

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

58-9	Boston North	AU	BLM.459
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Town/City: Belmont

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

Address: 60 Snake Hill Road

Historic Name: Richard & Ruth Kriebel House

Uses: Present: single family dwelling

Original: single family dwelling

Date of Construction: 1941

Source: building permit

Style/Form: International Style

Architect/Builder: Carl Koch, Huson Jackson & Robert Kennedy, architects; Joseph Richardson, builder (1940); Hans Tobiason, builder (1950)

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: vertical boards

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
shed

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

1950 – 20' x 20' & 8' x 20' addition (Carl Koch, architect)

1968 – 14' x 18' addition (Carl Koch, architect)

1991 – 2nd story addition

1993 – replacement windows

1998 – 2 story add. 9' x 20'

2009 – addition, interior renovation

Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 45,416 SF

Setting: near top of hill in neighborhood of other Koch designed dwellings

Photograph



Assessor's photo

Locus Map (north at top)



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Belmont Historic District Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

60 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.

The house at 60 Snake Hill Road is a three-level dwelling set into a hill with views of Boston to the southeast. What was originally a modest, economical dwelling has seen various alterations over the years including multiple additions, new exterior cladding and new windows in 1993. As originally constructed in 1940 the house was rectangular in plan measured just 32' x 20' with its long elevation facing southeast. It was originally clad in cement surfaced fiberboard between redwood posts but is now covered in vertical wood siding. A large brick chimney emerges from the low gable roof.

The minimalistic house has been greatly expanded over the years, two of the gable-roofed additions were also designed by the original architect Carl Koch for the original owners, the Kriebels. These consisted of a 20' x 20' addition constructed to the rear (northwest) of the original house in 1950 and a 14' x 18' addition to the southwest of the original house in 1968, topped by a cross gable roof with clerestory windows. An additional two-story rear addition measuring 9' x 20' was constructed in 1998.

A small shed is located to the northeast of the house on the property line with 64 Snake Hill Road. The house does not have a garage but has a paved parking area to the west. There are patios adjacent to the house but most of the land is wooded.

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 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. 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 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). (The boiler house was located to the west of this parcel.) 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 he and his family. The significance of the Snake Hill Development was appreciated soon after construction. In 1945 *Progressive Architecture* called the five original 1940 Snake Hill houses "one of the best known and most significant groups of contemporary houses in the world".

The house at 60 Snake Hill Road was part of the second phase of construction. These three houses - #50, 60 & 64 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 Kriebel House at 60 Snake Hill Road was originally 20' x 32' and consisted of three levels on a sloping site. It was designed with the family of five in mind and incorporated a lower level workroom for hobbies and four bedrooms. It was built on the basis of "utmost economy" although future plans called for the addition of a bedroom suite and larger hobby room. As described in an architectural journal of the day: "Spaces are divided only where desirable or necessary to separate functions...the total house area is planned as a single general living space". A natural rock outcropping emerging through the floor of the living-dining space was intended to serve as a dividing element between the two sections. The living room and dining area were designed as a continuous space without a separate entrance hall (*Progressive Architecture*, Oct. 1946). The house was added onto twice with Carl Koch serving as architect. In 1950 a 20' x 20' addition was constructed as well as a 8' x 20' addition to the basement workshop. A 14' x 18' addition was added in 1968. In 1998 a two-story, 9' x 20' addition was constructed.

The original owner, Richard T. Kriebel (1904-1990), was a major figure in the early history of the Polaroid Corporation, founded in 1937 by Edwin H. Land. Kriebel joined the corporation's precursor, Land-Wheelwright Laboratories in 1935 and was the man who carried out Land's innovative personnel policies including hiring women for significant jobs and broadening benefits for all. He remained with Polaroid in various capacities until 1969 and in the later years served as the director of public relations. Richard Kriebel died in 1990 and the following year his widow sold the house to Fred Danforth and Carlene Larsson. In 2005 the Lord House at 64 Snake Hill Road which stood next door was demolished to make way for a new house. Geoffrey Jones and Rattana Promrak purchased the house at 60 Snake Hill Road in 2008 and still own it today (Book 51461, Page 201).

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Betts, Richard B. *The Streets of Belmont and How they Were Named* (2nd edition). Belmont: Belmont Historical Society, 2012.
- Fixler, David *Hipsters in the Woods: The Midcentury-Modern Suburban Development*, Spring 2009. www.fomalincoln.org
- Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA
- Robbins, Samuel Dowse, ed. *Who's Who in Belmont*. Belmont: Belmont Historical Society, 1972.
- "3 New Houses at...Snake Hill, Belmont, Mass.", *Progressive Architecture*, October 1946.
- Town of Belmont, Building Department Files.
- Williams, Judy. Area form (BLM.AU) for Snake Hill Road, November 1982.



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Original entrance from driveway



Original southeast elevation

Progressive Architecture, Oct. 1946

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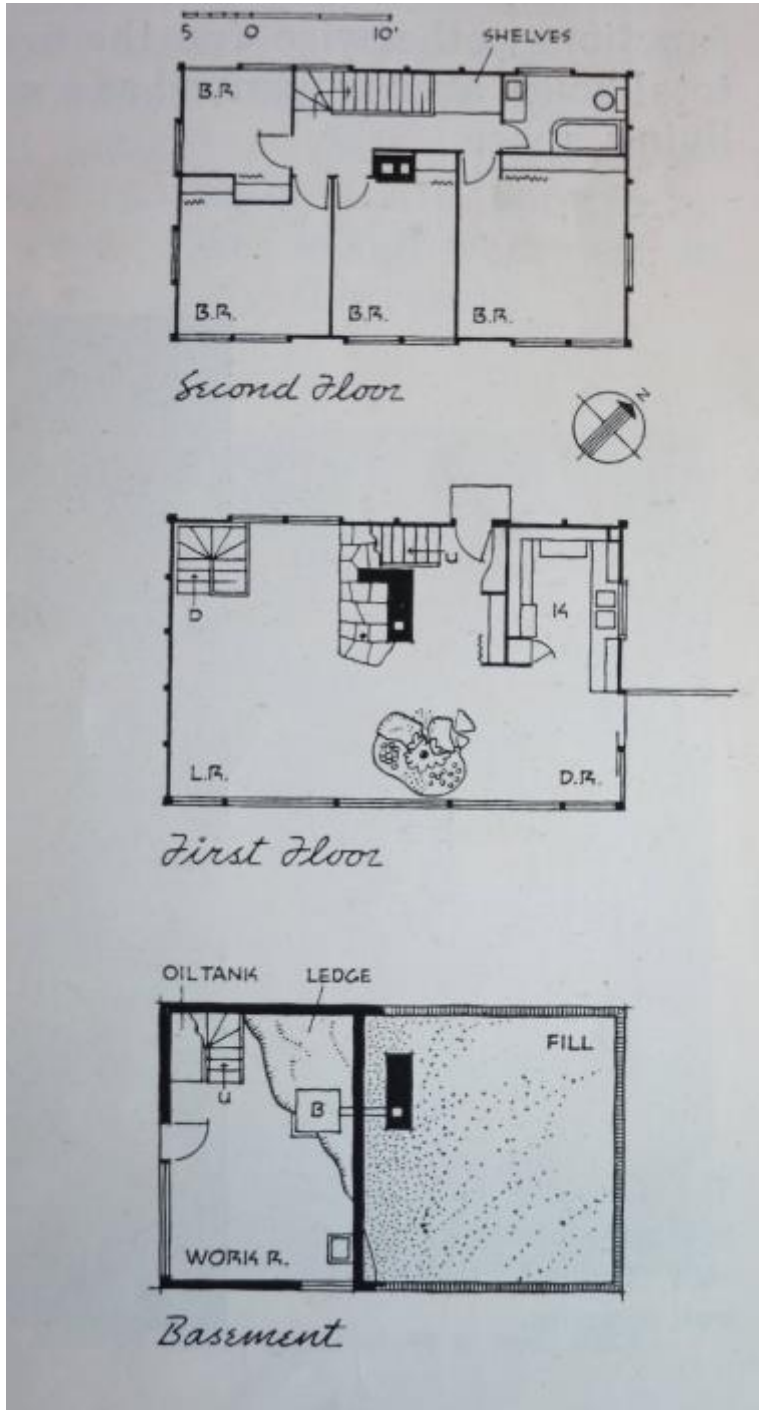
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Original Floorplan

Progressive Architecture, Oct. 1946

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Progressive Architecture, Oct. 1946

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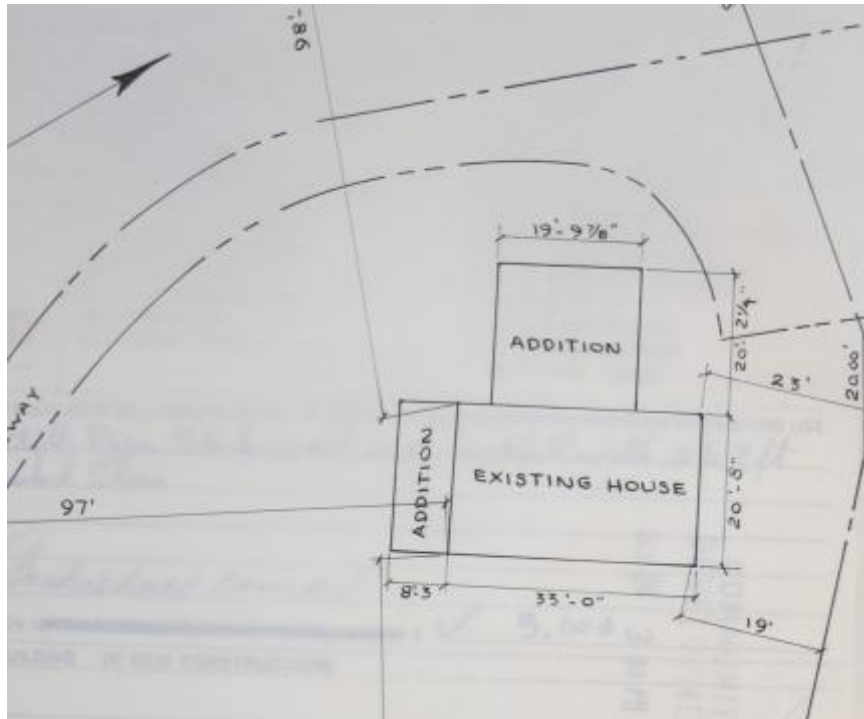
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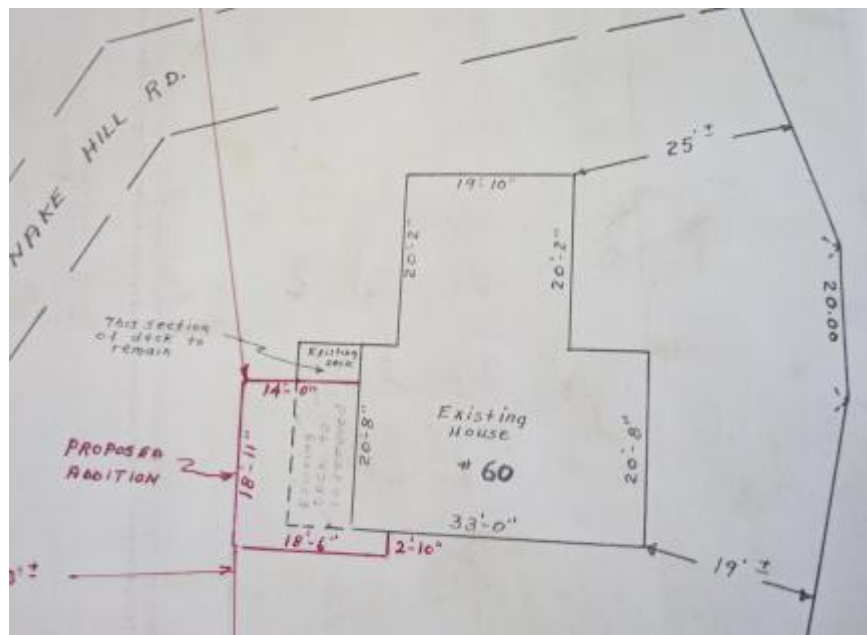
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Original House with 1950 additions (Carl Koch, architect)



Plan showing proposed 1968 addition (Carl Koch, architect)

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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 Kriebel House at 60 Snake Hill Road is eligible for the National Register, under Criterion C, as part of the Snake Hill Development which 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. This house was designed by architect Carl Koch and constructed in 1941 as part of the second phase of construction and was featured in an October 1946 article in *Progressive Architecture* on Snake Hill. The house has seen several additions (two of which were designed by the original architect, Carl Koch). Despite alterations, the house still appears to contribute to a Snake Hill district.