

FORM A - AREA

Assessor's Sheets

USGS Quad

Area Letter

Form Numbers in Area

46 & 54

Boston N.

AM

1410-1420

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125



**Town:** Lexington

**Place** (*neighborhood or village*):

**Name of Area:** Rumford Road

**Present Use:** Residential

**Construction Dates or Period:** 1959

**Overall Condition:** good

**Major Intrusions and Alterations:** none

**Acreage:** approx. 10 acres

**Recorded by:** Lisa Mausolf

**Organization:** Lexington Historical Commission

**Date** (*month/year*): July 2000



## AREA FORM

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

*Describe architectural, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community.*

The Rumford Road neighborhood is a development of eleven contemporary style houses constructed in 1959. The houses are examples of the award-winning, split-level design known as the "Peacock Farm" house. Rumford Road is a narrow, curvilinear road which is without sidewalks and climbs uphill from Woburn Street, terminating at Laconia Street. The orientation of each house reflects the contours of its particular site with some of the houses set below the grade of the road and others set on rock outcroppings. Variations in the siting of the buildings avoids the appearance of sameness and uniformity. Some of the houses face the road while others are set at an angle. The original layout of the subdivision retained historic stonewalls along the north and west boundaries. All of the houses feature wooded settings which harmonize well with the houses' natural stained siding and simple design.

The houses are all capped by a low pitch tar and gravel roof with one slope longer than the other. The broadly overhanging eaves display exposed beams. The houses are sheathed in stained vertical cedar siding. Fenestration consists of horizontal bands of windows which include single-pane glass as well as casement units in addition to clerestory windows which extend to the eaves. Separating the bands of windows on the upper level of the facade are plywood panels. Some of the lower level windows are covered by horizontal lathing.

As originally constructed, the houses contained roughly 1,800 square feet, display an open plan layout which separates activities according to their noise level. The three-level interior which is divided functionally with three bedrooms and bath on the top level, living room, dining room, kitchen and main entrance on the middle level and a playroom, utility room and/or garage (convertible to two additional bedrooms) on the lower level. Interior features include a distinctive fireplace wall separating the entrance hall and living room, sloping ceilings and exposed beams. From the exterior the brick chimney is visible through the clerestory window.

The Rumford Road neighborhood retains a high degree of integrity. In comparison to some of the other similar Peacock Farm neighborhoods in Lexington, the houses on Rumford Road have seen fewer large additions and the inherent design of the houses remains fully recognizable. Houses which have seen the construction of additional living space include **4 and 13 Rumford Road**. Several of the houses including **5, 9, 10, 11 and 12 Rumford Road** appear to be virtually unchanged. Most of the original owners appear to have chosen lower level living space rather than a garage and several of the houses including **8 and 13 Rumford Road** have witnessed the addition of garage structures.

Lexington has approximately ten developments of Contemporary style houses (see also **Areas S, AK, AL, AN**), including the Rumford Road houses and these constitute some of Lexington's most significant architectural resources.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how this area relates to the historical development of the community.*

Rumford Road is one of five areas in Lexington developed with a split-level dwelling which became known as the "Peacock Farm" house. In addition to the original **Peacock Farms development (Area S)** and adjacent extension, **Peacock Hill** (1940s), the other areas are **Turning Mill Road (Area AN)** (1957-1961) in North Lexington; **Glen Estates (Area AK)** *off Grove St.* (1960-6); and the **Grove (Area AL)** off Burlington Street (1962-1964). Other communities featuring the same house design were built in Wayland and Newton. The Rumford Road subdivision followed on the heels of the success of Peacock Farms which met national acclaim in 1956-7 including first prize in the national "Homes for Better Living" contest sponsored by the A.I.A., a First Award from House and Home magazine and exhibited in the National Association of Home Builders' Hall of Fame in Washington.

Recommended as a National Register District. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form*

## INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town  
LexingtonProperty Address  
Rumford Road  
Area(s) Form No.Massachusetts Historical Commission  
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## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (continued)

As part of the Peacock Farm development, Cambridge architect Walter Pierce was commissioned by developers Harmon White and Edward Green to design a house which would meet the needs of the young professional buyers they hoped to attract. The resulting design, known as "the Peacock Farm house" contained 1,825 sq. ft. including garage and sold for just over \$20,000. For an extra \$1,500 buyers had the option of adding two bedrooms and a bath in the basement garage space and a separate garage outside the house.

The Rumford Road contemporaries were built in what was known as the Battleview Park subdivision, Section 2. The land was developed by the Battle View Realty Trust which was owned by Ralph Frissore of Lexington and his partner, Joseph Monsignore. The development was constructed by Benjamin Franklin Homes of Newton (also known as Lexland Construction Corporation) who also constructed the other subdivisions of Peacock Farm houses in Lexington (Upper Turning Mill Road, The Grove and Glen Estates). The initial phase of the project involved the construction of conventional split-level homes at 15 and 17 Rumford Road in 1957. In the second phase of the project Rumford Road was extended to Woburn Street and laid out in lots which are approximately 30,000 square feet. The final eleven houses were all constructed in 1959.

The "Peacock Farm" house prototype was popular with young professional buyers and the Rumford Road houses were no exception. Directories indicate that within the Rumford Road subdivision, the original households were all comprised of male breadwinners and their spouses who are listed as housewives. The residents had an average age of 30 in 1960 and all had moved to Lexington in 1959 from various locations in Massachusetts and across the nation. Their occupations included physicians, engineers, a chemist, psychologist, optometrist, accountant and mathematician. Of the eleven original homeowners, four continue to occupy the dwellings today, forty years after their construction.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey of Lexington, Book 1, 1984 [Area S, Peacock Farm].  
*House and Home*, October 1956, June 1957.  
 Lexington Assessors records.  
 Lexington Building Department Records.  
 Lexington Planning Board records.  
 Middlesex County Register of Deeds, Sept. - Oct. 1958, Plan No. 1298, Book 9243, Pg. 49.  
 Seney, Noel. "A Split-Level that Makes Sense", *Better Homes and Gardens*, May 1960.  
*Time*, May 20, 1957.

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**DISTRICT DATA SHEET  
AREA AM  
RUMFORD ROAD**

Assessors	Resource	Address	Style	Date	MHC#
46/16	Peter & Katharine Waterman House	4 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1410
46/18	Theodore & Jane Yoos House	5 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1411
46/17	Karl & Hedwig Schmid House*	6 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1412
54/123	Conan & Marcia Kornetsky House*	7 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1413
54/128	Eugene & Sylvia Merfeld House	8 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1414
54/122	Harry & Lois Zeltzer House	9 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1415
54/129	Gilbert & Edith Levey House*	10 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1416
54/121	Harry & Sarah Wolfe House	11 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1417
54/130	Murray & Norma Herscott House	12 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1418
54/120	Carl & Marjorie Friedman House	13 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1419
54/131	Herbert Slade House*	14 Rumford Rd.	Contemporary	1959	1420

\*Still owned by members of the same family in 2000.

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7 Rumford Road



8 Rumford Road



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9 Rumford Road



10 Rumford Road

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12 Rumford Road

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
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Community    Property Address

Lexington    Rumford Road

Area(s)    Form No.

AM	
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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

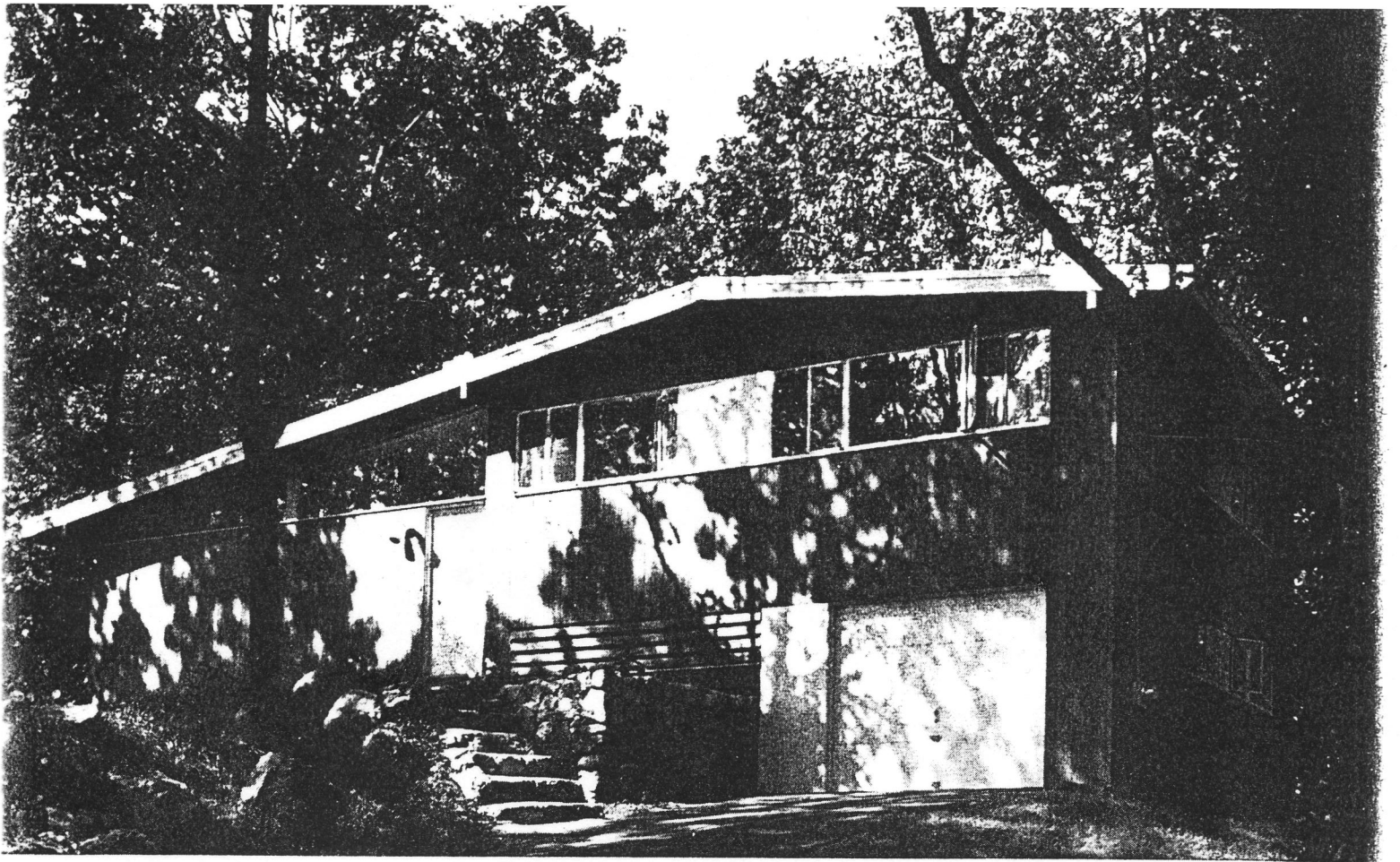
Statement of Significance by: Lisa Mausolf

*Justify criteria that are checked in the above sections:*

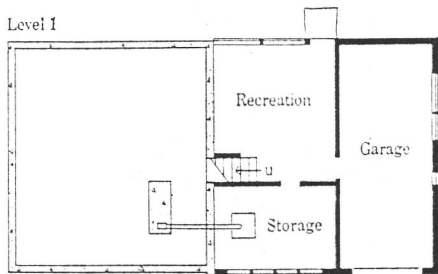
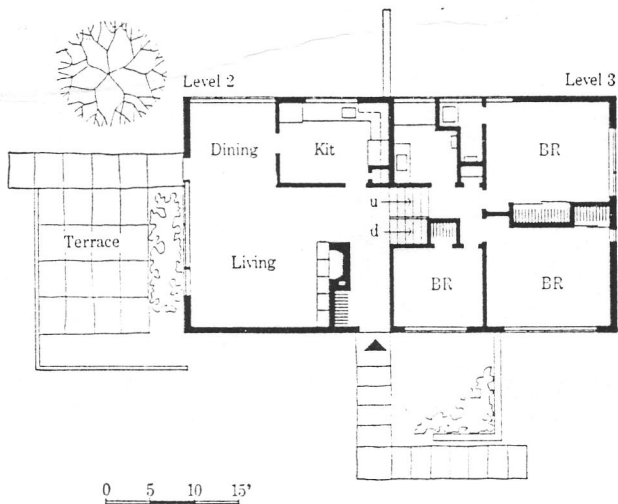
The Rumford Road subdivision is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as an intact example of a late 1950s subdivision of award-winning, split-level residences known as the "Peacock Farm" house, named after the Lexington neighborhood where the houses were first constructed. Rumford Road is one of five areas in Lexington developed with this type of dwelling giving the town a concentration of these Contemporary-style houses which is without parallel in the region or the state.

The Rumford Road neighborhood in particular exhibits a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The aspects of integrity which are most important to the neighborhood include setting, design, and materials. Critical elements include the relationship between the houses and their surrounding and the unique way in which each dwelling is oriented to make the most of the site and its natural topography. The wooded setting adds to the character of the neighborhood and harmonizes well with the natural stained siding on the houses. Although the siting of the houses varies considerably, all of the houses are built according to the same basic plan and retain a distinctive, asymmetrical gable roof with broadly overhanging eaves, fenestration which includes horizontal bands of windows as well as clerestory units and vertical cedar siding.





**FRONT ELEVATION.** *Jury's comment:* "The well-integrated facade makes the house look considerably larger than it really is. The site planning is excellent, especially the large lot (125' frontage)."



**PLAN.** *Jury's comment:* "The house has excellent circulation between living-dining and bedroom levels. The plan permits very economical plumbing." (Floor area is 1,860 sq. ft. including garage.)

## FIRST AWARD

Class B—\$15,000 to \$20,000

**CITATION:** "An excellent solution of the entire problem: site planning, arrangement of interior circulation, and treatment of the facade."

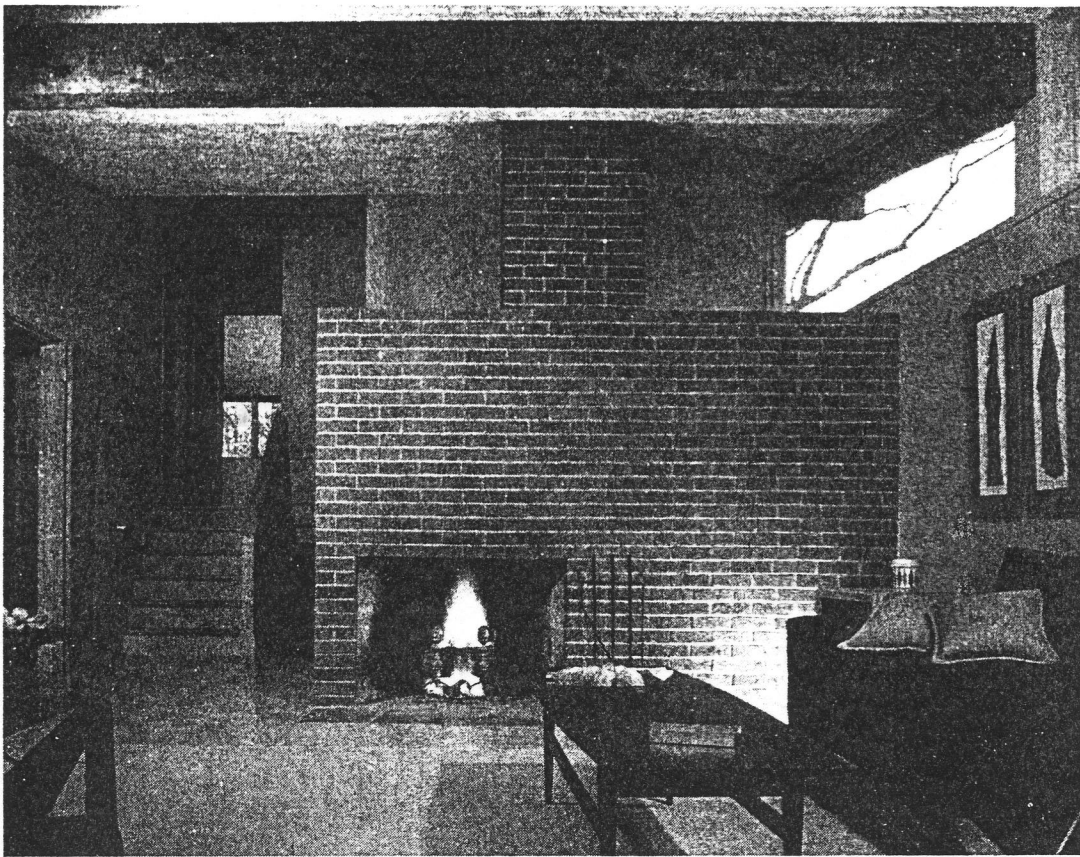
**BUILDER:** Edward Green & Harmon White

**ARCHITECTS:** Compton & Pierce

**LOCATION:** Lexington, Mass.

*This house was one of the 57 houses for '57 published in H&H last October.*

*House + Home June 1957  
pp 142 -*



Photos: Robert D. Harvey Studios

**FIREPLACE WALL.** *Jury's comment:* "We call particular attention to the way the fireplace is used to give privacy for entry without reducing the sense of space in the living room." (You enter the house from behind the fireplace at the right end.)

**LIVING ROOM,** below, as seen from the stairway at the fireplace wall.

