

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

58-2	Boston North	AU	BLM.461
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Town/City: Belmont

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Snake Hill Road

Address: 15 Snake Hill Road

Historic Name: Philip Darlington Jr. House

Uses: Present: single family dwelling

Original: single family dwelling

Date of Construction: 1946

Source: building permit

Style/Form: International Style

Architect/Builder: Carl Koch, architect;
Hans Tobiason, builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: vertical boards

Roof: tar and gravel

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
carport (1964)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

1970 – rear addition (Carl Koch, architect)

1998 – some new windows

2002 – entry and tool storage addition at front of house

Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 22,394 SF

Setting: Contemporary dwellings on steep hillside setting

Photograph



Locus Map



INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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15 SNAKE HILL ROAD

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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.

Located on a bend in the road as one climbs Snake Hill Road, the Darlington House is an International Style dwelling designed by architect Carl Koch in 1946 for his sister and her husband. The house is clad in vertical boards and is set on a concrete foundation. It is capped by a slated roof with overhanging eaves on the east side. A large stone chimney rises from the roof. The window openings are grouped into bands. They were replaced in 1998.

The additions to the house have been minimal. A single-story rear addition designed by Koch was constructed to the southwest in 1970. The open carport to the northeast was added in 1964 and was also designed by Koch. The sides of the structure are clad in vertical boards above a concrete foundation and simple metal trusses support the roof. A small single story addition is also located in front of the entrance and includes outdoor tool storage; it dates to 2002. Like the other houses in the subdivision, 15 Snake Hill Road is informally landscaped and was intended to blend in with its surroundings. A patio is located to the rear of the house.

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.

In March 1940 Edward Hartshorne and Carl Koch had petitioned for approval of a ten lot subdivision and a winding road to be laid out off Pleasant Street through a seven-acre parcel of land that they had purchased from Ernest J. Corrigan. Corrigan had bought the land in 1928 from George V. Fletcher. The Snake Hill location was selected because of its magnificent view of Boston, the fact that it was within a quarter mile of transportation and stores and because the land was cheap due to the fact that its rocky ledges were not believed to be suitable for conventional homes. As reported in the *Belmont Citizen* on May 31, 1940, the planned community was the joint venture of five individuals – two Harvard instructors and three graduates. They were Carl Koch, architect and designer of the community; Dr. Edward Hartshorne and Dr. A. Lincoln Gordon, instructors at Harvard; lawyer Gardner Cushman and Harry B. Wissmann. The street was originally to be called “Witsend Road”. It was renamed Snake Hill Road in October 1940. Originally the abutters owned and maintained their own boiler house and kept the street clear of ice and snow with a system of underground pipes (Betts 2012: 249-250).

The five initial Snake Hill houses constructed in 1940 and designed by Carl Koch (#68, 69, 77, 83 & 89) were quickly recognized as one of the most significant groups of contemporary houses in the world – notable for their planning and architecture and their success in creating a strong sense of community (Fixler). The development also incorporated new technology. Originally the abutters owned and maintained their own boiler house and kept the street clear of ice and snow with a system of underground pipes (Betts 2012: 249-250). Carl Koch (1912-1998) received his Master of Architecture degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1937 and after traveling to Sweden developed the Snake Hill community housing project as a way to design an inexpensive house for himself and his family. A second phase of construction took place the following year and resulted in the construction of three additional Snake Hill Road houses - #50, 60 & 64. These houses were designed by Carl Koch working with Huson Jackson and Robert Kennedy. The builder was Joseph Richardson, grandson of H.H. Richardson. These three houses were built at the end of pre-war private residential construction, at a time when it was difficult to find builders to bid on the work and materials were in short supply. With the goal of building houses cheaply and quickly, the houses utilized a new experimental, economical construction featuring new materials and a new structural method. Construction was based on a four-foot module. The framing was expressed on the exterior by 4 x 4” and 4 x 6” redwood posts. The wall curtain consisted of cement-surfaced fiberboard (*Progressive Architecture*). The landscape architect for Snake Hill was Christopher Tunnard (1910-1979).

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The house at 15 Snake Hill Road was the last dwelling constructed in the development and was constructed on Lot 8A, land that was originally reserved for a tennis court. The original owners were Philip J. Darlington and his wife Elizabeth (Koch) who purchased the property in 1946. The couple had married in 1942. "Libby" (d. 2004) was the younger sister of the architect, Albert Carl Koch, Jr. Her husband (1904-1983) was a prominent biologist who was schooled at Harvard and later became a professor of Zoology there. The house was designed by Carl Koch and Hans Tobiason of Arlington was the builder. The initial cost of the dwelling was \$7,000.

The Darlington lived here only a few years and sold the house in 1948 to Arthur and Katherine Smithies of Washington, D.C. Arthur Smithies was a Harvard economist. In 1948 his book, *The Federal Budget and Fiscal Policy*, was published. It was regarded as the standard source on the budget for the next two decades. The Smithies sold the property in 1953 to Lewis and Ethel Kornfeld who retained ownership until 1970. Lewis Kornfeld worked for Radio Shack, becoming president of the company in 1970 and leading the company to become a major player in the personal computer market. In 1964 the Kornfelds added a garage/carport designed by Carl Koch and Associates and built by Paul Sullivan. Roy and Sylvia Hammer purchased the property in 1970 and soon thereafter constructed a 30' x 15' addition, designed by Carl Koch and Associates and built by Donald Tait.

The house was purchased by Elwood and Karel Henneman in 1975 (Book 12766, Page 363). Dr. Elwood Henneman was an expert on neurobiology at Harvard Medical School. The property was sold by the Henneman Trust to Kim Scola and Amy Wilson in 1996 and sold by Amy Wilson in 2007 to Jon Fullerton and Louisa Lund, the present owners (Book 50456, Page 499).

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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- Town of Belmont, Building Department files.
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- Williams, Judy. Area form for Snake Hill Road, Nov. 1982.
- Wilson, Edward O. *Philip Jackson Darlington, Jr. 1904-1983*. National Academy of Sciences, 1991.

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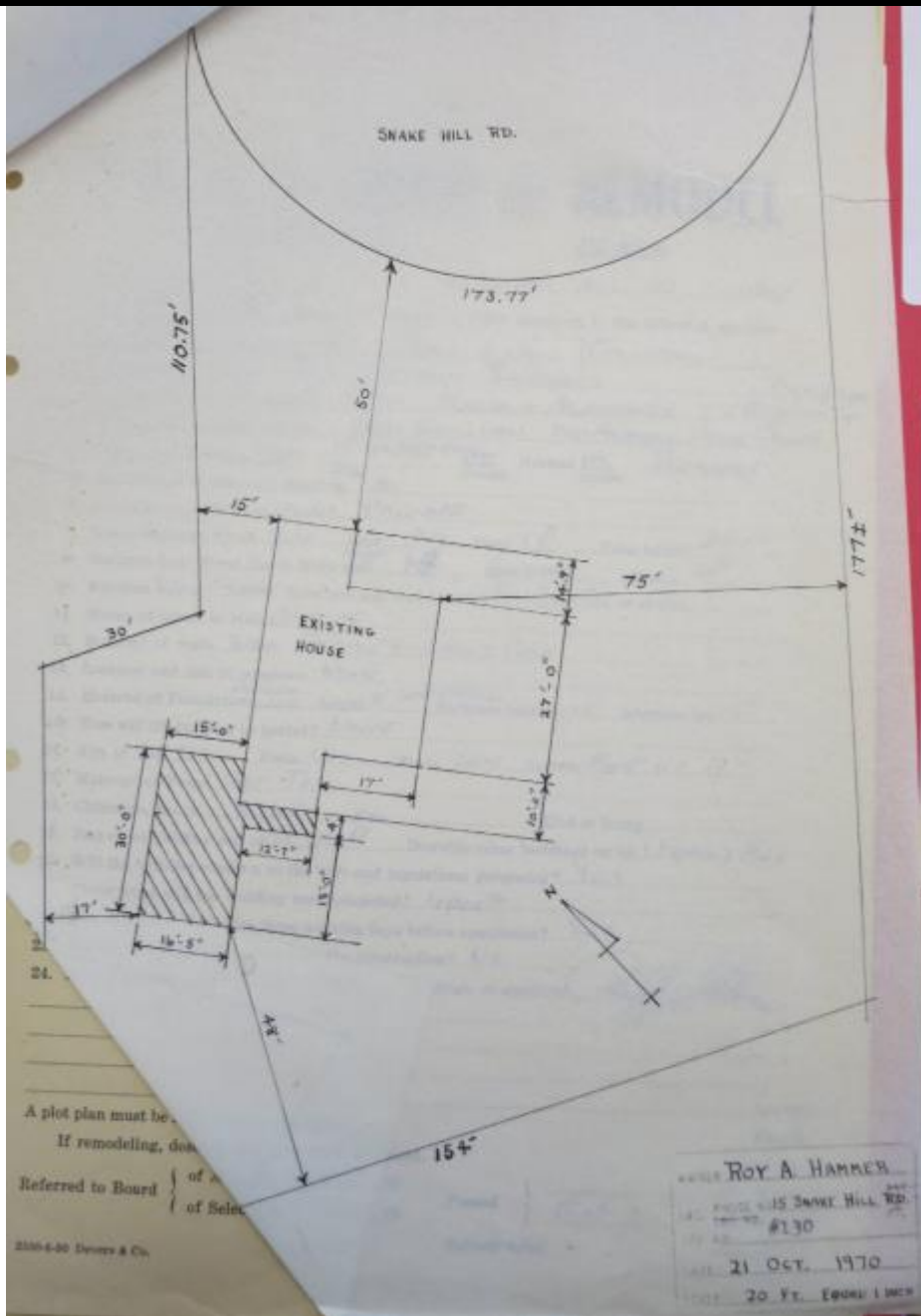
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Drawing showing original house and 1970 rear addition by Koch (hatched lines)
Source: Belmont Building Department files

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible **only** in a historic district
 Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: **A** **B** **C** **D**

Criteria Considerations: **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G**

Statement of Significance by Lisa Mausolf
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Darlington House at 15 Snake Hill Road is eligible for the National Register, Criterion C, as a well-preserved example of the International Style which has seen minimal alteration since its construction in 1946. It was designed by preeminent architect Carl Koch for his sister and her husband and was the last of the homes constructed at Snake Hill. Snake Hill is considered one of the best known and most significant groups of contemporary houses in the country – notable in terms of planning and architecture as well as its success in creating a strong sense of community.