

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

58-3	Boston North	AU	BLM.457
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Town/City: Belmont

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

Address: 69 Snake Hill Road

Historic Name: Gardner & Mary Cushman House

Uses: Present: single family dwelling

Original: single family dwelling

Date of Construction: 1940

Source: building permit

Style/Form: International Style

Architect/Builder: Carl Koch

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete block

Wall/Trim: vertical boards

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
garage (1986)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

1949 – addition at north end

1996 – rear addition; add. to front for entry

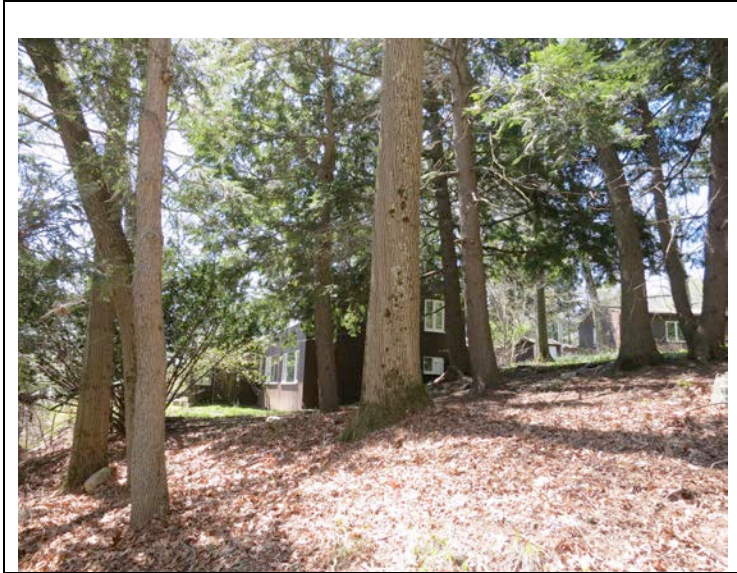
Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

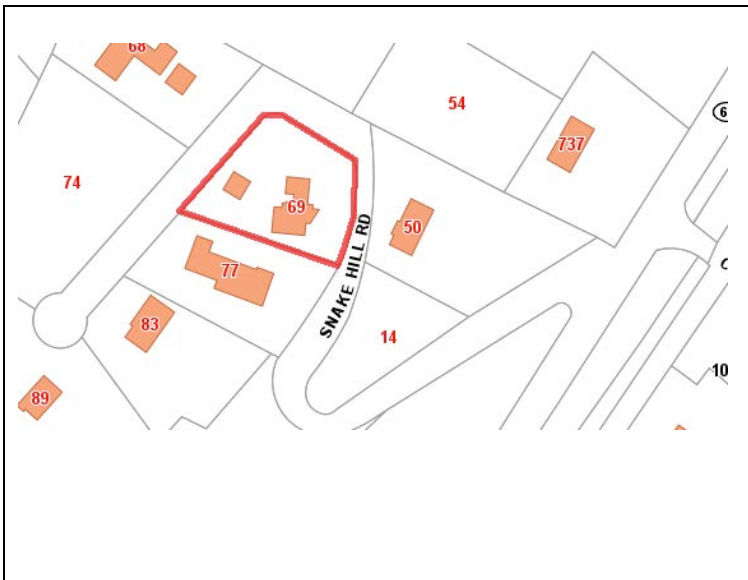
Acreage: 19,001 SF

Setting: group of other similar houses in wooded setting on steep hill

Photograph



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

69 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.

Set on a wooded hillside, 69 Snake Hill Road is a two-level International Style dwelling designed by Carl Koch in 1940 and subsequently expanded by a Koch addition to the north in 1949 and another rear (east) addition in 1996. The building is sheathed in vertical wood boards above a concrete block foundation. From the west, the house is a single-story in height and set back on the lot with a gablefront two-car garage (1986) set close to the road. Set into the sloping hillside, the east elevation is two-stories in height with large expanses of glass from a mix of fixed and movable sash.

The house is significant as one of the five original Snake Hill Road houses, designed by Koch in 1940. It is one of the least changed of the houses. The 1996 addition to the rear is relatively small but incorporates a distinctive curved wall. A brick patio fronts the south elevation.

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).

Albert Carl Koch Jr. (1912-1998) received his Master of Architecture from the Harvard School of Design in 1937 and studied under Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus founder. Koch traveled to Sweden on a fellowship in 1938 and was fascinated by the Swedes’ use of fabrication. With a goal of building houses that were less expensive but still fully functional and pleasant homes, Koch’s first project upon returning to the United States was a community housing project called Snake Hill. Koch initially developed the project as a way to design an inexpensive home for himself and his family. The house at 77 Snake Hill Road (Lot 6) was one of five houses constructed as part of the first phase of construction and was the architect’s own home. The first five houses - #68, 69, 77, 83 & 89 were constructed in 1940 and were all designed by Carl Koch. In 1946 *Progressive Architecture* declared “the original five houses at Snake Hill designed by Carl Koch constitute one of the best known and most significant groups of contemporary houses in the world”.

The original owners of this house were Gardner Cushman and his wife Mary Wyatt Cushman who purchased the house on lot 7 in 1940 (Book 6427, Page 173). Gardner Cushman (1913-1992) was an attorney. The Cushman House is located next to Koch’s own house (77 Snake Hill Road) and an effort was made to relate the two designs while reducing intrusions on each other’s privacy. The house was designed with an open and flexible interior plan with minimal partitions that would detract from the views to the east. It was also designed with future expansion in mind. The original floorplan includes a dotted-in space for the future study and this was subsequently constructed as part of the 1949 renovations. The original cost of the house was \$6,700. The 1949 addition was also design by Carl Koch and was constructed by Tobiason. In 1986 Mrs. Cushman also had a two-car garage constructed.

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Mary Wyatt Cushman sold the property in 1994. It was owned by Gregory Leonard from 1994 until 2002. During this period an addition was made to the rear of the house to enlarge the kitchen; the front entry was also modified. Jeremiah Eck of Boston was the architect for the additions. Shiva Ayyadurai purchased the house in 2002 and still owns it today (Book 37455, Page 533). He is an MIT professor who is credited with inventing an e-mail system. He copyrighted the term "EMAIL" in 1982 shortly after he began as an undergrad at MIT.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Betts, Richard B. *The Streets of Belmont and How they Were Named* (2nd edition). Belmont: Belmont Historical Society, 2012.
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"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.

<http://www.vashiva.com/innovation/email/vashiva-inventor-history.asp#inv07>

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Cushman House, 1941

Source: *Architectural Forum*, June 1941

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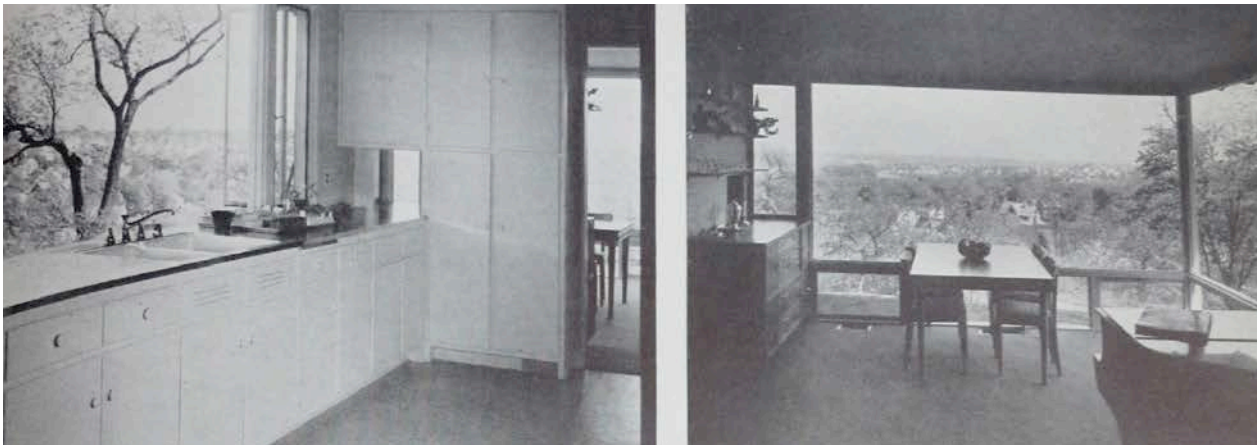
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Source: *Architectural Forum*, June 1941

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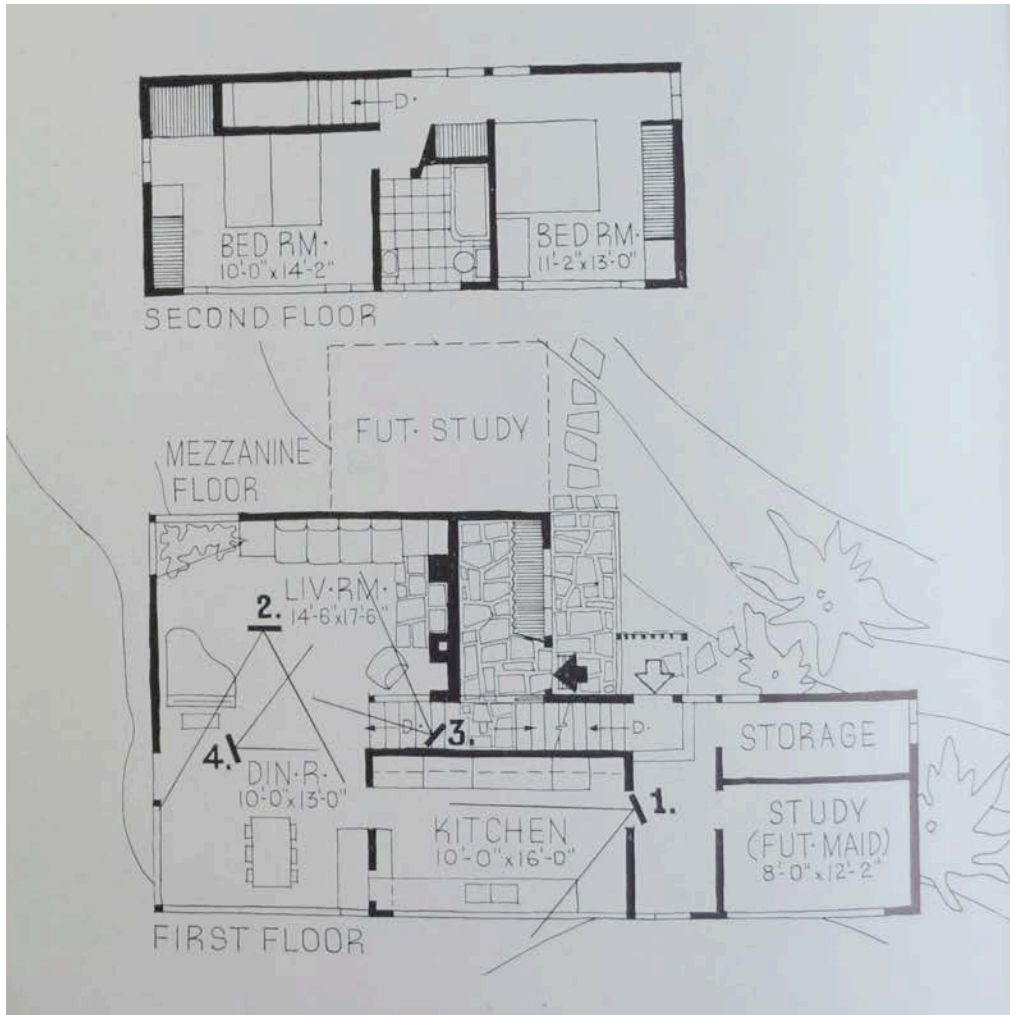
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Original Floor Plan

Source: *Architectural Forum*, June 1941

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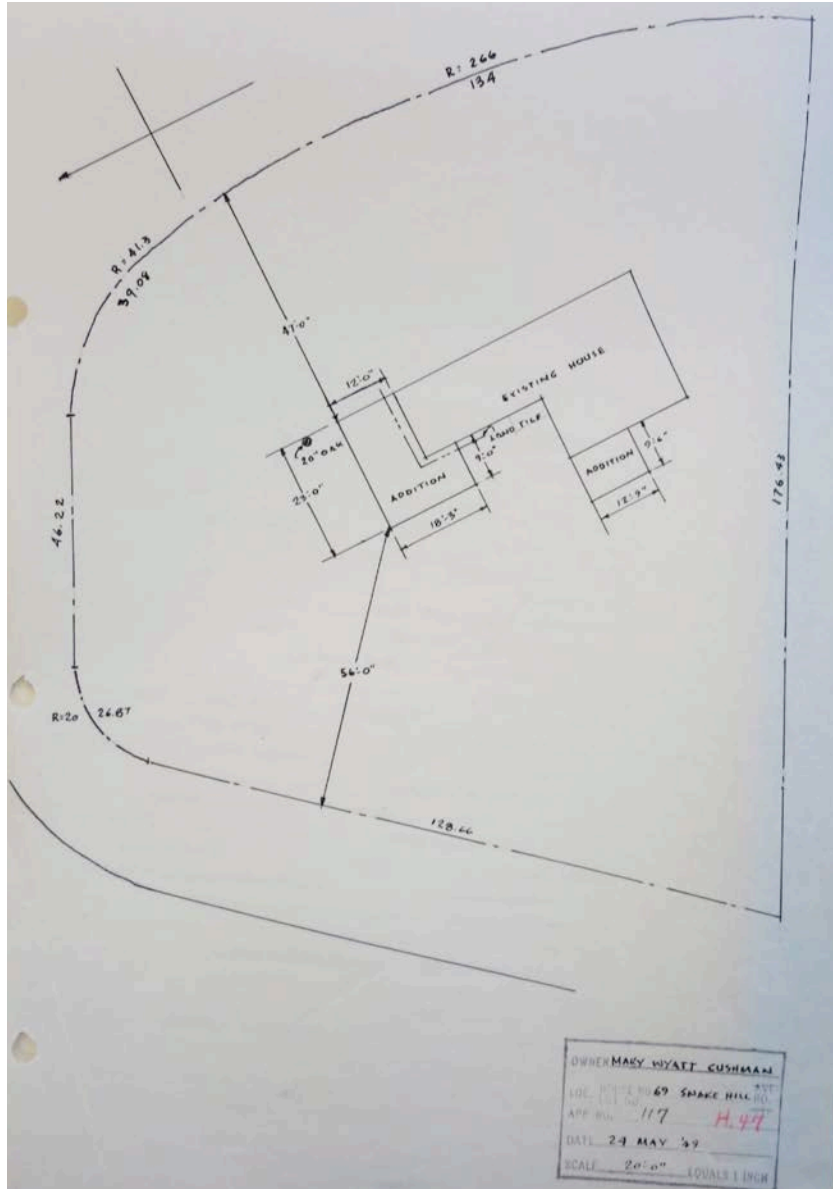
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Plan of 1949 additions (Carl Koch, architect)

Source: Town of Belmont Building Department

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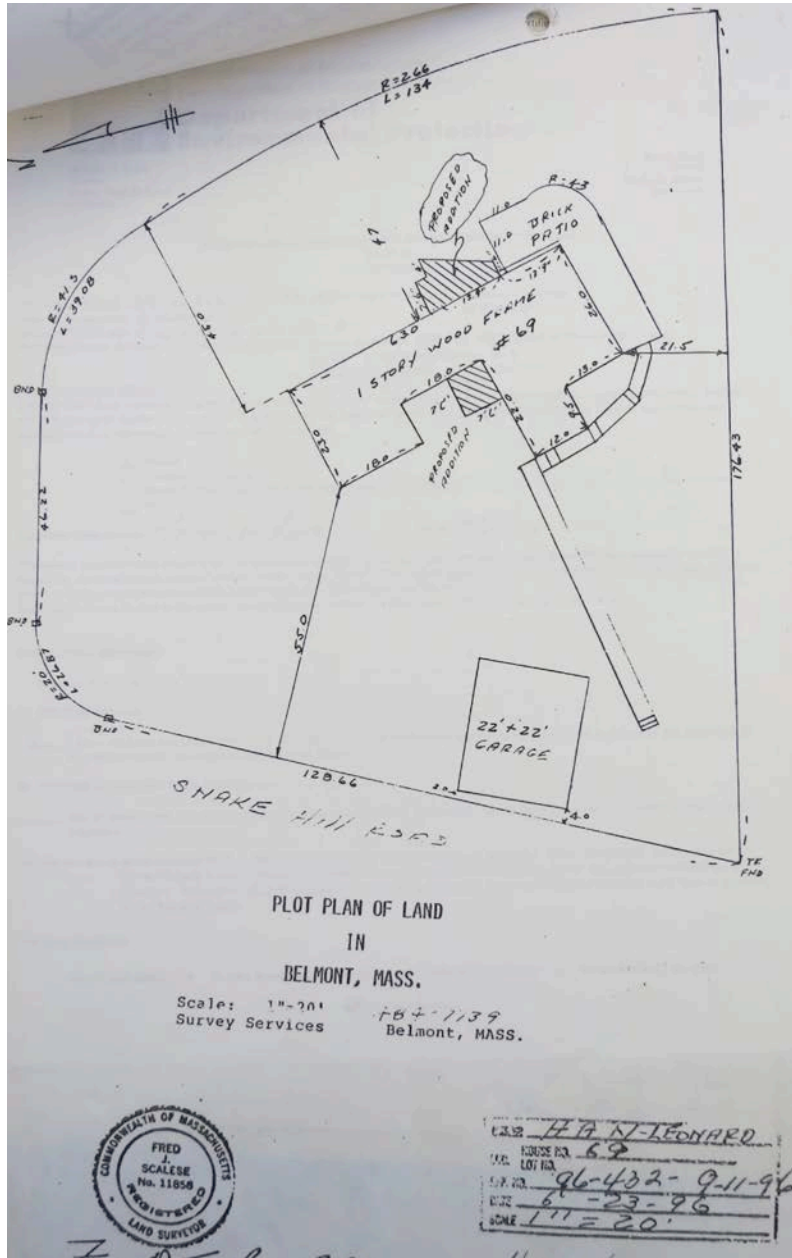
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Plan of 1996 additions

Source: Town of Belmont Building Department

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View from west, 2016

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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 Cushman House at 69 Snake Hill Road is eligible for the National Register, under Criteria A and 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 1940 as part of the first phase of construction. The planned community was the joint venture of five individuals including Koch who lived at 77 Snake Hill Road. The original owner, Gardner Cushman, was one of these and was a lawyer. The house was featured in a June 1941 article in *Architectural Forum* on Snake Hill. The house has seen two additions (one of which was intended as part of the original design by the Carl Koch). Compared to the other Snake Hill Road houses, this is one of the least altered.