

WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Vol. XL, No. 2

Fall 2009



The Richard and Caroline Field House (1932-34) at 74 Sudbury Road was one of the first International-style houses in New England. Photo courtesy of Mary Field Parker.

Modernism in Weston, 1930-1970 Part I

Editor's Note: This issue of the Weston Historical Society Bulletin is devoted to modern architecture in Weston. The subject will be continued in the upcoming spring issue, and we hope owners of modern houses will contribute stories and photographs. While Weston residents generally preferred traditional styles, the town has one of the first New England examples of the International Style, as well as individual houses by such well-known modernists as Hugh Stubbins Jr,

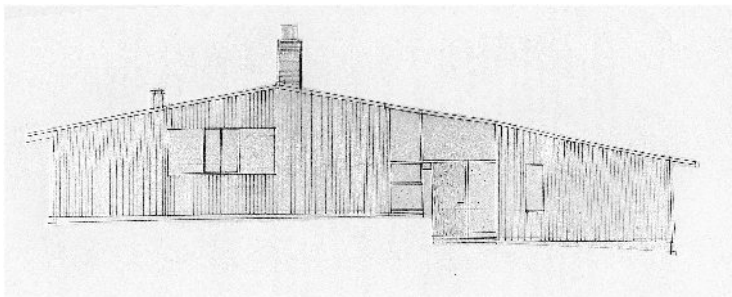
Carl Koch, and Henry Hoover. Buyers of lots in the Kendal Common neighborhood were required to design in the modern style, and the present King's Grant neighborhood began as a development owned by Techbuilt Inc. Country School, demolished in 2002-03, was praised as a model for a new school type and won prestigious awards.

Today, many buyers see the classic one-story 1950s modern house as a tear-down, too small and inadequate for today's families. These unassuming houses, often located on large wooded lots, are generally replaced with new Colonial or Shingle-style houses many times their size, with three-car garages and large manicured lawns. Modern houses can be expensive to restore and maintain, and they often require specially trained contractors and hard-to-find materials. But perhaps the greatest obstacle to preservation is that we no longer understand and accept the philosophical tenants that underlie the modernist aesthetic.

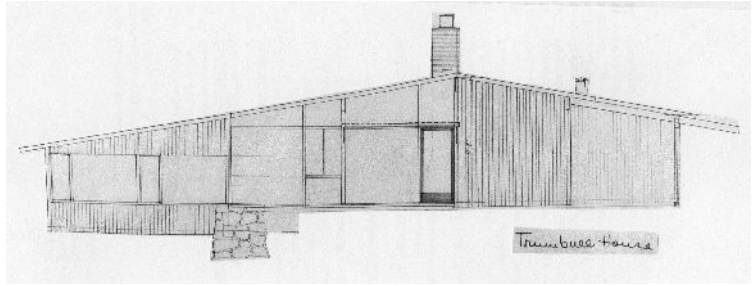
Weston resident and architect David Fixler advocates for the preservation of modern buildings as president of DOCOMOMO/New England, a branch of the Paris-based group that advocates for modern architecture. In the article "Modern and Historic" in the Harvard Magazine issue of September/October 2007, Fixler writes: "Modernism was about encouraging democratic ideas, including the idea that everyone can live well and live on a modest scale. The movement was about breaking down walls and opening up spaces and creating better communal environments, and the houses were meant to have a very light environmental impact on the land. There is something very liberating and uplifting about life in a modern house, and it is something we don't want to lose track of, especially given the general push toward sustainability."

In the same Harvard Magazine article, Cambridge architect Mark Mulligan points to the lessons that modern houses can teach us in the age of global warming. They make efficient use of space, have modest footprints, and bring in natural light and garden views, thereby turning the natural world into "extended outdoor rooms." Writes Mulligan, "A 1,200-square-foot mid-century modern house is the opposite of today's 5,000-square-foot McMansion in terms of how space is valued and used. It's important for us as a society to keep these smaller modern houses, because they move us away from the culture of consumption."

!
!
!



(Left) Front elevation for the Walter H. Trumbull House at 12 Dellbrook Rd by Hugh Stubbins Jr. (Right) Rear elevation. See also pages 34 & 35. Courtesy Special Collections, Harvard Graduate School of Design.



Why Save Modern Houses?

“Modern architecture happens to be in disfavor today in Massachusetts, despite the fact that the greater Boston area was an incubator for modern design beginning in the 1930s. Given this current antipathy for modernism, the preservation of significant buildings of the modern movement is an important challenge, akin to that of preserving Victorian architecture fifty years ago. Such twentieth-century structures are now part of our heritage.”

Gary Wolf, AIA, Weston resident and
VP, New England Chapter, DOCOMOMO

“Over the course of the last decade, and especially in the last several years, there has been a growing interest in the culture and architecture of mid-century modernism. . . This often manifests itself as nostalgia for an era of certainty and enthusiasm about the future and modern living. But it has lately also come to represent. . . a sense of a return to a clean, simple, more modest and. . . often more environmentally friendly way of life.

David Fixler, FAIA Weston resident and
President, New England Chapter, DOCOMOMO

Part I: Fall 2009

Modernism in Weston: A Time Line	p. 3
Edwin B. “Ned” Goodell Jr. and the Field House.....	p. 5
Kendal Common: “An Experiment in Living”.....	p. 9
Spruce Hill Road: Carl Koch and the Techbuilt, Inc. Subdivision.....	p. 21
Hugh Stubbins Jr. and the Country School.....	p. 29
Stubbins Buildings in Weston.....	p. 34

Part II: Coming in Spring 2010

A 1955 Tour of Contemporary Houses
 Henry B. Hoover: Lincoln’s First Modernist
 Hoover house list and interviews with owners
 Allen Chapmen and the Rivers School
 1967 Weston House Tour.
 Other Modern Houses in Weston - send us your photos and stories!

Modern Architecture in Weston: A Time Line

- 1932-34** First modern house in Weston built for Richard and Caroline Field at 74 Sudbury Rd, designed by architect Edwin B. “Ned” Goodell
- 1938** Walter Gropius builds his landmark family home in Lincoln
- 1940** Ned Goodell designs a second modern house in Weston, for Hassler and Margaret Whitney at 102 Sudbury Rd
- 1948** Post-War building boom is underway. Between 1950 and 1960, the number of dwellings in Weston increased 64 percent, from 1,186 to 1,998
- 1950** Weston High School (now Field School) opens, designed by Weston resident and architect Harold Willis of Collens, Willis and Beckonert
- 1950-1957** Kendal Common develops as a neighborhood of modern houses, many designed by pioneering architect Carl Koch
- 1954** Techbuilt Inc. purchases 250 acres (now Kings Grant neighborhood) About two dozen Techbuilt houses are constructed between 1955 and 1959, most on Spruce Hill Road
- 1955** Country School opens, designed by Hugh Stubbins Jr. The building wins the prestigious J. Harleston Parker Award for the “most beautiful building” in the Boston area that year.
- 1955** Waltham Hospital Associates sponsors House Tour of Modern Houses in Weston
- 1957** Cambridge School Dining Hall opens, designed by Hugh Stubbins Jr
- 1957** Techbuilt Inc. abandons its subdivision plans and sells its land in Weston
- 1960** Woodland School opens, designed by Hugh Stubbins Jr
- 1960** Rivers Country Day School establishes campus in Weston, with modern buildings designed by Rem Huygens and Allan Chapman
- 1961** New Weston High School opens, designed by Alderman & MacNeish
- 1967** The DeCordova Museum in Lincoln sponsors tour of modern homes in Weston
- 1969** Weston Junior High School (now Middle School) opens, designed by Cambridge Seven Associates

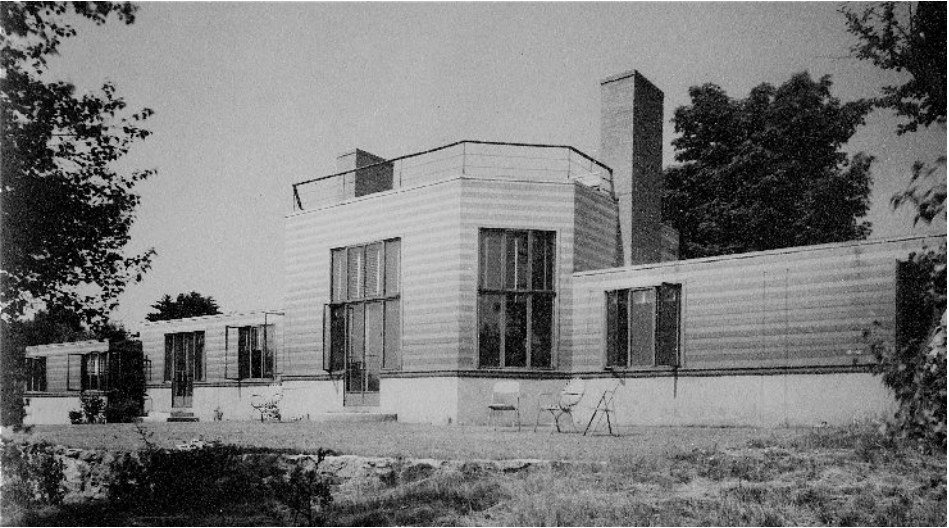


This early photograph of the front entrance of the Field House at 74 Sudbury Road shows the original horizontal wood siding. Alternating plain and reeded strips of wood created a striped pattern. According to the Field's daughter Mary, these stripes were originally painted with 14 shades of green in gradations from dark at the bottom to light at the top. Courtesy of Mary Field Parker.

Edwin B. “Ned” Goodell and the Field House on Sudbury Road

The roots of modernism in New England have traditionally been traced to architect Walter Gropius, a German émigré who brought with him Bauhaus architecture—a modernistic style that does away with decoration and emphasizes function. Gropius, who came to the United States to teach at Harvard in the 1930s, built what was long considered the first house of its kind in Massachusetts, in Lincoln in 1937-38. But research on the Field House in Weston by architect Ned Goodell, done in the early 2000s when the house was threatened with demolition, has established that Goodell and other native-born architects designed modern houses that pre-date the Gropius House.

Like other architects of his time, Edwin B Goodell Jr. (1893-1971), a 1915 graduate of the MIT School of Architecture, was trained to take inspiration from the best designs of the past, a philosophy known as Eclecticism. From 1915 he



Rear facade of the Richard and Caroline Field House (photo taken looking northeast towards Sudbury Road). Floor plan at right. Courtesy of Mary Field Parker.

worked in the prestigious office of Gothicist Ralph Adams Cram. Goodell became the firm's expert in the 18th century Georgian Revival style, designing buildings for schools and colleges including Williams, Choate, Exeter, and Wheaton.

In 1931 Goodell had his first exposure to modernism on a trip to Paris, where he saw examples at the Paris Worlds Fair. Traveling through Brittany to prepare for two French-style commissions, he experienced a revelation described in his autobiography:

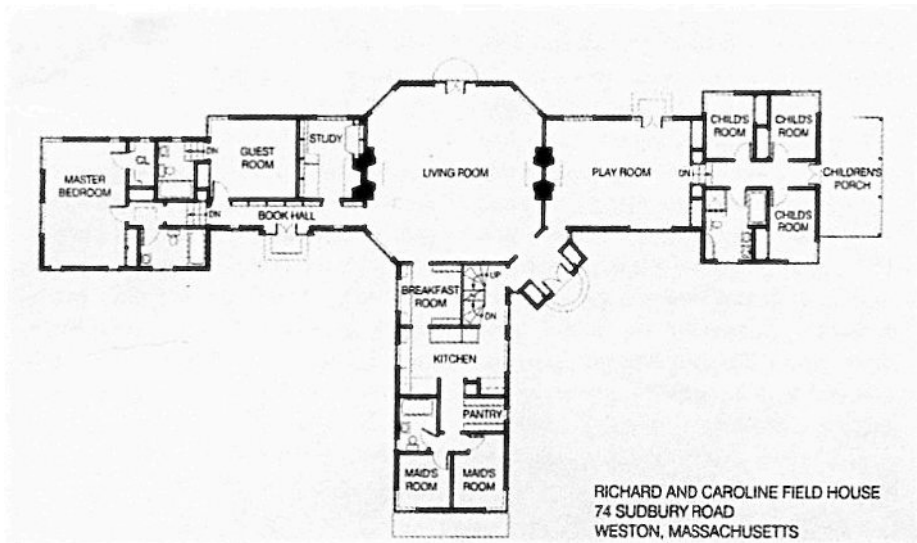
These buildings were genuine—expressive of their time—logical in their setting, buildings of integrity. Mine would be make-believe and at the very best only stage settings to please some false desires of clients who should have their “show off” tendencies analyzed out of them.

He began examining the modern movement, whose proponents believed in designing with the best materials and techniques of their own time:

I felt. . . I had discovered what was at the heart of architecture. . . In Paris and in Brittany I came to see that all great work had been true to its time. . . . I have been doing very respectable stage scenery but really betraying ‘architecture.’”

To share his discovery, he wrote the pamphlet “At the Heart of Architecture” (1935), sold in museums nationwide as one of the *Enjoy Your Museum* series.

On his return, despite the deepening Depression, Goodell was fortunate to be asked to design a house for the Field family, whom he described as “extremely intelligent clients.” The design work for Richard and Caroline Crosby Field began in 1932. Richard was a professor at Harvard Law School and served as a Weston selectman and moderator. Caroline majored in art or art history at Bryn



Mawr and was an early feminist active in the League of Women Voters. Her daughter, Mary Field Parker, recalls that she would do unconventional things, like going into Weston Center wearing blue jeans. The Fields knew the architect socially and became intrigued by his new and innovative ideas. Mary Parker believes that having a modern house was Caroline's idea; and the money would have come from her family, as Richard was just starting his career.

Mary Parker says of the house "It was about as far out as anything could be. People didn't build houses with flat roofs and all that glass." She recalls curious people pressing their faces against the huge living room windows to see what the house looked like inside. The plan has three wings, for adults, children, and service (kitchen, breakfast room, and maid's rooms), radiating from a double-height octagon living room with twin fireplaces. A "tower room" was the only second-level space. Parker says the family was very happy in the house and loved its interesting layout and many windows, which were unusually large for the time.

Unlike European examples of the 1930s International Style, which had smooth neutral-colored exterior walls, the Field house exterior was made of horizontal wood siding alternating smooth and reeded strips of cypress to create a striped pattern. It was originally painted 14 shades of green, in gradations from dark at the bottom to light at the top, to blend into the landscape. After a time, the Fields cut down on the number of paint shades, but they always kept it green. The door was bright red. Modernist scholar Helene Lipstadt has argued that the Goodell house fits a recently expanded definition of the International Style and represents the first use of two New England regional characteristics in modernism: local fieldstone and screened porches.

In 2000, the property was listed for sale and marketed as a tear-down. The owners applied for a demolition permit, and the Weston Historical Commission immediately alerted the preservation community. The house attracted state and na-



Edwin B. "Ned" Goodell (1893-1971)

tional media attention. Weston resident and architect Gary Wolf, vice-president of the preservation group DOCOMOMO, nominated the Field House to the Ten Most Endangered properties in Massachusetts list compiled annually by Historic Massachusetts. In 2001 it became the first modern house so listed. At that time, research was done to determine what other houses in New England might have predated Goodell's Field House. Only three or four others have been identified, and Goodell's has been called "arguably the most significant example of the practice of modernism in Massachusetts by native-born architects

well before Gropius." In 2003 the house was sold to the present owners, who have chosen to preserve it.

Interestingly, Goodell did not abandon the Colonial style. He lived in Wayland in an old farmhouse. He is known for his architectural drawings of the Wayside Inn in Sudbury after a disastrous 1955 fire and for his work on the West Barnstable Meeting House on Cape Cod. He later did reproductions of 18th century houses, including a Weston example at 42 Ripley Lane in 1958.

by Pamela W. Fox



Ned Goodell designed this house at 102 Sudbury Road for Hassler and Margaret Whitney, completed in 1940. Hassler Whitney was a mathematics professor at Harvard. Many modern house owners were professors or scientists. Photo by Pamela Fox, 2009.

Modern Houses in Weston by Edwin B. “Ned” Goodell Jr.

*Richard and Caroline Crosby Field House, 74 Sudbury Road (1932-34)
Goodell also designed the addition of 1968.

*Hassler and Margaret Whitney House, 102 Sudbury Road (1938-1940)
Hassler Whitney was a mathematics professor at Harvard. Restored and updated in 1998 by Louis and Kate Morgans Hruska.

*Dr. Joseph A. and Jane Holmes House, 29 Summer Street (1954)
* still standing

Major References

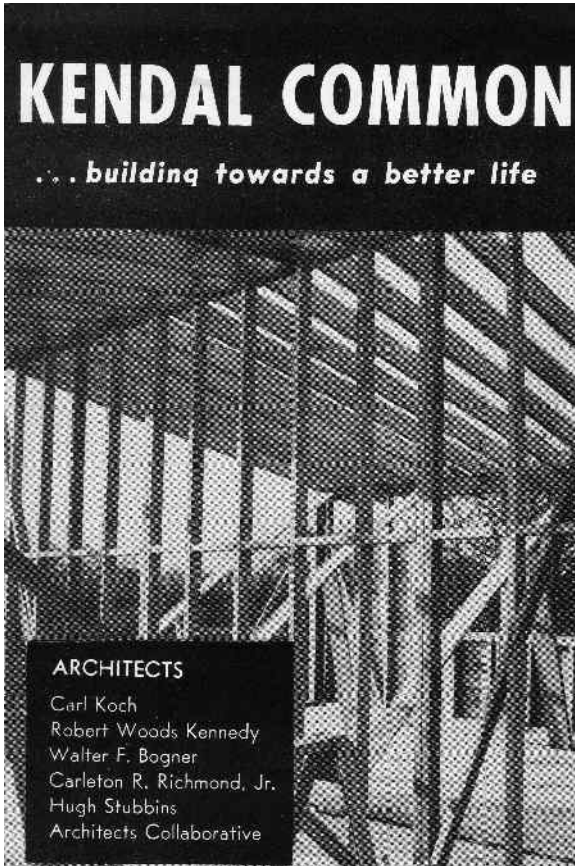
- 1) Lipstadt, Helene, “Revising Giedion, Redefining the International Style and Preserving ‘Invisible’ Modernism in Massachusetts,” *Newsletter of the Society of Architectural Historians*, June, 2001, Vol. XLV, No. 3.
- 2) *Preservation and People*, Journal of Historic Massachusetts, Fall/Winter, 2001, Vol. 16, No. 1., p. 13
- 3) Carlock, Marty, “A No-Name Classic at Risk,” *Preservation*, Magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Jan/Feb 2002
- 4) Unpublished autobiographical manuscript of Edwin B. “Ned” Goodell (nd)
- 5) Scrapbook, R.S. Field House, including photographs, owned by Mary Parker
- 6) NB: The Field House should not be confused with the Goodell-designed Field Farm in Williamstown, MA, owned by the Trustees of Reservations and operated as a bed and breakfast. It features the same reeded and smooth cypress siding.

Kendal Common: “An Adventure in Living”

The following article is taken from a 2003 area form prepared by Pamela Fox for the Weston Historical Commission and Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Kendal Common is one of several post-World War II subdivisions in the Boston area where all houses were built in the modern style. These neighborhoods attracted young couples interested in modern architecture and looking for a new way to live—at affordable prices. Other nearby examples of post-war modernist communities include Six Moon Hill and Five Fields in Lexington and Conantum in Concord. The Kendal Common neighborhood is important architecturally because of the involvement of Carl Koch and other Boston architects with connections to Harvard and MIT.

Historically, Kendal Common is unusual in Weston because of its organization as a “semi cooperative” and its strong sense of community. Each property owner owns a share of stock in the corporation, giving them voting rights concerning



(Left) Kendal Common marketing brochure from about 1952. The brochure was prepared as a community service by resident Dan Fogel, who was in the advertising business. (Right page) Detail from the Kendal Common brochure, showing houses built or planned by that time. Courtesy of Arthur Uhler Jr.

the common land. The group votes a small annual assessment that takes care of maintaining and paying taxes on the common land. A large number of original owners were young academics and scientists from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, with little money but much energy and idealism.

The Kendal Common land had been part of the Trapelo Golf Club, established in 1931. In 1946, the 54-acre

golf course was sold to the Cambridge School of Weston, which bordered it to the north. The school kept some of the land for its own use and invited Carl Koch to help plan for the remaining 40 acres. According to one resident, Koch had an option to buy the land but did not exercise it. Dan Fogel, one of the early residents, recalled that Koch started with a list of people who had come to him asking about designing a modern house. About a dozen people attended his first meeting to discuss developing a cooperative community. Others were brought in through notices on the bulletin board at MIT, newspaper ads, signs on Lexington Street, and word of mouth.

The following eight men became the original incorporators and stockholders of Kendal Common, Inc., which was established in December 1948: Frank A. Barnes, Mario Castillo, Setsuo Dairiki, Everett A. Grant, Ranulf W. Gras, Arthur Lane Jr., Robert H. Marden, and J. Earl Thomas Jr. Six of the eight lived in Cambridge. All but one, Ranulf Gras, went on to build houses in the new development. The corporation raised the money and purchased the parcel in 1949. The life of the corporation was initially limited to 50 years, but its charter has since been extended.

Before buying the land, the group met frequently in Cambridge to talk about how they wanted to live and raise their children. The young couples didn't want their proposed development to look like a typical subdivision and were ready to experiment with new architectural concepts. They were environmentally conscious, with strong concerns about preserving wildlife and the natural landscape. They wanted a place where their children could play together. They were interested in self-sufficiency and in making what they needed. Their monetary resources were limited. Above all, they wanted to create a sense of community. No fences were allowed in Kendal Common. Their progressive views on "community building" mirrored the philosophy of Cambridge School headmaster John J.R. French, after whom French Road is named.

The following is a list of the original buyers of lots in Kendal Common, arranged by date of land purchase. Occupations are listed when known. An asterisk (*) indicates that the original land buyer built a house in Kendal Common. If the original lot owner did not build a house, the second owner is also indicated. The list is heavy with scientists, mathematicians and engineers, many of whom taught at MIT, Harvard, or Brandeis.



THE MARDEN HOUSE



THE GRANT HOUSE



THE proposed MARCHAND HOUSE

Arthur Lane Jr., Nov 21, 1949*

Theodore A. Kalin, Dec. 7, 1949*

M. Thomas Stantial, May 11, 1950*
(professor, Electrical Engineering Dept, MIT)

Jay L. Hoffman, July, 1950 (lot sold to Grace Bissonette, nurse, and Elizabeth McDermott, accountant)

Edmund J. Jaskulski, July 11, 1950
(lot sold to Perry Veinot, a salesman)

J. Earl Thomas, Jr., July 5, 1950*
(Professor of Physics at Harvard)

Ranulf W. Gras, July 5, 1950 (lot sold to Gregory MacDougall, instructor at Brandeis, probably in modern dance)

Everett A. Grant, July 5, 1950* (lawyer) (His parents also lived here; father was an engineer)

Mario Castillo, July 5, 1950* (chemist, MIT)

Norman B. Saunders, July 24, 1950* (engineer)

Daniel Fogel, July 24, 1950* (advertising)



(Left) Kendal Common residents Mario Castillo and Earl Thomas prepare a sign on Lexington Street to advertise the Kendal Common lots. Courtesy of Andrew Tabak.

M. Erich Reissner, July 24, 1950* (Professor of Mathematics at MIT)
Walter E. Marchand, Aug. 7, 1950 (lot sold to Joseph Sedik, electrical engineer)
Robert H. Marden, August 7, 1950 (teacher at Harvard)
Frank A. Barnes, Aug. 10, 1950* (teacher and researcher)
Frederick J. Emminegger, Aug. 10, 1950 (lot sold to Ralph Waniek, physicist)
Eli Z. Rubin, Aug. 24, 1950 (lot sold to Lawrence Fuchs, Political Science Professor at Brandeis)
Setsuo Dairiki, Aug. 24, 1950* (electrical engineer at the Lab for Electronics)
Chia-Chio Lin, Nov. 1, 1950* (Professor at MIT, probably math or physics)
Sydney Theodore Guild Jr., March 17, 1955* (banker and later consultant at Arthur D. Little)
John Thomas O'Brien, Nov. 19, 1955 (lot sold to Spinelli)
Richard E. Seguin, Nov. 26, 1955 (mechanical and structural engineer)

Founding members took care of legal work, engineering, planting the common land, and record keeping. Everett Grant served as the lawyer and contact person. Some members worked on the construction of their own houses, with help from neighbors on carpentry or electrical work. The neighborhood had its own version of the “lawn party,” where everyone labored to remove rocks from a front yard, then graded and seeded it. Communal work was encouraged not just to save money but also to build ties within the community. Resident Dan Fogel called it “an adventure in living.”

A landscape architect developed planting plans for the edges of roads and chose highbush cranberry and honeysuckle to attract birds and wildlife. Because the property had been a golf course, the houses stood out in the barren landscape until small new trees began to mature. The common land included a vernal pool used by the children for ice skating and for summer-time activities like floating rafts. The group planned to have a children’s playground, swimming pool, tennis court, and common house for social activities, but only the playground was built.

Later, Kendal Common Inc. provided partial funding for a swimming pool at the Cambridge School in return for rights to use the school's pool and tennis courts.

Prospective buyers had to be approved by existing shareholders, but this process appears to have involved welcoming newcomers rather than screening them. As one early resident put it, "If you were interested in this kind of architecture, you were welcome." The neighborhood included Japanese, Chinese, Mexican, and Jewish residents, an ethnic and religious diversity unusual for Weston at that time.

Plans for at least one house were not approved. The Ranulf Gras house, shown in an early promotional brochure, was going to be a solar house and had one complete elevation covered with black glass panels, facing the cul de sac. This was considered out-of-place; and the Grases sold the lot and moved to Lincoln, where they helped start another development of modern houses.

The neighborhood has been described as "very friendly but not intrusive." The women in the neighborhood stayed home, and children were free to play under their watchful eye. Kendal Common has been described as a "wonderful place to bring up children." One long-time resident recalls that in the early years there were 45 to 50 children in the neighborhood under age 18. They played outside after school each day, and one resident recalled that her children went to Cat Rock or Bear Hill and they didn't ever worry until supper time.

The neighborhood had Halloween and Christmas parties, Fourth of July and Labor Day picnics, progressive dinners, scavenger hunts, "corn roasts" and other events to bring people together. Shareholders' meetings are still held annually, and each spring a day is still set aside to clean up the neighborhood, rake, prune

(Right) Kendal Common was organized as a semi-cooperative. Each lot owner is a shareholder in the corporation, with voting rights and shared responsibility for maintaining the common land. Courtesy of Andrew Tabak.





(Left) Mario Castillo and his daughters Consuello and Martha. Courtesy of Castillo family and Andrew Tabak

(Right) Top row: Bob Fogel, John Reissner, and Lawrence Saunders. Center: Sue Stantial; Bottom row: Chris Marden, David Fogel, and Holly Saunders (c. 1951-52). (Below left) Stantial girls with dog Taffy c. 1952-53; (Below right) Eva Reissner, center, with Stantial girls, 1951. Courtesy of Andrew Tabak.





(Above) Santa Claus visits the Grant House, c. 1952. Courtesy of Arthur Uhlir Jr. and Andrew Tabak. (Below) Thomas and Florence Stantial with their daughters at their 35th wedding anniversary, February 1977. Courtesy of Andrew Tabak.



(Left) Skating at Kendal Common Pond, c. 1952-53. Courtesy of Andrew Tabak. (Right page) Cover from Kendal Common informational brochure c. 1949, Courtesy of Andrew Tabak.

and cut down trees. Many of the original owners were active in town government but they have been described as less “politically-oriented” than Spruce Hill Road residents and more private in their opinions on politics.

The utopian spirit of Kendal Common is expressed in the 1952 brochure “KENDAL COMMON...building towards a better life,” designed by one of the original residents, advertising man Daniel Fogel. The first page, entitled “Kendal Common: LAND + AN IDEA” expressed the goal: “modern homes with all their freedom and color and sun . . . among neighborly people who appreciate the advantages of doing things together.”

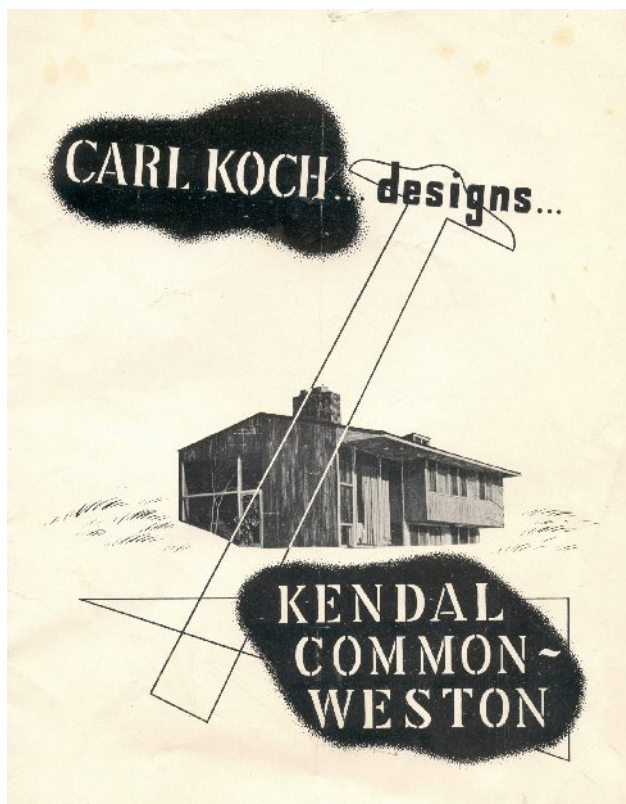
Architecture in Kendal Common

Kendal Common includes 22 houses on four streets, Kendal Common Road, Ellis Road, French Road, and North Avenue. Two additional lots on North Avenue were never developed because of wetlands. Commonly owned land at the corner of Ellis and Kendal Common Road contains a vernal pool and neighborhood playground. Three of the Kendal Common houses are located just over the town line in Waltham. All 22 houses were built between 1950 and 1960.

All of the houses were architect-designed or adapted from standard plans by architectural firms. For a time, Carl Koch and Associates was the only firm allowed to design houses in the new development. Plans were reviewed by the board of

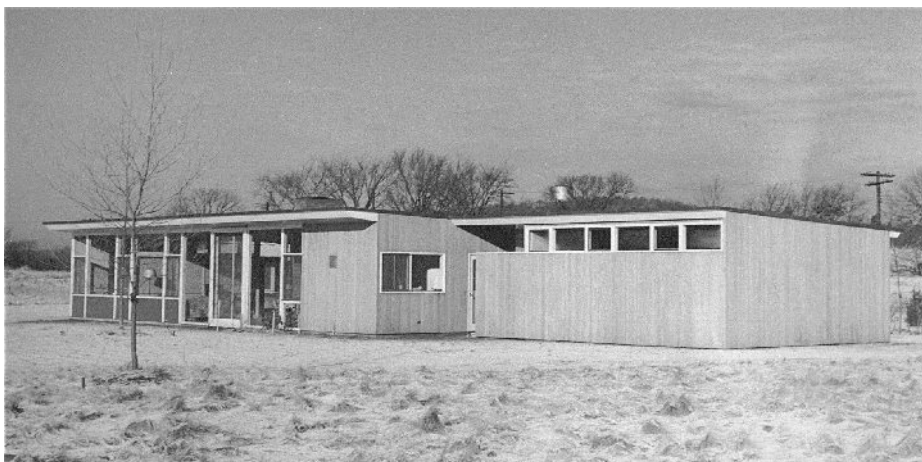
directors of the neighborhood corporation to insure variety within the modernist vocabulary. The board did not allow more than two of any given house design. Houses include both flat-roof and gabled-roof types and are one or two stories.

Carl Koch was one of the leading modern architects of the post-war period (see next article for biographical information). He also taught at MIT. The following 13 Kendal Common houses were built between 1950 and 1957 from designs by Koch or his firm, either as custom designs or from standard Koch plans that had been built elsewhere:



- 1) **Arthur Lane Jr. House (c.1950, One North Avenue) 1st house completed**
- 2) **Harry and Jesse Grant and Everett Grant House (1950, 16 Kendal Common Rd), 2nd house completed**
- 3) **Mario and Gene Castillo House (1950, 40 Kendal Common Rd)**
- 4) **Theodore Kalin House (c. 1950-51, 1481 Main St. Waltham)**
- 5) **Daniel Fogel House (c. 1950-51, 1489 Main St., Waltham)**
- 6) **Robert and Helen Marden House (1951, 30 Kendal Common Rd)**
- 7) **M. Erich and Johanna Reissner House (1951, 3 Ellis Rd)**
- 8) **Setsuo and Norma Dairiki House (1951, 45 Kendal Common Rd)**
- 9) **Thomas and Florence Stantial House (1951, 23 Kendal Common Rd-standard plan)**
- 10) **Earl Jr. and Betty Thomas House (1952, 49 Kendal Common Rd). This plan had previously been built in the Conantum development in Concord**
- 11) **Frank and Beatrice Barnes House (1953, 7 French Rd) Techbuilt**
- 12) **Ralph and Doris Waniek House (1956, 46 Kendal Common Rd) Techbuilt**
- 13) **Lin House (1957, 8 French Rd)**

In a 2003 interview with Pam Fox, Helen Marden recalled that she and her husband decided to paint their exterior cedar siding red, because they “didn’t want it to look like every other contemporary.” According to Mrs. Marden, “Carl Koch



(Above) *The Reissner house, c. 1952, was one of the largest in the neighborhood.*
Courtesy of Arthur Uhlir Jr. and Andrew Tabak.

didn't like it [the color] at all." Gene Castillo described how she and her husband Mario did much of the finishing of their house and lived in the lower section until it was completed. Mario built the chimney and Gene put up most of the exterior siding and did the wallboard and painting.

After a few years, the Kendal Common board expanded the group of architects that prospective buyers could use. The new list included not only Carl Koch and Associates but also Robert Woods Kennedy, The Architects Collaborative (TAC), Compton and Pierce, Hugh A. Stubbins Jr, Carleton R. Richmond Jr, Walter F. Bogner, and Morehouse and Chesley, an impressive group of leaders within the modernist movement in Boston. Their names were printed on a 1952 promotional brochure and on Kendal Common Inc. letterheads. Only the first four firms appear to have actually designed houses in Kendal Common.

Robert Woods Kennedy (1911-1985) designed three houses in the neighborhood:

- 1) **The MacDougall House (1955, 12 Ellis Rd)**
- 2) **The Bissonnette/McDermott House (1955, 17 Kendal Common Rd)**
- 3) **The Fuchs House (1955, 9 Ellis Rd)**

Kennedy, an award-winning architect and author, was the first American architect to work for Walter Gropius after he relocated to the United States in the 1930s. Kennedy taught architecture at MIT and designed modern apartment buildings, factories, stores, and theaters; but he is primarily known as an architect of private residences. According to his obituary in the *Boston Globe*, he "integrated the International Style with New England vernacular architecture" and also incorporated Japanese and Middle Eastern influences in some of his work. He wrote *Art of its Design*, published in 1953, and an autobiography *A Classical Language*.

Three houses were designed by The Architects Collaborative (TAC):

- 1) **The Seguin House (1957, at 3 Kendal Common Rd)**
- 2) **The Veinot House (1955, 31 North Ave)**
- 3) **The Saunders House (completed 1960, 15 Ellis Rd)**

TAC was formed in 1945 as an association of eight architects: Walter Gropius, Norman and Jean Fletcher, John and Sarah Harkness, Robert McMillan, Louis McMillen, and Benjamin Thompson. This original association, presiding over a staff of nearly 100, remained intact until the 1960s. The Harvard- and Yale-trained group, some Gropius's own students, utilized a teamwork approach. The firm was well-known for its work on major housing and educational buildings including the Harkness Common and Harvard Graduate Center, much of Children's Hospital, and the University of Baghdad. In 1995, when the firm closed its doors, *Boston Globe* architecture critic Robert Campbell wrote: "TAC really believed in the collaborative ideal, and was always more interested in solving problems than creating images. Among its best works, in fact, is one of its most modest: the community of modern houses the founders and friends built for themselves at Six Moon Hill in Lexington—another kind of collaborative. . . ."

Richard Seguin described how his "American International Style" house prototype, known as the "Mill House," was a TAC design. The Seguins had seen a finished version at the Five Fields development but were unable to afford the architect fees. In August 1956, the Mill House was featured in *Better Homes and Gardens*, and the Seguins were able to obtain plans and specifications from the

Kendal Common children (Saunders, Thomas, Castillo, and Marden) at the Grant house at Christmastime, c.1954-55. Courtesy of Andrew Tabak.



magazine for a small charge. Richard Seguin, an engineer, redrew the plans in mirror image. The Seguins purchased their modern-style sofa, tables, and chairs at Design Research, the ground-breaking Cambridge furnishings store.

For the Jeanne and Norman Saunders House at 15 Ellis Road (1959-60), owner Norman Saunders went to The Architects Collaborative and got what he understood was an original Gropius design for a house in Five Fields in Lexington. He worked with an architect from TAC to modify the plan for the Saunders family. Saunders, a professional engineer and inventor, named his house Experimental Manor and continued to modify it for decades. An early solar house, the architectural and energy-saving features were described in the 1980 book *Solar Houses for a Cold Climate*. According to Saunders, the house was designed using 10-foot modular units. It is oriented due south and the room layout was planned to work with nature and capture sunlight and cooling breezes. The south wall was largely glass. It has had at least five different solar collection roof designs over the years, combining different materials and designs in an effort to correct various problems. The walls of the house are pumice aggregate concrete block, chosen for its heat-storage and insulating capability. Saunders felt that the heat loss was probably less than from “any other wall in town.”

Two houses in Kendal Common were built by Richard Pierce of the firm Compton and Pierce:

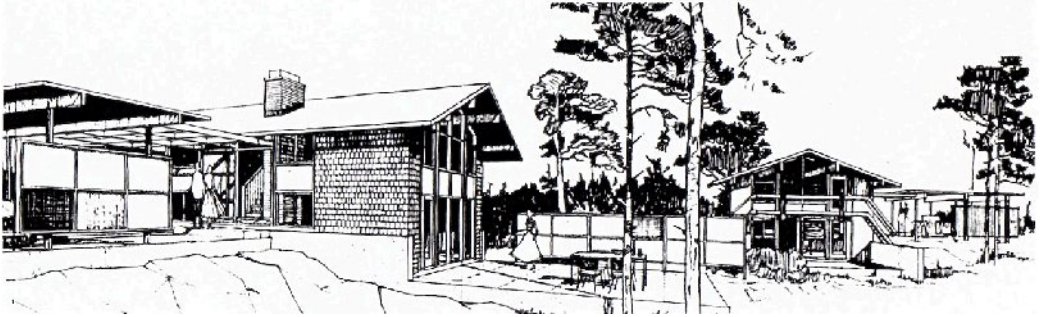
1) The Guild House (1955, 4 Kendal Common Rd)

2) The Sedik House (1958, 11 French Rd, heavily altered in 1983)

Pierce studied architecture at MIT and developed the modern community of Peacock Farm in Lexington. He designed what is known as the Peacock Farm house, a modern split level with a plan that was flexible enough to adapt to sloping sites.

Major References

- 1) Campbell, Robert, “Architects Collaborative closes doors after 50 years,” *Boston Globe*, May 5, 1995.
- 2) Carriere, Dean, *Solar Houses for a Cold Climate* (John Wiley & Sons, Toronto), 1980. (includes Saunders House)
- 3) Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Articles of Organization for Kendal Common, Incorporated under General Laws, Chapter 156, Section 10 (December 14, 1948)
- 4) Fogel, Daniel, “Kendal Common: Building Towards a Better Life,” promotional brochure, 1952.
- 5) Middlesex Country Registry of Deeds, So. District. Registered Land, Book 449/57.
- 6) Pam Fox, interviews with Norman and Jeanne Saunders (1997), Arthur Uhler Jr., Polly Guild, Richard and Mildred Seguin, Helen Marden (by telephone), Ruth Brotman (by telephone), and Gene Castillo (by telephone) (2003)
- 7) Photographs from collection of Andrew Tabak and Arthur Uhler Jr.



Techbuilt Inc. was a Cambridge corporation that designed non-traditional houses in modular units. This image is from an undated company brochure. Spruce Hill Road was different from Kendal Common, in that Kendal Common was developed by an association and Spruce Hill Road was developed by Techbuilt, Inc. functioning as a commercial developer and builder. Courtesy Boston Public Library, Fine Arts Department.

Spruce Hill Road: Carl Koch and the Techbuilt Inc Subdivision

The following article is taken from a 2003 area form prepared by Pamela Fox for the Weston Historical Commission and Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Spruce Hill Road was the first complete new road to be laid out and developed within the large post-World War II subdivision now known as King's Grant. The 20 original houses were constructed in the mid- to late-1950s by Techbuilt Inc, a Cambridge-based corporation that created the modern-style "Techbuilt" prototype house under the direction of architect Carl Koch. Techbuilt houses exemplify many of the principals of the modern movement including flexible design, open floor plans, use of new technology, openness to the outside, and minimal impact on the land. The company utilized pre-fabrication and modular systems to reduce costs. Techbuilt Inc. was a manifestation of a larger movement in the Boston metropolitan area, led by Koch and others, to create affordable communities that were modern not only in architecture but also in spirit.

The Techbuilt House: “A Design for Living”

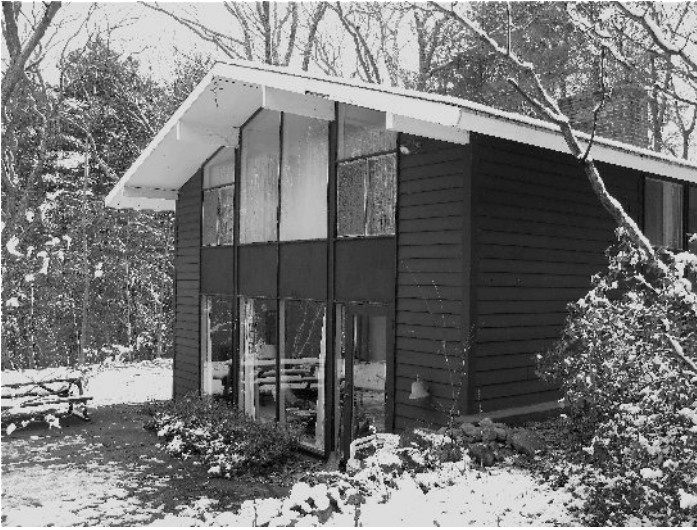
The prototype Techbuilt house, built in 1953, reflected a decade of concentrated work and experimentation by Carl Koch, one of the leading modern architects of the postwar period. Koch received his undergraduate and architectural degrees from Harvard and set up an office practice in 1939. His interest in new housing types led to his work from 1946 to 1949 on the Acorn House, a factory-fabricated home delivered to the site from the company headquarters in Concord. Beginning in 1952, he designed a series of low-cost, semi-factory-built, one- and two-story house plans for Techbuilt Inc. In the mid-1950s, when the Weston houses were being built, Koch was president of Techbuilt, Inc. Beginning in 1951, Koch was involved in the planning, design, and construction of 100 houses on a 190-acre site in Concord called Conantum.

Techbuilt, Inc. was one of the first companies to combine modern architecture with pre-fabricated construction techniques. The company described its house as “a design for living” that “frees the family from the confines of space designed for the statistically *average* family and affords instead an opportunity to enjoy an expression of individual living requirements.” Because of the post-and beam construction, interior partitions could be placed to suit the needs of each family. Houses had wide expanses of glass. The “pleasant, sun-filled rooms” often had sliding glass doors, which added to the experience of indoor-outdoor living. Emphasis was on family needs—not just physical and social needs but also the needs of the “mind and spirit.” The goal was a house that would encourage a comfortable and enjoyable family life as well as accommodate changing needs over time.

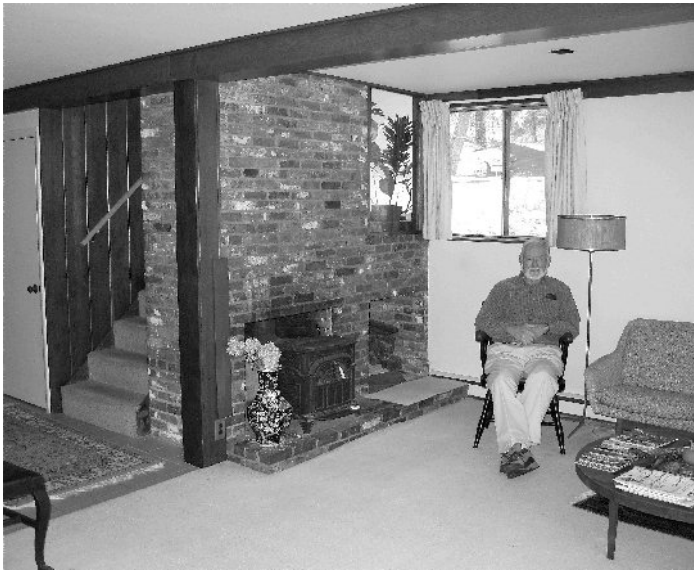
The company touted the “freshness of design” offered by the new modernist aesthetic. The stark white surfaces of the earlier International Style were replaced by combinations of wood clapboards, shingles, or brick, allowing houses to be better integrated into the landscape rather than standing out as pieces of sculpture. Company literature described the two-story Techbuilt House as a “completely new kind of two-level house” that utilized every cubic foot of space and thus provided more space for less money.

Techbuilt houses were built on concrete slabs and had no basement and no “space-wasting attic” or costly dormers. Brochures pointed out that Techbuilt houses combined the economies of a two-story house with the low silhouette of a one-story house. This low silhouette conveyed the feeling of “belonging to the land” that was part of the modernist aesthetic. The modern philosophy emphasized minimizing impacts on the land.

While company literature tended to emphasize style and livability, the Techbuilt house was also developed to be built quickly and cheaply during the immediate post-war period, when housing was scarce. The price of the houses was lower per



(Left, above) This house at 36 Spruce Hill Road, built by James and Agatha “Gay” Fay in 1955-56, remains largely unaltered. Part of the visual interest of the Techbuilt houses derives from the relationship between the clapboard or shingle surfaces, the fixed or paired window modules, and the painted spandrels. The roofs have wide overhangs that block direct sun in summer. (Below) James Fay in his living room, December, 2009. Each Techbuilt house had a brick fireplace. Photos by Pamela Fox, 2009.



square foot than traditional houses because the modules were pre-fabricated and materials and interior finishes were simple and inexpensive.

According to company literature, the Techbuilt house achieved instant recognition as a significant advance in housing. The American Institute of Architects designated it as the “Best Development House” and the *New York Times* called it “The People’s Choice.” The construction method was featured in leading magazines and televised on the Ford Foundation’s TV Radio Workshop over its nationwide “Excursion” and “Omnibus” programs.

James Fay, interview with Pamela Fox, April 2003.

James Fay came to Boston from Ithaca, where he taught at Cornell, to take a position as a professor of mechanical engineering at MIT. He had built his own contemporary-style house in Ithaca and wanted to build in Boston. He and his wife Agatha (“Gay”) had five children, and a sixth was born in Weston. They looked at various types of houses but wanted a contemporary. Fay contacted Techbuilt in the spring of 1955. He was in a hurry, as he had accepted the position at MIT. Techbuilt promised to build his house in six months, but it took almost a year. The construction foreman, Bob Brownell, supervised the work and also built a house for himself. There was general dissatisfaction on the part of all the owners concerning failure to meet construction deadlines and some problems with the houses themselves.

The Fay house was six modules wide at the gable end and 12 modules long (24’ X 48’). The 1225-square-foot house was the largest size available in the mid-1950s. The family customized their floor plan to accommodate an entry, kitchen, dining room/alcove, two bedrooms and a full bath on the first floor and two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a large living area on the second floor. Fay remembers how the modules were delivered on large trucks and put together on site, block by block. The roof also came in pre-assembled modules.

The Fays liked the house because there was “plenty of room” for their six children. It had an open floor plan and was open to the outside, especially on the south side, where there were many large windows. The wide overhang blocked direct sun in summer. The house had none of the special energy saving features that became commonplace by the 1970s, such as fiberglass insulation and storm windows. However, Fay feels that it was probably more energy efficient than the average traditional house, which also did not have energy saving features at the time.

The land cost “a few thousand dollars” and the house cost \$28,000. James Fay recalls: “The cost was “rock bottom” —less than \$10 per square foot. It was cheaper than any house in Weston with similar floor area, probably half as much as a Colonial of the same size.” The savings came from the pre-fabrication, slab foundation, and omission of drywall finishes, among other things. The Fay house is the only one on the street that has never been enlarged.

(For 2009 photographs of James Fay and his house at 36 Spruce Hill Road, see page 23)

The basic Techbuilt module was 8 feet long and 4 feet wide. Four columns, which served as pipe stanchions, were needed for interior support and were located 12 feet apart on the long side and 8 feet apart on the short side. Because interior partitions were not supporting, original owners were able to customize the floor plan around the four columns and also to determine the location of windows. Some of the large plate-glass windows span the full eight-foot width of a module and are fixed in place, while others are four-feet wide and paired, and could open by sliding horizontally on aluminum tracks. Spandrels between windows were constructed of plywood, and owners sometimes chose to paint them in bright colors.

Inside, a brick fireplace was located on an interior wall near the center hallway. Floors were covered with asphalt tiles over concrete and perimeter walls were covered with beveled-edge cedar siding. In the earliest Techbuilts, rather than using drywall, interior partition walls were made with 2 X 3's covered with plywood, which was then painted. Ceilings were also covered with plywood rather than drywall. Opaque glass was used in the entry halls. The modern-style light fixtures were stainless steel. In the earliest houses, kitchen cabinets were metal. The houses had hot water baseboard heat around the perimeter but no baseboard heating on the interior walls. The second floor ceilings slope down at an angle from the center ridgeline. The large roof beams, measuring about 4" X 12", are meant to be visible on the interior. They were originally left unfinished and often were boxed in later. The beams pierce the outside walls at the gable ends and continue outside, where they support the roof overhang. The earliest Techbuilt houses were designed without built-in closets. Techbuilt sold prefabricated wardrobes that have been described as "good looking but somewhat unstable."

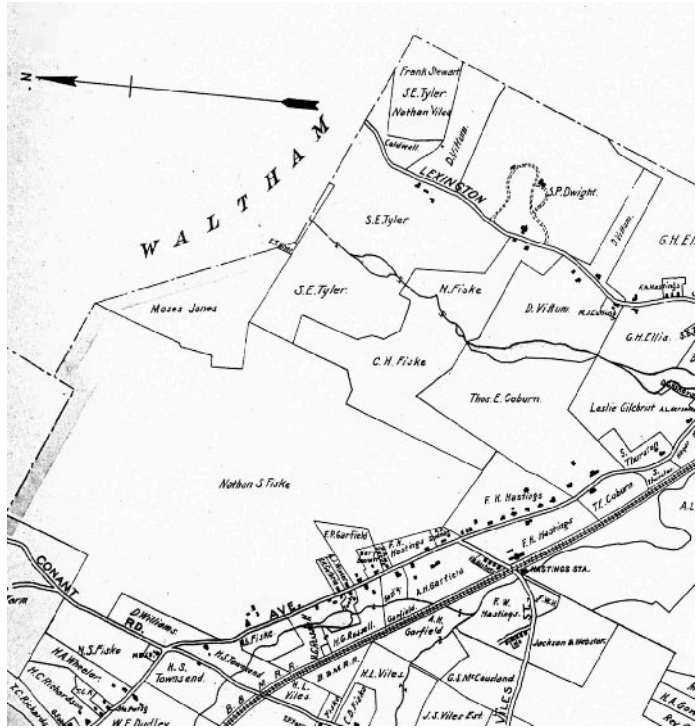
In the Spruce Hill Road Area, trees were cleared only where needed to provide room for the house. None of the original Techbuilts have much lawn.

Problems mentioned by long-time owners include the need for insulation. Many owners have replaced fixed glass panels with insulated glass and/or added storm windows. Also, there were problems with the heating system involving corrosion of steel pipe return lines embedded in the concrete slab floors.

History of Spruce Hill Road

Techbuilt Inc. purchased the 250-acre property on North Avenue now known as King's Grant in 1954 and sold it three years later after developing only a small fraction of the acreage. Spruce Hill Road was the only street that had been completed and for this reason was the only "all Techbuilt" street in Weston. The development attracted young couples interested in contemporary architecture at affordable prices.

(Right) The 1908 Middlesex County Atlas shows the Fiske Farm on North Avenue, always one of the largest in Weston. Lt. Nathan Fiske purchased the original 220 acres in 1673 for 10 pounds. It passed undivided from father to son for six generations, until the last Nathan died a bachelor in 1912. From the mid-1920s to 1941, Charles Cahill operated Cedar Hill dairy farm here. In the mid-1950s, Techbuilt, Inc. began development.



When Techbuilt bought the land in late 1954, the 250 acres of fields and woodland was the largest undeveloped parcel of land in Weston. It had been passed from generation to generation of Fiske family farmers until 1912, when it was sold to candy-maker William F. Schrafft. He sold the farm to Charles J.R. Cahill and Joseph H. Beale in 1923, and the two partners established the largest dairy farm in Weston, known as Cedar Hill Farm. After World War II, the now-defunct dairy was sold to Kendal Green Realty Trust. The trust kept the farm buildings intact and rented the barns to Watertown Dairy, which kept cows there until the end of the decade. The abandoned buildings burned to the ground in 1949.

Kendal Green Realty Trust held the land until November 1954, then sold it to Techbuilt Inc. The company laid out 40 lots along North Avenue, the lower end of Cahill Road, (now King's Grant Road), and Spruce Hill Road.

In the mid-1950s, Weston was growing rapidly. The town was at the intersection of two new major highways (Route 128 and the Mass Turnpike) Early owners of Techbuilt houses on Spruce Hill Road settled there for two principal reasons: they wanted a contemporary house (in some cases they specifically wanted a Techbuilt house) and they had children and knew that the schools had an excel-

lent reputation. Buyers were generally young. One resident characterized buyers this way:

A certain type of people related to these houses. It was a more liberal, creative group. Contemporary design didn't usually attract older people used to traditional styles. Many people our own age also preferred traditional houses and wondered when we were going to buy a "real house."

To them, the Techbuilts seemed more like vacation homes in New Hampshire than year-round homes.

Nancy Baer, an original resident, summed up the appeal of Techbuilt: "We liked the price, the size, the "purity," the idea of honest materials, and the contemporary feel. We were young. . ."

Residents describe Spruce Hill as "a real neighborhood" with "a lot of warmth." Everyone knew everyone. Everyone had small children. The children played together and the women had coffee. They were a congenial, imaginative, close-knit group.

Science, technology, law, and education were heavily represented in the professions of original owners. Among the men, there were three professors, three attorneys, and one each in occupations described in the street list as follows: news director, "electronic," manager consultant, advertising, physician, engineer, instrument worker, industrial designer, sales manager, insurance, and construction superintendent. The Balkin family owned the Newbury Street store Decor International. Of the women, two were social workers, one woman was listed as a "housewife writer," and the rest were listed as housewives. As the children grew, the women branched out into teaching, creative arts, and volunteerism, particularly in community service and social issues.

In the 1950s there was resistance in Weston to development in general and the Techbuilt development in particular. In 1954, the town adopted new zoning requiring 60,000 square foot lots on much of the remaining undeveloped land, and Spruce Hill Road lots had to meet the larger lot size requirements. The Techbuilt development was out of character with the way Weston had grown up to that point. People didn't like the fact that all the houses looked basically the same. In addition to the unfamiliar style, the Techbuilts were perceived as poorly constructed, of inferior materials. People called them "chicken coops." When Weston assessors created categories of construction as part of building records, the Techbuilts were low on the list of desirable house types. It is difficult to know how much of Techbuilt's problems in Weston were related to sales and infrastructure issues and how much to town opposition. It is notable that architect Carl Koch was behind the successful development of Conantum in Concord but was unsuccessful with the Techbuilt, Inc. project in Weston, which would have been of similar size.

Spruce Hill Road developed a reputation as a liberal Democratic stronghold in a conservative Republican town. The street acquired the nickname "Pink Hill." Ac-

According to James Fay, one of the residents, attorney Larry Locke, ran for school committee, which at that time was always a hotly contested position. Someone raised questions about whether he had ever been associated with the Communist Party. Locke withdrew from the contest, which was “getting a little vicious,” according to Fay. This was not long after the McCarthy era.

Residents in the Spruce Hill neighborhood established a fair housing association to help make it possible for minorities to buy in Weston. They also supported fair housing legislation at the state level. Almost everyone on Spruce Hill Road joined the association, which also had support from elsewhere in the town. At that time, there were few if any black families in Weston. It was generally known that Jews were not welcome. Realtors were not required to show houses to everyone. The fair housing association tried to get people to sign up and say they would welcome people of all races and ethnic groups in Weston.

Two Spruce Hill women, Nancy Baer and Imogene Fish, along with South Avenue resident Harriet Elliston, started the Roxbury-Weston program in the mid-1960s, after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. Children from Roxbury joined Weston children for a summer day camp experience. Several years later, another Spruce Hill resident, Gay Fay, was instrumental in establishing the Roxbury-Weston nursery school. Mrs. Fay also taught part-time in the Roxbury schools. Deborah Ecker was head of the League of Women Voters, and many neighborhood women were active in the League.

When Techbuilt Inc. purchased the land in 1954, the company took out a mortgage for \$80,000 from Cambridge Savings Bank, with the requirement that the money be paid back in three years. Since Techbuilt conveyed the land to the Watts Realty Corp exactly three years later, it can be assumed that it was unable to pay off the mortgage without selling the property. Reasons cited by local resi-

(Right) The Balkin House at 44 Spruce Hill Road was constructed in 1956-57 and enlarged over the years. This photograph is from the 1967 tour of modern houses in Weston sponsored by the DeCordova Museum in Lincoln. Courtesy DeCordova Museum.



dents for the failure of the development include high costs of infrastructure, particularly roads and water supply.

Watts Realty Corp owned the property for only two months before conveying it to Weston Land Company, a group of local investors. According to an article in the January 23, 1958 *Town Crier*; the company was formed “for the purpose of creating a new residential area of architect designed, custom built homes of a character befitting the unusual settings.” Corporate officers included at least one devotee of modern architecture, M. Erich Reissner, who was a vice president (see page 17 & 18). The neighborhood continued to attract people who wanted to build contemporary homes. Over the next decades, the Weston Land Company gradually subdivided the former Fiske Farm into more than 100 lots on King’s Grant, Myles Standish, Bradford, Indian Hill, Hancock, and Bay State Roads. Buyers purchased the land and hired their own architects or builders. Techbuilt Inc. continued to build modular houses in Weston, but prospective owners had to buy their own lots.

Major References

- 1) Techbuilt brochures and letters, located in the Techbuilt vertical file at the Boston Public Library, Fine Arts Department
- 2) Interviews by Pamela Fox with James Fay, Lorraine Balkin, Grace Nichols, and Herbert and Nancy Baer, spring 2003.
- 3) Plans and elevations for the James and Gay Fay House, Weston Historical Commission files

Hugh Stubbins Jr: The Country School

Editor’s Note: In 2000, the Weston School Committee began planning for renovations to the town’s two primary (K-3) schools, Country and Woodland. In a 2000 report, the school committee noted that the schools “are over forty years old, lack adequate space to meet current and anticipated enrollments, and need substantial renovations to comply with modern buildings codes and laws and to accommodate current academic programs.” The decision was made to renovate and expand Woodland School and replace Country School, which, because of site constraints, presented major obstacles to expansion.

This award-winning and seminal work by the nationally known architect Hugh Stubbins Jr was demolished in 2002-03. The following excerpts are from a March 2002 report by Pamela Fox commissioned for the Weston School Department at the request of the Weston Historical Commission. Together with an extensive photographic record, it was intended to document the Country School.

Country School was planned in 1952 and opened in 1955 as the second of five schools built to accommodate Weston's burgeoning school-age population after World War II. It was Hugh Stubbins's first commission over one million dollars, and the building won prestigious awards and brought him widespread recognition. Stubbins also designed the Woodland School in Weston, dedicated in January 1960.

Just as modern house design reflected changing lifestyles, modern school design of the 1950s reflected new concepts in progressive education. Education was no longer confined to the four walls of the traditional classroom but rather was intertwined with social and recreational experiences considered essential to pupil development. Stubbins himself was an advocate of team teaching, and his pioneering school buildings were synonymous with early experiments in team teaching and "open classrooms" spreading through New England. Like his early small homes, these unpretentious school buildings strived to be economical and efficient without sacrificing durable materials or design interest.

In choosing Stubbins, the Weston school building committee was looking for an architect who "could make a creative and functional application of the best educational recommendations available, primarily from local school people." Teachers and school officials prepared a detailed list of suggested specifications.

The site presented many difficulties because of the irregularity of the ground, drainage problems, and the presence of a ledge between two knolls. In response to the terrain, the building was organized into two main areas. The south wing, constructed between the two rocky knolls, contained primary classrooms, the auditorium, music room, administration offices, medical room, library-conference room, boiler room and custodial facilities. The north wing, which was connected by a glass-sided ramp, was built on lower ground and contained the intermediate grades and a gymnasium and dressing rooms.

The following design features were singled out in a 1956-57 *American School and University* article written by Stubbins and Gross. Many of these ideas were being advocated in contemporary educational journals:

1. An extensive covered platform permitting all children to get on and off buses under shelter.
2. Bluestone floors in the most heavily traveled areas for ease of maintenance.
3. Easily accessible and separated play areas.
4. Auditorium and related areas located for use in the evenings by community groups.
5. All but three classrooms face north to eliminate the use of Venetian blinds and to assure constant side lighting supplemented by overhead natural light [through skylights].



(Above) Because of site constraints, the Country School building was divided into two wings constructed between two rocky knolls. This photo of the north wing and glazed connector by noted photographer Samuel Herman Gottscho is part of the Library of Congress collection.

6. The four first grade classrooms, with 1,200 square feet of area, are approximately one and one-third times the size of other rooms. This permits the separation of first grade classes into small groups.
7. Each wing had conveniently located inside and outside storage rooms, custodial facilities, teachers' rooms, and toilets.

Even before the building was constructed, Country School began receiving awards. In 1954, the preliminary plan received a design citation from *Progressive Architecture's* first awards program.

Upon completion in 1955, the Boston Society of Architects voted to give Country School the Harleston Parker Gold Medal, awarded approximately annually for the "most beautiful piece of architecture" in the Boston area. It was one of the first modern buildings to receive the award and was seen as a model for a new school type. The design was cited for its sensitivity to human needs and flexibility to accommodate developing educational trends. Stubbins was praised for sensitive handling of a difficult site, where the creation of a level building platform would have required expensive blasting and removal of ledge. Instead, the irregular topography and beautifully wooded site became features of the design.

(Above) Notable architectural features of Weston's Country School included bluestone floors in heavily traveled areas, an auditorium conveniently located for evening use by community groups, and a long covered platform that allowed children to get on and off buses under shelter. Photographer Samuel Herman Gottscho took these photos, probably in the mid-to late-1950s. Courtesy Library of Congress.



Major References

- 1) "The Country School, Weston, Massachusetts." *Progressive Architecture*. 35, January, 1954, 96.
- 2) "Elementary Schools," *Progressive Architecture*, 37, March, 1956, 116-129, 144. (includes Country School)
- 3) "A Proposed Elementary School," *Arts and Architecture*, Vol. 71, January - December, 1954, 20-21.
- 4) "The School Environment: One Architect's Approach," *Progressive Architecture*, Vol. 44, February, 1963.

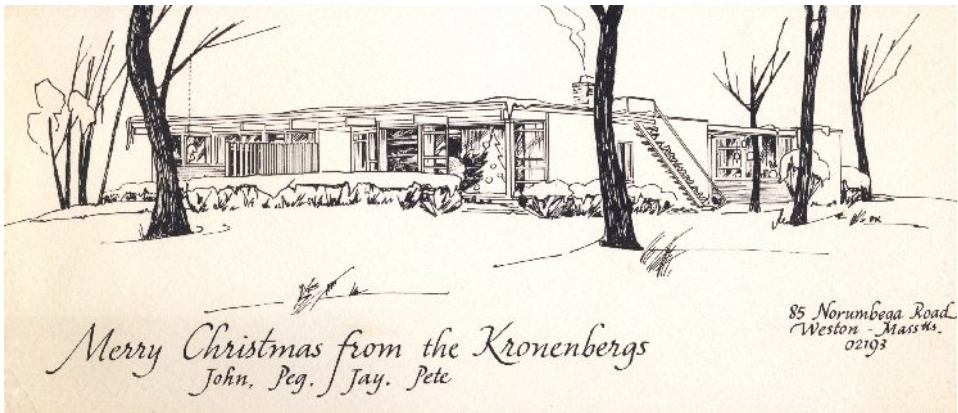
- 5) Stein, Jeffrey, "The Most Beautiful Building: J. Harleston Parker and his medal," *Architecture Boston*
- 6) Stubbins, Hugh and Gross Calvin, "New Approach to Planning a New England Elementary School," *American School and University*, 1956-57, Vol. 1, School Plant Reference, 215-220.
- 7) Hugh Stubbins and Associates, Architects (informational brochure on the firm), includes photographs and plan of Country School and other Stubbins schools, Boston Public Library, Fine Arts Department

Hugh Stubbins Jr.: Biographical Information

Hugh Asher Stubbins Jr (1912-) was born in Birmingham, Alabama, and graduated from Georgia Institute of Technology in 1933 and Harvard's Graduate School of Design in 1935. Stubbins professional beginnings coincided with the emergence of the modern house in the 1930s and 40s. After graduation, the enterprising 23-year old joined the established firm of Royal Barry Wills, known for small New England Colonials and Capes. From 1935 to 1938, Stubbins helped the experienced Wills compete in the field of contemporary design. He produced six modern houses and won several awards in national design competitions. The modest, two-bedroom Troy House in Needham, Massachusetts (1936) exemplifies the best of their collaboration. From Wills, he learned the importance of practicality, economy, efficiency, and comfort. In 1940, Walter Gropius invited Stubbins to return to Harvard as his assistant. He began teaching and also established his first architectural office.

The housing boom after World War II coincided with an enthusiasm for modern architecture and innovation. Stubbins continued designing modern houses throughout the 1940s and 1950s, characterized by informal indoor-outdoor spaces, flexible plans, visual spaciousness, shed roofs, regional materials, and large glass windows. His houses applied new building techniques and reflected the change to a more informal life style after the war. One biographical sketch said that he "pioneered a northeast regional contemporary style on a domestic scale." While Stubbins generally favored the pitched roof as more appropriate to the New England climate and tradition, the Kronenberg House in Weston (1948) reflects his awareness of mainstream architectural thought in its flat-roof, single-story form and modular post and beam construction.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Stubbins's practice expanded to include design of schools for the baby boom generation. The firm is credited with pioneering the innovative "open school" design of the 1950s, as exemplified in Weston's Country School. For Stubbins, good design is an essential and central ingredient of all good architecture but not the only ingredient. Excellence in planning, function, and technology are also essential.



(Above) Hugh Stubbins Jr. designed this house for John and Margaret “Peg” Kronenberg in 1948. Peg Kronenberg was the artist for this holiday card. Courtesy Weston Historical Society.

Stubbins Buildings in Weston

John L. and Margaret Kronenberg House, 85 Norumbega Road (1948)

The Kronenberg House was published in *Architectural Record* in March, 1954 (Volume 115, p. 192-195). The magazine article, entitled “3 Houses: Each Designed to Meet the Problems of its Specific Setting,” praises Stubbins for tailoring the house to take advantage of its location on the Charles River. As with the architect’s other two houses in Weston, the house had a modular post and lintel structural system “which is in turn frankly expressed in the finished house, both inside and out” according to the article.

Mr. and Mrs. Philip W. Trumbull House, 4 Robin Road (1948)

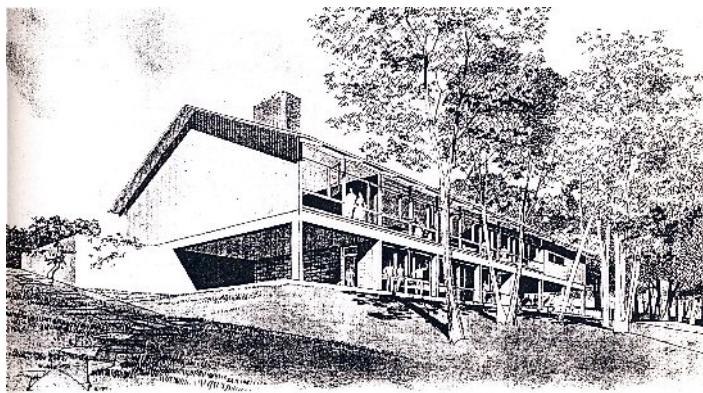
Philip Winsor Trumbull, grandson of estate owner Robert Winsor, built his house in the Meadowbrook Road area on a lot subdivided off from Winsor’s 472-acre estate. Philip’s one-story house had a living room/dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms, and one bath, along with small entry and utility rooms. Plans indicate a location for a future garage/utility/storage addition and a future bedroom wing. (Stubbins Job 4803, Special Collections, Harvard Graduate School of Design)

*Mary W. and Walter H. Trumbull House, 12 Dellbrook Road (1950)

This house is still occupied by its second owner, Carter Crawford. She and her late husband Harry knew Mary and Wally Trumbull and bought it directly from them. According to Crawford, the elder Trumbulls decided to build it because they liked their son’s house at 4 Robin Road (see above). All their children were grown and they no longer needed their large house at 209 Meadowbrook Road.



(Above) Rear facade of 12 Dellbrook Road, built for Mary and Walter Trumbull in 1950. The elder Trumbulls liked their son's modern house on Robin Road and engaged Stubbins to design this home for their empty-nester years. See pages 2 and 3 for elevations. Photo by Pamela Fox, 2009. (Below) Ziskind Dining Hall, Cambridge School, constructed in 1956. Architect's drawing from an undated brochure "Hugh Stubbins & Associates, Inc." Courtesy Boston Public Library Fine Arts Department.



The Stubbins plan has a small entry hall, living room/dining room, kitchen, small utility room, two bedrooms, and two baths. The Crawfords added a study that is sensitive to the original design. The house is largely intact, including the detached garage. (Stubbins Job 5001, Harvard Graduate School of Design)

Country School, Town of Weston, Alphabet Lane (1952, opened 1955)

*Ziskind Dining Hall, Cambridge School of Weston (1956/1974)

The entirety of both the east and west facades was made up of ten-foot-high glass panels, which gave the room a feeling of spaciousness. Because of the steep hill pitching down to the west, students looked out over the treetops. The Dining Hall was partially destroyed by fire in 1974 and rebuilt the following year with an enlarged reception and recital room.

*still standing

Please visit our new website: www.westonhistory.org, for more articles and photographs, along with information about the society and volunteer opportunities. Many thanks to webmaster Miller Blew!

With Special Thanks

To Joseph Sheehan Jr. for plates 12 and 13 from the Middlesex County Atlas of 1908. The historical society is deeply grateful to Joe, one of our former presidents, for purchasing these two important Weston maps for the society.

To Martie Fiske for the gift of a scythe found in the Kendal Common area. (A scythe is an agricultural hand tool for mowing grass or reaping crops.)

To Eloise Kenney for a watercolor of Sudbury Meadows done by John Jones Jr, brother of Theodore Jones and uncle of Ellen and Alice Jones. The watercolor once hung at the Jones House/Josiah Smith Tavern.

To Mimi Hastings for a US Bicentennial Flag, antique car horn, books, and a stereoptican viewer.

OFFICERS, WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2009-10

President: Pamela W. Fox

Vice President: Joe Mullin

Co-Secretaries: Tania Deary, Beth Nolan

Treasurer: David Cail

Membership Chair: Tom Friedlander

Bulletin Editor: Pamela W. Fox

Webmaster: Miller Blew

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Greg Barison, Pam Bator, Harold Coburn, Arnold Crowley, Elizabeth Eaton, Rebekah Gardiner, Sally Gilman, Lisa Greenberg, Mary Gregory, Mary Marder, Lee Marsh, Anna Melone, Madeleine Mullin, Tony Nolan, Pam Riffin, John Sallay, Carol Snow

Membership dues: Individuals or family \$25, life membership \$500. Tax deductible contributions and bequests to the Endowment Fund are welcome. Make checks payable to Weston Historical Society and mail to Box 343, Weston MA 02493. Additional copies of the *Bulletin* may be obtained for \$5 each. Statements and/or opinions expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the editor or the Weston Historical Society. ISSN 1083-9712.