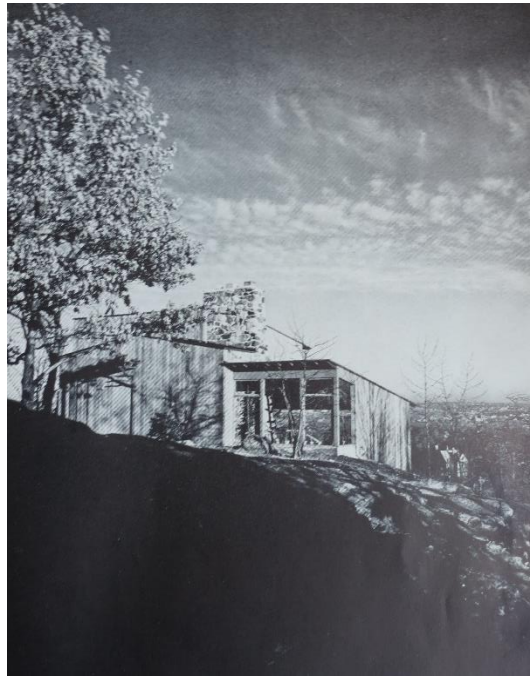


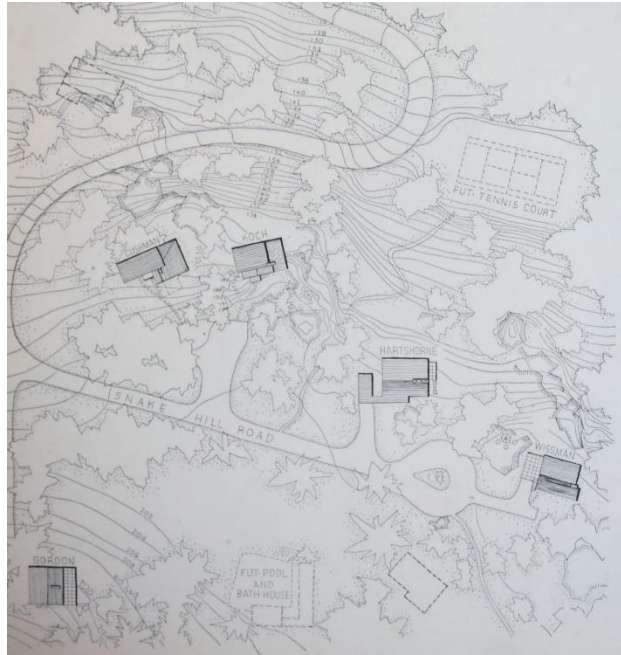
Snake Hill

The Snake Hill neighborhood is located on a steep hillside north of Pleasant Street and west of Belmont Center. Developed by architect Carl Koch in the early 1940s, it is considered to be one of the earliest and most significant Modern house neighborhoods in the country. The neighborhood consists of seven houses on Snake Hill Road.



*Carl Koch Home, 77 Snake Hill Road
Credit: Architectural Forum, June 1941*

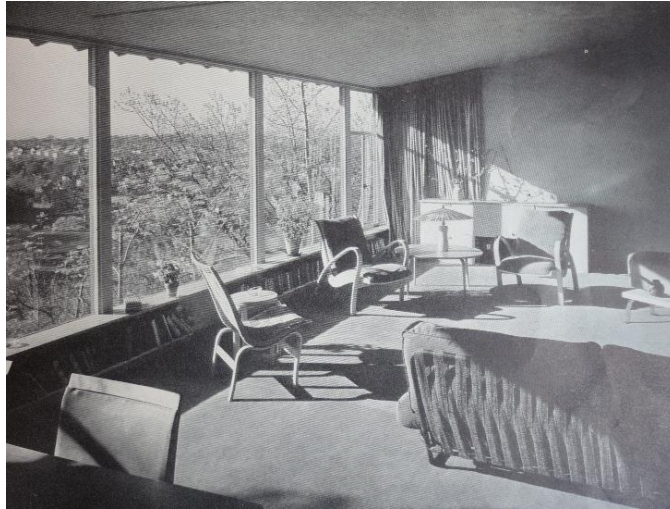
Carl Koch received his Master of Architecture degree from the Harvard School of Design in 1937 and studied under Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus founder. Koch traveled to Sweden on a fellowship and was fascinated by the Swedish use of fabrication. Upon his return to the U.S., Snake Hill was his first project. The community housing project was also a way for Koch to design an inexpensive home for himself and his family.



Credit: Architectural Forum, June 1941

The planned community was the joint venture of five individuals, including Koch, all with Harvard ties. The site selected offered a magnificent view of Boston and was cheap due to the fact that the rocky ledges were not believed to be suitable for conventional homes. Housing lots were owned individually and a trust composed of owners controlled the common land and the road. The steep road was fitted with radiant hot water pipes leading from a boiler house to melt snow and ice. The original plan included space for a community tennis court and pool and bath house but these were never built.

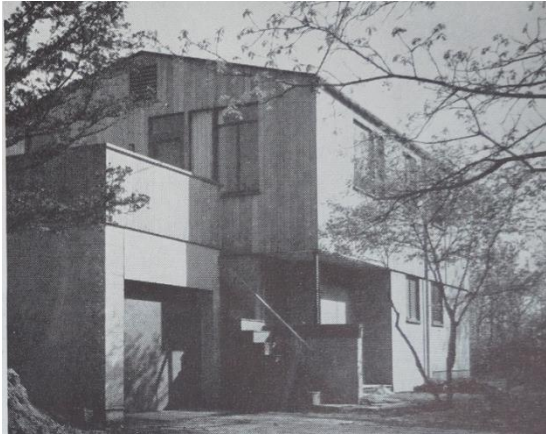
The first five dwellings (68, 69, 77, 83 and 89 Snake Hill Road), completed in 1940, were described by *Progressive Architecture* in 1945 as “one of the best known and most significant groups of contemporary houses in the world” by virtue of their planning and architecture and their success in creating a strong sense of community. Cost savings were achieved through standardizing details and equipment. Complicated details and expensive millwork were eliminated to the greatest degree possible. The houses also illustrate Koch’s belief that open and flexible interior planning was key to meeting the individual requirements of owners economically.



Koch House, Architectural Forum, 1941



77 Snake Hill Road (from road and down below)



89 Snake Hill Road

In 1941 three additional houses were constructed, designed by Koch in collaboration with Huson Jackson and Robert Woods Kennedy. Of these, two survive today at 50 & 60 Snake Hill Road. (The house at 64 Snake Hill Road was removed in 2005.) The houses were of similar plan and design as the first five but incorporated a new experimental, economical construction based on 4-foot modules that foreshadowed Koch's later Tech Built designs.

A final house was constructed at 15 Snake Hill Road in 1946 for Philip Darlington and his wife Elizabeth, who was Koch's younger sister. The house occupies what was once the site of the proposed community tennis court. As was the case with several of the houses on Snake Hill Road, the house was added onto several times. Both the rear addition (1970) and the carport (1964) were designed by Carl Koch.



15 Snake Hill Road

Virtually all of the original owners were academics, scientists and engineers trained at area institutions including MIT and Harvard.

Despite the fact that many of the houses on Snake Hill Road have been enlarged and altered by additions, the neighborhood as a whole still represents an innovative example of a community housing project showcasing what was at the time a new architectural mode, the International Style.



50 Snake Hill Road