

FORM B – BUILDING

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

53-69	Boston North	BC	BLM.813
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: Belmont

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

Photograph



Address: 35 Ross Road

Historic Name: Edward Dewhirst House

Uses: Present: single family dwelling

Original: single family dwelling

Date of Construction: 1938

Source: building permit

Style/Form: English Revival

Architect/Builder: Royal Barry Wills

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: stone, stucco, shingles, clapboards

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 11,335 SF

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

Locus Map



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Belmont Historic District Commission

Date (*month / year*): November 2014

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

35 ROSS 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.

The house at 35 Ross Road is a distinctive English cottage designed in 1938 by architect Royal Barry Wills. The main house is a two-story structure sheathed in a combination of stone veneer, wood shingles and half-timbering. It is capped by a steeply pitched, wood-shingled roof with a pent and brick chimney on the north end and small arched wall dormers on the façade. The door on the south end of the façade and all the windows are fitted with rustic board shutters. Windows include 6/6 sash and multi-light casements. Offset toward the street, south of the main house is a single-story original wing which is clad in stucco, half-timbering and rough clapboards. The building contains a single-car garage and breezeway. Fenestration on the wing includes diamond paned casements.

The rustic character of the property is reinforced by natural landscaping and a stone wall running 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 22) in 1938. The building permit notes that used bricks were to be used in construction. The architect of the house was Royal Barry Wills. Wills designed several other houses in the subdivision including 27 Dorset Road (BLM.764), 24 Ross Road (BLM.812), 25 Ross Road, and 43 Village Hill Road (BLM.835).

The completed house was sold by August Johnson to Edward Dewhirst in July 1938 (Book 6218, Page 215). The 1940 Census indicates that the house was then occupied by Edward, his wife Alice, infant son William and a maid. Building Department records indicate that Dewhirst was given a building permit for the addition of a rear maid's room in 1940. Edward Dewhirst worked in publishing. In 1953 the house was sold to Paul H. Gill (Book 8130, Page 4). Robert and Mary Fahey owned the house from 1958 to 1979 (Book 13650, Page 62). A small portion of the lot was taken by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1966 as part of the Rt. 2 Widening Project. The house has been owned by William Brown and Judith McSwain since 1979 (Book 13650, Page 62).

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The house was designed for Johnson and Trenholm by 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 and two-story, garrison houses but became especially well known for their Cape Cod cottages. As seen here, Wills also designed a lesser number of Tudor Revival/English Revival homes. Of the 130+ properties currently listed in the Massachusetts Historical Commission MACRIS database, about a dozen appear to be variations on the English Revival. These include 55 Blake Road in Brookline (1930), the Fitzpatrick Estate at 159 Saddle Hill in Hopkinton (1922); and a number of homes in Newton: 60 Beacon Street (1930); 199 Dorset Road (1929); 33 Gate House Road (1927); 11 Sagamore Road (1929); 24 Sagamore Road (1928); and 62 Sheffield Road (1931) and 197 South Street in Reading (1931) (Mausolf 2009). In Belmont other English Revival designs by Wills include 27 Dorset Road (1938) in the Belmont Hill Village subdivision. He also designed Cape Cod houses such as 24 and 25 Ross Road (also in the Belmont Hill Village subdivision).

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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