

FORM A - AREA

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 294 Washington Street, Boston, MA. 02108

Form numbers in this area	Area letter
526-542	R

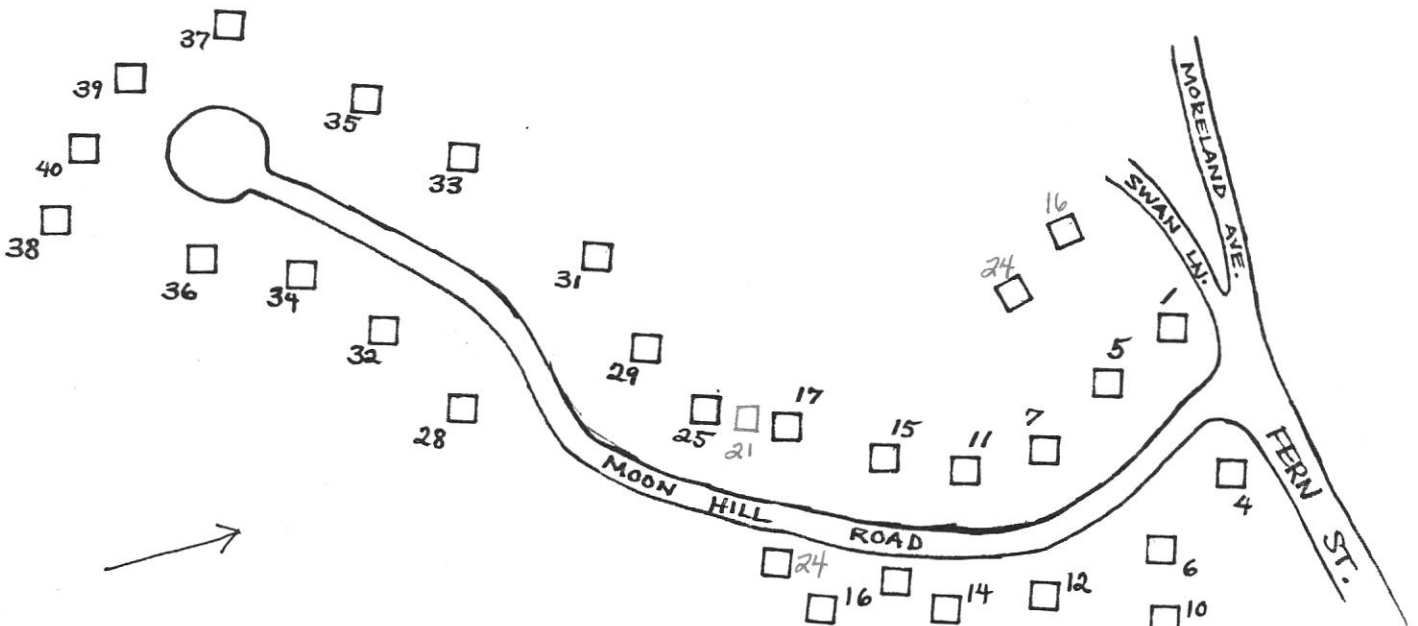


Lexington

f area (if any) Moon Hill

l date or period late 1940s

Sketch map. Draw a general map of the area indicating properties within it. Number each property for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets (including route numbers, if any) and indicate north. (Attach a separate sheet if space here is not sufficient)



Recorded by Nancy S. Seasholes

Organization Lexington Historical Commission

Date February, 1984

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE of area. (Describe physical setting, general character, and architecturally significant structures).

Designed by The Architects Collaborative (TAC), Walter Gropius' firm, as a coherent community of individually designed and well-sited contemporary houses, Moon Hill is in sharp contrast to most post-World War II tract housing developments. Most of Moon Hill is on a ridge with rocky outcrops and oak and pine woods. The houses were sited so as to retain the rural character of the property, disturb the land as little as possible, and take maximum advantage of the views. In order to maintain design coherence, similar exterior finishes were used throughout: flat or shed roofs with a standard overhang and roof joist spacing; white fascia boards and copper roof edges; vertical redwood or cypress siding; and casement and large fixed glass windows set in sub frames, eliminating the need for window trim. These elements plus the strong horizontal lines and use of natural colors reflect the influence of the International Style.

The interior plan was determined by the needs of the individual client and by TAC's explicit desire to design homes for servantless families with children.

(see Continuation Sheet)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE of area. (Explain development of area, what caused it, and how it affected community; be specific).

Six Moon Hill, as this development was originally called, was begun in 1948 by The Architects Collaborative (TAC), a Cambridge firm founded in 1948 by Walter Gropius and seven young architects: Jean Bodman Fletcher, Norman Fletcher, John Harkness, Sarah Harkness, Robert S. McMillan, Louis McMillan, and Benjamin Thompson. The original objective was to provide housing for the TAC architects and their families as well as work for the new firm (Richard Morehouse, personal communication), but the project was also conceived as an experiment in community living. TAC believed that "cooperative principles were important" (Gropius et al. 1966:41) and wanted to create "a genuine neighborhood of well-designed houses in the cooperative spirit" (TAC microfilm). A search was made for a site in the Boston area and one of 20 acres was located on a hill in Lexington. In addition to its unspoiled natural beauty, the site had other advantages: in a town with good government and good schools, half a mile from an elementary school and a shopping center, two miles to Lexington Center, 15 minutes from Harvard Square, one mile to the East Lexington station, easy access to both city and country, surrounded by an area zoned for single family houses, and protected by its hilltop location from traffic but open to vistas and fresh air (TAC microfilm). The former owner had left six 1920s Moon cars in a garage on the property; hence, TAC named it Six Moon Hill.

All the TAC architects except Gropius, who already had a house in Lincoln, Massachusetts, joined with seven other university families to develop the land. Because Massachusetts law prevented the establishment of a true co-op and the AIA code of ethics forbade architects to participate directly in development, a

(see Continuation Sheet)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Gropius, Walter et al., editors. 1966. The Architects Collaborative: 1945-1965, pp. 37-47. Switzerland: Arthur Niggli Ltd.

"Groupe d'habitation pres de Boston." L'architecture d'aujourd'hui 28, February 1950, pp. 34-39, 110-111.

Reinhardt, E.W. "The Architect Designed Development: Two Prototypes and their Implications." Paper prepared for FA798, Boston University, May 6, 1974.

(see Continuation Sheet)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Lexington	Form No: R
Property Name: Moon Hill	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Thus, kitchen, dining, and play spaces were often integrated to facilitate the supervision of small children, and service entrances were often eliminated. To meet the demand for more space for less money, spaces were designed for multiple uses and, because excavation was necessary to at least the four-foot frost line, half basements were often used. Large panes of glass were extensively employed to increase the sense of space, maintain contact with the outdoors, and take advantage of the superlative views. Cinder block walls and cement floors were used to cut costs and radiant heat installed in the ceilings or the cement floors.

In addition to these design innovations, the Moon Hill houses also employed some new architectural elements. As a result of research TAC conducted for Rohm and Haas Company of Philadelphia, who wanted a peacetime use for plexiglass developed during the war for bomber turrets and noses, the houses pioneered the use of bubble skylights in varying sizes. Other innovations were the use of sliding glass doors in wood frames and overhead glass doors on garage door hardware.

A number of architecturally significant structures exist in Moon Hill. An earlier survey started to inventory every house, beginning at the top of the hill; the present survey has added comments on or new forms for houses that were designed by the original members of TAC and/or that have been published.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

nonprofit corporation was formed to put in a road, utilities, and sell lots. Because it was the least expensive alternative and restricted the volume of traffic, a cul-de-sac road was built up the middle of the site, which was divided into 29 half-acre lots with four acres of common land. In keeping with the cooperative principles, the house sites were equally priced and the first 12 were assigned according to numbers drawn from a hat. Purchase of a lot entitled the owners to two votes in the corporation and required building within two years and using the services of a resident architect. Any later modifications were to be approved by a community board and members of the corporation were to have right of first refusal on any sales. All but two of the present 28 houses on Moon Hill have been designed by TAC architects (15 and 21 Moon Hill Road were designed by William Haible) and the addition and sale restrictions are still in effect though informally applied. In the early years of Moon Hill the corporation decided to build a community swimming pool; the corporation now sets policy on issues affecting the neighborhood.

Moon Hill today remains an enclave of contemporary houses that has had little architectural affect on Lexington except that it prompted TAC to develop Five Fields, another community of contemporary houses in the same town (see Five Fields area form).

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Community: Lexington	Form No: R
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"Six Moon Hill." Architectural Forum 92(6), June 1950, pp. 113-123.

TAC Job Files 4803. Microfilm on file at TAC Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"Ten Great Places to Live." Esquire, December 1965, pp. 223, 260, 262.

"The Good Life, Inc." Vogue, February 1, 1954, pp. 149, 194-195.

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
LEXINGTON

Property Address
SIX MOON HILL

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

Area(s) Form No.

R	
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**DATA SHEET
AREA R
SIX MOON HILL**

MHC #	Address	Name	Style	Architect/Builder (if known)	Date
	1 Moon Hill Road		Contemporary		
	4 Moon Hill Road		Contemporary		
	5 Moon Hill Road		Contemporary		
526	6 Moon Hill Road	Fletcher Ashley House	Contemporary	Richard S. Morehouse (TAC)	1950
	7 Moon Hill Road		Contemporary		
527	10 Moon Hill Road	Morton Sills House	Contemporary	The Architects Collaborative (TAC)	1948
	11 Moon Hill Road		Contemporary		
	12 Moon Hill Road		Contemporary		
	14 Moon Hill Road	Robert Gallagher House	Contemporary		1949
	15 Moon Hill Road		Contemporary		
528	16 Moon Hill Road	Leonard J. Currie House	Contemporary	Leonard J. Currie (TAC)	c.1948
529	17 Moon Hill Road	Louis McMillan House	Contemporary	Louis McMillan (TAC)	c.1948
	21 Moon Hill Road		Contemporary		
530	25 Moon Hill Road	Donald T. Clark House	Contemporary	TAC	1947
531	28 Moon Hill Road	Waldo Elmer House	Contemporary	TAC	1948
532	29 Moon Hill Road	Eric T. Clarke House	Contemporary	TAC	1948
533	31 Moon Hill Road	Dr. Edwin O. Wheeler House	Contemporary	TAC	1948
534	32 Moon Hill Road	Herbert Stewart House	Contemporary	TAC	1948
535	33 Moon Hill Road	Arthur Kipp House	Contemporary	TAC	1948
536	34 Moon Hill Road	Sarah & John Harkness House	Contemporary	Sarah & John Harkness (TAC)	1948
537	35 Moon Hill Road	Wallace E. Howell House	Contemporary	TAC	1948
538	36 Moon Hill Road	Norman & Jean Fletcher House	Contemporary	Norman & Jean Fletcher (TAC)	1948
539	37 Moon Hill Road	Richard S. Morehouse House	Contemporary	Richard S. Morehouse (TAC)	1950
540	38 Moon Hill Road	Robert S. McMillan House	Contemporary	Robert McMillan (TAC)	1948
541	39 Moon Hill Road	Saul G. Cohen House	Contemporary	TAC	1948
542	40 Moon Hill Road	Benjamin Thompson House	Contemporary	Benjamin Thompson (TAC)	1948
	16 Swan Lane		Contemporary		
	24 Swan Lane		Contemporary		