

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

53-85-D	Boston North	BC	BLM.812
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Town/City: Belmont

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Belmont Hill Village

Address: 24 Ross Road

Historic Name: Malcolm Davis House

Uses: Present: single family dwelling

Original: single family dwelling

Date of Construction: 1936

Source: building permit

Style/Form: Colonial Revival/Cape Cod

Architect/Builder: Royal Barry Wills

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete/stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboards

Roof: wood shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):
2005 – rear addition, front dormer

Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

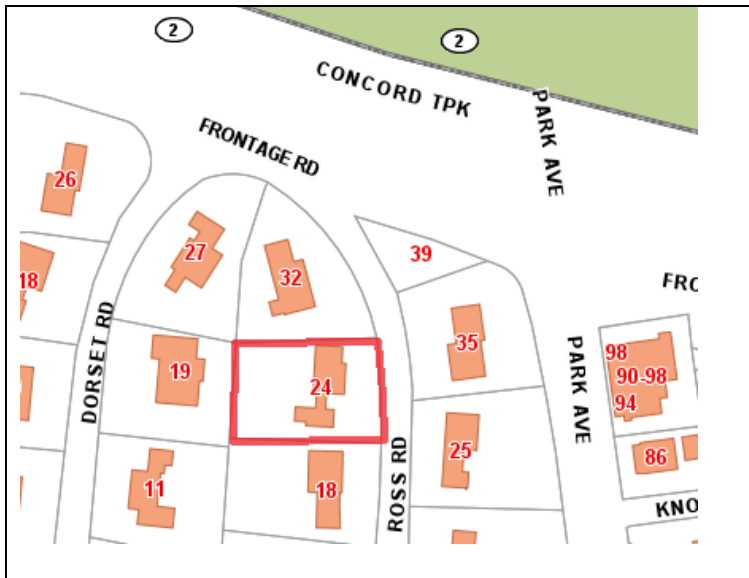
Acreage: 11,245 SF

Setting: neighborhood of similar early 20th century dwellings on small, landscaped lots near Concord Turnpike

Photograph



Locus Map (north at top)



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Belmont Historic District Commission

Date (*month / year*): November 2014

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

24 ROSS ROAD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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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 1936, the house at 24 Ross Road is a quintessential example of a Royal Barry Wills-designed Cape. The 1 ½-story main house displays graduated clapboards where the exposure decreases at the base of the wall. The house is capped by a wood shingled roof with close eaves and a large chimney. A small single-story wing with arches reminiscent of a carriage house connects the house to a garage to the south with an asymmetrical gablefront. The offcenter entrance has a six-panel door with the upper two panels glazed and is topped by transom lights and flanked by fluted pilasters with diamond corner blocks. A single-story wing is offset to the north. Windows contain 6/6 sash with shutters. Alterations to the house have been minimal and include a front dormer and rear addition (2005).

The house is set up from the road and is screened by informal plantings; a stone wall runs along the road.

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 located within the "Belmont Hill Village" subdivision which consisted of thirty-six residences all built between 1935 and 1939 under the supervision of August Johnson Associates. Belmont Hill Village was the fourth of nine areas in Belmont developed by the Belmont Hill Company. It was developed after the Concord Turnpike was built in 1934.

All of the lots in the Belmont Hill Village subdivision were about ¼ acre – smaller than the earlier developed areas. Deed restrictions controlled the type of development which could occur. Construction was limited to single-family dwelling houses with a garage permitted accommodating not more than two cars. The houses were to be setback from the road at least twenty-five feet and the designs had to be approved by the Belmont Hill Village Trust. Lastly, the houses had to cost at least \$7,000 to construct. The Village Hill Trust received a building permit for this lot (Lot 32) in 1936. The architect of the house was Royal Barry Wills and the builder was Carl Swanson of Natick. Wills designed several other houses in the subdivision including 27 Dorset Road (BLM.764), 25 Ross Road, 35 Ross Road (BLM.813) and 43 Village Hill Road (BLM.835).

The house was sold to Malcolm and Erika Davis of Cambridge in November 1936 (Page 6079, Page 254). He was an engineer. Davis continued to own the house until 1987 when it was sold to Paul and Joanne Konig (Book 17802, Page 46). Paul Konig sold the property in 2003 to Joseph and Jennifer Baldwin who still own the house today (Book 38772, Page 328).

The house was designed for Johnson and Trenholm by architect Royal Barry Wills (1895-1962). Royal Barry Wills grew up in Melrose and graduated from MIT in 1918. After working as a design engineer with the Turner Construction Company from 1919 to 1925, Wills opened an architectural office in Boston in 1925 which he maintained until his death in 1962. His office specialized in small house design including traditional two-story, central hall houses, two-story, garrison houses and English Revival cottages but became especially well known for their Cape Cod homes. The Massachusetts Historical Commission MACRIS database includes a number of Capes including Wills's own house at 59 Oakland Street in Melrose (MEL.266, 1929) and houses in Brookline, Cohasset, Lexington, and Lincoln. The house across the street at 25 Ross Road is an example of one of his gambrel Cape designs.

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Wills's simple designs met with considerable success. Between 1935 and 1942 he won awards in more than two dozen design competitions including those sponsored by *Pencil Points*, *House Beautiful*, *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Ladies' Home Journal*. In 1938 *Life* magazine selected him as one of eight architects (four modern and four traditional) to prepare home designs for families in four income categories. In the category for families with \$5,000 to \$6,000 income, Wills's traditional design competed against a modern design by Frank Lloyd Wright. The selected family in the article chose the Wills house over the Wright design and subsequently the home was built in Edina, Minnesota. In the 1940s Royal Barry Wills wrote three books on architecture that were widely read and publicized in both the popular and professional architectural press. By 1946 over a half million copies of his books had been sold and *Life* Magazine declared him the nation's most popular architectural author. Royal Barry Wills went on to win a number of national contests and was also featured in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He received a Certificate of Honor from the Massachusetts State Association of Architects in 1949 and a fellowship in the American Institute of Architects in 1954 (Ibid).

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