

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

|      |              |    |         |
|------|--------------|----|---------|
| 58-5 | Boston North | AU | BLM.823 |
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**Town/City:** Belmont

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

**Address:** 83 Snake Hill Road

**Historic Name:** Edward & Elsa Hartshorne 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, architect;  
Tobiason Brothers, builders

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: vertical wood boards

Roof: tar and gravel

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
none

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*):

2011- renovations and large addition at rear (east)

**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no  yes  **Date:**

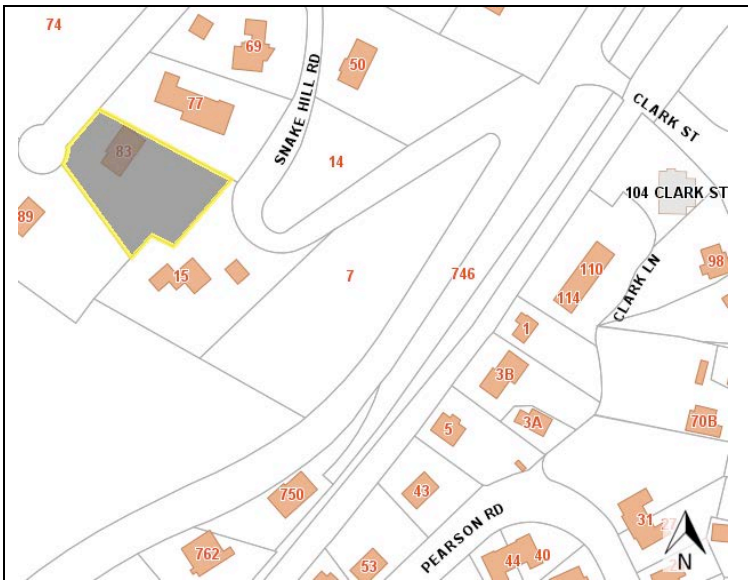
**Acreage:** 20,720 SF

**Setting:** Contemporary dwellings on steep hillside setting with views of Boston

## Photograph



## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Lisa Mausolf

**Organization:** Belmont Historic District Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): April 2016

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

83 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.*

Constructed in 1940, the house at 83 Snake Hill Road is one of the original five houses at Snake Hill designed by Carl Koch, widely considered a landmark grouping of contemporary dwellings. Like the other Snake Hill drawings, it is designed with modern materials, no decorative detailing, an open floorplan and blends with the natural setting. The two-level house is capped by a sloped roof and is clad in vertical boards above a concrete foundation. The single-story façade, visible from Snake Hill Road, is very much as it was originally with an attached garage to the east and the entrance sheltered by a minimalistic porch supported by plain posts. The windows are arranged in bands and a large brick chimney stack emerges from the roof.

The rear two-level elevation is also clad in vertical boards and includes two additions dating to 2011 which are sensitive to the original design intent.

## 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. The house at 83 Snake Hill Road was built for Edward and Elsa Hartshorne.

Carl Koch (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 Snake Hill, a community housing project. Koch initially developed the project as a way to design an inexpensive home for himself and his family. The house next door 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”.

Koch believed that open and flexible interior planning was the key to meeting the individual requirements of owners economically. Complicated details and expensive millwork were eliminated to the greatest degree possible and commonplace materials were utilized. Dictated by the conditions of the site, the Hartshorne House consisted of a single story on one side and two on the other with services in the excavated portion of the ground floor. Like the other Snake Hill Houses, the main rooms face in a southerly direction to take advantage of sun and view. The Hartshorne House was the largest of the five original houses and contained three bedrooms, a maid’s room and study. The cost of the home was \$9,230.

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Dr. Edward Yarnall Hartshorne (1912-1946) was the author of a book entitled *The German Universities and National Socialism*, published in 1937. He was shot and killed on August 30, 1946 while traveling in Germany on official business. His wife sold the house shortly thereafter to Edmund Keville (Book 6977, Page 548). Architect Hugh Stubbins reportedly lived here between 1941 and 1960 when he moved to Lexington. He apparently rented part of the house from the owner, Edmund Keville. The 1955 town directory lists both Hugh Stubbins and Edmund Keville as living here.

Edmund Keville (1910-2005) was born in Belmont and was a graduate of Harvard College and Boston College Law School. After serving in the Navy in World War II, he returned to Belmont in 1946 and bought this house where he resided with his wife Mary. He served as a judge for 35 years, serving in the Probate Court and state Appeals Court. In the 1950s he was chief secretary to former Massachusetts governor Christian A. Herter. Mary Keville died in 1984; Judge Keville died in 2005 and the house was sold by his estate in 2008 to Alan Savenor, the present owner. Savenor has made substantial alterations to the house including the addition of two wings which increase the total square footage from 1,697 to 3,500 SF. A geothermal heating system replaces the former oil system and solar collectors have been added to the roof. Hickox Williams were the architects for the 2011 renovation/additions.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

- Ancestry.com [information on Edward Hartshorne]  
Betts, Richard B. *The Streets of Belmont and How they Were Named* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Belmont: Belmont Historical Society, 2012.  
*Boston Globe*, March 3, 2005 [obituary of Edmund Keville].  
"Five Houses in Belmont, Mass.", *Architectural Forum*, June 1941.  
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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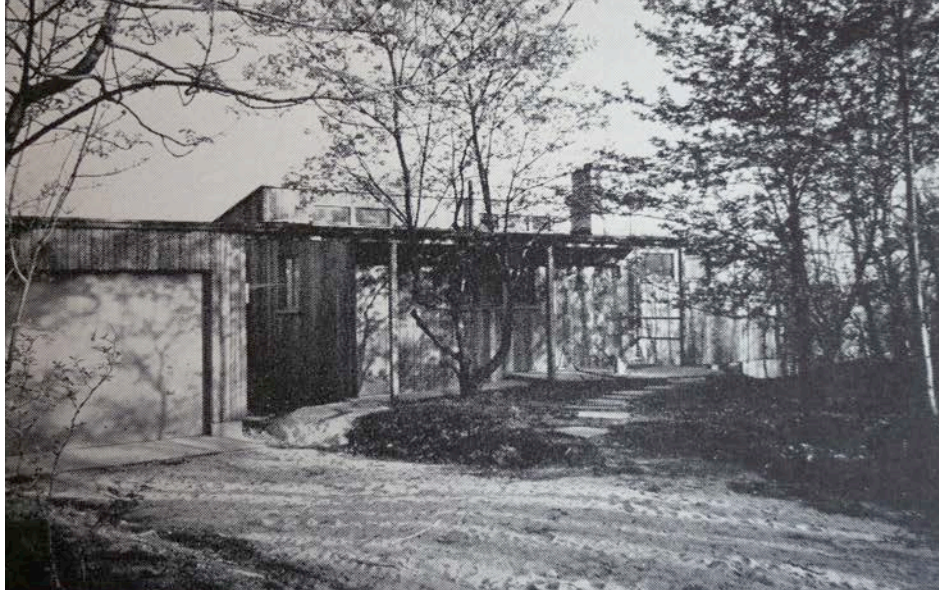
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Entrance Elevation  
Top: *Architectural Forum*, June 1941  
Bottom: current view (2016)

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Northeast corner of house

Source: *Architectural Forum*, June 1941

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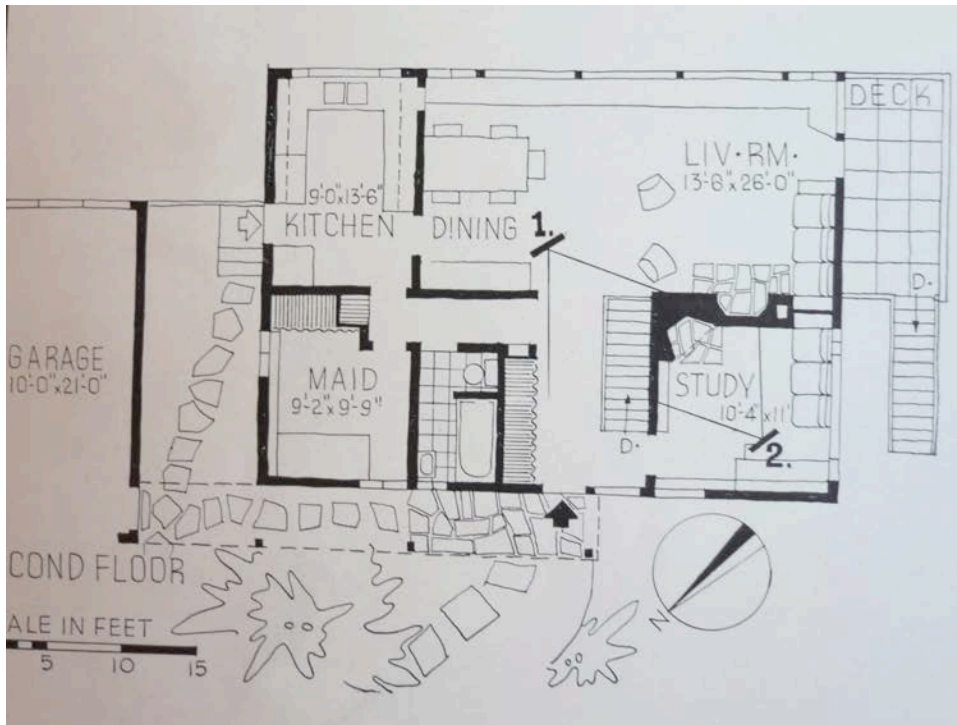
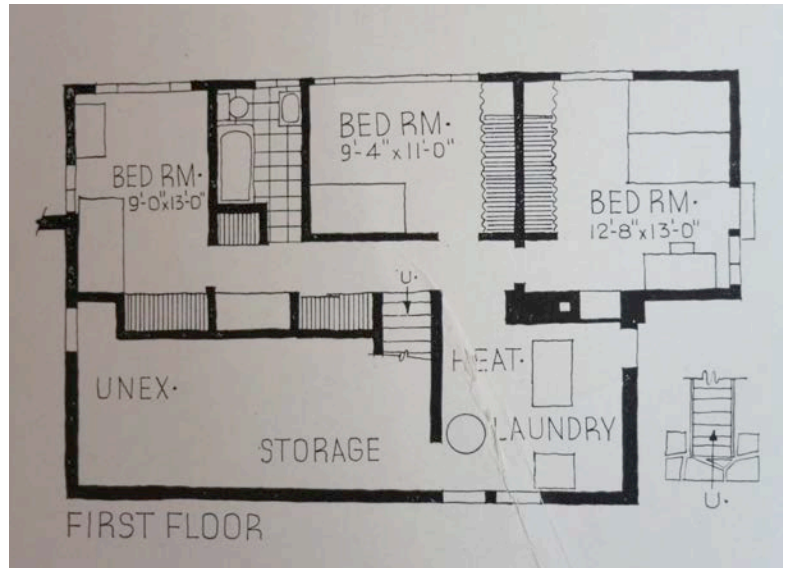
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Original Floor Plan  
*Architectural Forum*, June 1941

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Interior details  
*Architectural Forum*, June 1941

**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 Hartshorne House at 83 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, Dr. Edward Hartshorne, was one of these and was an instructor at Harvard. The house was featured in a June 1941 article in *Architectural Forum* on Snake Hill. A large addition was constructed to the rear in 2011 but the house still retains sufficient integrity to contribute to a potential Snake Hill district.