyes. Goldberg's design introduced curves and circular shapes, which softened the appearance of the structure and contrasted with the rectangular form of Noyes's building. The main entrance was relocated during this renovation. In addition, a three-car garage, entrance courtyard, and stone terraces and walls were constructed. In 1993, John D. and Sally N. Hough purchased the property (later transferred to Sally N. and John D. Hough, Trustees, in 1997). The property's trees, stone walls, and expansive lawns were restored by the Houghes. In 2005, Felipe Ferrand acquired the property.

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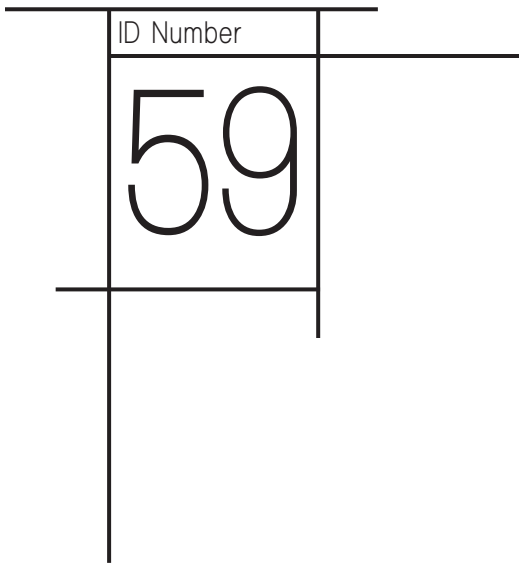


Noyes House 2, side and rear façades, October 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Noyes House 2, historic view of courtyard, unknown date (photographer: Ezra Stoller, source: Philip Johnson Glass House)





# Noyes House 2

Eliot Noyes, 1954-55

The Noyes House is sited in a grove of trees adjacent to a brook on a six-acre lot. The one-story, flat-roofed house was designed with a courtyard plan: a bedroom wing in one rectangular pavilion separated by a square, open courtyard from a parallel living wing in a second rectangular pavilion. Covered but open concrete walkways were designed to connect the separate pavilions of the house. The roof is flat and is continuous over the entire building.

Noyes emphasized the difference between the axes of his house by contrasting solidity and transparency. On the north (entry) and south (rear) façades, he used solid fieldstone walls with no openings except the entries into the courtyard (which can be closed with heavy barn doors). On the east and west façades of the perpendicular axis, he used five bays of floor-to-ceiling glass set between wood-covered steel columns. This arrangement gives the house privacy from the road (north), effectively using the stone to camouflage the house within the rocky, wooded setting. On the other axis, the arrangement allows the natural settings to merge with the interiors. The east and west window walls and the window wall in the courtyard allow light and air to move through the house. Plastic “bubble” skylights give additional natural light to both pavilions of the house.

The window sash and the sliding doors are made of steel, painted black, with 1/4” plate glass panes. All exposed trim is square-edge cypress stained a deep brown. The barn doors and wall of the bedroom pavilion facing the courtyard are covered with flush, tongue-and-groove vertical boards. The exterior soffits are plywood, painted white.





Noyes House 2, west façade and studio, October 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Noyes House 2, shed, October 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



The courtyard was treated as an active living space for the house and as an integral part of the designed landscape. Additional structures on the property include a shed (built 1964), and a studio (built 1976), both designed by Noyes. Along the western side of the property, adjacent to the studio, is a brook dammed by Noyes to create a natural pool.

## Significance

Noyes House 2 was designed by Eliot Noyes for his family after they outgrew their first house in New Canaan (Noyes House 1, 1947, no longer extant). According to the assessor property street cards, the property for Noyes House 2 was acquired by purchasing at least two different lots. Noyes and his wife Mary acquired the lots between 1952 and 1953 from Annis S. Gilbert. Completed between 1954 and 1955, Noyes House 2 was featured in *Life* and *Time* magazines, was awarded the AIA Award of Merit in 1957, and based on the amount of media coverage it received, is the most famous of all the houses Noyes designed. The Noyes House was featured on multiple Modern House tours in New Canaan, including the 1953, 1955, 1957, 1959, and 1963 tours. The house was built by Borglum & Meek, who also built Noyes House 1.

The house demonstrates Noyes's appreciation for New England's natural materials, particularly fieldstone walls. Though the major walls were built of local stone, the secondary and courtyard façades are primarily glass and steel, rendering the house decidedly Modern. In Noyes's words, the house is "a fortress on one side and all glass on the other" (Bruce, 116). The house was among the first to use wall-size sheets of glass to open up the living area into the outside courtyard. This allowed the house to blend with its environment and to make an unobtrusive statement from the exterior. With basic, rectilinear spaces separated by elements of function rather than configurations of material, the Noyes House is the ultimate expression of its designer's concepts of what an ideal house should be. Noyes himself referred to it as "a very hard-boiled piece of architecture" (Bruce, 110).

Noyes wrote in his 1963 essay in *Life* magazine, "It is no coincidence that an architect often expresses himself most clearly in a house designed for himself and his family. As an architect, he will have thought a lot about how people could live as opposed to how they do and how by architectural means he could expand the scope and richness of life within the house" (*Life*, 15 February 1963). As the house built expressly for Eliot Noyes's own family, the Noyes House stands as the perfect encapsulation of the architect's structural and aesthetic ideal.

After Eliot Noyes's death in 1977, the ownership of the house was transferred to Mary D. Noyes and the Estate of Eliot Noyes. In 1979, it was transferred to Noyes Family Properties, Inc. The property is still owned by the Noyes family.

Very few alterations have been made to Noyes House 2. The Noyes family sold two acres of their original lot to the Blake family c. 1970, leaving them with just over six acres. The original tar and gravel roofs have been replaced with EPDM. The "bubble" skylights were replaced with flat glass units. The courtyard walkways and the shallow terraces along the east and west façades, left as bare concrete to save money, were later finished. After Eliot Noyes's death, the master bedroom was enlarged, reducing the number of bedrooms from five to four.

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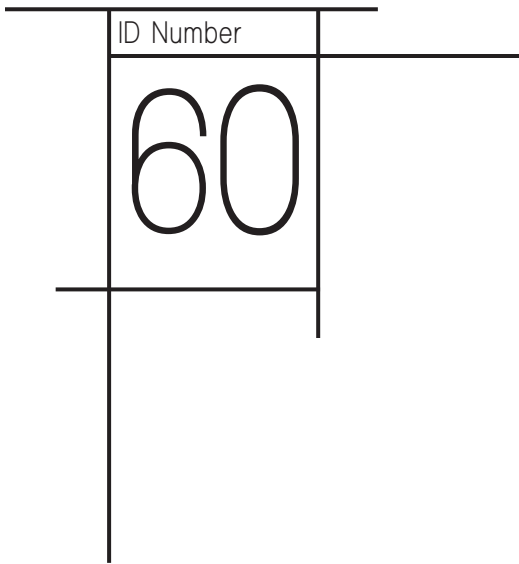


Chivvis House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Chivvis House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)





# Chivvis House

Eliot Noyes, 1978

The one-story, flat-roofed Chivvis House is finished with vertical wood siding, solid fieldstone walls, and glass walls. The house has an irregular H-shaped plan, with the public and private areas of the house separated into two parallel rectangular pavilions connected by a wide corridor. The corridor serves as the main entry lobby for the house and opens onto a landscaped courtyard between the pavilions. The entrance side of this 18'-wide corridor is faced with fieldstone while the courtyard façade is a window wall.

The house was originally built with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, an entry lobby, a kitchen, an open living/dining room, and a courtyard. Except the courtyard-facing wall, which is a 12'-tall solid fieldstone wall, the bedroom wing walls are clad with vertical wood siding relieved with fixed and sliding sash. The walls of the public/living wing are more open, with vertical wood siding on the primary façade, window walls along the long façades, and both wood siding and glass walls at the rear façades.

In 1982, a separate 3-car garage was added along with two additions which seamlessly extend the rectangular plan of each pavilion of the house.





Chivis House, courtyard, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Chivis House, side façade of garage, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



# Significance

Mary-Lynette Chivvis (nee Mary-Lynette Bremer) purchased the four-acre site in 1976. She and her husband Arthur Beecher Chivvis, Jr., commissioned architect Eliot Noyes to design a house for their family. Mary-Lynette Chivvis had grown up in the Bremer House (1951), also designed by Noyes. The design of the Chivvis House is reminiscent of the New Canaan home the architect designed for his family in 1954 (Noyes House 2). The Chivvis House was completed in 1978 after Noyes's death.

Although completed at the end of the Modern period in New Canaan, the house is clearly marked as a Modern structure by its open plan, expressive use of glass and local materials, architectural details, and its interior/exterior living spaces. The house retains very high integrity.

## Sources

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Papp House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Papp House, front and side façades, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



ID Number

61

# Papp House

Laszlo Papp, 1959-64

The Papp House is set near the top of a sloping site in the woods and is bordered by fieldstone walls. The house faces west, overlooking a valley and a lake.

The house was originally constructed as a one-room summer cottage. Several additions were added between 1959 and 1964 to create an asymmetrical U-shaped plan around a terrace and oak tree. The foundation of the house is concrete. The walls are clad with vertical redwood siding. The building has asphalt-shingled roofs of varying pitches. Irregularly spaced rectangular windows puncture the façades. The two-story structure that comprises the south end of the house was constructed in 1964 and contains a dining room, kitchen, and playroom on the first floor. Three bedrooms and two bathrooms are located on the second floor. A fireplace, open to both the living and dining rooms, connects and balances the two rooms despite the change in floor level (the dining area is below the living room). The projecting balcony of the second-floor master bedroom is enclosed with a solarium, and the first-floor balcony below is open. A patio is located at the rear of the building.

## Significance

The original cottage on this site was constructed c. 1945. After the original owners passed away, it was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Palmer, who eventually sold it to Laszlo and Judith Papp in 1959. The Papps were Hungarian refugees who were forced to leave their homeland in 1956. Given their limited resources, they altered the small cottage on the site over time to





Papp House, side façade, 1964 addition, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Papp House, side façades, 1959 additions, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



create their idea of a home. The design of the house responds to the challenging slope of the site through the construction of several levels that flow into one another and create a dynamic space.

The Papps winterized the cabin and dug out a partial cellar/crawl space under the structure. In addition, they built a fireplace and chimney and replaced the doors and windows with large glass units. In 1961, a second room and a two-car garage were constructed to Laszlo Papp's designs to the north of the cabin. The rest of the house was essentially built to Papp's designs in 1964, with the exception of the second-floor solarium, which was added later at an unknown date.

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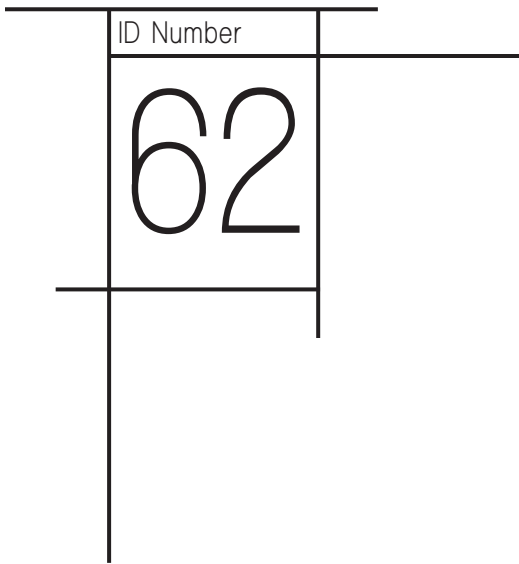
"Papp, Laszlo, Papp House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Fine House, historic view, 1980 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Fine House

Laszlo Papp, 1965

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Fine House was designed by Laszlo Papp for William M. Fine. Fine was the publisher of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Town & Country* magazines. According to Papp, Fine asked him to design a house that would resemble a remodeled barn (Papp, "Fine/Flaschen House"). The builder was Andrew Pirro of Norwalk.

William M. Fine et. al. acquired the property in 1964 and the house and swimming pool were completed around 1965. The original two-story and one-story house had an L-shaped plan with a large terrace. A two-car garage with living space above was attached to the house. The Fine House had a concrete block foundation, a gable roof, and was clad in vertical board siding and brick veneer. In 1975, a 10'x6' poolhouse was completed.

In 1978, Joyce D. Flaschen acquired the property and lived there with her husband Stewart. Flaschen hired Laszlo Papp to design a kitchen addition and new vestibule for the house, completed in 1980. Andrew Pirro was the contractor on the addition work as well. The addition had a greenhouse barrel roof. In 1990, the property was transferred to the Joyce D. Flaschen Revocable Investment Trust.





In 2002, Craig R. Kingsley acquired the property. A building permit for an addition was filed in 2003 and completed in 2004; it is unknown what this work entailed, but the house currently appears to be heavily altered.

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Beaven Mills House, front façade, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Beaven Mills House, front and side façades, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

63

# Beaven Mills House

William Pedersen, 1956

Designed by architect William Pedersen, the Beaven Mills House is a one-story (plus basement), flat-roofed house with an irregular plan set on a sloping, wooded site. The house is clad with painted vertical wood siding and there are broad expanses of glass throughout. The house was designed to have separate living and sleeping wings connected by a corridor. The primary entrance to the house is at the north wall of the connecting corridor. Passing through the main entrance to the south side of the corridor, the space opens to a courtyard between the bedroom and living wing. The living wing was designed with a full-height finished basement level containing guest quarters, and the bedroom wing was designed with three bedrooms.

In 1960, a separate carport was built. A small addition for storage was built adjacent to one of the bedrooms ca. 1970 and the house was fully insulated in 1979. Minor interior alterations took place in 1997 and 1999, when hardwood flooring was installed in the major living areas and the wet bar was remodeled to become a laundry room. In 2004, the wall between the kitchen and the great room was removed and the kitchen was remodeled.



Beaven Mills House, side façade, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Beaven Mills House, carport, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



# Significance

In 1950, Beaven Mills bought an unimproved parcel of land from Chichester Estates, Incorporated. Beaven Mills commissioned architect William Pedersen to design a house for the site. The house was completed in 1956. In 1976, William and Marjorie Hammond bought the parcel. Robert and Virginia Dunbar purchased the house in 1992. Five years later, in 1997, Matthew and Erica Siegel bought the parcel and they are currently the owners of record.

The Beaven Mills House appears to be one of the earliest Modern houses built on Chichester Road, a road that had been developed with several Modern houses by 1960. Local architect John Black Lee took an active role in encouraging the development of Modern houses on Chichester Road; in 1954, he purchased twenty acres of land to be subdivided into six parcels with the provision that the new houses built on the lots were Modern, although the Beaven Mills House was not part of this development.

## Sources

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

"Pedersen, William, [address redacted]," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Hall House, façade facing driveway, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Hall House, side façade, looking towards garage and hidden courtyard, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

64

# Hall House

William Pedersen, 1962

The Hall House is a long, rectangular structure sited on a gently sloping hill. The driveway leads to a two-car garage at the narrow end of the rectangle, essentially masking the remainder of the house from view. The long sides of the rectangle are characterized by narrow inset wood decks sheltered under overhangs that connect the garage to the main house. An internal courtyard, accessible only from the house interior and not visible from the decks, sits between the garage and house. At the other narrow end of the rectangle, the house cantilevers over the basement level. This end of the house is heavily glazed and has a wood deck on the upper level finished with exposed beams at the eaves that extend from the living room, and large plate glass windows flanked by casement windows at the lower level. The entire structure is clad in V-channel vertical wood siding painted a dark green, creating an unbroken line between the garage and house. The flat roof also is continuous with the exception of an opening for the courtyard. An addition supported on piers sits off the kitchen of the house, extending perpendicularly from the original structure.

## Significance

The Hall House was built in 1962 for the Hall family. According to Cornelia Walworth, who moved to the house with her parents in the early 1980s, the Halls originally lived with their five children in the Lambert House, a large Gothic-style mansion adjacent to the current Hall House property. After some of the children had grown up and moved out, the Halls decided to





Hall House, side façade, looking towards main entrance and ca.1975 addition, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Hall House, rear façade, looking towards living room (upper level) and bedrooms (lower level), November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



subdivide the property and construct a new house on a hill next to one of the massive beech trees. The lot the Hall House is located on (which presumably included the Lambert House) was purchased by I. Davis Hall in 1950. Hall hired architect William Pedersen to design a house of wood and glass to complement his love of nature and light, and the house was completed in 1962 (Cornelia Walworth to Martin Skrelunas, 25 October 2007).

Around 1975, an addition supported on piers was constructed to provide additional living space. It appears that the fieldstone patio was added at this time.

According to the assessor records, Edward (Ned) H. and Nancy Z. Walworth purchased the Hall House in 1979, although Cornelia Walworth remembers them buying it in 1981. The Walworths filled in the windows at the entrances to provide additional interior wall space, although the framing is extant, and cut one new window opening in the living room. They also hired landscape architect Anne Mackenzie to install a larger terrace and flower gardens.

**Sources**

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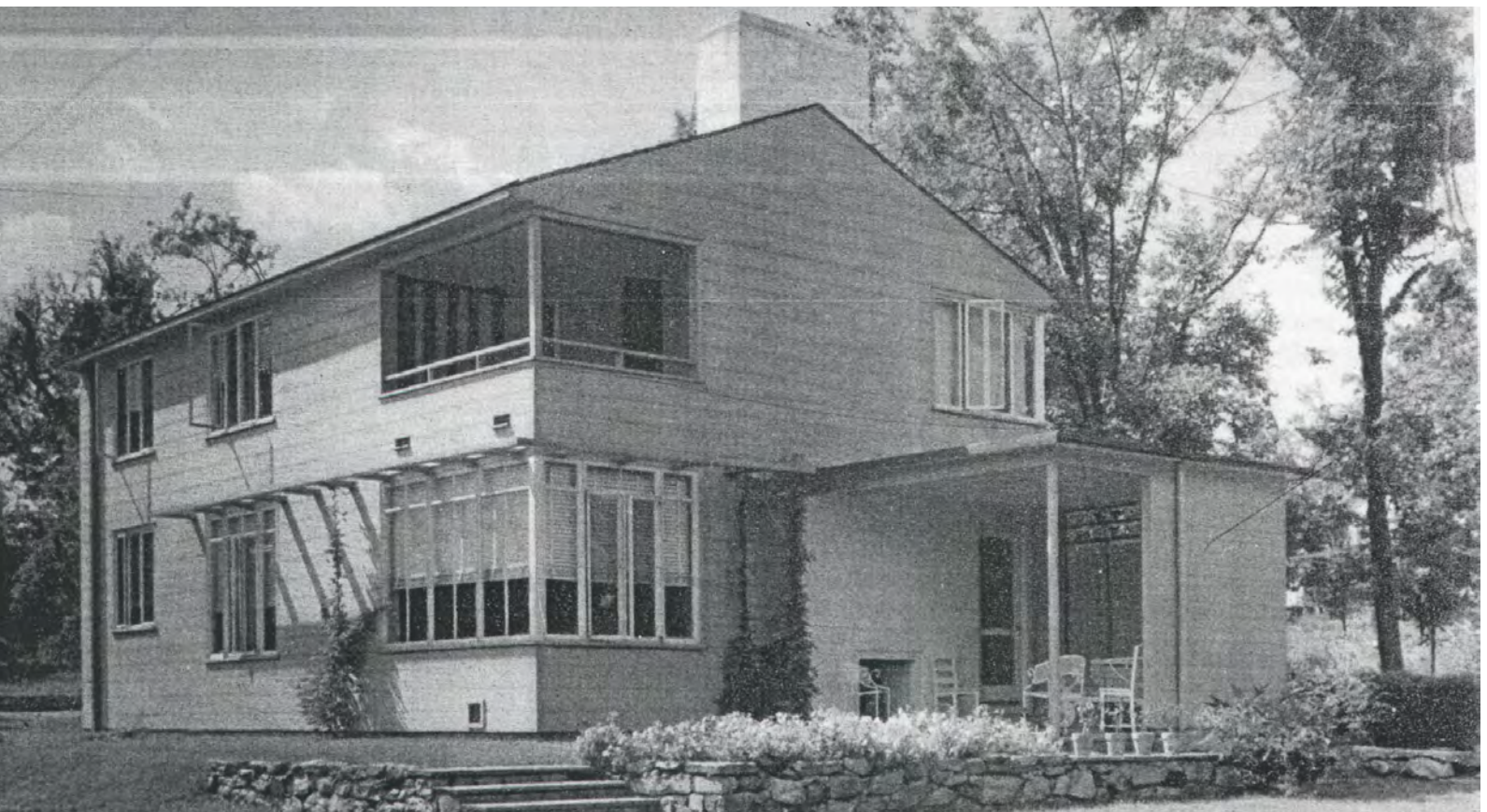
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Walworth, Cornelia, to Martin Skrelunas, Philip Johnson Glass House, email correspondence, 25 October 2007.



Mills House 1, view from street, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Mills House 1, photograph and plan, ca. 1944 (source: *Pencil Points*, May 1944)



ID Number

65

# Mills House 1

Willis N. Mills, 1939

Field survey was not conducted on Mills House 1.

## Significance

Architect Willis N. Mills acquired the property for Mills House 1 in 1938. He designed a house for his family, which was completed between 1938 and 1939. According to an article written by Mills's wife Esther, the house "attracted the stares and amazed comments of New Canaan" during its construction (Esther Mills, 1951). Mills would later come to prominence as a partner in the Sherwood, Mills & Smith firm and would design several residences and public buildings in New Canaan. Mills graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1929 where he received a traditional Beaux-Arts education, unlike many of the architects who would come to New Canaan in the post-World War II period.

Mills's simple house had a gable roof, horizontal beadboard and flush wood siding, and a fairly standard plan, although the living room and dining room were open to each other. The most unusual aspects of the house were the steel casement sash, corner window units, glass block, brise soleil, the cut-out second-floor corner porch, outdoor living space with exterior fireplace, and the extensive use of glass at the rear, more private side of the house.





Mills House 1, view from street, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Mills House 1, view of carport from street, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



The May 1944 issue of *Pencil Points*, published six years after construction began, featured a four-page spread on the house, remarking on the careful planning of the interior: “[U]nusual attention has been given to improved arrangement and location of familiar facilities. A good instance is the placement of laundry equipment on the ground floor...a convenient arrangement of utilities that are too often relegated to the basement for no obvious reason.” The article also pointed out that the house design was suited to the area: “more and more new New England houses have been built that are both congenial with the region and suited to the tastes of twentieth-century livers. It is agreeable to publish such a house that an architect designed for his own family” (*Pencil Points*, May 1944, 65-68).

In 1956, Willis N. Mills completed Mills House 2 and sold his first house to Alfred A. Muenchen. In 1962, the existing porch on the east side was enclosed. In 1964, Norman S. Hewitt acquired the house. According to a realtor listing for the house, the property included a two-stall barn. In 1968, Lynn D. Bannister purchased the property. In 1974, the one-car garage was converted to a living space, a curved addition was added to the west façade, and a two-car carport was constructed by extending the roofline of the former garage. A fieldstone patio along the west side and rear of the house was also constructed at an unknown date.

In 2006, Edward G. Mellick, Trustee of the New Canaan Country Day School, acquired the house.

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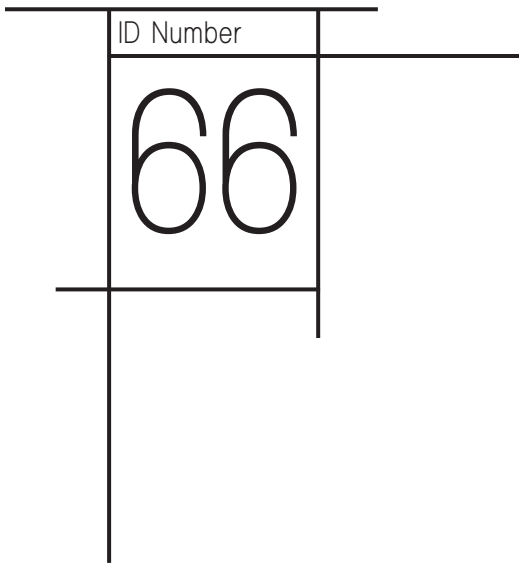
The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Rantoul House, view from street, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)





# Rantoul House

Sherwood, Mills & Smith, 1947-48

Field survey was not conducted on the Rantoul House.

## Significance

The Rantoul House was built for Talbot and Claire Rantoul and completed in May 1947 or in 1948. Designed by architects Sherwood, Mills & Smith shortly after their firm was founded in 1946, the house is one of the earliest Modern houses in New Canaan and could be considered the first Modern. (The brochure for the first Modern House tour lists Noyes House 1, generally considered to be the first Modern, as being completed in December 1947; the Rantoul House is listed as being completed in May 1947, although the assessor notes the house was finished in 1948.) Claire Angert Rantoul acquired the property for the house in 1946. The house was constructed by Borglum & Meek.

Talbot Rantoul was born in Ipswich, Massachusetts and attended Harvard College. He worked as a design administrator for several rug companies before becoming an administrative officer at the Harvard Business School in 1967. In 1969, he became president of the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Claire Angert Rantoul was an artist who had graduated from the Childe Walker Art School in Boston. She later became a trustee of the Silvermine Guild of Artists in New Canaan. The Rantouls had three children (*Stamford Advocate*, 20 May 1969).



Rantoul House, realtor photo, ca. 1969 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



The Rantoul House was included on the first Modern House Tour in New Canaan in May 1949 and featured in a November 1948 article in *Progressive Architecture*. The *Progressive Architecture* article shows an L-shaped plan with a large combination living/dining room, a kitchen/laundry room, a master bedroom and bath, a nursery, a baby's room, a nursemaid's room, and a second bath. The baby's and nursemaid's room were separated by a temporary partition to allow easy conversion to a larger bedroom. The Rantouls praised the efficient layout and easy maintenance of the house, along with the many "gadgets," including the pass-through window between the dining room and kitchen, built-in storage units, and drop-leaf tables. The exterior of the wood-frame house was sheathed in painted striated plywood and local stone with a composition shed roof over plywood sheathing. Fenestration consisted of horizontal sliding wood-sash windows, awning windows, and fixed sash with double glazing. The house had a radiant heating/cooling system in the concrete slab floor. Interior finishes included slate, linoleum, or carpeted floors; wood-fiber acoustical tile ceilings; and two-panel fir doors with striated plywood veneers. The article noted that the house was designed to "spread out to provide desirable southeast exposure for main living rooms... solar principles used in design of fenestration and roof framing" (*Progressive Architecture*, November 1948, 73-76).

In 1949, a new 20'x13' addition containing a bedroom and bath and a new entrance was constructed on the east end of the building in place of the terrace. The house had originally been held to 1,500 square feet because of wartime restrictions, so the addition was likely part of the original plan of the house. In 1960, according to the assessor property street card, a "small old building 10x12" was acquired for use as a studio on the property. In 1961, a swimming pool was constructed. A flagstone terrace off the north side of the house was also added during this time period.

Around 1968, the 2.124-acre lot was subdivided. Although the assessor records for this time period are not currently available, other sources indicate that Robert E. Greer acquired the house and 1.124 acres, and Harold D. and Mary Williams acquired the remaining 1.0 acre, which contained the swimming pool and studio building, in 1969. In 1975, Zachariah and Mary Ellen Allen acquired the house. In 1980, Doris Driver purchased the house. A small addition was constructed in 1987 at the northeast corner of the house. A wood deck at this corner of the house was completed sometime after 1988.

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Risom House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Risom House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



ID Number

67

# Risom House

Sherwood, Mills & Smith, 1949

The Durisol House/Risom House is a one-story, slab-on-grade structure sited at the center of a small, open parcel with a significant old-growth Chinese paper maple tree. The house has an irregular L-shaped plan, gable roofs, and a painted stucco exterior wall finish. The stucco wall surfaces are relieved with broad expanses of glass, primarily found at the back of the house. The original garage area (now a bedroom) is clad with red brickwork. The attached carport has painted wood-encased steel columns, a wood-frame gable roof, and an asphalt floor.

In 1954, the original porch was enclosed and the master bedroom was enlarged. Between 1958 and 1959, the garage was remodeled into living space, including a bedroom with a bathroom and storage space. A carport and an office, designed by architect Laurent DuPont, were added in 1972.

## Significance

In 1950, Jens Risom (1916- ), the renowned Modern furniture designer from Denmark, bought a three-bedroom house from Robert Jahn. The house was designed by architecture firm Sherwood, Mills & Smith and was completed in 1949 by contractors Tudisco & Diehl.





Risom House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Risom House, detail of Durisol material, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



The house was built as a showcase for a construction material known as “Durisol.” According to an article in the *New York Times*, the Risom house was the first house to be built entirely of Durisol, a material described as a “light-weight pre-cast concrete employing chemically mineralized wood shavings for its ‘aggregate,’ and formed in modular slabs, blocks and tiles, over which various surfaces can be applied if desired” (*New York Times*, 6 November 1949). The article states that the blocks used for the walls of the house were laid in staggered rows, interlocking at their ends and laid without pointing mortar. The voids within the blocks were filled with concrete to form load-bearing walls. The corner units were reinforced with steel bars. Stucco was applied directly to the units’ surfaces for an exterior finish. Durisol was also used for the roof sheathing, which was left exposed at the interior for a ceiling finish and for acoustical ceiling tiles.

Featured in articles in the *New York Times* (1949), the *New York Times Magazine* (1954), *House & Garden* (1955), and the *Herald Tribune Magazine* (1958), the house was acclaimed for the use of Durisol, its efficient layout, and the prominence of its owner, Jens Risom.

In 1959, Risom sold the house to Lester and Patricia Brooks, who still own the house today. Despite additions and alterations, the house retains its plan, character-defining features, and most of its original materials, including the Durisol.

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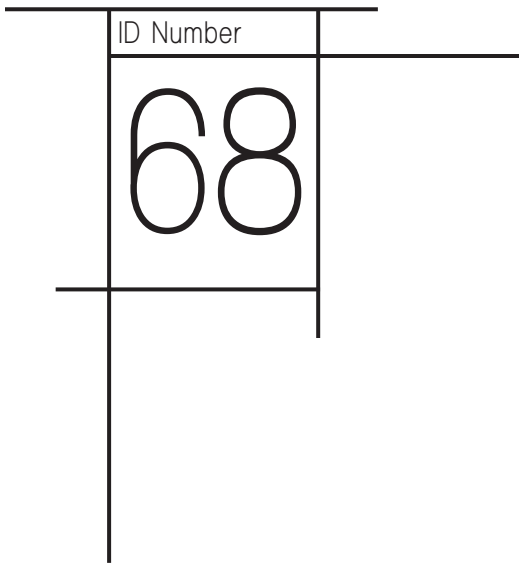


Mills House, front façade and main entrance, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Mills House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)





# Mills House

Sherwood, Mills & Smith, 1950

The Mills House is set on a natural knoll on a rocky, wooded site with a stream running along the edge of the property. The original house was a low, long structure with a shallow gable roof and V-channel vertical wood siding. The main entrance is at one intersection of the T-shaped plan. A brick wall steps down adjacent to the path leading to the front entrance. The entry foyer has a large fixed window overlooking a flagstone terrace at the rear. At one leg of the “T” is a prow and at the top of the “T” is a window wall overlooking another terrace protected by a deep overhang and a brise-soleil. The interior brick wall in the living room forms an extended end wall that borders the terrace, blurring the line between interior and exterior space.

The additions to the house, completed in 1992, were designed using the same materials, but are more eclectic in their plan and detailing, including triangular bay windows and bumped-out window bays.

## Significance

The Mills House was constructed in 1950 for Barbara and James Mills. James Mills acquired the property in 1950 and hired architects Sherwood, Mills & Smith to design a house. The builder on the project was Ted Hobbs. According to the current owner, the Mills had a child with cerebral palsy, so the house was designed to accommodate the child’s needs. The assessor records indicate that the house was ready for plastering in October 1950 and was likely finished by the end of 1950 or in 1951.



Mills House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Mills House, 1992 garage addition, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



In 1951, the assessor found a one-story cabin with a bar and screened porch in the “back land.” It is unknown if this cabin predated the house or was part of Sherwood, Mills & Smith’s design. It was destroyed by fire in 1980.

In 1963, Alison P. Cullinan (later McKee) acquired the property. In 1980, Jacob T. and Bette J. Chachkes purchased the house. The Chachkes built a large addition to the house in 1992 consisting of a two-car garage, an expanded kitchen, additional living space, a wood deck, and a screened porch. All of the windows were replaced and several of the openings on the existing house were bumped out to create bay windows. The exterior siding, which had been painted when the Chachkes acquired the property, was replaced in kind but left unpainted.

**Sources**

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

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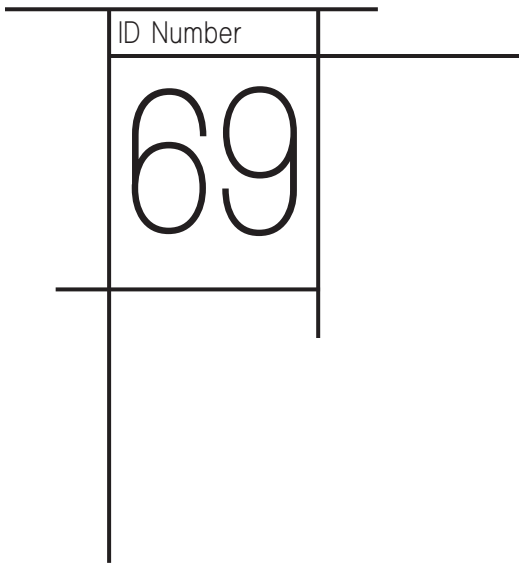


Mills House 2, primary façade and entrance, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Mills House 2, historic view, ca. 1957 (source: *Architectural Record Houses*, mid-May 1957)





# Mills House 2

Willis N. Mills of Sherwood, Mills & Smith, 1956

Mills House 2 is situated on a rocky, wooded hillside. The site drops 45 feet from the street level entrance and the three-story house follows suit, with cantilevered sections at each level. The house is oriented north-south. Fieldstone walls run along the eastern edge of the property.

The house has a rectangular plan. The foundation of the building is concrete block. The exterior walls are clad with clear-finished vertical redwood siding. The house has a flat built-up roof. Wood decks are located on the east façade of the upper level and the west façade of the lower level, and a cantilevered stone patio is located on the east side of the first-floor level.

The house was renovated between 1999 and 2003. This resulted in a number of alterations to the structure, including the removal of several interior walls and the replacement of a section of the solid wall on the rear façade with a wall of glass. At the time of this renovation, the wood decks had rotted and were replaced with new decks in the same footprint. Steel and wood windows were restored, wood windows were replaced with steel units, and aluminum windows were replaced with aluminum units. A new stone-clad garage was constructed to the north of the house. The original garage was integrated into the living quarters and the north wall of the house was reclad with stone to match the garage.





Mills House 2, side and rear façades, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Mills House 2, master suite end façade, November 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



# Significance

Mills House 2 was designed by Willis N. Mills, a principal in the architectural firm of Sherwood, Mills & Smith, as his private residence. It was built by Borglum and Meek and completed in 1956. The house received design awards from *Architectural Record* and the Boston Arts Festival. It was constructed on a rocky slope where many thought it was impossible to build. The uncomplicated geometry of the rectangular floor plans was offset by the diagonal balconies and terraces.

Mills House 2 was included in the 1957 Modern House Tour in New Canaan and featured in *Architectural Record Houses of 1957*, *Progressive Architecture* (March 1957), and *House & Garden's Book of Building*.

In 1999, the house was purchased and renovated by architect Craig Bassam and Christopher Scott Fellows. The property was sold to James C. Seuss in 2007 (transferred to Willis Mills House LLC that same year).

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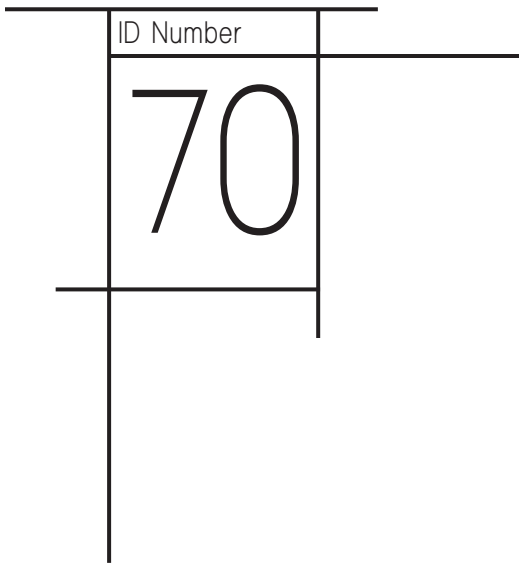


Smallen House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Smallen House, 1969 (photographer: E.J. Cyr, source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Smallen House

Hugh Smallen, 1957

The Smallen House is set in a clearing on a gently sloping wooded site. The one-story house is simply finished with flush vertical wood siding painted white, large fixed sash, and flush doors. Geometric in its design, the shed-roofed house is sited to provide one floor of fenestration at its lowest pitch, and two floors of fenestration at its highest pitch. The main entrance is at the slope of the roof and consists of a flush door flanked by fixed sidelights and an irregularly shaped transom that follows the line of the low-pitched shed roof. The entrance is accessed by a wood deck anchored at one end by a mortared stone wall that bridges the slope at the front of the house.

The public living space is fenestrated with a five-bay glassed wall. A pair of full-height flush doors in the fourth bay leads to a wood deck terminating at a mortared stone wall; the remaining bays contain fixed sash. The opposite side façade is demarcated by two rows of horizontal sliding sash ribbon windows, indicating the split-level plan on the interior. At the rear of the house is a flat-roofed addition on concrete-block footers connected to the main building by a small hyphen with sliding glass doors. This addition is clad in V-channel vertical wood siding and fenestrated with horizontal sliding sash.

The property also has a one-story, flat-roofed, three-car garage/studio building. Sited on a hill, the building is designed to follow the slope of the land, creating an angled foundation similar to Smallen's Parsons House (1964). A wood deck at the side of the building leads to the entry to the lower-level studio.





Smallen House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Smallen House, side façade and 1979 addition, November 2007 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



# Significance

The Smallen House was designed by architect Hugh Smallen for his family and completed in 1957. The Smallen House was part of a Modern enclave along Chichester Road. Architect John Black Lee purchased twenty acres of land in the mid-1950s to be subdivided into six building parcels with the stipulation was that houses constructed on the lots had to be of Modern design. Two other Smallen-designed houses are next door. The Smallen House parcel was purchased by Lee in July 1955 and sold to Smallen in September of that year. The builder for the project was Borglum & Meek.

The Smallen House was featured in the 1959 Modern House Tour in New Canaan. An article in the *New Canaan Advertiser* described the house: "...a nice division of sleeping areas is made possible by the way the architect planned his home to the sloping site. Going up one half flight of open structure walnut steps will be found the master bedroom, bath and a guest-study, while by descending a half flight one finds three bedrooms for the daughters of the family and an extra guest or maid's room. In both sleeping areas there are giant, walk-in closets, considered to be a monument to the architect's wife, that are expected to bring sighs of appreciation from most of the women who make the modern pilgrimage" (*New Canaan Advertiser*, 14 May 1959).

The house was also included in the 1965 Modern House Tour along with Smallen's Parsons House. In an article about the tour, Smallen called the design of the Small House as "the essential quality of interspacial relationships" (*New Canaan Advertiser*, 13 May 1965). The Smallen House was also featured in the October 1964 issue of *House & Garden*. This article discussed how the kitchen was divided from the dining room and entrance hall by partitions that did not extend to the ceiling, allowing light and air to flow through the house.

In 1962, a three-car garage was constructed on the property. A lower-level studio was added to the basement in 1969. In 1979, Smallen designed an addition for the house, but the assessor noted that it was of temporary construction with unfinished walls and floors. Hugh Smallen sold the property to Celia B. Berg in 1981. In 1986, the assessor noted that the existing studio was completed, but it is unclear if this refers to the house addition or the garage studio. In 1993, Clyde B. and Barbara A. Crebs acquired the house. Michael McDermott purchased the property in 2003, and David Strine purchased the house in 2007.

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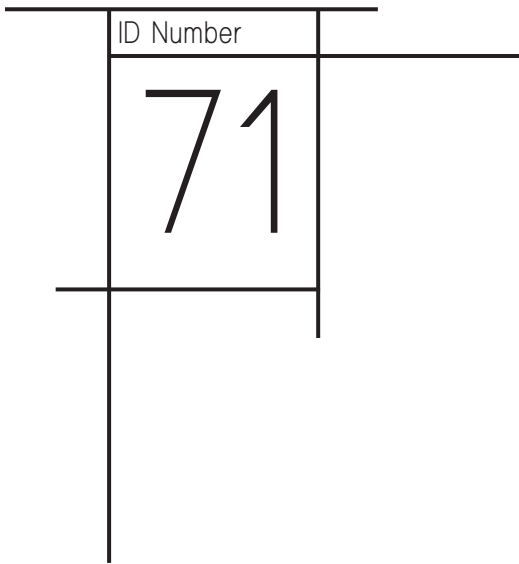


Tatum House, primary façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Tatum House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)





# Tatum House

Hugh Smallen, 1962

The Tatum House was constructed on a two-acre plot of gently sloping land that includes natural woods and a stream. A three-car garage/barn (not designed by Hugh Smallen) is situated southeast of the home. Landscape architect Peter Rolland was hired for a 2003-04 renovation of the property. His design included planting a line of birches along the north side of the house; these contrast with the natural surroundings while complementing the geometric formality of the building. Rolland also designed a black pebble border around the house, which keeps the stark white exterior pristine and facilitates drainage.

The one-story house, built in 1962, initially had a rectangular plan. The frame of the house divided the building into four zones, which reflected the internal uses of the space. Adjustable vertical blinds were installed to further accentuate the rhythm of the building. Five years after the house was built, it was converted to a T-shaped plan when the original owners erected additions on the north and south façades of the westernmost bay.

The house has a concrete block foundation and vertical cypress siding. The walls are largely composed of aluminum sash with plate glass. The roof is flat. The outdoor living space includes more than 1,000 square feet of decking. During a 2003-04 renovation, interior alterations were made to the 1967 addition rooms, built-ins were restored, and a new main entryway was added. Decks off the two addition rooms were rebuilt with ipe (a species of wood) and similar decks were added under all of the overhangs (as was originally considered).



Tatum House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



Tatum House, primary entrance, November 2007 (photographer: Martin Skrelunas)



# Significance

Hugh Smallen designed the Tatum House in 1962 for Liston and Corinne Tatum and their three boys. The intention was to create optimum living space for a moderate budget. The four structural bays of the house coincide with the four general zones of activity. These zones were constructed to account for the requirements of individual privacy as well as the activities performed in each space. The property originally had a tool shed, which was later demolished. The house was constructed by builder Roy Varian.

In 1967, the original owners added two “great” rooms (a home office and a music room). Dan Kistler, an associate in Hugh Smallen’s office, supervised this work.

In 1995, the property was purchased by Paul Bertin-Boussu. The new owner removed an outdoor sculpture that had been part of the 1967 addition and also dismantled much of the built-in furniture.

In 1999, Craig Bloom and Ashlea Ebeling bought the property and began renovating it in 2003-04 with architect John Black Lee and landscape architect Peter Rolland, who both knew Hugh Smallen.

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Becker House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Becker House, historic view, ca. 1967 (photographer: Pedro Guerrero, source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number
72

# Becker House

Hugh Smallen, 1963-64

The Becker House is set on a hillside overlooking a pond and stream. The street-facing façade of the house is sheltered by a high fieldstone wall. The main entrance is through a narrow opening in the fieldstone wall which leads to a secluded courtyard with a pergola roof. A carport is located adjacent to the courtyard, also behind the stone wall. The main part of the house is rectangular in plan. At the lower level of the hill, the house is two stories high; this rear wall is heavily glazed. A wood deck extends across the back of the house. The house is clad in flush vertical wood siding, which contrasts with the heavy stone wall and stone base of the building.

## Significance

The Becker House was designed by architect Hugh Smallen, who designed several other houses in the area. According to the assessor records, Nathaniel Becker purchased the lot in 1962, construction began in 1963, and the house was completed by April 1964. It was shown on the 1967 Modern House Tour in New Canaan. The original owners, Nathaniel and Theo Becker, owned the house until 2002. Nathaniel Becker was president of Becker and Becker Associates, Inc., an architectural planning firm which he founded in 1950. The firm relocated to New Canaan in 1973. Becker and Becker Associates completed numerous planning studies; their projects included work at Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., the Winterthur





Becker House, view of courtyard, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Becker House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Museum, various museums at the Smithsonian Institute, Boston City Hall, Philadelphia Municipal Services Building, and the Town of New Canaan. His wife, Theo, was a painter, designer, and partner in the firm. They had three sons: Todd, Kenneth, and Bruce. Theo Becker completed the overall landscape design for the property and courtyard and created the pond. The interior cabinetry was designed by Jens Risom.

Marianne Dolan purchased the property in 2003. Dolan undertook alterations to the interior of the house, which was reconfigured from five bedrooms to three bedrooms. All of the windows and doors were replaced during the 2003-05 renovations. The current owners, Thomas and Carol Herbig, acquired the house in 2005.

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Parsons House, side façade as viewed from street, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Parsons House, front façade, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

73

# Parsons House

Hugh Smallen, 1964

Sited on top of a rock ledge forty feet above street level on a three-acre woodland site, the Parsons House is clad and framed in wood, and supported by eight exterior thin steel columns set in concrete footings. Architect Hugh Smallen enhanced the parcel's dramatic grade changes in both the siting of the house and its design. Although the footprint of the house is square and its roof is flat, the base of the house is angled to match the grade change of the rock ledge it straddles, resulting in two stories at one end of the house and one story on grade at the opposite side of the house. Stone stairs lead up from the driveway at street level to the entrance of the house.

Walls clad in vertical wood siding face the street and the rear of the house. The one-story end of the house is divided into four equal bays that stretch across the full width of the house and contain sliding glass doors and fixed plate glass sash. The ground floor of the two-story façade is divided into four bays centered on the façade. The primary entrance is located in the first bay and has a painted flush panel door and a floor-to-ceiling fixed plate sash. The other three bays have fixed and operable window sash. The second floor is divided into five bays and has horizontal sliding sash windows.





Parsons House, rear façade, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Parsons House, garage, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



# Significance

Architect John Black Lee bought twenty acres of land on Chichester Road in the mid-1950s and subdivided the land into six parcels for the development of Modern residences. In September 1955, Erik Simonsen bought an unimproved three-acre parcel from Lee, but never developed the land. In 1959, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Parsons purchased the plot for their dramatically-sited Modern house from Erik Simonsen; Simonsen purchased the Gratwick House (1953, Christ-Janer) that same year. The Parsons House was finished in 1964.

The Parsons House was featured in the May 1967 issue of *House & Garden* and the *New York Times Magazine* in July 1965. In 1971, the property was sold to Norman Rowe. Rowe built a separate two-story, two-car garage with a studio and workshop at the base of the hill, which was designed by John Black Lee. In 1999, the property was transferred to Michael and Ulrike Gavin. In 2006, the property was sold to Michael Formica and Bob Hiemstra.

The house, included on the 1965 Modern House Tour, is significant for its association with Modern architects Hugh Smallen and John Black Lee and for its creative design solutions in plan, massing, and framing. The house retains high integrity at the exterior.

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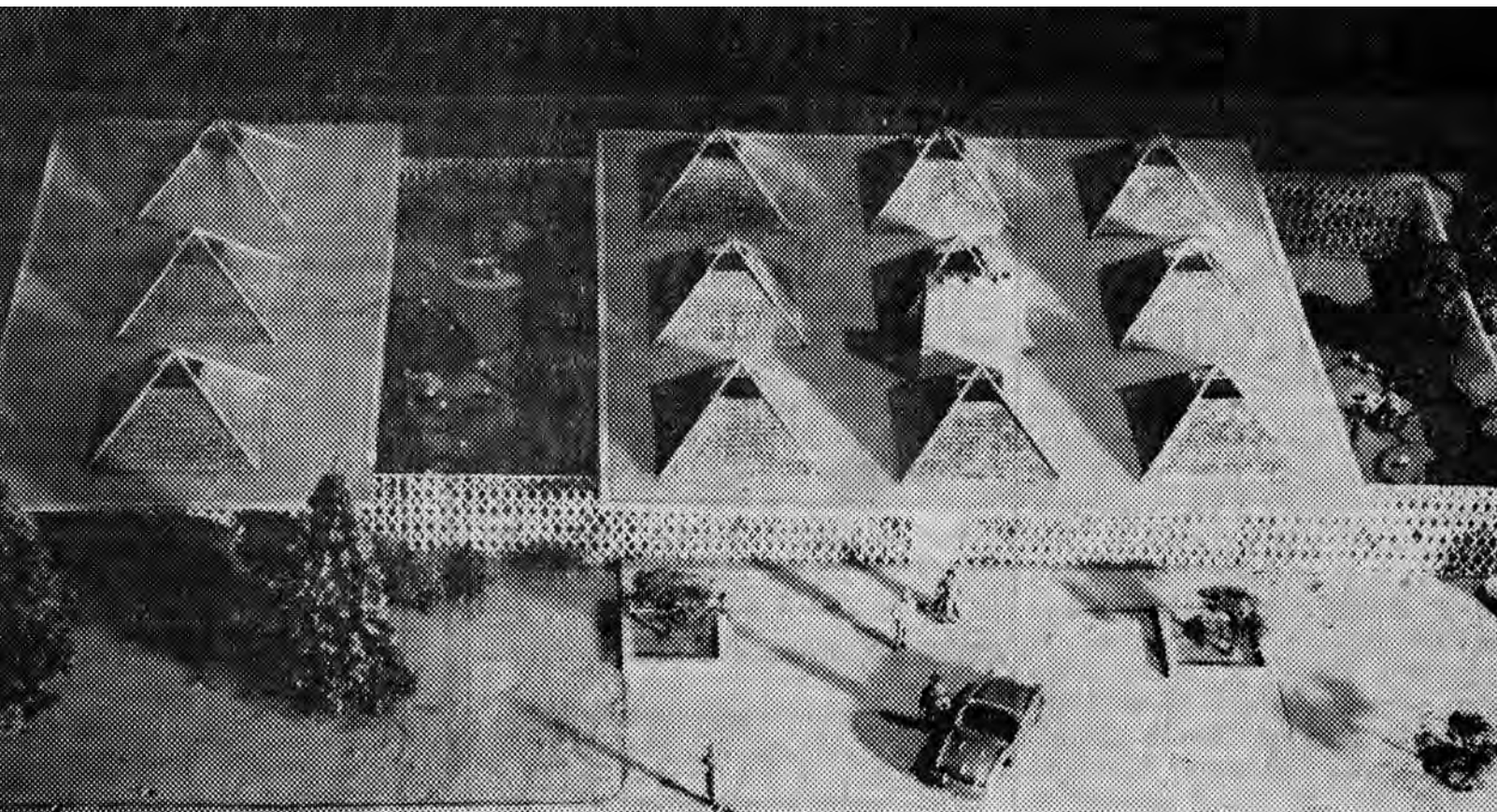
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Celanese House, front façade, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Celanese House, view of house model as it appeared in the New Canaan Advertiser, 22 January 1959 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number

74

# Celanese House

Edward Durrell Stone, 1959

The Celanese House is set on a gently sloping site at a grade below street level. At the rear of the house are a lawn and a set of curving flagstone and fieldstone stairs bordered by massive fieldstone walls. The property is bounded by trees. The house is a flat-roofed structure with walls clad in wood shingles painted grey. The roof extends to create deep overhangs on all four sides of the structure. Twelve pyramidal skylights partially clad in wood shingles provide light to the interior spaces. Almost the entire building is covered by a wood trelliswork screen featuring a star-shaped pattern. The trelliswork on the main façade is unbroken with the exception of the front door, which is a glazed wood door finished with wood detailing matching the pattern of the trelliswork. At the rear façade, the trelliswork is interrupted for sliding glass doors leading to a concrete terrace.

The house originally had a rectangular plan with an internal roofed dining courtyard between the garage wing and the main house, and an unroofed terrace at the bedroom wing, all enclosed in wood trelliswork. The garage wing contained a two-car garage, a family room/guest room, and a bath. The main house was divided into three zones: the north area contained the dining room, kitchen, and master bedroom and bath; the central area contained an entry atrium with small pool separated from a large living room by a fireplace; and the south area contained a study, two bedrooms, and two baths. The dining room, living room, atrium, and study were fitted with shoji screens that could be opened up to create a large, T-shaped entertainment space, which could be extended to the bedroom terrace, the back terrace, and the dining room courtyard.





Celanese House, rear façade, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Celanese House, side façade, looking towards bedroom terrace, October 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



# Significance

The Celanese House was commissioned by the Celanese Corporation of America, a leading chemical manufacturer in the United States, to showcase the company's various products during their 1959 promotional program titled "The American Idea." The company hired architect Edward Durell Stone to design the house after Celanese executives decided that only Stone or Frank Lloyd Wright would be considered for the commission (*New York Times*, 20 September 1959). The home furnishings consultants for the Celanese Corporation, John and Earline Brice, were in charge of interior design and furnishings, and Dunbar furniture by noted designer Edward Wormley was also showcased. The structural engineer on the project was Henry Gorlin, the mechanical engineer was Harold Hecht, and the contractor was New Canaan builder Ted Hobbs, who built several Modern houses in town. The property was acquired by Theodore (Ted) de Freyne Hobbs et. al. in 1957 as a development venture; the Celanese Corporation provided products at cost but Hobbs carried the building expenses except for the architect's fee (*House & Home*, September 1959, 88). The house was finished in early 1959. By September 1959, Hobbs had put the house on the market for \$150,000 (*New York Times*, 20 September 1959). After the house closed for tours, a duplicate version of the house was installed at W. & J. Sloane's in New York City.

The house was designed for privacy. Interior spaces originally opened to terraces screened by latticework or to the backyard terrace. At the street-facing main façade, the latticework provided an unbroken screen aside from the main door. Because the house was screened, lighting was provided mainly by the twelve pyramidal skylights. Below the skylights on the interior were inverted pyramids containing planters and concealed lighting fixtures. The dining room courtyard was originally covered by a translucent plastic roof with latticework gates at each end. Pots of flowers hung from the roof. All rooms had outside access. Doors leading to courtyards were fitted with four sliding panels: insulated glass on the exterior, screen doors, translucent plastic panels, and opaque fabric shoji screens at the inner layer. Some doors also had curtains. Interior spaces were separated by sliding shoji screens. The interior was designed with a neutral color scheme.

The Celanese House received national press when it was completed and was featured in *House & Garden* (October 1959), *House & Home* (September 1959), and *Architectural Record* (October 1959). The Celanese House was included in the 1963 Modern House Tour in New Canaan.

In 1960, the Celanese House was purchased by Frederick and Velma Willcox. Frederick, an inventor, lived in the house with his wife Velma until his death in 1996. Velma Willcox remained in residence until her death in 2005 at age 102. It appears that the Willcoxes undertook no major alterations to the house. In 2006, after the house had been on the market for over a year, Laidlaw LLC became the owner of record. New owners Bruce Capra and his wife Jackie undertook a major renovation and restoration of the house, which had become badly deteriorated, between 2006 and 2007. The most significant alteration to the house was the enclosure and conversion of the dining room courtyard to an expanded kitchen. The original kitchen became an enlarged master bedroom. Capra also replaced the roof, rebuilt the skylights, installed a new HVAC system, replaced the original marble-patterned vinyl floor in kind, and updated the fixtures and finishes in the kitchen and baths. Damaged portions of the wall cladding and wood trelliswork were replaced in kind. The bedroom terrace was restored to its original design.

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Waxberg House, carport and primary façade, December 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



Waxberg House, side façade, December 2007 (photographer: Heather McGrath)



ID Number

75

# Waxberg House

Nathaniel Streitman, 1956

The Waxberg House, set on a grassy plot in a residential neighborhood, is a Wrightian-inspired wood-frame house clad with cypress siding and covered with low, flat roofs. However, unlike many sprawling Prairie-style houses, the Waxberg House is decidedly vertical, with an irregular floor plan featuring living spaces on three compact floors organized by a central staircase and a central hearth. Decks or terraces at each level connect the interior spaces to the outdoors. The property also contains an attached two-car carport and brick retaining walls.

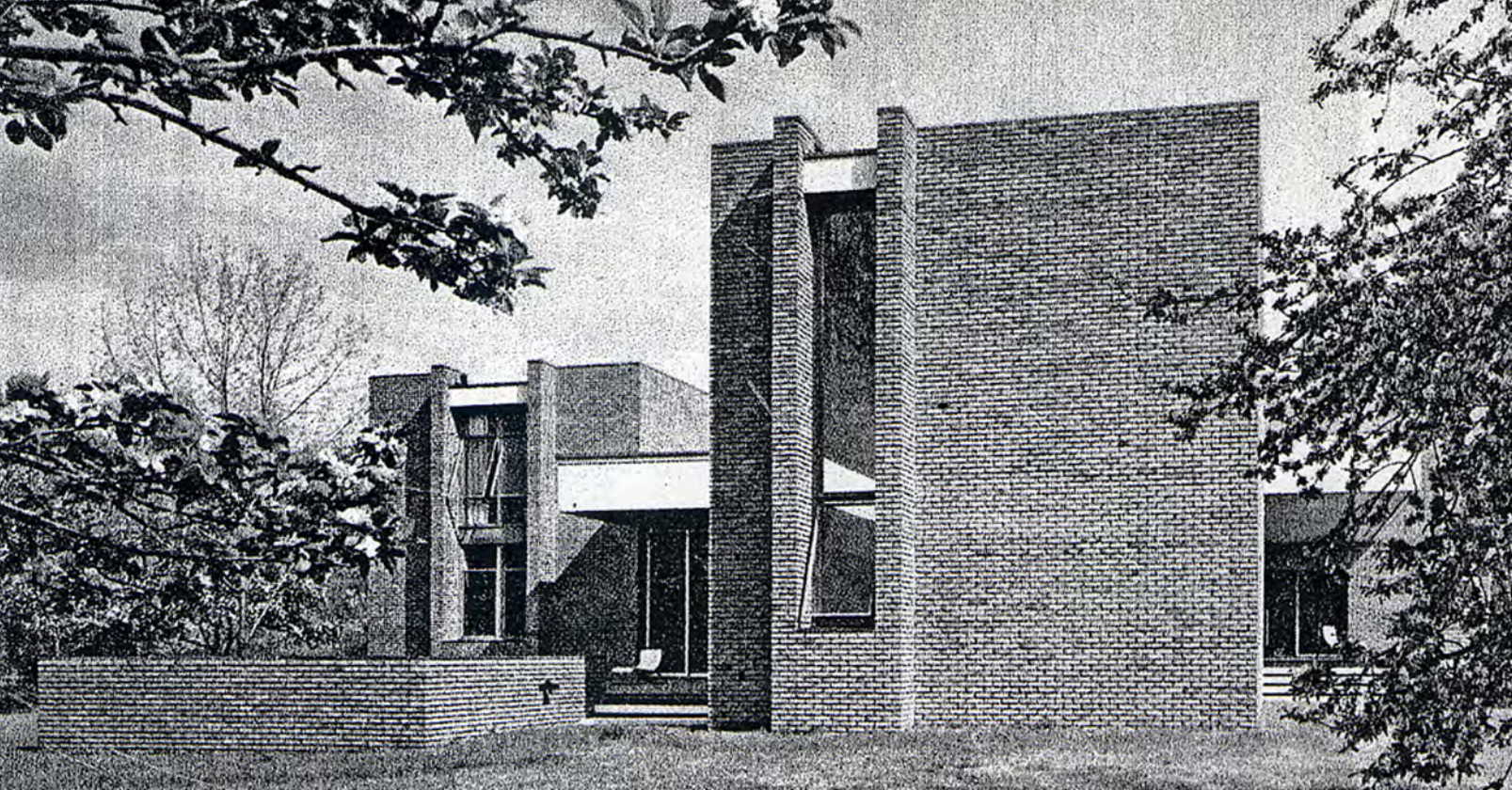
## Significance

In 1956, Joseph D. Waxberg purchased an unimproved 1.3-acre parcel from Hearthstone Park, Incorporated. Waxberg and his wife Carol commissioned architect Nathaniel Streitman to design a house for the site. The Waxbergs have maintained the house in its original condition and continue to live there today. The house retains remarkably high integrity, including the exterior wood siding and brickwork, custom wood windows and doors, and on the interior, the kitchen cabinets and countertops, built-in furniture, bathroom finishes and furnishings, and the layout of the house.

### Sources

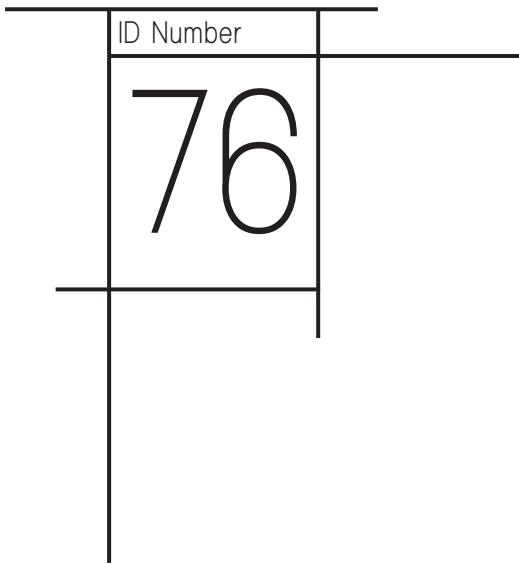
The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Dana House, historic view from *Architectural Record Houses of 1966* (photographer: Robert Damora)





# Dana House

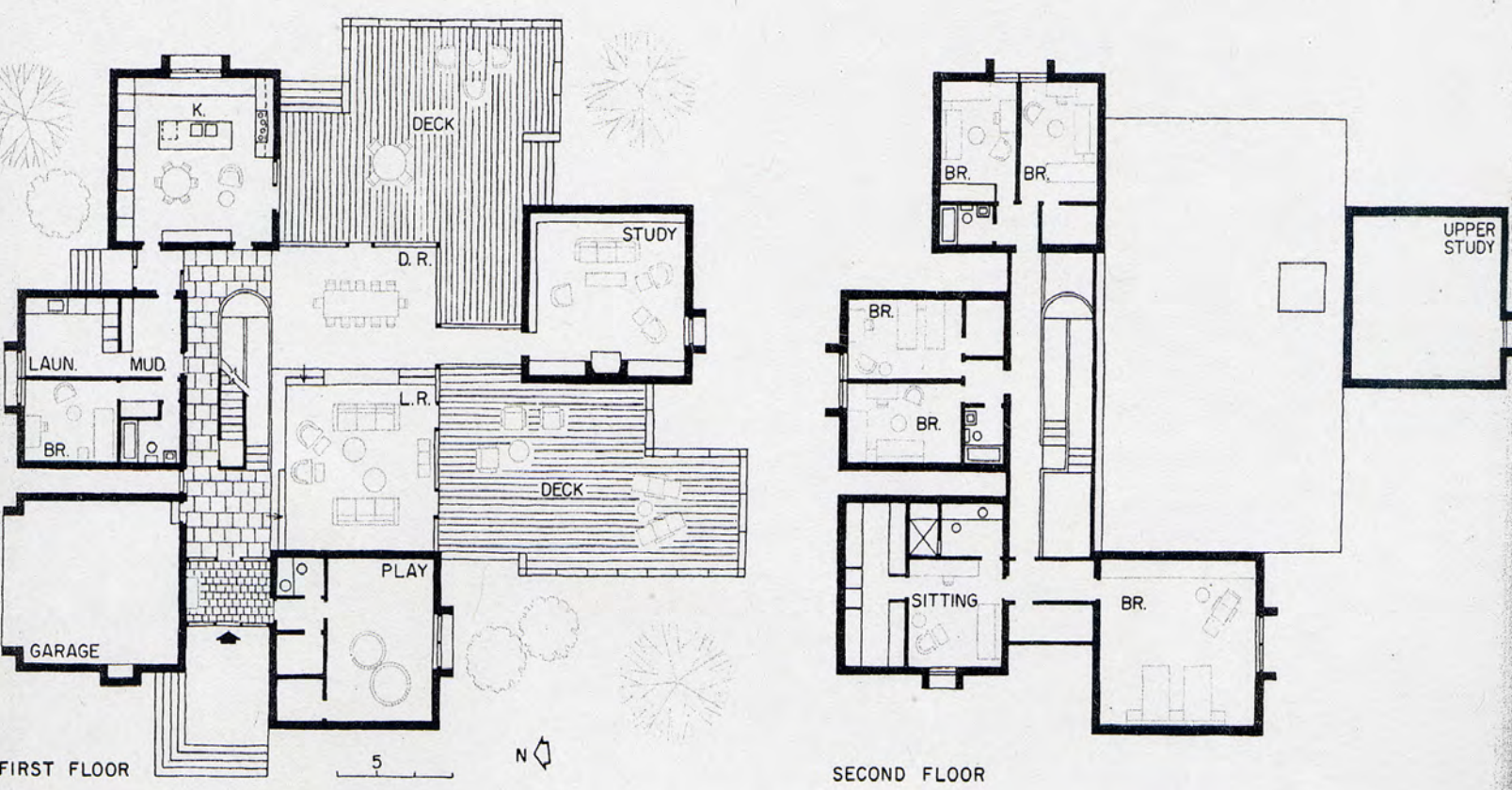
Ulrich Franzen & Associates, 1964

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Dana House was designed by Ulrich Franzen & Associates. James D. Dana acquired the property in 1962. Construction began in 1963 and the house was completed in 1964. The contractor for the project was Emil Toikka, the structural engineer was Vladimir Busch, and the mechanical engineer was John Altieri. According to the assessor property street cards, the original house had a concrete foundation, brick veneer exterior cladding, and a flat composition roof. The assessor noted that the house had a sunken living room.

The Dana House was featured in *Architectural Record Houses of 1966*. In historic photographs, the exterior of the two-story house resembles a fortress, with strong vertical lines, plain brick walls, and projecting brick bays extending the full height of the building containing fixed or awning sash. In the article, the house is described as “representative of a couple of the relatively newer directions in house design: the treatment of a building’s massing as big, powerful sculpture, and more clear-cut and definitely expressed separation of ‘public’ and ‘private’ areas within a home” (*Architectural Record Houses of 1966*, 114). Franzen described the dwelling as a country house placed in an apple orchard: “As the design evolved, the concept



Dana House, view of plan from *Architectural Record Houses of 1966*



became a cluster of articulated masonry masses, freely arranged but sheltering a central meeting hall. The large space is the 'covered yard,' the precinct between the smaller structures containing the more intimate activities" (*Architectural Record Houses of 1966*, 114).

The central public living space contained a living room and dining room with large decks extending off of both rooms. The first floor of the towers contained a kitchen; bedroom (likely maid's room), bath, laundry and mudroom; a playroom; a two-story study; and a garage. On the second floor, two towers contained two bedrooms and a bath, one tower contained the upper part of the study, and the remaining two towers formed a master suite consisting of a bedroom, bath, and sitting room. The exterior finishes like the brick veneer, hardwood floors, and hemlock soffit, continued into the interior, creating an unbroken line between exterior and interior.

By 1969, Bertha B. Shepard was the owner of the Dana House. Shepard filed for a name change in that year, but since the 1960s assessor property cards are currently being conserved and are unavailable, it is unclear if Shepard's original last name was "Dana" or if she had acquired the house from the Danas. A tennis court was constructed on the property in 1969. In 1977, a shed was completed. In 1999, Shepard changed her name to Bertha R. Betts.

#### Sources

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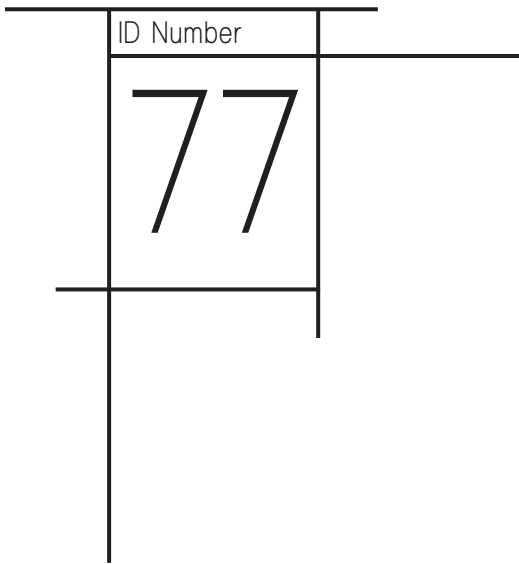


Zucker House, rear façade, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Zucker House, historic view from realtor pamphlet, ca. 1964 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Zucker House

P. Whitney Webb, 1961-62

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Zucker House was designed by architect P. Whitney Webb and constructed by builders Reed & Lord. The house was completed between 1961 and 1962. M.W. and Kathlyn Zucker acquired the property by quitclaim from M. William Zucker in 1961 (possibly the same M.W. Zucker). M. William Zucker had acquired the property in 1958 by quitclaim from C.P. Morton et. als.

The gable-roofed house was L-shaped in plan and had a two-car garage in the basement level. It was finished on the exterior with vertical wood siding.

In 1964, Andre C. DePrez et. al. acquired the property (transferred to Andre C. and Jocelyn C. DePrez in 1965). In 1995, Robert B. and Thea Ross purchased the house. A wood deck was added to the rear of the house sometime after 1988.

### Sources

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





Ford House/Edward Winter House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Ford House/Edward Winter House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number

78

# Ford House

Edward Winter and Russell Ford, 1961

The Ford House/Edward Winter House is located on a flat, secluded site accessed by a long driveway. Surrounding the house are lawns bordered by stands of trees, two large ponds, and a stream. A swimming pool and poolhouse are also on the property.

The house is a long, low, one-story structure clad in vertical flush wood siding. Larger than many of the Modern houses in New Canaan, the original house had a double H-plan (two H-plans set adjacent to each other); the inset areas served as courtyards or terraces. Some of these inset areas were later enclosed as living space. At the main façade, the two inset areas are shielded by decorative wood screens: one leads to a graveled courtyard with a large evergreen tree and a glazed wall that allows views through the living room to the backyard; the second is adjacent to the garage and contains a service entrance. Above the living room is a four-sided clerestory window that rises above the main roof line. The remaining façades are heavily glazed with casement, fixed, and horizontal sliding aluminum sash, and aluminum sliding glass doors. At the rear of the house, adjacent to the living room, is an inset terrace paved with red clay tiles.

## Significance

The Ford House/Edward Winter House was designed by architects Edward Winter and Russell Ford as a home for Ford and his family. Ford had been a partner in the firm of Gates and Ford, but Frederick Taylor Gates had left New Canaan in



Ford House/Edward Winter House, detail of entry courtyard, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Ford House/Edward Winter House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



1957. Ford's wife, Hope, purchased the lot in 1959. Construction began under builders Borglum and Meek in 1960 and was completed in 1961. In 1963, a round glass-and-aluminum greenhouse was added to the site. An in-ground pool was completed in 1967, and the associated pool house was finished in 1968.

In 1976, Victor H. and Eleanor Q. O'Neill purchased the property. According to the DOCOMOMO documentation for the house, in 1992, the 9'x14' brick courtyard at the south end of the building was converted to an enlarged master bathroom; the glasshouse window at this façade was also likely added at this time. Michael Irving was the architect. The assessor records indicate that there was an addition to the house in 1990, but this was likely the master bathroom work, as no other additions are apparent. In 1994, the kitchen was renovated by architect Mella Kernan and builder Joseph Catalfamo. At an unknown date, it appears that one of the incised porches at the rear of the house was enclosed by a glass wall and converted to interior living space; assessor records indicate that it was originally a screened-in porch.

**Sources**

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"Winter, Edward, Edward Winter House," Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.





Arit House, front façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Arit House, historic view from realtor pamphlet, ca. 1965 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number

79

# Arlt House

Evans Woollen III, 1954

The Arlt House is set on a massive rock outcropping overlooking a wooded valley. Fieldstone walls that predate the house run throughout the property. The original house was a one-story glass box, but it has since been completely obscured by later additions.

The current house is considerably larger than the original structure. It is a two-story, flat-roofed structure clad in vertical wood siding with an L-shaped plan. The house is heavily fenestrated and has multiple projecting wood decks. The recessed main entrance is at the driveway and is adjacent to a two-story semicircular tower and two narrow openings filled with glass block. To the north of this entrance is a two-car garage shaded by a brise-soleil located above the second-story windows.

To the north of the garage are tall fieldstone walls and a set of steps formed from large stones that lead to an in-ground swimming pool surrounded by a flagstone terrace and stone walls, with a pavilion-style poolhouse at the northern end of the terrace.

## Significance

The Arlt House was designed for Paul Arlt and his wife by architect Evans Woollen III. Paul Arlt was a cartoonist and artist and a member of the Silvermine Guild and the Rowayton Art Center. At one time, he worked as a political cartoonist at the *New York Herald Tribune*. His wife worked at Bloomingdale's.





Arlt House, side façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Arlt House, rear façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Paul Arlt acquired the property in 1953. Construction began shortly thereafter under builder Ted Hobbs. The house was completed in 1954. In 1955, the Arlt House was featured in *Architectural Record*. In this article, architect Evans Woollen III described the challenges with the site: “a beautiful, wooded 2 acres with a high, narrow ridge of rock running north and south through the center of the property. The decision was to place the house on top of the ridge with the long side of the rectangle opposing the direction of the ridge; the ridge being the fulcrum with the house overhanging on either side” (*Architectural Record*, February 1955). The house, which was essentially a rectangular glass box, had posts, beams, frame, and trim constructed from a 3” by 6” section of fir, with fixed glass and outswinging ventilators. In plan, a combination dining/living room was placed in the center of the structure, divided from rooms at either end of the house by 4-foot-wide sliding doors. One end held the kitchen, a bedroom, and a bathroom, and the opposite end held the study, a bedroom, and a bathroom.

The Arlt House was included on the 1959 Modern House Tour in New Canaan. In 1966, the property was sold to William P. and Irma J. Kennedy. Architect Leon Boris Pogacnik and Tatjana Pogacnik acquired the house in 1978. Boris Pogacnik designed a two-story addition, which was constructed in 1982. Sometime after 1988, a second large addition designed by Pogacnik was completed, which enveloped the original house. The fenestration pattern on the original house was completely altered, making it difficult to recognize the original Arlt House, although the new design is in sympathy with the Modern aesthetic. A large swimming pool, bluestone terrace, and pool house were also constructed.

#### Sources

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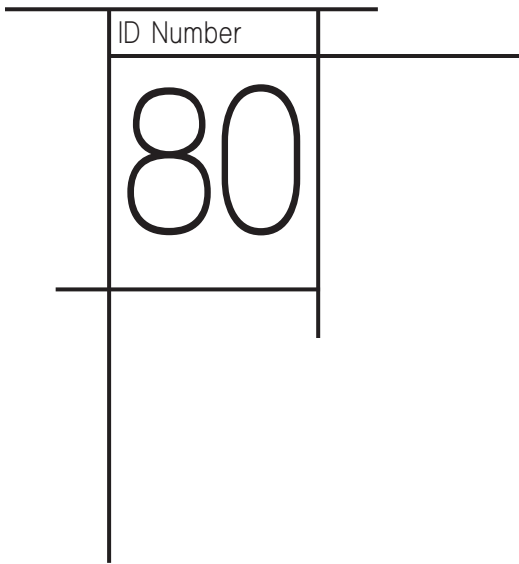


Nail House, front façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Nail House, historic view from realtor pamphlet, ca. 1981 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Naill House

Evans Woollen III, 1954

The Naill House was originally a one-story, flat-roofed, 29'x52' structure with a rectangular plan. According to the assessor property street cards, it was originally sided with concrete block and plywood. Multiple alterations and additions have completely obscured the original house.

The house lot is relatively flat. Lawns and sparse woodland surround the house; at the rear of the property is a shallow pond. Due to the number of additions over the years, the two-story, flat-roofed house does not have a unified design aesthetic, but is loosely characterized by V-channel vertical wood siding, deep roof overhangs, recessed wall planes, semicircular projections, and the use of fieldstone veneer as an accent. The first floor is heavily fenestrated with sliding glass doors, glazed doors, fixed sash, and casement windows. The second floor contains a series of small square windows. The two-story round tower at the rear elevation has narrow rectangular windows. A two-story garage/workshop is similar in appearance and utilizes the same finishes as the main house.



Naill House, rear façade, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Naill House, 1993 garage/workshop, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



# Significance

The Naill House was designed for Eugene J. and Karin E. Naill by architect Evans Woollen III. Eugene Naill was an engineer and Karin Naill was a teacher at the Community Nursery School. As part of her job requirements, Karin worked at the Modern House Tours in New Canaan and developed an appreciation for Modern architecture (Naill, 2008).

The Naills acquired the property in 1954. The road that the property was located on was considered less desirable than roads like Oenoke Ridge, Ponus Ridge, and Smith Ridge, so the lots were more affordable (Naill, 2008). The owner of the land had commissioned Evans Woollen III to design a house for the lot but didn't like it and refused to pay for the plans. The Naills acquired the property for about \$1900 and contacted Woollen to purchase the plans; he had just graduated from Yale University and was working as a caretaker to pay his rent. He assisted the Naills with choosing interior furnishings and was paid an architectural fee of about \$1800. Woollen eventually spent his honeymoon at the house (Naill, 2008).

Construction on the house began in 1954 and was completed by August 1955. Karin Naill stated that the house originally had a very large pane of glass that was laid on leather to absorb the weight and helped allow the glass to flex in the wind (Naill, 2008). In 1963, a 18'x27.5' structure consisting of a workshop flanked by carports on either side was completed; an above-ground swimming pool and possibly a pool house were also added at this time.

By 1981, according to a realtor listing, the property had a swimming pool with an outdoor shower and changing rooms, a redwood deck, a workshop and two-car carport, a shed, a small pond with a waterfall, gravel terraces, and Japanese plantings. In 1981, Anthony Marino purchased the house.

In 1983, Thomas and Josephine Arnone became the owners of record, although the property was transferred back to Anthony Marino in 1984, and then back to the Arnones later that year. In 1984, two additions were constructed: a second-story addition containing a bedroom and bath, and a first-story addition containing a family room with a wood stove. In 1987, Gina Lorezato acquired the house. Lorezato added another second-story addition (completed in 1988) and renovated the first floor. In 1989, Stanley Scholsohn became owner of the property through foreclosure, and in 1991, the Dime Savings Bank of New York took over the house through foreclosure. The bank offered the house for sale in 1992 "as is" with no certificate of occupancy.

In 1992, Richard A. and Elizabeth W. Rowley bought the house. The Rowleys constructed a two-story garage and storage room in 1993, presumably demolishing the original carport structure. Due to the additions and alterations, the existing house is largely unrecognizable as the original Naill House.

## Sources

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Tirranna/Rayward House, rear façade, December 2007 (photographer: Ray Pepi)



Tirranna/Rayward House, historic view from realtor pamphlet, ca. 1964 (photographer: Pedro Guerrero, source: New Canaan Historical Society)



ID Number

81

# Tirranna/Rayward

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1956

Tirranna/Rayward House, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, is located on a large, hilly, forested site. The Noroton River runs through the property. According to the current owners, Wright dammed the section of the river next to the house site to create a pond and waterfalls.

The one-story, flat-roofed house is constructed of concrete block with Philippine mahogany trim, doors, soffits, and windows. The plan of the house is essentially semicircular with an enclosed rectangular courtyard. Attached to the house is the former carport (now a porch) and former staff quarters (now guest quarters), a long, curving pergola, staff quarters with an attached greenhouse, and a large carport. The rear of the house overlooks the view of the pond, which features a dramatic fountain added in the late 1960s. In an island in the pond is a two-story concrete playhouse that originally contained a Chinese smoke oven.

According to Allan Gelbin, who acted as the contractor during construction, the original house was constructed of 8-inch concrete block with Philippine mahogany trim and a roof clad in 5-ply built-up tar and gravel. The glass in the house was ¼" polished plate glass. The floors were poured concrete "topped with red coloratum, terracotta, and sealed with the W.R. Grace sealer that was typical in Mr. Wright's houses, unit lines being scored in" (Gelbin, 4). The ceilings were ¼" plywood overlaid with mahogany in a checkerboard pattern placed in alternating grain patterns. All of the original furniture was custom-built for the house.





Tirranna/Rayward House, front façade, December 2007 (photographer: Ray Pepi)



Tirranna/Rayward House, carport, staff quarters/greenhouse, and pergola, December 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



# Significance

Tirrana/Rayward House was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for John L. Rayward, his wife Joyce, and their two daughters, Jennifer and Victoria. Rayward was originally from Australia and worked as a paper broker. The name of the house, "Tirrana," is an Aboriginal word for "running waters."

John L. Rayward acquired the property in 1955 and construction began that same year. Architect Allan Gelbin, then studying for his architectural exams, acted as contractor and master-of-the-works. He had previously built three Wright houses in Ohio: Rubin House, Dobkins House, and Feiman House. According to Gelbin, Rayward insisted on using cheap, non-union labor, making it difficult to find qualified subcontractors, but Gelbin eventually was able to hire Alfred Eliasson as carpenter-foreman; Eliasson had acted as contractor on Wright's Sanders House in Stamford. The doors and windows were custom-made by Ben Mollo, and the built-in furniture was also made by either Eliasson or Mollo. The house was completed in 1956 for about \$180,000, not including the architect's fee, land, or interior work aside from the built-in furniture (Gelbin, 1990).

Originally, the project included a one-story house and a three-car garage with an attached storage space, but Rayward—notoriously difficult to work with—made several changes during construction. In 1956, Rayward requested that a swimming pool overlooking the pond and a master bedroom wing with a two-story observatory be added to the project, creating an L-shaped wing off of the elliptical main structure. Gelbin left the project around 1956, but by 1959, other changes had been made, including construction of a curved pergola connecting the house to the garage, completion of the dam and fish-ladder, the addition of servants' quarters in the carport area adjacent to the house, and construction of a playhouse in the pond. Most or all of this work was apparently completed by contractor Alfred Eliasson.

In 1963, the property was acquired by Mid Continent Properties Inc. In 1964, Herman R. Shepherd et. al. purchased the house. Between 1964 and 1967, major renovations to the property were undertaken by Taliesin Associated Architects. It appears that architect John de Koven Hill designed the additions with some assistance from architect William Wesley Peters (Wright's son-in-law). Gelbin acted as supervisor on the project but was not the contractor; the contractor was Tom Riordan from Norwalk. Work included an addition containing a new entry and a family room attached to the L-shaped wing, creating an enclosed courtyard, expansion of the master bedroom and bath, converting the garage storage space to servants' quarters and adding a new attached greenhouse, constructing a new carport, and construction of a steel-framed terrace off of the swimming pool. Tennis courts were also added at this time. New landscaping was designed by landscape architects Charles Middleleer and Frank Masao Okamura. This work included installation of a curved bridge, stepping stones, a dramatic fountain in the pond, and new paths. The remodeled house was included in the 1967 Modern House Tour in New Canaan.

In 1980, the property was acquired by Ranko Santric. The Shepherds took much of the furnishings with them when they moved. In 1992, it was acquired by Vada S. Stanley. The Stanleys completed an extensive restoration of the house and landscape between 1992 and 1996. John de Koven Hill consulted on the project, and the work was completed by interior designer Ronald Bricke and landscape architects Heritage Landscape. The primary work involved repairing or replacing the Philippine mahogany in kind and interior alterations.

## Sources

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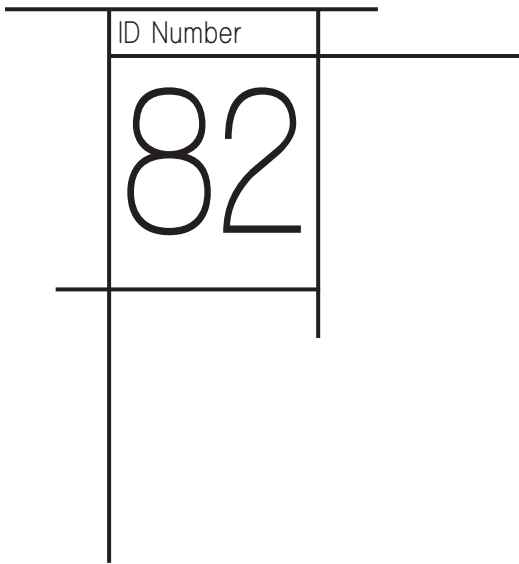


Goldmark House/Salant House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Goldmark House/Salant House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)





# Goldmark/Salant

Unknown architect, 1941

The Goldmark House/Salant House is essentially a traditional house with some Modern features and elements; it can be best be classified as a transitional house, similar to Mills House 1 (1939, Willis N. Mills). The house is set on a large, flat lot on a secluded road. At the rear of the house is a very large open meadow. Directly adjacent to the rear of the house is a lawn area containing a small swimming pool. Brick and flagstone terraces border the rear façades of the house.

The main part of the house was designed as a series of connected hipped-roof pavilions set in a staggered line at the rear façade. The house walls are concrete block painted white with a chamfered brick cornice. Most of the windows are rolled steel multi-light casement sash; some openings contain glass block. The original doors are glazed wood doors with horizontal panes of glazing, and wood screen doors. The front entrance is located in an inset porch accessed by a set of curving brick and flagstone stairs with a metal handrail; the main door is a solid wood door scored with horizontal lines.

At the front of the house, set at a 90-degree angle, is a flat-roofed, concrete-block structure containing the original laundry room, a two-car garage, and a one-car garage (added around 1951). The garages have large horizontal openings filled with glass block. At the other end of the main facade is a flat-roofed, concrete-block bedroom wing (1951). A flat-roofed dining room addition at the rear (1951) includes a deeply overhanging roof that partially shades a brick terrace (1951). At one side of the house is a multi-sided breakfast room addition (1979-80) clad in vertical wood siding with a large solar panel mounted on its flat roof.





Goldmark House/Salant House, rear façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



Goldmark House/Salant House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



# Significance

The Goldmark House/Salant House was constructed in 1941 for Peter and Frances Trainer Goldmark. The Goldmarks had been married in January 1939 and eventually had four children. In 1940, Frances T. Goldmark acquired the land for the house. According to Frances, the land was part of an old farm being divided up and her lot was an open cow pasture without a single tree on it. The house was completed in 1941. Frances stated that she and her husband Peter acted as architects for the house, and the builder was George Hickey of Stamford. A note on an early assessor property street card states, “fancy glass similar looking to quartz,” suggesting that the existing glass block may have been original to the house.

In 1951, two additions were completed: a new flat-roofed bedroom wing containing two bedrooms and a bath, and a 14'x33' flat-roofed dining room extension with an overhang extending above a new brick terrace at the rear. The curving brick steps at the front entrance were also added. The one-car addition to the garage may also have been constructed in 1951; the two-car garage and laundry room were already extant. In 1954, Peter and Frances were divorced. Frances retained title to the house. She married Richard Salant in 1955 and had one daughter with him. In 1966, an in-ground swimming pool was constructed. Between 1979 and 1980, an addition containing a new kitchen and breakfast room was added to the house. According to Frances Salant, it was built by Dinyar Wadia and designed by Chris Mooman of Ridgefield, Connecticut. Later alterations (at unknown dates) include the replacement of some original rolled steel casement windows with single-panel aluminum or vinyl casement windows, the replacement of the roof, and the construction of a tennis court.

Both Peter Goldmark and Richard Salant had remarkable careers and were well-known in their respective fields. Peter Goldmark (1906-77) was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1906. He received his Ph.D. in physics at the University of Vienna. After coming to America in 1933, he landed a job at CBS as chief television engineer. In 1940, according to the *New York Times*, Goldmark “built the first practical color TV system” (*New York Times*, 17 December 1967). During World War II, he worked on technology to jam German radar. After the war, in 1948, he created the first long-playing record in the world, an accomplishment for which he is best known. In 1954, he became president of CBS Laboratories. By the late 1960s, he was working on the development of EVR (Electronic Video Recording). He retired in 1971 and founded the Goldmark Communications Corporation. In 1967, the *New York Times* called him “one of the 10 top inventors today” (*New York Times*, 17 December 1967). Goldmark received the National Medal of Science in 1977 and was killed in a car crash a few weeks later.

Richard Salant (1914-1993) was born in New York City and attended Harvard University, receiving a B.A. in 1935 and a law degree in 1938. Salant left the law firm of Rosenman, Goldmark, Colin & Kaye, to become a vice president at CBS in 1952. Despite no background in journalism, he served as president of CBS News from 1961-1964 and 1966-1979. While Salant was leading CBS News, he oversaw the establishment of “60 Minutes,” “CBS Morning News,” and “Sunday Morning.” Salant died in 1993. In his obituary, CBS Broadcast News president Howard Stringer said Salant was “one of the founding fathers of CBS News” (*New York Times*, 17 February 1993).

The property is still held in the Salant family.

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Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





ID Number

83

# MackKnight House

Weber, Ernst. "Peter Carl Goldmark 1906-1977." Washington DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1985.

Unknown architect, 1947

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The MackKnight House was constructed in 1947 and possibly designed by Wilton architect Lewis Gelders. Dorothy MacKnight, a local decorator and painter, acquired the property—which overlooks the Silvermine River—in 1939. The original one-story house was described in the assessor field property cards as having a foundation of concrete block and posts, board-and-batten siding, and a flat composition roof. Between 1950 and 1951, a small 13'x15'6" addition containing a bedroom and a flagstone terrace were completed. A 3'x6' shed was attached to the house off the entry porch likely in the early 1950s.

In 1957, prominent New Canaan builder Paul Borglum acquired the house. In 1960, a barn and shed were built. In 1973, a 21'x21' one-story addition was constructed; a 14'6"x5'6" addition had also been added by this time. In 1975, a carport was completed. The house was transferred to Harriet M. Borglum in 1975 and to Linda B. Fry in 1986.

### Sources

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

"Silvermine to Exhibit Portraits by Gutman." *Bridgeport Post*, [30 September 1973].



Harding House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



ID Number

84

# Harding House

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Sasanoff House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



ID Number

85

# Sasanoff House

Unknown architect, 1953

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Harding House was constructed in 1953 for Richard B. and Beatty P. Harding. Beatty Harding acquired the lot in 1952. As of 1977, Richard B. Harding was the president of New York construction company Humphreys & Harding (New York Times, 12 June 1977).

The assessor property street card notes that drawings by Page & Franklyn were filed on 5 June 1953, suggesting that they were the architects or builders. The original wood-frame house had a concrete block foundation, wood clapboard exterior sheathing, and an asphalt shingle roof. The house consisted of a two-story, hipped-roof central building with a square plan flanked by a one-story wing with a rectangular plan and a one-story, shed-roofed, two-car garage. The entire house had a four-foot overhang. In 1967, a one-story, multi-sided addition was completed. A fieldstone patio adjacent to the house was added at some point before 1967. In 1994, Richard G. and Eva McCarrick acquired the property.

### Sources

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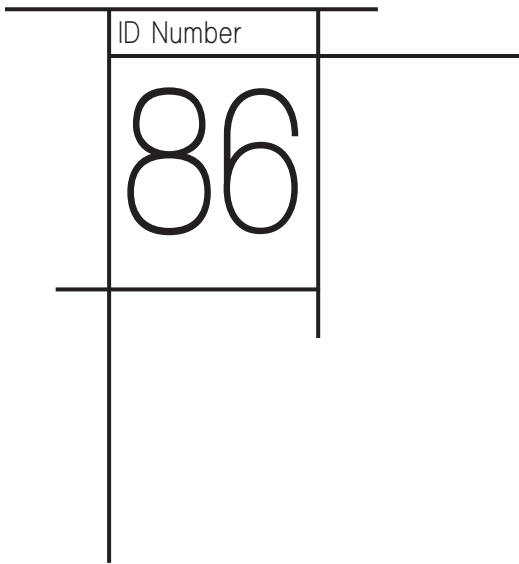


Doctors House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



Doctors House, historic view from street, July 1964 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Doctors House

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.

Unknown architect, 1955

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Sasanoff House was constructed in 1955 by an unknown architect. The property was acquired by Michael Sasanoff et. ux. in 1954 from New England Homes. According to the assessor, the house had a cinder block foundation, clapboard siding, and a wood-shingled hipped roof. In plan, the house was rectangular with a wing at the front surrounded by a wood deck at the main level and a carport at the basement level; a wood deck at the side; and a screened-in porch at the rear. The assessor described a "master bedroom - raised 4 steps from LR and open to living room with garage underneath."

Ownership of the house during the 1960s is unknown since the 1960s assessor property cards are currently undergoing conservation. The house was acquired by Hannelore M. Ross in 1978, Dennis B. Ross in 1980, and Dennis B. and Whitney B. Ross in 1988. In 1997, the house underwent alterations: the side wood deck was reduced in size, the screened-in porch was removed, and a large addition was constructed at the rear of the house. In 2006, Robert G. Doctors acquired the property.

### Sources

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Kirkpatrick House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)



ID Number

87

# Kirkpatrick House

Unknown architect, 1957

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Docters House was completed in 1957. The architect is unknown, but according to a 1966 realtor listing, it was constructed by builders Blitz & Price. It appears that Gerard J.G. Docters was the first resident of the house. In 1956, the property was purchased by Rocky Brook Corp. and transferred by quitclaim to Parting Brook Homes, Inc., suggesting that the house was built as a speculative house. In 1957, Raymond J. Kautz et. al. acquired the property (no purchase price is listed). In 1958, Docters purchased the property. The one-story, L-shaped house had an incorporated garage at one end.

In 1964, Norman E. Pennels et. al. acquired the house. In 1966, James F. Sirmons purchased the house. In 1977, Richard H. Ference became the owner. In 1984, Robert and Francine A.T. Schechter purchased the property. The Schechters had a 34'x18' addition containing a bedroom and bathroom constructed in 1988 to the designs of architect Chris Moomaw.

### Sources

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





# Unknown architect, 1959

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

The Kirkpatrick House was built in 1959 for William T. Kirkpatrick and his wife. The New Canaan Historical Society archives identify this house as the “Pederson House,” designed by architect William Pedersen and built by Ted Hobbs, but the assessor records show no evidence that a Pederson (or Pedersen) ever owned the property and further research is required to determine if Pedersen designed the house.

William T. Kirkpatrick et. ux. acquired the property in 1957 from Dino Olivetti. According to the assessor property street card, construction on the house had begun by March 1959. The one-story house had a 25’x67’ rectangular plan with a 10’x64’ patio along one façade. A flat-roofed carport with a dirt floor was attached to one corner of the house.

In 1976, the house was acquired by Bruce S. and Elizabeth A. Beresford. During that same year, the carport was enclosed and enlarged as living space, and a new two-car garage was constructed and connected to the house by a new fieldstone patio.

In 1993, Michael A.F. and Cynthia B. Roberts purchased the house. Between 1993 and 1994, the Roberts enlarged the former carport addition, constructed a new addition on the site of the 1976 fieldstone patio, and altered the garage. In 1996, the assessor notes that alterations to the “garden and laundry room” were completed. Between 1996 and the present, another addition was constructed adjacent to the garage and a wood deck and small patio were added on to the house.

### Sources

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

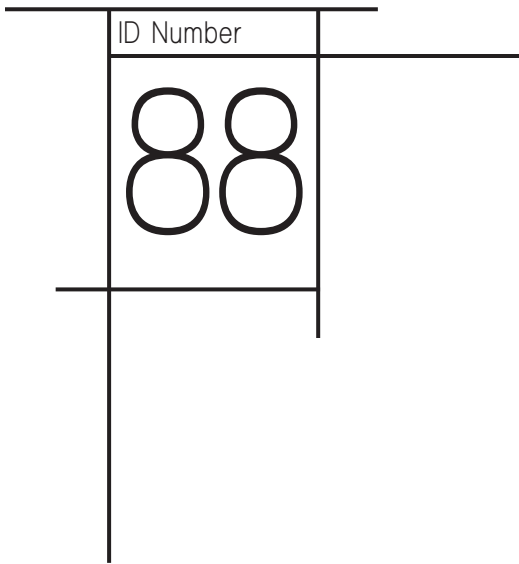
“Pederson, William, Pederson House,” Modern house file in collection of the New Canaan Historical Society.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor’s Office field cards.



Fiore House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)





# Fiore House

Unknown architect, 1960-61

Field survey was not conducted on this property.

## Significance

The Fiore House was completed between 1960 and 1961. The architect is unknown. Lorenzo J. Fiore et. al. acquired the property in 1960. The house had a rectangular plan with roof overhangs at either end. In 1964, a two-car garage was constructed adjacent to the house, creating an L-shaped plan. Some unspecified interior alterations were also completed at this time.

In 1974, John and Sheila Owen-Smith acquired the property. In 1978, a swimming pool was completed. Between 1980 and 1981, an addition was constructed at the rear containing a guest bedroom and bath and a sewing/laundry room. It appears that the roof overhangs may have been altered or eliminated at this time. In 1990, PHH Homeequity Corporation acquired the property. In 1991, Cornell D. Cornish, Jr. and Marie A. Cornish purchased the house. In 1998, Giovanni and Girolamo Soro acquired the house.

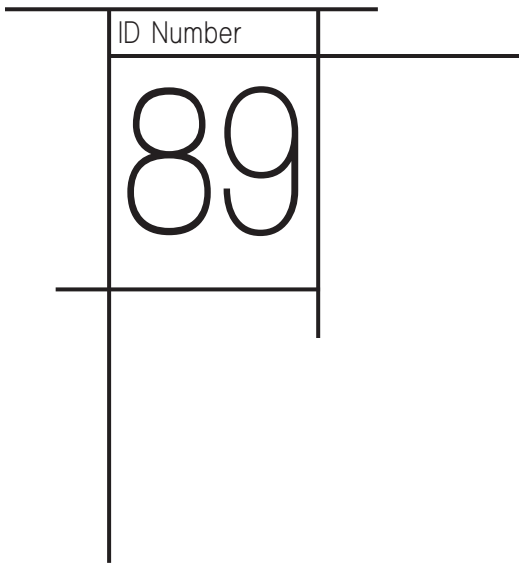
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The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.  
Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Jones House, historic view from realtor pamphlet, ca. 1970 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)





# Jones House

Unknown architect, 1960-62

Field survey was not conducted on this house.

## Significance

This house was designed by an unknown architect for Henry S. and Virginia Jones. The Joneses acquired the property in 1955. According to the assessor records, although a tool shed for the builders had been erected in 1956 and plans had been filed, no work started through 1958. It appears that construction finally began in 1960 and was completed by 1962. The original house had an L-shaped plan and included an attached garage. Two bedrooms and a bathroom were added in 1963, altering the plan to a C-shaped plan and creating an open courtyard between the original building and addition. A wood deck set at a diagonal to the building was also completed by 1963, but may have been part of the original construction. Sometime between the late 1970s and 1982, the garage was converted to a family room. A wood deck was also added to the open courtyard sometime between 1963 and 1982.

R. Munger purchased the property from Henry and Virginia Jones in 1970. Stuart D. Watson and Sarah and Sperry A. DeCew purchased the property in 1976. The DeCews became sole owners in 1979, then sold the house to Donald J. and Joan E. Carroll. James J. Farrell, Trustee, acquired the property in 1985 which passed to Andrew J. Ross in 1987 by a quitclaim, then



Jones House, historic view from realtor pamphlet, ca. 1987 (source: New Canaan Historical Society)



Don H. Jones purchased it that same year. After a foreclosure on the house in 1981, John L. and Alice Mitchell acquired it in 1992. In 2000, Daniel J. and Kelly A. DeFrancesco purchased the house. The current owner, Frank Ramppen, acquired the property in 2006. At some point after 1988, the angled deck was reduced in size by half and extended slightly across the front of the house.

**Sources**

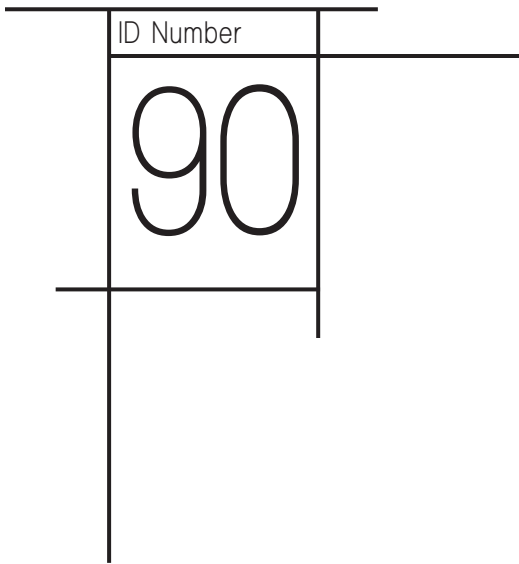
The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



Archer House, view from street, February 2008 (photographer: Allyson Mehley)





# Archer House

Unknown architect, 1963

Field survey was not conducted on this property.

## Significance

The Archer House was constructed in 1963 by an unknown architect for Harry and Margaret Archer. A realtor listing from 1990 identifies the original builder or architect as someone named "Platts." Margaret A. Archer acquired the property in 1962 and the house was completed by July 1963. The original gable-roofed house had an L-shaped plan, two attached garages, and vertical wood siding. Adjacent to the house were a flagstone patio and an L-shaped wood deck set at an angle to the building.

In 1973, Alois A. and Genevieve Stauber acquired the property (transferred to Genevieve Stauber in 1986). In 1990, Peter M. and Sally J. Finnican purchased the house. The Finnicans undertook a major renovation to the house starting in 1990: the house was expanded in size, a second story was added, the garages were converted into living space, and the wood deck and flagstone patio were altered. In 1994, a new separate two-car garage was completed. A second addition connecting the house and garage was completed at some time after 1994.

### Sources

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.





James House, front façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



James House, front façade showing addition, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



ID Number
91

# James House

Unknown architect, 1965

The James House is sited midway up a gently sloping plot overlooking a pond and a stream. The original house was a one-story-plus-basement structure with a square footprint. The house currently has a complicated roofline with a gable roof with deep eaves over the original section of the house. The walls are clad with painted vertical tongue-and-groove wood siding. The basement is fully exposed at the south and east sides of the building and wood decks are found off of the first-floor spaces. The two-car garage at the basement level is incorporated in the square footprint of the original section of the house. Floor-to-ceiling glass walls open the living rooms in the house to the landscape beyond.

## Significance

The James House was constructed around 1965 and designed by an unknown architect.

In 1962, Miles B. Olson acquired the property from Robert Roles, likely the same Robert Roles who was a prominent builder in town. It appears that Olson died in 1963. A note on the assessor property field card dated 1 July 1963 states, "Remove dev. disc.," likely referring to a developer's discount on the property assessment. This suggests that Olson was a developer. In 1964, Phillip A. James et. al. purchased the property. According to the assessor, the house was constructed in 1965. The original house had a square footprint with wood decks wrapping around the south and east sides.





James House, front and side façades, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



James House, side façade, November 2007 (photographer: Eileen Brackenbury)



In 1971, Alfred E. and Glenna Fischer purchased the property. In 1975, the Fischers added a one-story addition with vertical wood siding and a gable roof; a gazebo with a hexagonal plan was also constructed and the decks were extended around the house to integrate the new construction. The Fischers also created the pond on the property. The 1975 work was designed by architect Chris Moomaw. Sometime between 1975 and 1990, an attached two-story round tower capped with a wide floating roof was constructed adjacent to this addition. In 1990, a new enclosed porch was constructed at the northeast corner of the house and an entry foyer was built at the basement level adjacent to the garage. In 1994, the assessor lists a permit for a new side entry, but the location of this alteration is unclear.

**Sources**

The New Canaan Historical Society general house files.

Town of New Canaan, Assessor's Office field cards.



McDonnell House (1968-69, Eduardo Faxas)





6

# Significance of Modern Resources in New Canaan

The collection of Modern houses in New Canaan, Connecticut, appears to be significant on a national level as a diverse group of intact mid-century residences designed by some of the leading architects of the time period, many of whom lived and worked in the town. Although the house designs were influenced by experimental designs developed in the pre-war and immediate post-war period—like the Case Study Houses in California and Walter Gropius’s house in Lincoln, Massachusetts—the New Canaan houses are remarkable because they were not built solely as personal

homes for the architects nor as academic projects. At a time when Modern architecture was viewed with suspicion by much of the general public, the New Canaan architects were able to convince homeowners to commission or purchase over 100 of these houses, builders to construct them, banks to finance them, and realtors to market them. The collection of houses is also unusual for its variety, in stark contrast to planned post-World War II suburban residential communities where houses were designed to be largely uniform.

The growth of New Canaan in the mid-twentieth century was a direct consequence of the flight to the suburbs in the post-war period. Housing shortages in urban areas combined with new ideas about the importance of raising families away from the “evils of the cities” drove young families into suburban towns where land was cheaper and fresh air was abundant. Dream houses of the future had been heavily advertised during the Depression and World War II, fueling expectations for new, clean homes with all of the latest modern conveniences. The post-World War II exodus to the suburbs was one of the most significant events in twentieth-century American history; New Canaan is an excellent example of how the resulting development and changing trends in architecture resulted in the construction of a large number of Modern residences in an established middle-class suburb, as opposed to prefabricated or mass-produced housing in a new planned community like Levittown, New York.

Other similar collections of upper-middle-class Modern housing in the United States are located in Palm Springs, California; Sarasota and Palm Beach, Florida; Los Angeles, California; Phoenix, Arizona; and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. Most if not all of these communities saw immense population booms in the post-war period as families flocked to the Sun Belt. Although upper-middle-class Modern houses were built in other towns in New England and the Northeast, New Canaan has by far the greatest concentration of this type of housing.

## Eligibility for National Register of Historic Places

To determine the eligibility of resources to the National Register of Historic Places, the buildings must be assessed against the National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation, which read as follows:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or

- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

The eligibility of the proposed New Canaan Mid-Century Modern Houses multiple property listing is based on a preliminary evaluation of the properties. This preliminary evaluation is intended to provide guidance for a future National Register nomination, which would provide a more comprehensive analysis of the appropriate criteria, levels of significance, and integrity.

The collection of mid-century Modern houses in New Canaan appears to be eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C as a nationally significant multiple property listing, formerly known as a thematic district. Because the houses are not contiguous, a historic district with distinct boundaries is not appropriate for these resources.

The period of significance for the proposed multiple property listing is 1947-1979. The start date was determined by the construction date of the earliest extant eligible Modern house (Breuer House 1) and the end date corresponds with the end of the Modern period as defined in the methodology section of this report.

### Age Considerations

Under the National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation, Criteria Consideration “G,” commonly known as the “fifty-year rule,” states that properties less than fifty years old are not eligible for the National Register unless they are “integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria” or are “of exceptional importance.” In this case, the resources that are less than fifty years old are integral parts of the proposed thematic district.

According to *National Register Bulletin 22*, “Exceptional importance still must be demonstrated for districts where the majority of properties or the major period of significance is less than 50 years old.”<sup>1</sup> In the proposed district, the majority of properties are less than fifty years old and the

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<sup>1</sup> Marcella Sherfy and W. Ray Luce, *National Register Bulletin 22: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, revised 1998), 10.



period of significance is less than fifty years old, meaning that exceptional importance must be shown for the district to be eligible.

The proposed New Canaan Mid-Century Modern Houses multiple property listing does appear to be exceptionally significant for its association with the Harvard Five and other notable architects of the time period who both lived and worked in the town, and for the breadth of the collection of houses, which appears to be one of the largest, most intact, concentrated groups of individually designed mid-century Modern houses on the East Coast and possibly in the United States.

## Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the National Register, resources must demonstrate integrity of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Determining integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is a challenge for Modern buildings for several reasons:

1. In the historic preservation field, there is ongoing debate about the importance of integrity of materials for Modern structures. Modern buildings were generally designed to look new and “modern,” and deteriorated materials (like damaged plate glass or corroded metal elements) can detract from the intended original appearance, suggesting that in-kind material replacement is a more appropriate treatment than maintaining weathered original fabric.
2. Some of the materials used were experimental and have deteriorated so rapidly that replacement is necessary. Finding in-kind material replacements can be difficult, if not impossible, since many mid-century materials are no longer manufactured.
3. Some experimental designs have not remained functional or stable, and have required intervention. For example, at Breuer House 1, the daring porch cantilever failed only a few years after construction and required the insertion of stone wall supports to prevent the house from collapsing. These changes often affect design integrity.
4. Modern houses were often designed to be expandable so later additions or alterations are not necessarily detrimental to the building’s integrity. For example, carports were sometimes constructed with the idea that they could be enclosed to provide extra living space as a family grew in size. In other cases, bedroom wings may have been originally planned for houses but construction was delayed until additional financing could be secured.

Although the evaluation of the integrity of Modern resources may require additional thought, the buildings must still meet the seven aspects of integrity to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; in this way, they are no different than other potentially significant resources.

In order to analyze the eligibility of the survey houses in New Canaan, certain questions were posed to determine integrity. In general, houses that were altered beyond recognition were determined to be ineligible for the district. Houses with minor alterations (converting a carport to a garage, replacement of windows) were determined to be eligible for the district because the integral design remained intact. These general guidelines were followed regardless of whether the original architect was involved or approved of later renovations, because the district represents mid-century design, not the evolution of thought of individual architects.

The questions posed to determine integrity were as follows:

- Is the original house design clearly visible? Does the house represent mid-century design in its plan, use of materials, and relationship to the landscape?
- If an addition has been constructed on the house, are the outlines of the original house still visible or have they been engulfed by later construction? Have the massing, siting, and/or size of the additions overwhelmed the scale of the original building and its relationship to the site?
- Has the site been heavily altered through additions or new landscaping features, seriously affecting the planned views to and from the house?
- If the house has been expanded, is there archival or physical evidence that the architect designed the house to be expandable? Was the expansion completed during the period of significance and/or was it designed by the original architect?

After considering all of these questions, the overall impact of the changes was examined to determine integrity. Determining integrity for buildings that have been saved from demolition and renovated by caring owners was a challenge. Although the houses would likely have been lost to demolition if renovations had not been made, the additions and alterations have often lessened the integrity of the resources to the point that they are no longer eligible for the proposed multiple property listing.

# Recommended Nominations to National Register

## National Register Multiple Property Listing

As outlined above, the proposed New Canaan Modern Houses multiple property listing appears to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a nationally significant historic district. Few historic districts that are composed solely of post-World War II resources are currently listed in the National Register. The proposed New Canaan district may be the first of its kind as a collection of individually developed and designed Modern houses, in comparison to a planned community of housing designed as an entity.

## National Historic Landmark: Individually Eligible

The Glass House is the only Modern house in New Canaan currently listed as a National Historic Landmark. Out of the houses surveyed for this project, Noyes House 2 and the Gores House appear to be eligible for National Historic Landmark listing under Criteria C. Both houses demonstrate exceptional significance and integrity. The Gores House is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places and Noyes House 2 is currently being considered for listing in the National Register. Please refer to the survey forms in Appendix N for statements of eligibility for each property.

## National Register: Individually Eligible

Twenty-seven houses have been identified as individually eligible for the National Register (see Appendix B or D for eligible properties) under Criteria A, B, and/or C for local and state significance. Twenty-five of the houses found individually eligible for the National Register are also eligible as contributing resources in the multiple property listing. Please refer to the survey forms in Appendix N for statements of eligibility for each property.

The houses in the study area that were not accessible for field survey have not been assessed for National Register eligibility, since there is insufficient information about their present appearance to determine integrity.

Further research may determine that additional properties are individually eligible for the National Register, especially in the case of the houses that were not accessible for field survey.

## National Register: Eligible as Contributor to a Multiple Property Listing

Forty-seven houses have been identified as eligible for the National Register as contributing resources in the proposed nationally significant multiple property listing under Criteria A and C (see Appendix B or D for eligible properties). Each property is an integral part of the multiple property listing, displaying the evolution of Modern architecture in New Canaan from the time period between 1947 and 1979. The properties each retain sufficient integrity to be eligible for the National Register as contributing resources. Please refer to the survey forms in Appendix N for statements of eligibility for each property.

The houses in the study area that were not available for field survey have not been assessed for the proposed National Register multiple property listing, since there is insufficient information about their present appearance to determine integrity.

Further research may determine that additional properties are eligible for the National Register as contributing resources, especially in the case of the houses that were not accessible for field survey.





# About Building Conservation Associates

Building Conservation Associates, Inc. is a private consulting and research firm practicing preservation design, conditions assessments, materials science, and historic building documentation.

Since 1985, BCA has provided custom technology and planning services to architects, private institutions, developers, building owners, museums, and government agencies. BCA's pragmatic philosophy is rooted in construction technology and museum practices. Our company's mission is to make building conservation an economically viable option within the normal parameters of property development and rehabilitation.

BCA is headquartered in New York, with a regional office in New England. BCA's staff includes building and object conservators, architects, historic preservationists, scientists, historians, planners, and artisans. Its senior staff members are widely published and have been individually honored with grants, fellowships, and other citations. BCA has won numerous awards for excellence in architectural conservation and historic preservation.