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United States Department of the Interior  
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National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items

New Submission  Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Mid-Century Modern Houses of Lexington, Massachusetts

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Mid-Century Modern Architecture in the United States, 1945-1970

Prefabrication and Mid-Century Modernism in the United States, 1945-1970

Post-World War II Residential Expansion In Lexington, Massachusetts, 1945-1970

C. Form Prepared by

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.  
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Brona Simon*

*September 20, 2012*

Signature and title of certifying official Brona Simon, SHPO, MHC | Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*For Edson H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

*11-21-12*  
Date of Action

Mid-Century Modern Houses of Lexington, Massachusetts

MA

Name of Multiple Property Listing

State

**Table of Contents for Written Narrative**

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

	<b>Page Numbers</b>
<b>E. Statement of Historic Contexts</b> (if more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)	1
<b>F. Associated Property Types</b> (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)	23
<b>G. Geographical Data</b>	30
<b>H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods</b> (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)	30
<b>I. Major Bibliographical References</b> (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)	33

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 1

### E. Statement of Historic Contexts

The principal historic context identified for this Multiple Property Documentation is the development of *Mid-Century Modern Architecture in the United States, 1945-1970*. A national context was chosen because many of the architects active in Lexington achieved national recognition, and many Lexington houses were featured in national publications, both professional and general-interest, throughout the 1940s and 1950s. In at least two cases, the Hugh Stubbins House and the Six Moon Hill subdivision, Lexington properties can be said to have had international renown. The Lexington houses are also related to the architectural programs of Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, both of which were among the country's leading architectural schools and produced graduates who went on to have distinguished careers in many other parts of the country. One can identify some secondary characteristics in Lexington that distinguish its Modern houses from those elsewhere in the United States (fewer completely flat roofs, more hilly topography, more groups of like houses), but in nearly every sense, the Lexington houses embody the distinguishing characteristics of a type of building that appeared all over America in the post-World War II period. Mid-Century Modernism on the state and local levels are discussed as subcontexts of the national theme in the detailed statement of historic contexts that follows.

One aspect of Mid-Century Modernism, prefabrication, has been broken out as a separate historic context, *Prefabrication and Mid-Century Modernism in the United States, 1945-1970*. Not all Modernists were interested in manufactured housing, but a substantial number were, and among the thousands of prefabricated Modernist houses built throughout the country are several dozen examples in Lexington.

The third historic context, *Post-World War II Residential Expansion in Lexington, Massachusetts, 1945-1970*, recognizes the numerous changes brought to the town by postwar population growth. No less than the postwar garden apartments and subdivisions of Capes and ranches, the Modernist houses of Lexington recall that era of great change and so have historical significance apart from their architectural qualities.

The time period for these historic contexts, 1945-1970, was chosen because the overwhelming majority of the Modernist houses in Lexington that have been identified to date were built between the end of World War II and 1970. The years 1945-1970 also correspond to the period of historical development that gave rise to these houses, the post-World War II residential expansion of Lexington. Lexington had experienced some suburbanization previously, but the greatest period of growth occurred after the war, when the town was transformed not only physically, with new streets, churches, public buildings, and utility services, but also politically and socially, as younger families with children made up an increasing proportion of the population.

These three historic contexts are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

### I. Mid-Century Modern Architecture in the United States, 1945-1970

Modernist architecture can be defined in a negative sense by considering it as opposition to the historicist styles of the Victorian period and the revival styles of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In place of forms and details drawn from Classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, or the Renaissance, Modernist architects proposed that form, line, proportion, and the honest expression of structure and materials would suffice as a basis for architecture. The Modernists proposed freedom from received forms (especially symmetrical façades), from the use of traditional fenestration and fenestration patterns, and from formal interior plans. The Modernists saw themselves as embracing the industrial age, and so explored steel framing, the use of industrial materials (such as cork sheeting

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
 Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 2

for residential floors), and manufactured building components. Above all, the Modernists avoided what they regarded as useless decoration—especially details like dentils and Palladian windows—that made reference to the architecture of the past. In a manifesto written in 1908, entitled “Ornament and Crime,” the Austrian architect Adolph Loos labeled ornament as degenerate, even immoral, and proclaimed that “the evolution of culture marches with the elimination of ornament from useful objects.” Loos was hardly alone. In Germany, a group of architects that included Hermann Muthesius, Peter Behrens, and Fritz Schumacher, started the Deutscher Werkbund in 1907 to promote a more functional and rational approach to architecture, while in the Netherlands J.J.P. Oud and others formed De Stijl in 1917.

Among the many roots of Modernism are the works of Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). Wright’s Prairie-Style Houses of the early 1900s prefigured Modernism with their shallow-pitched roofs, overall horizontality, and freely massed forms, and their decorative detailing was as likely to arise from the materials themselves, or from Wright’s own preference for abstract, rectilinear motifs, as from any particular precedent. One of Wright’s earliest publications, *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (1910), known as the Wasmuth Portfolio after its Berlin publisher, had a great influence on European architects of the period. Le Corbusier is known to have owned and shared a copy of the portfolio, both Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra re-located to the United States in part because of it, and the arrival of the portfolio in the office of Peter Behrens in Berlin, where both Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius were working, is said to have caused work to stop for a day while all studied the Robie House, Unity Temple, and other Wright designs.

After the war, Gropius, by then having left the office of Behrens, assumed leadership of the Bauhaus, a design school that not only included architecture in its manifesto but also painting, photography, printmaking, and several other arts; the painters Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky were among the early participants. Located first in Weimar, the Bauhaus, founded by Henry van der Velde, not only instructed hundreds of students in design, it also mounted well-publicized exhibitions that showcased the work of the school’s workshop leaders and its students. Publicizing Modernism proved to be a blessing and a curse: as reactionary forces gained political power in Germany, the Bauhaus was forced to endure budget reductions, until the city of Dessau came forth with an offer of new funding. In 1926, the Bauhaus moved to a striking new glass-walled, steel-framed building in Dessau, designed by Gropius. The left-leaning Hannes Meyer became director in 1928, but his overtly political policies antagonized both local authorities and staff members, causing many to resign. He, in turn, was replaced in 1930 by Mies van der Rohe, who had achieved considerable notice in the 1920s for his austere glass and steel buildings. The following year, the National Socialists took over the city government in Dessau. Rightly perceiving the school as inherently international rather than properly German, the Nazis moved against the Bauhaus, cutting off funding and eventually using the police to close it down. Gropius, Mies, and others associated with the Bauhaus, or who had been associated with it in the past, dispersed to England, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

Although the Bauhaus was the institutionalized embodiment of Modernism, by the 1920s the Modernist outlook had established itself in many other places besides Central Europe. In France, the Swiss-born Charles Edouard Jenneret (Le Corbusier) issued in 1921 *L’Esprit Nouveau*, a rejection of the Beaux-Arts establishment and a powerful argument for rationalizing architecture in accordance with the machine age, followed in 1922 by *Vers une Architecture* (re-issued in English in 1927 as *Toward a New Architecture*). In addition to his writings, Le Corbusier put his principles into action with numerous concrete, steel-framed commissions in the 1920s that attracted considerable attention. In Italy, a group of Modernists banded together as the Gruppo 7, while in

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 3

Scandinavia, Alvar Aalto introduced the style with his Turku Apartments and Viipuri Library, both from 1927. All these threads came together in 1928 with the formation of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). Periodically, leading Modernists would gather to address a particular topic—rationalization of building construction, affordable housing, city planning, high-rise architecture—and issue a report that would serve as both a summary of work to date and a challenge for the future. CIAM was able to hold five congresses, in various European locations, from 1928 to 1937, after which the onset of war made meeting impossible.

In the United States, architectural education was still firmly in the Beaux Arts mode, but that did not stop individual architects from joining their European colleagues in supporting the new approach. In southern California, Irving Gill (1870-1936) designed several houses in the World War I period that Le Corbusier or the Bauhaus architects would have found completely familiar, though it appears he came to his rejection of the old ways as Wright did, through an apprenticeship with Sullivan and Adler in Chicago. Another influence that set California on an early road to Modernism was the presence of two Austrian architects, Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler, who had come to America to study with Wright, and who, both together and separately, designed numerous houses and other Modernist buildings in the late 1920s and 1930s. Other early immigrants who helped plant Modernism in America include Eliel Saarinen, who designed the Cranbrook Educational Community in a Detroit suburb in 1925 and subsequently taught architecture there, and William Lescaze, who partnered with George Howe to build some of the earliest Modernist buildings in the Northeast. In 1932, the cause was furthered by a major architectural exhibition mounted by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which featured works by Neutra, Aalto, Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe. The exhibition catalog, entitled *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*, written by the exhibition's curator, Philip Johnson, and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, served as a manifesto for the new architecture (and gave it an enduring name). Throughout the country, architects in the 1930s, both native-born and European transplants alike, found clients willing to take a chance on the new and different.

In the 1930s and 1940s, architectural education in the United States turned away from the Beaux-Arts tradition and embraced the principles of Modernism in terms of both aesthetics and pedagogy. Although European émigrés figured largely in the transformation, in every case it was American architects and educators who saw the need for change and recruited the Europeans to help carry out the task. Joseph Hudnut, for example, was already teaching Mies, Gropius, and Le Corbusier to his students at Columbia in the early 1930s, and after he became dean in 1934, he transformed the curriculum and brought in several European-educated scholars to teach architecture, planning, and design. Hudnut then moved on to Harvard at the invitation of its president, James Conant. Together the two created the Harvard Graduate School of Design, and recruited Walter Gropius to head it. In Chicago, George Fred Keck was instrumental in bringing Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to direct the New Bauhaus in 1937, and it was Henry T. Heald, a graduate of the University of Illinois, who brought Mies van der Rohe to the newly formed Illinois Institute of Technology to create both its architecture program and its campus. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the refocusing of the formerly Beaux-Arts curriculum was begun by Walter R. McCormack (dean from 1939 to 1944) and furthered by William Wilson Wurster (dean from 1944 to 1950). The reform of architectural education typically embraced the principles of design in general as a starting point for architecture, emphasized the need to integrate practical, contemporary problems into studio work, and integrated city planning and landscape design into the curriculum (in many cases, by uniting formerly separate programs into a single school). By the end of World War II, Modernism no longer represented the avant-garde, but rather had become the accepted wisdom in all the country's leading architectural schools.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 4

The reorganizations of architectural education at Harvard and MIT were particularly consequential because those two institutions trained a large number of architects, and because both enjoyed national prestige as two of the nation's leading architectural programs. Although recruiting Gropius for Harvard may be the best known of Joseph Hudnut's accomplishments, it was neither the first nor most dramatic of his actions. Hudnut began by stripping the architecture buildings of all vestiges of the past by removing copies of Old Master paintings and plaster casts of Classical building fragments and sculpture. Walls that had divided the architecture, landscape, and planning faculties came down, creating more open interiors intended to foster cooperation. Next attacking the library, he consigned architectural history books, which he called "a reference library for archaeology," to storage. In his second year, 1936, came the most momentous change: Harvard's separate architecture, planning, and landscape programs were united into a single graduate program called the Graduate School of Design. The change was more than semantic: it represented a firm commitment to the Bauhaus idea that there were core principles of design underlying all artistic specialties. The final step was to bring a genuine Bauhaus master to Cambridge as chairman of the department of architecture.

Conant and Hudnut considered both Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius for the position. Both were regarded as occupying the apex of European modernism, and both, living abroad as virtual refugees from the reactionary forces then in control of Germany, were available. According to Pearlman (2007: 67-70), Conant was more impressed by Gropius, while Hudnut leaned toward Mies, but then Mies took himself out of the running when he discovered that he was one of two candidates, not Harvard's sole choice. Gropius arrived in March 1937 and immediately put his own mark on Harvard by convincing Hudnut to hire two additional Bauhaus figures: the painter and graphic designer Josef Albers, who had been at Black Mountain College since 1933, and the architect/furniture designer Marcel Breuer. In 1938, Gropius arranged to have Martin Wagner, who had served as Berlin's city planner before being expelled by the Nazis, hired to teach courses in planning and housing. Hudnut's choice for the landscape architecture program, Christopher Tunnard, also came by way of Gropius: Gropius knew him from his years in London, where Tunnard and Gropius's partner, Maxwell Fry, had worked closely together. Gropius was unable to institute one change he wanted, making Basic Design the fundamental introductory course for the entire school (he and Hudnut eventually fell out over this issue), but by the eve of World War II, the Harvard School of Design had a faculty with wide-ranging design interests and a deep commitment to Modernism.

At MIT, the changes took place over a longer period of time but were of a similar character. The Department of Architecture's head, William Emerson, was himself trained at the École des Beaux-Arts, and he sustained that tradition during his long tenure at MIT (1919-1939). At the same time, he oversaw some notable steps toward modernization. In 1932, city planning was added to the curriculum, and architecture and planning were then made a separate school, with Emerson as dean. Lawrence B. Anderson (M. Arch., MIT, 1930) joined the faculty in 1933, beginning his long career as a proponent of Modernism, both as a practitioner and as an educator. Another important addition during Emerson's time was the establishment of the Albert Farwell Bemis Foundation in 1938, dedicated to "the search for, and dissemination of, knowledge pertaining to adequate, economical, and more abundant shelter." Walter McCormack, Emerson's successor as dean, brought Alvar Aalto to MIT in 1940 to serve a year as Research Professor in Architecture, and his successor, William W. Wurster, brought Aalto back, not only to teach but also to design Baker House, a new dormitory. Wurster also undertook a revision of the curriculum similar to what had been accomplished at Columbia and Harvard. Gyorgy Kepes, who had taught Light and Color at the Dessau Bauhaus, was brought from Chicago to teach courses in visual design, as was the sculptor Richard Filipowski of Poland, who taught design theory. In 1946, Henry-Russell Hitchcock began

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 5

teaching architectural history. Two Modernist architects, Ralph Rapson and Carl Koch, arrived from Cranbrook and Harvard, respectively. Wurster himself influenced the philosophy of design offered by the school. His experience designing houses in California, characterized by indigenous materials, simple lines, and natural settings, allowed him to show students a way to move beyond Bauhaus severity.

As befitted an institution with roots in engineering, instruction in architecture at MIT focused on technical solutions to actual problems, such as temporary housing for returning veterans and a high-rise apartment building for MIT staff. Under Wurster's direction, the School of Architecture and Planning also began its first experiments with solar-heated houses, a program that eventually resulted in the construction of four model solar homes, including one built in Lexington.

The number of students in the architecture programs of Harvard and MIT, as well as other schools across the country, plummeted during the war years, but after the war enrollments quickly reached and even exceeded the prewar levels. As a result of the reforms that had been put in place there and elsewhere, there emerged a new generation of American architects thoroughly imbued with the Modernist outlook.

Modernism dominated commercial and institutional architecture in the United States for at least a quarter century following World War II and cannot be regarded as over even now. Landmark buildings such as Lever House (Gordon Bunshaft/Skidmore Owings Merrill, 1952), the United Nations headquarters (Wallace K. Harrison, Oscar Niemeyer, Le Corbusier, and others, 1952), and the Seagram Building (Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, 1954-1958) defined a look for urban America that was repeatedly employed for both high-rise towers and glass-walled suburban office-park buildings in the 1950s, 1960s, and into the 1970s. The same aesthetic informed new buildings on college campuses, such as Harvard's graduate center (Gropius and his associates, The Architects Collaborative, 1948-1950), buildings for MIT by Aalto and Eero Saarinen, Ferry House at Vassar (Marcel Breuer, 1951), and countless others built during an unprecedented expansion of American higher education. Public elementary and high schools of the period also featured bands of windows, low or flat roofs, and simple rectilinear lines, but in many, if not most, cases, budget restraints resulted in a lowest-common-denominator Modernism that allowed the architect little room for imagination (a circumstance that also applied to much of the public housing and other multifamily residential architecture of the period).

In architecture for single-family homes Modernism achieved a respectable foothold, but not the dominant position attained in commercial and institutional architecture. A review of articles in professional periodicals, such as *Architectural Forum* and *Architectural Record*, would show that Modernism went from being one of many possibilities in the 1930s to the only respectable form of architecture in the 1950s; *Progressive Architecture*, first published in 1920, had by the late 1940s dispensed with the old architecture altogether. A similar progression occurred in general-interest publications. Some early compendiums, such as *Small Houses* (1936), by the editors of *Architectural Forum*, included some Modernist houses among a preponderance of traditional houses, but by the 1950s, many books of houses featured nothing but Modernist designs (e.g., Ford and Creighton 1951). In the late 1940s and early 1950s, *Better Homes and Gardens*, one of the country's largest-circulation magazines, featured a balance of both traditional and Modernist designs in its monthly Five-Star Home feature (the plans for which could be ordered from the magazine or in leading department stores); by the end of the 1950s, the featured houses were exclusively Modernist. Despite the enthusiasm of architects and most publishers, other popular magazines, such as *House Beautiful*, never embraced Modernism, and *House & Home*, targeted to the home-building industry, split its support down the middle, probably the best reflection of the actual American market for single-family homes. The architectural profession may have become a monolith of Modernism, but the home-buying

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 6

public had not.

Mid-Century Modern residential architecture flourished in areas where there was already some combination of an established Modernist presence, solid middle-class incomes, and more cosmopolitan tastes. Notable concentrations thus exist in the greater Chicago area, northern Virginia, the northwest suburbs of Boston, coastal California, and the well-to-do suburbs of New York City (including Fairfield County, Connecticut). In nearly every large college town, one or more professors chose a Modernist design for his or her house; and in some towns, Modernist houses, including prefabricated systems such as the "Techbuilt," predominated, at least for a short period. In the case of major universities, the Modernist trend extended more broadly into the general region, especially where scenic settings were within a short commuting distance to the classroom or laboratory. Modernist houses also formed a small but highly distinctive component of the period's seasonal homes in places like the coastal communities of New England.

At least in residential architecture, Mid-Century Modernism went well beyond the International Style of the 1920s and 1930s. Although critics often cited the sterility of the glass or concrete box in their denunciation of Modernist architecture, the men and women who graduated from architecture programs in the postwar period saw the Bauhaus look not as an end in itself but as a starting-off point for their imaginations, once they were freed from established preconceptions. As a result, there is considerable diversity among American Mid-Century Modern houses. The use of indigenous natural materials, such as the redwood of California and the fieldstone of New England, led to regional variations: the Bay Area Modernist houses of California, for example, could almost be regarded as a separate type. In many cases, Mid-Century Modernists partook of an enthusiasm for regional forms and materials that verged on the romantic. In addition to the extensive use of redwood siding in Modernist houses in California, examples include Gropius's choice of a "New England" clapboarded exterior for his otherwise Bauhaus home, Breuer's penchant for fieldstone walls, and Philip Johnson's claim that the surrounding Connecticut countryside of fields and stone walls was an essential part of the Glass House concept. Despite a set of overall common principles, Mid-Century Modern architects found a surprising number of ways to express their individuality, so that sameness is rarely encountered. In a review of a Long Island house by The Architects Collaborative, the editors of *House & Home* came up with an apt phrase that expressed the difference between the International Style and Mid-Century Modernism as applied to residential architecture: "the mellowing of the modern."

Within the context of the great diversity of design achieved by the hundreds if not thousands of individual architects active in the period, the Mid-Century Modern house can be described as having the following distinctive characteristics:

- Freedom in form and plan. By setting aside preconceived ideas of architecture, Modernism created a clean slate, which in practice usually translated into a single rectangular prism or a group of related rectangular prisms. Modernists were not opposed to curved shapes, but concern for keeping the cost reasonable (see below), as well as a preference for simplicity, typically resulted in the boxy shape that was praised or condemned, depending upon one's aesthetic outlook.
- A total lack of decorative detail, especially details that referred to earlier architectural styles. Modernists rejected the ornamentation of past architecture, but at the same time, they did not accept the idea that Modernist buildings were necessarily plain, dull, and all the same. Instead, they believed that elements such as cantilevered spaces overhanging basement levels, wood and brick screens, exposed roof beams

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 7

and other structural elements, skylights, and projecting shelters over doorways made up a palette of functionally justifiable elements with which, along with a judicious use of color, architects could create a wide variety of designs.

- An overall horizontality created by flat or shallow-pitched shed or gable roofs; even Modernist houses of two or three levels generally appear horizontal when they are set into slopes. Horizontality is not in itself intrinsic to Modernist architecture; otherwise, skyscraper office buildings and high-rise apartment complexes would be impossible. But in the case of the single-family house, the needs of the family could almost always be met on one or two levels. In the Modernist sensibility, having bedrooms in a secondary wing was a much more direct solution than shoehorning them into an upper-level space formed by a steeply pitched roof, so roof pitches were kept to the minimum imposed by climatic conditions. The increase in horizontality created by wide overhangs of the roof also had a functional aspect: the overhangs protected the siding below from weather, and in summer, shaded the house from some of the sun's rays.
- Use of bands of windows or entire glass walls, rather than individual windows. In earlier styles of architecture, the arrangement of windows could create symmetry for the façade or delineate the various levels of the house, and windows frequently were one of the main locations for added ornamentation. None of this was of interest to the Modernists. Instead, the location and extent of glass was determined by the needs of the spaces within or by the desire to connect the inside with the outside.
- Interior plans that are open and informal. The young families for whom Modernist houses were designed were perceived to be more interested in space that could serve a variety of functions (family meals, evening relaxation, children's play, entertainment of friends) rather than having separate rooms for each activity. Consequently, the houses almost always had a large combined living room and dining space, many times with the kitchen and/or entry hall only partially partitioned off. A fireplace was regarded as a highly desirable amenity for any American home, and the Modernists, almost without exception, provided some sort of fireplace or hearth that would serve as the center of the family's living space.
- A close union between the interior and the exterior. Large glass walls giving onto terraces or decks broke down the distinction between outside and inside activity areas. The outside was easily accessible for play, recreation, or outside meals, and the glass allowed the occupants to experience the scenic qualities of the setting at all times of the year.
- A preference for natural materials, particularly stained wood siding and rough stone masonry. Unlike the Modernist houses of the 1930s, in which concrete, stucco, or white-painted wood exteriors and industrial fixtures like tube railings were in vogue, postwar Modernist houses in the United States were much more likely to relate to their rural, wooded settings by incorporating natural materials. In addressing American culture's longstanding Arcadian thread, postwar Modernists created an architecture that went well beyond its European roots, a development that probably made Modernism attractive to a much wider group of American home buyers.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 8

- Careful attention to siting. Postwar Modernist houses in the United States usually were sited so as to take advantage of specific topological or scenic conditions.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Modernist houses rarely duplicate the setback and orientation of their neighbors, and Modernist developments avoided a grid or other regular spacing of houses. A concern for a house's setting, a preference for wooded settings and informal landscaping, the low roofline and overall horizontal form of most Modernist houses, and the incorporation of natural materials all recall the "organic architecture" principles of Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright himself did not like to be associated with the Modernist movement, but his own work from the 1930s and 1940s, as well as his later writings on architecture, suggest that Wright was one of the influences on postwar Modernists that led to a softening of the stark appearance associated with the Bauhaus.

Some of these characteristics also appeared in the more vernacular houses of the period (such as ranches, raised ranches, and split-levels) that would not in an overall sense be classified as examples of Mid-Century Modernism. For example, the Modernist glass wall overlooking a terrace or deck has become a familiar part of the American backyard, regardless of the style of the house, and the same could be said of bubble skylights. It is harder to delineate the precise relationship between Modernism's preference for a large expanse of glass and the picture window, but both probably derive from a desire to better unite the inside and outside. Similarly, the simple lines, freedom from ornamentation, and open, informal plans that characterized a large portion of American houses of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, were, if not derived from Modernism, at least legitimized by the work of the Modernists that filled the pages of *Better Homes and Gardens* and other popular magazines.

Many Modernists had philosophical, social, and ideological concerns that informed their approach to architecture. At the Bauhaus, and at the American universities that were remade in its image, students were encouraged to conceive of architecture as part of a larger human experience that included other arts, personal and social ethics, and the forces of history. One of those forces of history was the rise of the machine, and Modernists generally accepted industrialization as not only inevitable, but potentially leading to greater wealth, leisure, and, under certain conditions, social harmony. By embracing the machine, the Modernists opened up architecture to acceptance of plainly industrial materials such as steel framing members, cork flooring, and pipe railings. (Earlier, architecture had made use of machine-made products primarily as cheaper imitations of handmade elements.) The Modernists were also attuned to the possibilities for new materials, or new uses for existing materials. At one time or another, plywood, asbestos board, Masonite, vinyl tiles, and acrylic skylights were all used in a straightforward way in Modernistic houses, appreciated for their particular qualities and therefore with no need to hide them.

Many Modernists also felt a social responsibility to meet the needs of less fortunate members of society. From the beginning, Bauhaus architects and artists conceived of themselves as making good design accessible to a wide range of incomes. Good housing for industrial workers was a particular concern. Enthusiasm for the machine and meeting the need for affordable housing often led Modernists to seek ways of making construction less inexpensive by building in quantity, using standard plans, and designing prefabrication systems. In the United States after World War II, the need for housing, which the Europeans had conceived of primarily as an issue for the industrial working class, was seen as a crisis affecting society at large, particularly as returning veterans

<sup>1</sup> One might consider the large-scale Modernist developments of California as an exception, though even in those cases, variety in landscaping and siting probably exceeded that of conventional tract developments.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 9

started families and sought affordable single-family housing in the suburbs. Studio classes at architectural schools focused on the problem of small, affordable houses, and popular magazines were filled with ideas for inexpensive yet desirable homes. Beginning in 1945, *Arts & Architecture* sponsored the "Case Study" series of model houses, most built in the Los Angeles area, in which Modernists such as Richard Neutra, A. Quincy Jones, Eero Saarinen, and Charles and Ray Eames created houses that were to be at once strikingly attractive, inexpensive, and highly efficient. In 1956, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *House & Home*, the National Broadcasting System, and the American Institute of Architects ran a "Homes for Better Living" competition, with separate prizes for custom-built and standard-plan houses. In the period following World War II, equality in income distribution in the United States reached an all-time high. Growth in manufacturing and the attendant well-paid jobs resulted in increased prosperity among industrial employees, and at the same time investment in research and education expanded the ranks of technical and professional workers. There was every reason, therefore, for Modernist architects to expect that many among the growing number of prospective home buyers would appreciate modestly priced contemporary designs. Many though not all Modernist architects were interested in democratizing design, with the result that throughout the country, standard-plan and prefabricated Modernist houses transformed the landscape.<sup>2</sup>

Another ideal shared by many Modernists was the value of collaborative effort. Gropius was especially vigorous in promoting the idea that a team approach would necessarily produce better results than individuals working alone. As the Bauhaus concept of workshops was transferred to American architectural education in the form of group studios focused on a particular problem, most postwar American architects had at least some experience with teamwork. Although few Modernists went as far as Gropius in submerging individual identity within a group, a number of firms achieved great success while explicitly following the collaborative model, including Tecton in England, Skidmore Owings Merrill in the United States, and the young architects with whom Gropius formed The Architects Collaborative.

The Bauhaus concept that all the arts were united by basic design principles led many Modernists to take a broad view of their work in which architecture, interior design, landscape design, and community planning were all closely interrelated. The Europeans who were active in the proceedings of CIAM rarely missed the chance to extend architecture into the realms of public housing and city planning, and the writings of both Wright and Le Corbusier delineated visions that went beyond the individual dwelling to embrace entire cities. A key component of the reform of American architectural education was integrating formerly separate specialties in landscape design and planning into one administrative structure, and ideally, a curriculum with many opportunities for cross-fertilization. Consequently, many Modernists attempted to design not only individual houses but groups of houses that would, in part through good design, promote a feeling of community among the residents. As early as 1940, Carl Koch, whose time at the Harvard Graduate School of Design overlapped Gropius's by only a few months, began work on a group of five houses at Snake Hill in Belmont, Massachusetts (including his own residence), that was intended to create a strong sense of community; it succeeded, and was subsequently expanded with additional houses. In 1943, Gropius began planning a nineteen-lot subdivision in Lincoln, Massachusetts,

<sup>2</sup>The largest single effort is represented by the more than 11,000 Modernist houses erected in a dozen California developments by the builder Joseph Eichler, using a variety of standard designs by Anshen and Allen, Claude Oakland & Associates, and Jones & Emmons.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 10

that would include commonly owned open land, recreation facilities, and a school; although not realized, it undoubtedly served as a model for the efforts of his postwar students. Another notable early attempt to use Modernist architecture to create community was the cooperative development of 47 houses known as Usonia Homes in Pleasantville, New York, undertaken by David Hanken and other associates of Frank Lloyd Wright in 1945 using Wright's low-cost "Usonian" concepts. The development included common ownership of open and forested land and design requirements for the construction of the houses.

**Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Massachusetts**

Massachusetts in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century had several characteristics that allowed Modernist architecture to flourish:

- A sizeable, prosperous city—Boston—that could rightly claim to be the financial, commercial, educational, and cultural hub of New England.
- Two universities, Harvard and MIT, that not only housed leading architectural schools but also attracted some of the top academic, scientific, and engineering talent in the country, particularly in the Cold War period when a close alliance among the federal government, these two universities, and technology companies emerged.
- Dozens of other institutions of higher learning in the Boston area and in west-central Massachusetts (Amherst-Northampton-South Hadley).
- Scenic areas, particularly the Berkshires, the south shore of Massachusetts Bay, Cape Cod and off-shore islands, where well-to-do people with cosmopolitan tastes might chose to build Modernist seasonal homes.

The arrival of Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer at Harvard's Graduate School of Design in the late 1930s, and the changes that were introduced there, made the school one of the country's major focuses of Modernism, partly because of the eminence of the émigrés, but equally because so many of the school's graduates, particularly in the postwar period, achieved national prominence. But both Harvard and MIT were graduating architects with a Modernist outlook long before the arrival of the Europeans, and before the Beaux Arts curriculum had been abandoned. G. Holmes Perkins (1904-2004), for example, received his master's degree from Harvard in 1929 and joined the faculty shortly thereafter, where, together with Conant, Hudnut, and Gropius, he implemented the Modernist program; leaving Harvard in 1951, he played a similarly transformative role at the University of Pennsylvania. Perkins built a Modernist house for himself in Brookline in 1938. Another graduate from the 1920s, Henry Hoover (1902-1989), built a Modernist house for himself in Lincoln in 1937, one of several dozen Modernist houses he designed in Boston's suburbs. Yet another 1920s Harvard graduate, Howard T. Fisher (1903-1979), was one of the first to develop a Modernist prefabricated house, and later became a pioneer in computer-aided spatial analysis. Gordon Bunshaft (1909-1990), a major Modernist designer at Skidmore Owings Merrill in the postwar period, received both his bachelor's and master's degrees from MIT during the Beaux Arts-dominated tenure of William Emerson. It is not surprising, then, that the suburbs of Boston contain a number of examples of Bauhaus-inspired houses from the 1930s. Among those designing Modernist houses in the Boston area before America's entry into World War II were Edwin B. Goodell, Jr. (MIT, 1915), Samuel Glaser (M.Arch., MIT, 1926), Carl Nathaniel Saltonstall (M.Arch., MIT, 1931), Hugh Stubbins (M.Arch., Harvard, 1935), and Carl Koch (M.Arch., Harvard, 1937).

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 11

Another notable early Boston-area Modernist was Eleanor Raymond (1887-1989), who designed a house in Belmont for her sister Rachel in 1931, after visiting the Bauhaus the previous year. Raymond, a graduate of Wellesley College, received her architectural training from the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, which shared its faculty with Harvard's architecture school (limited to men at the time). In addition to the 1931 Belmont house (now demolished), Raymond designed several others in the Modernist mode in the greater Boston area. Raymond was an early adopter of plywood and a pioneer in incorporating solar energy into her designs.

Modernism in the Five-College area may have been introduced by Frank Lloyd Wright with his Usonian design (1940) for the family of Theodore Baird, professor of English at Amherst College; the Baird House was listed on the National Register in 1985. In the Berkshires, the painter couple George Norris and Suzy Frelinghuysen, known as the "Park Avenue Cubists," designed, with the help of Boston architect George Sanderson, a Bauhaus-inspired studio in 1930, followed by a companion house in 1941. Modernism established a beachhead on Cape Cod in the late 1930s when John C. Phillips, who had attended the Harvard Graduate School of Design for a year, erected a half-dozen Modernist cottages and studios on 800 acres of land he had inherited in Wellfleet and Truro.

Walter Gropius and his fellow Bauhaus émigré, Marcel Breuer, together launched an architectural practice shortly after their appointment to the faculty of Harvard. Among their first efforts were their own two houses in Lincoln, Massachusetts, built on land provided to the architects by Helen Osborne Storrow, a wealthy Boston philanthropist and patron of the arts. Mrs. Storrow, who financed the construction and rented to the architects with an option to purchase, was not familiar with Modernism at the time, writing to Gropius, "your type of architecture is somewhat startling, but I shall look forward with great interest to having you build a house on this place if you decide to do so." Gropius and Breuer were joined, on the same terms from Mrs. Storrow, by the families of Walter F. Bogner, another Harvard professor of architecture, and James Ford, a sociology professor whose wife, Katherine Morrow, became a major popularizer of Modernism in the 1940s and 1950s through numerous books on architecture and interior design. The Lincoln houses, completed in the period 1938-1940, make up the Woods End Road Historic District (National Register, 1988); the Gropius House is a National Historic Landmark (2000).

Gropius and Breuer received other commissions as well. In 1938, the pair designed a house for James Hagerty and his mother, Josephine M. Hagerty, on a rocky site in Cohasset overlooking the south shore of Massachusetts Bay. Hagerty intended it for a summer home but decided to make it his full-time residence while it was still in the design phase. Although boxy and fitted with tubular industrial railings, the house (National Register, 1997) made use of the fieldstone walls that became one of Breuer's signature features, reappearing in his own house in Lincoln (1939) and his later house in New Canaan, Connecticut (1948). In 1940, Gropius and Breuer designed the Henry Chamberlain House in Wayland, Massachusetts, which made use of stained wood siding, rather than the white-painted siding that had appeared in their earlier houses, and also incorporated fieldstone walls as its base. Gropius and Breuer dissolved their partnership in 1946, when the latter relocated to New York City.

After World War II, the scattering of Modernist houses that had earlier been built in Massachusetts were joined by a flood of new Modernist homes, primarily in those areas that already had a modest Modernist presence: Boston suburbs, college towns, Cape Cod, and the Berkshires, with postwar Modernist houses especially numerous in the towns that make up Boston's northwest suburbs—Concord, Belmont, Lexington, Lincoln, and Weston. Many, if not most, of the area's young Modernists combined teaching with the practice of architecture, so these towns, convenient to colleges and universities in Cambridge and Boston, were good places for the architects themselves

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 12

to live. The towns were also a likely source for prospective clients with a taste for the new architecture, since they appealed to young families connected to the academic-government-corporate nexus that was then emerging. Large numbers of Modernist houses, both as individual houses and as whole developments, form an important part of the character of the northwest suburbs and make the area a unique resource for understanding Modernist residential architecture.

**Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Lexington**

Hugh Stubbins, Jr. was teaching at Harvard's Graduate School of Design when, in January 1946, he bought several acres of woods in the rural East Lexington section of town; his Harvard colleague, Marcel Breuer, was a partner in the purchase. Over the next year, Stubbins built for his family a flat-roofed, wood-sided house, one elevation of which was almost entirely of glass, which was the first of hundreds of Mid-Century Modern houses in Lexington. The house received widespread attention both in the United States and abroad. Within two years of its completion, plans, photographs by Ezra Stoller, and extensive descriptions had appeared in *House and Garden*, *Architectural Record*, *Architectural Review*, *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* [France] *Domus* [Italy], and *Nuestra Arquitectura* [Argentina], and Katherine Morrow Ford (who undoubtedly knew Stubbins well) chose it as one of 85 "notable examples" for *The American House Today* (Ford and Creighton 1951). In 1950, Stubbins designed a similar house on another portion of the tract, and then in 1952, a third house.

In May 1947, just two months after Stubbins finished his house, another group of architects associated with Harvard's GSD acquired a 20-acre tract of former farmland just to the north of the Stubbins-Breuer property. The architects intended to divide up the land for house lots for their own families, with the remainder of the 30 lots to be sold to friends and colleagues who were interested in living in a cooperative community of well-designed yet affordable homes. Called Six Moon Hill, reportedly because a barn on the property had six "Moon" automobiles, the land was a mixture of woods, fields, and rocky outcroppings that offered a rich opportunity for siting houses in natural settings with long, attractive vistas. Land was to be set aside for open space and recreation. Purchasers of the house lots received a share in Six Moon Hill, Inc., a corporation that owned the common land, retained first right of refusal should a purchaser wish to sell, and reviewed all plans for conformance to the development's design expectations. Lots were laid out along a new, curving cul-de-sac that ascended the hill, with a few of the lots reached by existing roads to the west. Within three years, 19 houses were completed, ranging in size from 1,100 to 2,200 square feet, and costing between \$10,000 and \$22,000.

The architects who developed Six Moon Hill included William E. Haible, Leonard J. Currie, and the members of The Architects Collaborative (TAC), an association of young architects and Walter Gropius who were then at work on Harvard's new graduate center: Jean and Norman Fletcher, John and Sarah Harkness, Robert S. McMillan, Louis A. McMillen, and Benjamin Thompson. The houses they designed for themselves and others are all different, but they share a common Modernist vocabulary of vertical wood siding, large expanses of glass, flat or shallow-pitched roofs, and flexible, open plans centered on a stone or brick hearth. Eventually, 29 houses were completed.

Six Moon Hill was immediately hailed as a practical and aesthetic triumph. *Architectural Forum* devoted twelve pages of photographs, plans, and text to the houses in its June 1950 issue, describing them as having all the "hallmarks of advanced contemporary design," and praised the development for its harmony of design, for its modest prices, and for creating what the magazine judged to be a "pleasantly coherent community." Further

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 13

coverage appeared in *Progressive Architecture*, *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, and *Domus*, and in November 1952, *Better Homes and Gardens* featured a Six Moon Hill house as a rare example of a house that sums up “the best of new ideas” in architecture.

Hoping to capitalize on what they had learned building the Six Moon Hill houses, the TAC architects purchased an even larger tract nearby to develop as a speculative venture. Called Five Fields, it was planned to have 20 acres of commonly owned open land and 68 house lots, with a governing structure and design restrictions modeled on those of Six Moon Hill. Construction began in 1951. Some of the houses were custom designs by TAC and other architects, but the majority were built according to several related standard plans. The last houses, built in the early 1960s, were two prefabricated houses of the “Deck House” type (see next context). To keep costs down, several houses were constructed at a time, and some components of the standard-plan houses, such as roof trusses and wall panels, were pre-assembled. Five Fields attracted attention for both its standard-design and its custom-designed houses, appearing in *Architectural Record*, *House & Home*, and *Baukunst und Werkform* [Germany]. Two Five Field houses, one a custom design and the other a standard design, were selected as *Better Homes and Gardens* “Five-Star Homes.”

At the same time that Five Fields was underway, W. Danforth Compton and Walter S. Pierce, two young architects who had completed their education at MIT after serving in the war, undertook Peacock Farm, another of Lexington’s developments of Modernist houses. At MIT, the two men had been influenced by William Wurster, Lawrence Anderson and the houses of Carl Koch<sup>3</sup>, and Compton’s M.Arch. thesis was on manufactured housing. Compton and Pierce laid out a winding drive, two cul-de-sacs, and five dozen house lots on a hilly, wooded site overlooking a 19<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse and barn (where the owner raised peacocks). The two designed a standard one-story house on a high basement that would be sited in various ways, seven of which had been built by April 1955, when Compton died suddenly. Pierce and a firm of experienced builders completed the project with a second design, a split-level Modernist house with broad areas of glass and a shallow-pitched, asymmetrical roof. The split-level design was honored with a First Award in the standard-plan category in the 1956 “Better Homes for Living” competition,<sup>4</sup> and appeared in the pages of *House & Home* (twice), *Time*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*. The development provided for commonly owned open space, and established a governing board with design-review powers so as to assure the compatibility of new construction and alterations.

Peacock Farm proved that there was a market for well-designed, well-sited, standard-plan Modernist houses. Four more developments using the design were undertaken in Lexington: Upper Turning Mill (47 homes, 1957-1961), Rumford Road (11 homes, 1959), the Glen at Countryside (26 homes, 1960-1966), and the Grove (40 homes, 1962-1965). The split-level was also used in the Pleasant Brook development (1960-1970) that bordered the northwest corner of Peacock Farm, as well as for individual houses in Lexington. The “Peacock Farm” split-level appeared in the nearby towns of Belmont, Wayland, and Newton, and Pierce enlarged the plan somewhat for a development of 60 split-level houses in Norwood; the expanded plan became the basis for a *Better Homes and Gardens* “Five-Star Home.” About a dozen “Peacock Farm” split-levels were built in other parts of the country.

<sup>3</sup> Koch had followed his first housing development in Belmont with Kendal Common (1948) in Weston, promoted as “Land and an Idea, Community and Modern Architecture,” and Conantum (1951) in Concord.

<sup>4</sup> In the category of comparable custom-designed houses, Eliot Noyes won the First Award for his house in New Canaan, Connecticut.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 14

The Middle Ridge/Turning Mill neighborhood was planned in 1955 as a development of "Techbuilt" prefabricated houses (see next context). Thirty-five Techbuilt houses were completed in two phases between 1956 and 1959, with a variety of other Modernist designs filling out the development over the next eight years. Lexington's Techbuilt development is notable for having been planned and carried out directly by Carl Koch and the Techbuilt Corporation, which had an office in Lexington. Since the Techbuilt prototypes were finished only two years earlier, in 1953, it can be assumed that the houses of Middle Ridge are among the earliest of what became one of Modernism's greatest prefabrication success stories.

Many of the men and women who designed Lexington's Modernist houses in the early days of their careers went on to achieve prominent reputations on the state, national, and international levels. **Hugh Stubbins, Jr.** (1912-2006) designed additional Modernist houses after Lexington, but he received his greatest recognition for landmark high-rise office buildings, including the Federal Reserve in Boston (1976), Citicorp Center in New York City (1977), and the Treasury Building, Singapore (1986). His Yokohama Landmark Tower (1993) is still the tallest building in Japan as of this writing. Other notable commissions include the Kongresshalle in Berlin (1957), the Reagan Presidential Library in California (1991), and educational buildings for Harvard, Princeton, the University of Massachusetts, and Hampshire College. Hugh Stubbins and Associates won the AIA's Architecture Firm Award in 1967, the profession's highest honor for a group practice.

**Leonard J. Currie** (1913-1996), one of TAC's associates on the Six Moon Hill project and, along with his wife, architect Virginia Currie, one of the first residents, became a leading figure in architectural education. In 1951, he started the Inter-American Housing and Planning Center in Bogotá, a research and training institution funded by the Organization of American States. From 1956 to 1962, he headed the architecture program at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, creating the College of Architecture and Urban Studies. From Blacksburg, he moved on to Chicago, where he was the founding dean of the College of Architecture and Art at the University of Illinois's Chicago Circle campus. Currie was elected an AIA Fellow in 1969.

**William E. Haible** (1914-1994), like Currie an associate architect and resident of Six Moon Hill, had a productive career as a member of Anderson Beckwith and Haible, a firm that designed many signature Modernist buildings in the Boston area, including the Middlesex Building Mutual Trust building in Waltham (1957), the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School (1957), the Raytheon complex in Lexington (1961), and several buildings for the MIT campus. The other partners, Lawrence B. Anderson and Herbert L. Beckwith, were professors in the MIT School of Architecture and Planning, with Anderson serving as department head beginning in 1947, and dean from 1965 to 1972. Other prominent commissions included the Carnegie Building at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (1962), the American Life building in Manila (1963), and a portion of the Rochester Institute of Technology's new campus (1968), for which the firm shared the 1972 AIA Collaboration Award with Hugh Stubbins and Associates, Roche and Dinkeloo, and others. Haible was elected an AIA Fellow in 1966.

**Walter S. Pierce** (b.1920), the architect of Peacock Farm, designed other Modernist houses in the 1950s, including one in New Jersey, featured in *Designs for Living* by Katherine Ford and Thomas Creighton (1955), and two that were chosen as *Better Homes and Gardens* "Five-Star Homes." Other notable designs include the Susquehanna Valley Children's Home in Binghamton, New York (1954), the Industrial Arts building at Berea College in Kentucky (1957), Trinity Episcopal Church in Topsfield, Massachusetts (1960), and the Marine Biology Teaching Laboratory at Wood's Hole, Massachusetts (1969). His largest commission was a 300,000-square-foot research facility in Everett, Massachusetts (1969), for the Avco Research and Advanced Development Corporation. Pierce was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1969.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
 Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 15

The original partners of **The Architects Collaborative**—Jean and Norman Fletcher, Walter Gropius, John and Sarah Harkness, Robert S. McMillan, Louis A. McMillen, and Benjamin Thompson—were joined by a number of associates over the years, including Edward A. Cuetara, Herbert Gallagher, Allison P. Goodwin, Roger S. Morehouse, Chester Nagel, and H. Morse Payne. Self-consciously a collective, and so regarded over the firm's long history (1946-1995), the international renown of TAC is best recounted as a group achievement rather than as the accomplishment of specific individuals. Some of the group's success can be attributed to the eminence of Gropius, who is generally understood to have been the group's philosophical inspiration rather than a source of design ideas. But even after his death in 1969, TAC continued to receive high-profile commissions both here and abroad that were widely acclaimed. Among TAC's notable accomplishments are the offices of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C. (1951), the campus of Baghdad University in Iraq (1957-1966), the American Embassy in Athens (1959-1961), the John F. Kennedy Building in Boston (1961-1966), the AIA Headquarters Building in Washington, D.C. (1973), and the Bauhaus Archive, Berlin (1976-1979). TAC designed major educational buildings at Harvard, Brandeis, Williams College, Amherst College, the University of Minnesota, and Philips Exeter Academy. Less happily, the firm was associated with Emory Roth and Sons in the design of one of the country's most controversial Modernist buildings, the Pan American World Airways Building in New York (1958-1963), which many criticized as an assault on Park Avenue. TAC, which in 1964 became the second firm to be honored with the AIA's Architecture Firm Award, represents the most thorough, long-lived, and successful embodiment of the Modernist principle of teamwork.

Among the associates who left TAC before its demise and achieved exception recognition was **Benjamin C. Thompson** (1918-2002). Thompson had found it hard to obtain interior furnishings that would complement the elegant Modernist houses the TAC architects were designing, so in 1953 he created Design Research (D/R), a retailer of furniture, fabrics, and housewares of the most advanced design. (D/R was the first American company to import Marimekko fabrics and other products.) At its height, D/R had not only its flagship five-story, transparent-walled store in Cambridge, but also stores in New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.

Thompson had succeeded Gropius as head of architecture at Harvard in 1963, which, together with his involvement in D/R, strained his relationship with his colleagues at TAC. Thompson also reportedly felt that the Baghdad University and Pan American projects conflicted with his ideals, and by January 1966, he had left both Harvard and TAC to form Benjamin Thompson and Associates (BTA). BTA designed some notable buildings in addition to the D/R store in Cambridge (1968), including a dormitory for Colby College (winner of a 1968 AIA Honor Award), the Ordway Music Theater in St. Paul Minnesota (1985), and the Broward Center for the Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale, Florida (1991). The firm's greatest accomplishment, however, was creating the concept of the "festival marketplace." Thompson had called for the creation of a lively, pedestrian-friendly, urban waterfront in Boston as early as 1967, and as design consultant to the James W. Rouse Company, he realized the vision with the opening of Faneuil Hall Marketplace in 1976. BTA and Rouse went on to create several more successes, including Harborplace in Baltimore (1980), New York City's South Street Seaport (1982), and the renovated Union Station in Washington, D.C. (1988). Thompson may be the American architect most honored by the AIA: he was made a Fellow in 1975, received the AIA Gold Medal, its highest individual honor, in 1992, and shared in two AIA Architectural Firm Awards (The Architects Collaborative, 1964, and Benjamin Thompson and Associates, 1987).

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 16

**II. Prefabrication and Mid-Century Modernism in the United States, 1945-1970**

A passion for prefabrication was an inevitable corollary of the Mid-Century Modern movement's concern for affordable housing and its acceptance of, even enthusiasm for, the methods and products of the Industrial Age. Prefabrication promised not only the economies of scale that could be achieved through building many houses at one time on-site, but also additional savings through the use of indoor production lines in factory like settings. At the most basic level, prefabrication might consist of packaging pre-cut materials, windows, doors, trusses, and other components, and delivering them to the site. At the other end of the spectrum, some Modernists conceived of entire houses that could be factory-built and dropped onto a foundation. In between were various systems that relied on pre-assembled panels that were then brought to the site and joined together. Panelized systems had particular appeal because they combined the advantages of factory production with the possibility of varying the size and plan to meet individual needs and taste.

Gropius himself showed a deep commitment to factory-built housing, both in his European years and after coming to the United States. As early as 1909, he had proposed a system of industrially produced standard panels from which a variety of houses could be assembled, and he applied these principles in his designs for working-class and middle-class housing. After coming to the United States, Gropius collaborated with another émigré, Konrad Wachsmann, in devising the "Packaged House," a panelized system based on a cubical module. By the end of 1942, the two had raised the necessary capital, formed the General Panel Corporation, built a model house in Somerville, Massachusetts, and arranged for production in California. About 150 were completed. Production did not continue after the war, and the company was liquidated. Gropius continued to promote the advantages of panelized construction, both in the studio courses at Harvard's Graduate School of Design and in writings aimed at the general public. In a March 2, 1947, letter to the *New York Times*, he wrote:

Industrialization will not stop at the threshold of building. . . Prefabrication, as a logical progressive process, aimed at raising the standard of building, will finally lead to higher quality for lower prices. . . Prefabrication will be beneficial and must be encouraged for the ultimate social good.

Although he may have been the most influential proponent of prefabrication, Gropius was in fact preceded by several other American Modernists who developed prefabrication concepts. The "Aluminaire," by Albert Frey and A. Lawrence Kocher, was a metal-framed glass and aluminum panelized house exhibited at the Architecture and Allied Arts Exposition in New York in 1931; it never went into production, but the model was one of two American houses included by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in their 1932 manifesto, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*. Another early prefabrication scheme was the Motohome devised by Princeton-educated Robert W. McLaughlin. A prototype was constructed in 1932, and in 1933 McLaughlin formed American Houses, Inc., with offices in New York and production facilities in New Jersey. About 150 of the flat-roofed, panelized Motohomes were constructed, mostly in the Northeast, but in 1938 McLaughlin abandoned his Modernist design and refocused the company on a compact prefabricated Cape Cod-style house that enjoyed great success. A similar fate befell General Houses, Inc., a company started by Howard T. Fisher, a 1928 graduate of Harvard's architecture program. Fisher exhibited prefabricated Modernist designs at the Century of Progress Exhibitions in 1933 and 1934, and set up a complex network of suppliers and dealers. His company was the first to sell prefabricated houses wholesale to speculative builders, beginning in 1935 at Oak Park, Illinois. Eventually, several hundred Modernist houses were completed by General Houses, Inc., but by the late 1930s, the company had shifted to more traditional-looking houses, with which it achieved even greater

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
 Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 17

financial success, both during the war and immediately after. Prior to 1945, it is likely that fewer than 1,000 prefabricated Modernist houses of all types were built, compared with tens of thousands of traditional-design units.

Postwar Modernists were undaunted by the numbers, however, and continued their belief that sleek, honest Modernist designs could be combined with prefabrication to produce a practical, affordable house that was also (to the Modernist eye) an aesthetic triumph.

One person who actually realized the dream was Carl Koch (1912-1998). Koch had earned his M. Arch. from the Graduate School of Design in 1937, a few months after Gropius's arrival, and then studied abroad with the Swedish architect Sven Markelius. In 1941 he returned to the United States, where he taught at Harvard and designed five houses (including his own) for a development of standard-plan houses at Snake Hill in Belmont, Massachusetts. In 1946, William W. Wurster, who was remaking the MIT School of Architecture into a more Modernist program, recruited Koch. MIT at that time was especially focused on joining together Modernist principles and industrialized housing. The Bemis Foundation's director from 1938 to 1948, John E. Burchard, did major research on issues relating to prefabricated housing, while the Modernists brought to the faculty by Dean Wurster set the school's aesthetic tone. In 1945, Koch and two associates devised the Acorn House, designed to be assembled on-site in a day and to be demountable so it could be moved. The intention was to have a simple, inexpensive house that would prove useful in housing returning veterans. Engineer John R. Bemis (1916-2006) provided essential engineering for the house's stressed-skin panels, and the two formed a company to market the concept. Despite coverage in *Life* magazine, which called it "handsome, cheap, and sensible" (Jandl 1991:203), the Acorn House never caught on, reportedly because of resistance from local building officials and providers of financing. About a half-dozen, including two demonstration models, were built between 1948 and 1952.

Another Koch venture into prefabrication was as an adviser to the Lustron Corporation, a firm that had produced about 1,000 steel-framed prefabricated houses with walls of enameled pressed-steel panels. Koch and his associates streamlined the production of the Lustron House by reducing the number of components and also redesigned it to have a more pronounced Modernist appearance, with overhanging eaves and large glass walls. Shortly after the Koch redesign was finished, in late 1949, the Lustron Corporation went bankrupt.

In 1951, Koch began Conantum, a development of 100 Mid-Century Modern houses built on-site in Concord, Massachusetts. Based upon associate Joel Leon Lipshutz's own house in Lexington, the Conantum houses, 24' by 40' in plan, had broad overhangs to the gable roofs and glass end walls. Differences in surface materials, the arrangement of windows, and the number of finished rooms allowed for variations within the standard plan, with prices ranging from \$8,650 to \$16,895. Although all the houses were eventually finished, poor weather, the need to redo work, and cost overruns bankrupted the project.

Success came at last in 1953, when Koch and his associates developed a prefabricated, simplified version of the Conantum House, but with a shallower-pitched roof, called the "Techbuilt." It was manufactured as a post-and-beam structure, with four-foot-by-ten-foot stressed-skin wall panels that were erected over a poured-concrete basement story. Beginning with two demonstration models in Concord and Weston, Massachusetts, by 1958 Techbuilt houses had been built in 32 different states, both as individual houses and as residential developments. Four factories (including one run by John R. Bemis) provided the components to a network of 90 franchised builder-dealers. Several variations of the design were available to accommodate individual preferences. It is

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 18

estimated that more than 3,000 Techbuilt houses were erected nationwide in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, making Koch's design one of the most successful of Modernist prefabricated houses. In Lexington, Techbuilt houses appear within neighborhoods of other types of Modernist houses and also at Middle Ridge, a development that was made up almost exclusively of Techbuilt houses in its first two phases, 1956-1959.

Koch's Techbuilt design received extensive publicity in professional and general-interest publications, and several other companies began producing prefabricated designs that resembled the Techbuilt in one or more ways. It is likely that as surveys of houses from the 1960s and 1970s progress, more will be learned about the relationship between the Techbuilt house and other manufactured housing of the period.

A contemporary of the Techbuilt house was the Core-Plus-X house developed by The Architects Collaborative, for which one of the Five Fields types in Lexington served as the model. The idea was to establish a central utility core, around which would be assembled a flat-roofed post-and-beam house with twelve-foot structural panels. The panels could be all glass, all wood siding, or some combination of siding, glass, and doors. The Core-Plus-X house was featured as one of *Better Homes and Gardens'* "Five-Star Homes" (Normile and Anderson 1956), but it is not known if any other examples were built from the plans. For Gropius, the house, if it had gone into mass production, would have epitomized the union of prefabrication with custom design:

Building your house of standard component parts (panels and cores) realizes the economies of repetition while each family has a house of its own. The system is especially well suited to building houses in groups. It will allow builders to develop communities similar in scale and construction, but differing widely in shape, size, and adaptation to particular sites. (Normile and Anderson 1956: 51).

As an entity, TAC did not pursue the Core-Plus-X concept, but one architect who worked for TAC for many years, Edward R. Cuetara,<sup>5</sup> formed a company, called The Core House, which built an undetermined number of prefabricated houses, including two still standing in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Two offshoots of earlier efforts carried the story of Modernist prefabrication into the 1960s and 1970s. John R. Bemis manufactured stressed-skin panels for Techbuilt, but he also pursued his own designs as Acorn Structures, Inc., in Acton, Massachusetts, for which he served as president from 1947 until 1978. Bemis had a special interest in incorporating solar energy into his houses, which were of both modern and traditional design. Another Koch associate, William Berkes, who trained at the Graduate School of Design and then worked for Techbuilt, established Deck Houses, Inc., his own company for manufacturing houses, in 1959. Deck Houses<sup>6</sup> were very much in the Mid-Century Modern style, featuring low-pitched roofs, bands of windows, vertical wood siding, exposed beams, and glass walls. The two companies merged in 1995, and ten years later the combined company, Acorn Deck House, claimed to have built more than 20,000 houses nationwide and in numerous foreign countries.

The success of Techbuilt, Acorn Structures, the Deck House, and other manufactured Modernist houses of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s was probably due to a combination of practical design, adequate capitalization, and, above all, growing popular acceptance of the Modernist aesthetic. Earlier Modernists had found themselves unable to succeed despite devising clever methods of prefabrication and exhibiting attractive concept homes.

<sup>5</sup> Cuetara built a house for himself in Lexington at Five Fields in 1952, though he later relocated to Boston.

<sup>6</sup> The "deck" in the name of the design referred to the construction of the roof.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 19

That American Houses, Inc. and General Houses, Inc. were able to succeed with prefabrication only after adopting more traditional designs suggests that early Modernist prefabrication efforts were simply ahead of the tastes of the times. In contrast, Koch, Bemis, and Berkes were able to benefit from Modernism's increasing popularity. Though probably never the first choice of a majority of American home-buyers, Modernism by the 1950s had attracted a sufficient number of enthusiasts to create a viable market for Modernist manufactured housing.

The theme of Modernist prefabrication is especially meaningful for Massachusetts. Gropius, Koch, Bemis, and Berkes were longtime Massachusetts residents who had ties to the architecture programs at Harvard and MIT. They built their first models in Massachusetts, and production facilities for Techbuilt, Acorn Structures, and Deck House were located in the Commonwealth. Individual Techbuilt structures are found in suburbs and summer retreats throughout the state, with entire developments of Techbuilt houses in Lexington, Weston, and Northborough.

### **III. Post-World War II Residential Expansion in Lexington, Massachusetts, 1945-1970**

For most of its first three centuries, Lexington was primarily a farming community, close to Boston but still part of the agricultural backcountry that surrounded the city. Lexington was originally a part of the town of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was first known as "Cambridge Farms." By 1691, there were enough families in the area to warrant the formation of a separate ecclesiastical society, the North Parish of Cambridge, and in 1712, the settlement was made an independent town. As originally incorporated, Lexington included the present-day towns of Lincoln and Bedford, but the western area was set off in 1754, resulting in the town's boundaries as they are today. Although agriculture formed the bedrock of the economy, brick-making, timber-harvesting, peat-cutting, clock-making, and the finishing of furs were also pursued, and there were a few taverns as well. Lexington's participation in the opening actions of the American Revolution forever changed the town's identity, though it had little lasting effect on the character of the town as a community of small farms.

Beginning in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, a series of transportation improvements brought Lexington and Boston closer together. The construction of the West Boston Bridge in 1793 helped the local economy and allowed a greater specialization in dairy production for the Boston market. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, two turnpikes passed through Lexington—the Cambridge and Concord Turnpike, chartered in 1803, and the Middlesex Turnpike, chartered in 1805. Citizens of Lexington opposed the latter, because the turnpike proposed charging tolls for traveling over a road that had formerly been free, and in 1811, the state legislature passed an act that allowed residents of Lexington to travel the turnpike to and from Boston for free.

Lexington had been bypassed when the Fitchburg Railroad opened its line to Boston in 1845, but local residents, forming the Lexington & West Cambridge Railroad, quickly remedied the situation, and the Lexington branch opened in 1846. After the Civil War, the railroad, renamed the Lexington & Arlington, extended the tracks from Lexington to Bedford, where it joined a line to Lowell, and to Middlesex Junction in Concord, where it linked up with the Fitchburg Railroad and other lines leading to Framingham and Nashua, N.H. At the east end, a branch was built to Somerville Junction, where it joined the main line between Boston and Lowell. By 1879, Lexington was well-connected to the network of rail lines crisscrossing the Boston metropolitan region. Because of consolidation in the industry, some of the branch lines became redundant and were discontinued, but throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the line between Boston and Bedford, running through

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
 Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 20

the center of Lexington, remained a major passenger route. Eleven trains ran daily between Lexington and Boston, with seven on Sundays, and there were five station stops in town. The railroad spurred some commercial growth in the center of Lexington, but equally important, it greatly aided the town's farmers by expanding their capacity to transport milk and livestock to market. Several areas in town saw the construction of large Victorian-style houses for the business and professional workers who made up a small but growing portion of the town's residents. Some Boston families also established rural, summer retreats in town. In the 1880s and 1890s, several large farms were divided up into house lots. Still, dairy and livestock raising remained major activities in town, as did market gardening and floriculture.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lexington experienced an acceleration of suburban development. The town joined the Metropolitan District water supply in 1903, replacing an earlier private waterworks that had supplied part of the town, and commuting possibilities were enhanced by the Lexington & Boston Street Railway, later called the Middlesex & Boston Street Railway, which offered an electrified alternative to the steam trains. Further division of farm land into residential developments occurred, especially in areas close to the streetcar routes. The town's population increased from 4,918 people in 1910 to 9,467 in 1930. In 1921 alone, 35 subdivisions, representing 1,400 acres of land, were under construction. Even in the 1930s, when Lexington, like the rest of the country, experienced the effects of the Depression, growth continued, with the population reaching 13,113 people in 1940.

As impressive as Lexington's suburban development was before World War II, it was surpassed following the war by an even more impressive period of growth. The rail line to Boston, operated by the Boston & Maine Railroad, remained an important commuter service through the 1960s, as did the Middlesex & Boston Street Railway, though trolleys had been replaced by buses in 1924. At the same time, the possibilities for commuting by automobile were enhanced by notable road improvements. In the 1930s, Route 2 between Lexington and Boston, the old turnpike road, had been widened to an undivided four-lane highway, and between 1936 and 1958 it was gradually upgraded to expressway standards. Another major road, Route 128, was also rebuilt as a limited-access highway. Established as the "Great Circumferential" in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Route 128 was originally a ring road, about ten miles from Boston, that ran through the town centers of the various suburbs. But after the war, it was re-routed over a new alignment as a four-lane divided highway with no stoplights and on-off ramps at intersections. The new Route 128 opened through Lexington in August 1951. As a result, Lexington had the advantage of high-speed routes for both radial travel along Route 2 to Cambridge and Boston and circumferential travel to other suburban locations (such as industrial research parks and the area's first large-scale shopping center) along Route 128.

The provision of infrastructure created the means for suburbanization, but other factors led to an increased demand. The long years of the Depression led many to put off the purchase of homes until the economy improved, while World War II meant that many careers were put on hold and child-rearing was delayed until men returned from service. Shortly after victory in Europe and the Pacific, people everywhere made up for lost time, and residential expansion resumed in Lexington and other Boston suburbs. The prewar population of 13,113 reached 17,335 in 1950 and had more than doubled, to 27,691, by 1960. There were a few garden-style multi-family apartment developments, but most of the residential expansion took the form of single-family homes. Everywhere in town, former farmland and seasonal estates were divided into house lots. In 1950, a record was set by the construction of 421 new houses, worth \$4.3 million, only to be surpassed in 1955 by another record, \$4.97 million. Along with the homes, new churches and synagogues appeared to serve the growing population. A new fire station in East Lexington and a major new electrical power line in North Lexington were just two of the ways

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
 Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number E Page 21

that the town government and local utilities attempted to keep up with the growth of residential neighborhoods. Concern over the effects of growth, especially as it threatened the town's colonial and Revolutionary War heritage, led to the establishment of a Historic District Commission in 1956.

Beyond raw growth, Lexington experienced a change in character, as families with young children became an increasingly significant part of the population. A key indicator was the increase in the number of school-aged children. The general population increased by a factor of 111% in the 1950s, but the school-aged population increased by 123%. Five new or substantially enlarged elementary schools were built in the 1950s, and the new high school, completed in 1951, had to be expanded with sixteen additional classrooms in 1957. A public-interest group, the Citizen's Committee for the Lexington Public Schools, mobilized the community in support of school budgets and school-construction referendums. All accounts of Lexington neighborhoods in this period speak of armies of children filling the yards and spilling out into the street, and being able to field entire teams for softball and other games.

In 1965, *Esquire* picked a Lexington Modernist neighborhood (Six Moon Hill) as one of "ten great places to live," the selection criteria used by the magazine help explain the town's appeal: "location within or proximity to an excellent urban culture; plenty of space, peace and quiet, good water, and clean air; efficient services such as fire protection, hospitals, schools; a nonrestrictive atmosphere; and, finally, some minor thing to complain about."

A major component of population growth in Lexington and other northwest suburban towns was the influx of academics, scientists, and engineers associated with the area's universities and technology companies. Nearby Cambridge was home to two of the country's leading institutions of higher learning, Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and there were dozens of other colleges and universities in the greater Boston area as well. Tufts University in Medford, for example, graduated Vannevar Bush and Laurence K. Marshall, roommates who founded the American Appliance Company in 1922 in Cambridge, where Bush was then teaching at MIT; the company was renamed Raytheon in 1925. In the late 1930s, Bush, along with the presidents of Harvard and MIT and other area academics, was instrumental in forging the close alliance between the federal government and the scientific research community that resulted in the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD). The 30,000 employees of the OSRD oversaw the development of some 200 major weapon systems during World War II, including the early years of the Manhattan Project and the development of radar capabilities, in which Raytheon played a major role.

After the war, the previously close cooperation among the universities, the federal government, and area technology companies, many of which had been started by people with positions at the universities, continued apace. Much federally sponsored research took place in Cambridge, and Boston-area scientists were prominent in filling out the ranks of advisers to the military and other branches of the federal government. Lexington benefited from the alliance in 1951, when Lincoln Laboratory was established at Hanscom Air Field. Funded by the federal government and operated by MIT, the initial mission of Lincoln Laboratory was to devise a radar system that could detect an attack on the continental United States. The laboratory's research was implemented, and continually improved, as SAGE, the DEW line, and BMEWS, early-warning systems of the 1950s. Lincoln Laboratory moved to another site in Lexington, closer to Route 128, in 1954.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Route 128 became home to so many research and development enterprises that for a time "Route 128" became a synonym for high-technology, much as "Silicon Valley" is today. The concept of suburban research parks convenient to the highway was largely developed by the Boston real estate firm of Cabot,

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

<b>Mid-Century Modern Houses of Lexington, Massachusetts</b>
Name of Property
Middlesex County, MA
County and State

Section number  E  Page  22

Cabot and Forbes, based on the realization that the same attributes that made the suburbs attractive for residential use—relatively inexpensive land, good highway access, and peaceful, rural surroundings—also were attractive to technology workers. According to Rand (1964: 21-22), the scientists and engineers needed to expand the high-technology sector to be near Cambridge, but not too near, and could best be recruited by offering peace and quiet in the leafy settings of new research parks like those along Route 128. The Avco Advanced Research and Development Corporation, for example, first turned to an old factory in Lowell when it outgrew its Cambridge facility, but soon relocated its 3,400 employees, a third of whom were scientists and engineers, to a research park on Route 128. Avco at that time was developing missile nose cones. In 1958, Cabot, Cabot and Forbes convinced the Town of Lexington to re-zone 30 acres along Route 128 for Raytheon. Later, Polaroid joined the ranks of major technology companies locating along the busy ring road.

The impact of post-World War II residential growth continued in Lexington through the decade of the 1960s, though at a slowing pace. The high school was expanded again in 1961 as a campus with separate instructional buildings. That same year, Raytheon’s research facility was completed, and a major addition to Lincoln Laboratory was begun on a campus that had expanded to eight acres. The town established a Conservation Commission in 1963 to acquire open land and to advise on dealing with the pressures of growth, and in 1969, the voters adopted the town-manager form of government (but retaining the representative town meeting established in 1929). The town changed in its political outlook as well. Voters in Lexington had supported Republican candidates for president from Herbert Hoover in 1928 to Richard Nixon in 1960, but by the end of the 1960s, the changing demographics of Lexington and the changing national political climate allowed the Democratic Party to outnumber Republicans among registered voters. In 1970, the federal census recorded 31,886 residents in town, a peak from which the population began first to decline slightly, and then to rebound. As of this writing, Lexington has yet to return to its 1970 population.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number F Page 23

**F. Associated Property Types**

Four property types are associated with Mid-Century Modern residential architecture in Lexington:

- 1) individually designed Mid-Century Modern houses;
- 2) Mid-Century Modern houses that follow a standard design, including prefabricated houses;
- 3) historic districts predominantly made up of individually designed Mid-Century Modern houses; and
- 4) historic districts predominantly made up of standard-design Mid-Century Modern houses, including those predominantly made up of prefabricated houses.

This typology will provide an efficient and meaningful way of assessing the eligibility of relevant resources. It is, of course, possible to divide Mid-Century Modern houses, both individually designed and standard-design, into several subcategories according to form, materials, and ideological and aesthetic intentions. Based upon the Lexington comprehensive survey, however, the houses in the town share so many common attributes that further division into separate property types would complicate, rather than make easier, the task of assessing particular properties.

**I. Property type: Individually designed Mid-Century Modern houses**

**Description**

The Mid-Century Modern properties in Lexington that are individually designed, one-of-a-kind houses generally have a rectilinear form and a flat or low-pitched roof with wide overhangs, resulting in an emphasis on the horizontal in the overall appearance. Houses built on sloping terrain may have more than one level, and there is considerable freedom and variety in plan, ranging from a simple rectangle to complex arrangements of rectangles serving particular functions. The walls include large areas of glass, such as full-height glass panels or horizontal bands of windows; separate, individual windows rarely appear. The interiors feature informal, open plans, usually centered on a substantial fireplace. The settings, usually parcels of a third of an acre or more, typically include woods and informal, natural-appearing landscaping, and the houses are sited to take advantage of the setting. Houses may have a garage included within the basic mass of the house or attached to the house. Those that do not have an attached garage may have a contemporary freestanding garage or carport that echoes the house's Mid-Century Modern architectural vocabulary, such as the use of a flat or shallow-pitched roof with substantial overhangs.

**Significance**

Under Criterion C, such houses may be significant (1) for embodying the distinguishing characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern type—rectilinear form, horizontality, lack of ornamental detail, free-form massing, open hearth-centered plans—and (2) as the work of an important architect. The level of significance under Criterion C may be national, state, or local. A number of Lexington houses were widely published in popular and professional periodicals, reaching even an international audience, and their architects went on to great prominence. Such houses may be judged to have a national level of significance. Others may be more appropriately listed with a state level of significance; such houses will embody the defining characteristics of the

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number F Page 24

type and illustrate the spread of modernism throughout the Commonwealth's suburbs, but will have no demonstrable influence beyond Massachusetts. In the case of houses built toward the end of the period, the level of significance may be most appropriately judged to be local.

Mid-Century Modern houses in Lexington will have local significance under Criterion A for their association with the post-World War II residential expansion of Lexington, a major episode in the town's history. Because suburbanization was a broad social trend that affected many parts of the Commonwealth, Mid-Century Modern houses, particularly those from the earlier part of the period, may be judged to have state-level significance under Criterion A as well.

**Registration Requirements**

In order to qualify for listing, individually designed Mid-Century Modern houses will clearly exhibit most, if not all, of the defining characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern type (rectilinear form, horizontality, lack of ornamental detail, free-form massing, and open hearth-centered plans) in order to support Criterion C. The house must also retain intact a substantial portion of its original setting, though it need not include the entire extent of the original parcel if the remaining lot retains the character of the original setting. Any replacement materials such as window glass or siding will be similar to the original, with the horizontal or vertical orientation of the siding an especially important consideration. The presence of original or early garages or carports will add to the significance of the property, though more recent outbuildings need not be regarded as detracting from the house's significance, and the loss of an original garage or carport will not disqualify a house if it otherwise is eligible.

In order to have integrity, houses will retain their original roofline and overall form; later additions (outside the period of significance) will be visually secondary to the original massing of the house (typically limited to one side). Maintaining the integrity of street-facing elevations is important for the public's appreciation of the properties, but with Mid-Century Modern houses, the private, rear-facing elevations, often with glass walls giving access to a terrace, are often of equal (or even greater) importance to the original design concept. In the case of a more prominent addition, the integrity of design will not be compromised, even if its construction date lies outside the period of significance, if (1) the expansion of the house is known to have been provided for in the original design and was undertaken in a compatible manner, or (2) the expansion was designed by the original architect. Mid-Century Modern architecture had as a core value a pragmatism derived from design serving function, and later additions should not necessarily be regarded as an assault on the property's integrity of design, provided that a substantial portion of the original appearance remains.

The property's ability to support Criterion A with its association with post-World War II suburbanization is similarly dependent upon an integrity of design and materials sufficient to clearly identify the house as a product of its period.

The evaluation set for individual houses includes both those in clusters of related houses and those that stand apart from such areas. Mid-Century Modern houses in potential historic districts are most meaningfully listed as a group, because often in Lexington the group of houses itself has significance in terms of being a planned community with communal facilities, distinctive landscape characteristics, and design restrictions. But if the group of houses is not eligible under the Registration Requirements, particular houses can be evaluated for their individual eligibility.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number F Page 25

**II. Property type: Individual standard-plan Mid-Century Modern houses, including prefabricated houses**

**Description**

Three types of standard-plan Mid-Century Modern houses were identified by the Lexington comprehensive survey. The "Techbuilt" house, a prefabricated design based upon manufactured panels that are joined together on-site, has a shallow-pitched gable roof running the length of the house, supported on a pair of large purlins and a ridge timber. The roof forms wide overhangs at both the gables and side eaves. Some panels are almost entirely glass. The interior plans are open and generally include a prominent hearth, with at least part of the space rising full height to the roof. The manufacture of Techbuilt houses began in 1953. Lexington examples are found standing apart, in a development that is predominantly composed of Techbuilt houses, and as components of other Mid-Century Modern developments.

The other two identified members of this property type were not prefabricated but rather standard plans with variations that were intended to achieve some of the economies of prefabrication during construction of multiple examples. Five Fields, the second development designed by The Architects Collaborative, was begun in 1951 and featured about a half-dozen standard plans, along with pre-manufactured components such as roof trusses. Common elements include flat or low-pitched shed roofs, vertical wood siding, large areas of glass at the back, and settings on wooded lots. The Peacock Farm development included two standard-plan houses, both with vertical-board siding, broad overhanging shallow-pitched gable roofs, raised basements, and an open living/dining area with a fireplace. An earlier, single-story plan was succeeded by a distinctive split-level design with an asymmetric roof and horizontal bands of windows. The second Peacock Farm standard plan appears in Lexington, in subsequent developments of houses, and as stand-alone examples.

Standard-plan and prefabricated houses may be accompanied by contemporary garages or carports exhibiting Mid-Century Modern characteristics.

Other types of standard-plan and prefabricated Mid-Century Modern houses may be identified as survey activities progress and additional properties from the 1960s and 1970s are inventoried.

**Significance**

Well-preserved houses of this property type will qualify under Criterion C because they embody the distinguishing characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern type (rectilinear form, horizontality, lack of ornamental detail, free-form massing, open hearth-centered plans). Like the individually designed houses, they exhibit the overall horizontality, lack of ornamentation, extensive use of glass, natural setting, and informal, open plan that are key attributes. In addition, houses of this property type have architectural significance because they illustrate an important theme in the Modernist movement, the attempt to democratize advanced design by keeping prices within the reach of a large portion of the home-buying market. Techbuilt houses have special significance as the most commercially successful Modernist pre fabricated design, with thousands built throughout the nation. Finally, while most examples of this property type may be significant largely at the local and/or state levels, houses of this property type may qualify under Criterion C because they are the work of architects who achieved prominence within Massachusetts or on the national level.

Under Criterion A, such houses will have state and local historical significance for their association with post-World War II residential expansion, especially if they date from the opening years of postwar suburbanization.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number F Page 26

**Registration Requirements**

The same issues of integrity that apply to individually designed Mid-Century Modern houses must be considered in evaluating the eligibility of standard-plan and prefabricated houses. Replacement materials, especially siding, must approximate the visual qualities of the original, and the setting should retain most of its original character, even if it is reduced in size. Later additions should be secondary to the original mass of the building. Maintaining the integrity of street-facing elevations is important for the public's appreciation of the properties, but with Mid-Century Modern houses, the private, rear-facing elevations, often with glass walls giving access to a terrace, are often of equal (or even greater) importance to the original design concept. The evaluation of the effect of later additions for this property type should also consider whether the alterations have obscured the standard plan on which the house was originally constructed. At the same time, the evaluation of more prominent later additions must give weight to the principle of expandability that was inherent in the Mid-Century Modern outlook. In the case of a more prominent addition, even if its construction date lies outside the period of significance, the integrity of design will not be compromised if (1) the expansion of the house is known to have been provided for in the original design and was undertaken in a compatible manner or (2) the expansion was designed by the original architect or as an anticipated option within the original prefabricated concept. The presence of original or early garages or carports will add to the significance of the property, though more recent outbuildings need not be regarded as detracting from the house's significance, and the loss of an original garage or carport will not disqualify a house if it otherwise is eligible.

The evaluation set for individual standard-plan and prefabricated houses includes both those in clusters of related houses and those that stand apart from such areas. Mid-Century Modern houses in potential historic districts are most meaningfully listed as a group, because often in Lexington the group of houses itself has significance in terms of being a planned community with communal facilities, distinctive landscape characteristics, and design restrictions. But if the group of houses is not eligible under the Registration Requirements, particular houses can be evaluated as individually eligible properties.

**III. Property type: Districts predominantly of individually designed Mid-Century Modern houses**

**Description**

The Lexington comprehensive survey identified two districts of individually designed Mid-Century Modern houses from the late 1940s; one was a grouping of three houses designed by Hugh Stubbins, Jr., and the other was Six Moon Hill, the first development by The Architects Collaborative (TAC). In both, the houses exhibit the defining characteristics of Mid-Century Modernism—rectilinear form, horizontality, lack of ornamentation, extensive use of glass, and informal, open plan—and both make use of natural, wooded settings in which the houses are carefully sited. Although the houses are separately designed, distinctive design elements appear repeatedly. In the case of Six Moon Hill, the houses share not only a common design vocabulary, but also a sense of a cohesive development as a planned community, with common areas of undeveloped land, common recreational facilities, and design controls over subsequent construction. Contemporary garages and carports repeat many of the defining characteristics of Mid-Century Modern architecture: flat or low-pitched roofs, broad overhangs, and natural siding. Additional districts may be identified as survey activities progress, particularly with regard to districts of houses built after 1960.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number F Page 27

**Significance**

Districts of this property type may be eligible under Criterion C at the local, state, and in some cases national levels, as a grouping of houses that collectively embody the distinguishing characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern type, including the diversity and variation possible within the overarching principles of the movement. The potential districts also have architectural significance because both Stubbins and TAC achieved national, even international, reputations. Since the districts include houses that were designed by architects for their own families, the districts offer insights into the aesthetic principles of these prominent architects at the beginning of their respective careers. Additional aspects of Criterion C are illustrated by Six Moon Hill:

- The collaborative ethos important in understanding one stream of the Mid-Century Modernist movement. The Architects Collaborative was one of the most successful and long-lived firms to hold to the principle of group design championed by Walter Gropius and other Modernists. The firm typically published designs under the collective name, and the TAC architects were usually discussed collectively in the architectural literature of the period.
- Planning and landscape design as co-equal in importance with the individual design of buildings. The reform of architectural education at Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and other American universities in the 1930s and 1940s included basic design as a starting point for architecture, and most of the schools embraced landscape design and community planning/urban planning as integral components of the curriculum. The overall layout of Six Moon Hill, the siting of individual houses, and the provision for ongoing review of alterations and additions illustrate the concept of the unity of design that was central to many Modernists. Because of this principle, the overall plan becomes a contributing element within the eligible district.
- The social goals of many Modernists, who thought that well-executed design could create not just collections of houses, but actual communities that would enrich the lives of the residents through interaction with each other. The provision for undeveloped land and other common facilities at Six Moon Hill, as well as an ongoing governing structure for the development, reflect the social expectations of the architects.

Under Criterion A, such districts have state and local significance for their association with the post-World War II residential expansion of Lexington, an example of the suburbanization that affected large portions of the Commonwealth in that period. Both the group of Stubbins-designed houses and Six Moon Hill date from the immediate post-World War II period, and so may be regarded as particularly early embodiments of the theme.

**Registration Requirements**

The following registration requirements apply to districts of this property type:

- 1) A large majority of the houses in eligible districts will clearly exhibit most if not all of the defining characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern type (rectilinear form, horizontality, lack of ornamentation, extensive use of glass, and informal, open plan) in order to support Criterion C. With relatively few exceptions, the district's houses will have integrity of design, materials, and setting as outlined above for Property Type I, Individually Designed Houses. The presence of original or early garages or carports will add to the significance of a district, though more recent outbuildings need not be regarded as detracting from a district's significance, and the loss of original garages or carports will not disqualify a district if it

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

<b>Mid-Century Modern Houses of Lexington, Massachusetts</b>
Name of Property
Middlesex County, MA
County and State

Section number F Page 28

is otherwise eligible. (Houses lacking all the qualities expected for individual listing may nevertheless be regarded as contributing elements within the district, provided that they retain at least some characteristics that make them identifiable as part of the overall whole.)

2) Elements that define the development's overall character will be mostly intact, e.g., important common areas and facilities, the geometry of the streets, and the landscape qualities of the houses' settings.

Ideally, the boundary of an eligible district will coincide with the historical extent of the property as developed during the period of significance. In the case of districts with later houses, or districts in which some of the original houses have been substantially altered, the boundary can be limited to just the part of the original development that retains a concentration of houses with integrity of design, materials, and setting. Noncontributing houses at the edges will be excluded, as well as areas that include both potentially contributing houses and noncontributing houses in which the latter predominate.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
 Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number F Page 29

**IV. Property type: Districts predominantly of standard-plan Mid-Century Modern houses, including districts of prefabricated houses**

**Description**

The Lexington comprehensive survey identified one potential historic district of houses by The Architects Collaborative that used about a half-dozen standard designs, one potential district of "Techbuilt" houses, and several based on the "Peacock Farm" split-level design by Walter S. Pierce. Several dozen houses make up each development. The houses exhibit variations in size, form, and materials, but a single design theme is evident. Although one type of house, with variations, gives districts of this type an overall character, other types of Mid-Century Modern houses, including custom-designed houses, may also be found. Districts may include contemporary garages and carports that repeat many of the defining characteristics of Mid-Century Modern architecture: flat or low-pitched roofs, broad overhangs, and natural siding. In addition to the individual houses showing a concern for siting, the districts in their overall layout retain a relationship with the natural environment by using curving streets and working with, rather than modifying, the existing topography. Some of the developments included design controls to guide subsequent additions and alterations, and some have common amenities such as recreational facilities and undeveloped space. Additional districts may be identified as survey activities progress, particularly with regard to districts of houses built after 1960.

**Significance**

Such districts may qualify under Criterion C because collectively the houses embody the distinguishing characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern type (rectilinear form, horizontality, lack of ornamentation, extensive use of glass, and informal, open plan). These districts of standard-plan and prefabricated houses will also have significance under Criterion C for illustrating an important strand in the Modernist movement, the attempt to keep costs down by using standardization and prefabrication. A district of this type may also qualify under Criterion C because:

- It illustrates the principle that planning and landscape design are co-equal in importance with the individual design of buildings. The reform of architectural education at Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and other American universities in the 1930s and 1940s included basic design as a starting point for architecture, and most of the schools embraced landscape design and community planning/urban planning as integral components of the curriculum. The overall layout of the development, the siting of individual houses, and (where applicable) the provision for ongoing review of alterations and additions illustrate the concept of the unity of design that was central to many Modernists. Because of this principle, the overall plan may become a contributing element within an eligible district.
- It embodies the social goals of many Modernists, who thought that well-executed design could go beyond just a group of houses to create a real community that would enrich the lives of the residents through interaction with one another. Where applicable, the provision for undeveloped land and other common facilities and an ongoing governing structure for the development can be significant attributes of the district that reflect the social expectations of its architect(s).
- It represents a major work by an architect of local, state, or national prominence.

Under Criterion A, such districts may have state or local significance for their association with post-World War II suburbanization, a major historical episode both statewide and locally.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number F Page 30

**Registration Requirements**

In order to qualify, districts of this property type will have a clear majority of the houses exhibiting the defining characteristics of the Mid-Century modern type (rectilinear form, horizontality, lack of ornamentation, extensive use of glass, and informal, open plan), as well as the defining characteristics of the particular standard plan(s) or prefabrication type. With relatively few exceptions, the district's houses will have integrity of design, materials, and setting. The presence of original or early garages or carports will add to the significance of a district, though more recent outbuildings need not be regarded as detracting from a district's significance, and the loss of original garages or carports will not disqualify a district if it is otherwise eligible. (Houses lacking all the qualities expected for individual listing may nevertheless be regarded as contributing elements within the district, provided that they retain at least some characteristics that make them identifiable as part of the overall whole.) The boundary for the district ideally embraces the entire original development, but may be constricted to exclude substantially altered or otherwise noncontributing buildings, so long as the resulting smaller district maintains the character of the original.

**Criteria Considerations**

Criteria Consideration B, a building moved from its original location, may apply to Property Types I and II. Survey efforts to date have not identified any moved Mid-Century Modern houses in Lexington, but the possibility must be anticipated. Because the properties nominated within this Multiple Resource Submission framework are expected to be primarily significant for architectural value, a moved building will qualify if (1) it retains its original form, materials, detailing and other characteristics that make it exemplary of Mid-Century-Modern architecture, and (2) its relocated setting is similar to its original setting in terms of setback and landscaping.

Criteria Consideration G, properties less than 50 years old, could apply to both individual Mid-Century Modern houses and districts of Mid-Century Modern houses that are predominantly less than 50 years old at the time of nomination. Both cases pose the problem of assessing architectural significance without the benefit of the passage of time. The requisite "exceptional importance" would require that the design have some claim to having influenced subsequent architecture or that the house or group of houses was a milestone in the career of an architect of transcendent importance. At the present time, the Lexington Comprehensive Survey of Cultural Resources has not identified any properties less than 50 years old that qualify. It is anticipated that resources that are not yet 50 years old at the time of this Multiple Property Documentation will be evaluated on an ongoing basis as they pass that threshold.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

<p><b>Mid-Century Modern Houses of Lexington, Massachusetts</b></p> <hr/> <p>Name of Property Middlesex County, MA</p> <hr/> <p>County and State</p> <hr/>
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Section number H Page 31

**G. Geographical Data**

The geographical area encompasses the town of Lexington, Massachusetts.

**H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

For more than 30 years, the Mid-Century Modern houses of Lexington have been recognized as important historic resources. The Massachusetts Historical Commission's preliminary reconnaissance survey of Lexington (1980) included among its recommendations for further study the Middle Ridge neighborhood (1956) of "Techbuilt" and other Mid-Century Modern houses. In 1983-1984, the first phase of Lexington's Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey, undertaken by Anne Grady and Nancy Seasholes for the Lexington Historical Commission, compiled detailed information on 300 individual historic buildings and 20 areas of historic buildings. Among the latter were the Six Moon Hill, Five Fields, and Peacock Farm Mid-Century Modern neighborhoods. Additional Mid-Century Modern neighborhoods were recommended to be surveyed in future phases.

A second phase in 1998 added an additional 117 properties, including 115 buildings and two areas. The methodology of this phase incorporated several activities designed to systematically identify additional properties that would be appropriate for inclusion in the comprehensive survey: a review of 600 buildings based upon dates in the Lexington Assessor records, as compiled by a class from Boston University; extensive "windshield" survey by the consultant (Nancy Seasholes); and interviews with the town historian, Larry Whipple, and his predecessor in that office, Edwin Worthen.

The 2000 phase of the survey, undertaken by Lisa Mausolf, resulted in the addition of 108 buildings and ten areas, including Middle Ridge and four other Mid-Century Modern neighborhoods, and a number of individual Mid-Century Modern houses. In all phases of the survey, the forms for the Mid-Century Modern houses cite references to general-interest and professional journals, archival material in university libraries and in the possession of neighborhood associations, and interviews with early owners and, in some cases, with the architects of the houses. The records for the survey are available from the Lexington Historical Commission and online at <http://historicsurvey.lexingtonma.gov/>. Most of the records are also included in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

It appears that Mid-Century Modern houses and neighborhoods from the 1940s and 1950s have been comprehensively identified. Some resources from the 1960s and later have been identified, but it is likely that other Mid-Century Modern houses and neighborhoods from the 1960s and 1970s will need to be evaluated. For example, the Peacock Farm form alludes to the adjacent Pleasant Brook neighborhood developed in the 1960s, but no separate form has as yet been prepared for Pleasant Brook. Prefabricated Mid-Century Modern houses from the 1960s and later, such as examples of the "Deck House" and later "Techbuilt" houses, also await evaluation.

The comprehensiveness of survey efforts to date, at least for resources dating before the 1960s, allows for firm conclusions to be drawn regarding the number and character of property types relevant for this Multiple Property Documentation. Registration requirements were derived from a knowledge of the condition of existing properties. The detailed architectural and historical information on the survey forms led directly to the development of the historical contexts in Section E. The range of Mid-Century Modern houses identified to date also determined the date range of the historic contexts: the construction dates of all the known houses are post-World War II, and the

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

<b>Mid-Century Modern Houses of Lexington, Massachusetts</b>
Name of Property
Middlesex County, MA
County and State

Section number H Page 32

---

inventoried houses to date only include construction dates to about 1970. The year 1970 also marked the end of Lexington's post-World War II population expansion, with the federal census that year reporting a peak of 31,886 residents, after which the population stabilized and even declined slightly (31,394 residents were reported in 2010).

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number 1 Page 33

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**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
 Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number 1 Page 34

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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number 1 Page 35

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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Mid-Century Modern Houses of  
Lexington, Massachusetts**

Name of Property

Middlesex County, MA

County and State

Section number 1 Page 36

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