

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

62-15

Boston
North

AV

BLM.800

Town/City: Belmont

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Pinehurst

Address: 63 Pinehurst Road

Historic Name: Francis Sears House

Uses: Present: single family dwelling

Original: single family dwelling

Date of Construction: 1949

Source: building permit

Style/Form: Modern Movement

Architect/Builder: Alderman & Alderman, architects

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: brick, wood

Roof: rubber

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 26,852 SF

Setting: neighborhood of mixed 20th century residences
near Belmont Day School

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Belmont Historic District Commission

Date (*month / year*): December 2014

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

63 PINEHURST ROAD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

Constructed in 1949, the house at 63 Pinehurst Road presents a discreet single-story façade to the street offering little indication of the size or complexity of the house. The flat-roofed structure is clad in a combination of vertical wood boards and brick. Fronted by a patio, the understated entrance is sheltered by an overhang of the roof and is accented by a single twisted brick column. Windows on the façade are small and without any decorative detailing. A two-car garage is located at the north end of the façade.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

This house is of historical interest for its associations with the early career of folk singer Joan Baez and her younger sister Mimi Baez Farina. This house was built on lot in the Pinehurst Subdivision, which was originally lotted in 1931 by Harris Reynolds, a landscape architect. Reynolds had purchased the land from the Meisel family in 1928. He lived in a home at 95 Pinehurst Road until his death in 1953 (Betts: 186-7). Reynolds sold this land to Frederick B. DeKnatel in 1940 who in turn sold it to Clarence and Jeannette Howlett in 1946 (MCRD Book 6989, Page 318). The Howletts constructed the house next door at 69 Pinehurst Road and sold this parcel of land to Francis W. Sears in 1947 (Book 7141, Page 302).

Dr. Francis W. Sears (1898-1975) was a professor of physics at MIT for thirty-five years before moving to Dartmouth College in 1956. He also served as blackout officer for Belmont during World War II (Robbins: 341). In 1958 Dr. Sears rented the house to Dr. Albert Baez and his family of California. Dr. Baez had accepted a teaching post at MIT and lived here briefly with his family including daughters Joan and Mimi. It was during this period that Joan Baez (b. 1941) developed an interest in the Cambridge folk music scene and coffeehouses. She registered at Boston University but soon quit. In 1959 Joan began performing at Club 47, folk music venue in Cambridge. The following year Albert Baez moved back to California.

In 1969 Francis and Mildred Sears sold the property at 63 Pinehurst Road to Simmons College (Book 11736, Page 294). It was sold the following year to William and Barbara Morse who owned the house until 1983 when it was sold to George and Virginia McManama who continue to own it today (Book 15067, Page 318).

The architect of the house, Bissell Alderman (1912-1999) was the son of Holyoke architect George P.B. Alderman (1862-1942). Bissell Alderman received a Bachelor's degree in Architecture from MIT in 1935 and a Master's in 1937. He worked as a student one summer for Perry, Shaw & Hepburn and another for Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch & Abbott. He was in the Air Force during World War II and worked a year for Voorhees, Walker, Foley & Smith in New York before opening Alderman & Alderman in 1945. The only other known works found by Alderman & Alderman were three dormitories at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst constructed in 1948 – Hampshire, Middlesex and Berkshire. In 1950 Bissell Alderman entered into a new firm (Alderman & MacNeish) with engineer Archibald MacNeish. The firm was based in West Springfield.

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AIA Historical Directory, 1956.

Belmont: The Architecture and Development of the Town of Homes. Prepared for the Belmont Historic District Commission, 1984.

Betts, Richard B. *The Streets of Belmont and How they Were Named* (2nd edition). Belmont: Belmont Historical Society, 2012.

Hartford Courant, May 4, 1999 [obituary of Bissell Alderman]

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Robbins, Samuel Dowse, ed. *Who's Who in Belmont*. Belmont: Belmont Historical Society, 1972.

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