

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

62-13	Boston North	AV	BLM.801
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Town/City: Belmont

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Pinehurst

Address: 69 Pinehurst Road

Historic Name: Clarence & Jeannette Howlett House

Uses: Present: single family dwelling

Original: single family dwelling

Date of Construction: 1948

Source: building permit

Style/Form: International Style

Architect/Builder: The Architects Collaborative
(Walter Gropius & Benjamin Thompson,
Partners in charge)

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood, metal, glass

Roof: rubber

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 28,748 SF

Setting: mid 20th century residential neighborhood with mix of houses in wooded setting near Belmont Day School

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Belmont Historic District Commission

Date (*month / year*): December 2014

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

69 PINEHURST ROAD

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The house at 69 Pinehurst Road is a well-preserved example of the International Style designed by prominent architects Walter Gropius and Benjamin Thompson of the Architects Collaborative in 1948. Set up a low driveway in a wooded setting, the flat-roofed house presents a single-story to the street and is L-shaped in plan. The house is set on a mortared stone foundation and is sheathed in vertical stained boards. The main entrance is sheltered by a canopy that extends at right angles and also covers a porch and carport. Fenestration includes ribbons of small windows facing the street and larger plate glass windows particularly toward the rear. All of the windows are without decorative detailing. Thin round columns support cantilevered spaces, decks and the carport canopy.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

This house was built on lot 12 and the westerly 2/3 of lot 13 in the Pinehurst Subdivision, which was originally lotted in 1931 by Harris Reynolds, a landscape architect. Reynolds had purchased the land from the Meisel family in 1928. He lived in a home at 95 Pinehurst Road until his death in 1953 (Betts: 186-7). Reynolds sold this land to Frederick B. DeKnatel in 1940 who in turn sold it to Clarence and Jeannette Howlett in 1946 (MCRD Book 6989, Page 318).

Dr. Clarence Edward Howlett (1905-1996) was a native of Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin. He worked as an industrial engineer. He married his wife Jeannette about 1941. The Howletts engaged architects Walter Gropius and Benjamin Thompson of The Architects Collaborative to design their home. They worked closely with Gropius and Thompson who handled all aspects of the project including the structure of the house, furnishings and landscape. Donald Tait served as the general contractor.

One of the most influential architects of the twentieth century, Walter Gropius (1883-1969) was the founder of the German design school known as the Bauhaus. He came to the United States in 1937 and built a home for his family in Lincoln. From 1938 to 1952 Gropius served as chairman of the Department of Architecture at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. In 1946 he and several like-minded architects including Benjamin Thompson (1918-2002) formed The Architects Collaborative firm in Cambridge. The firms' designs emphasize the belief that every aspect of a home and its surrounding landscape should be simple in design and planned for maximum efficiency (Cornish).

The finished project was featured in the June 1950 issue of *Architectural Forum*. As stated in the article:

The unique feature of the house is the almost sleight-of-hand cleverness with which its three different levels face three different kinds of terrain with three different kinds of character, never losing the homogenous quality of the whole. To the nearby street the house presents a discreet cypress front with a low silhouette to blend with a conventional neighborhood. On the side away from the street the one-story top-floor living area turns an all-glass face to tree-covered rolling ground. The two floors of the sleeping and playroom areas front on a smooth lawn at the lower level. The focal point of these different elements is a big central open stairwell, walled with glass extending the full height of the house where the three levels converge. From almost any viewpoint, the open plan of the house gives a sense of spaciousness, yet the split level arrangement of the living and sleeping areas insures privacy where it is needed.

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The interior of the Howlett House was furnished by TAC Interiors which preceded the well known Design Research. Among the interior furnishings selected by Ben Thompson was a Saarinen Womb chair, webbed seats by Sweden's Bruno Mathsson, and a Breuer bentwood stool (Lang & Thompson).

The Howletts occupied the house until 1960 when they moved to 20 Howells Road, selling the house to Pierre du Pont IV (MCRD Book 9594, Page 477). Du Pont lived here while attending Harvard Law School. Donald Shively purchased the house in 1963 and sold it in 1965 to Shepard and Evelyn Shapiro of New York City. The property was sold by Mrs. Shapiro's estate to Graham and Elisabeth Allison in 1975. In recent years Matthew Cunningham was retained for a landscape restoration project to edit and replant the garden while respecting the original intent to celebrate indoor and outdoor spaces. The Allisons still own the property today.

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Gropius, Walter. Howlett Residence, Belmont, Massachusetts, 1945-1946, Drawing of east and west elevation framing and details. [Harvard Art Museums]

Lange, Alexandra and Jane Thompson. *Design Research: The Store that Brought Modern Living to American Homes*. Chronicle Books, 2012.

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INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

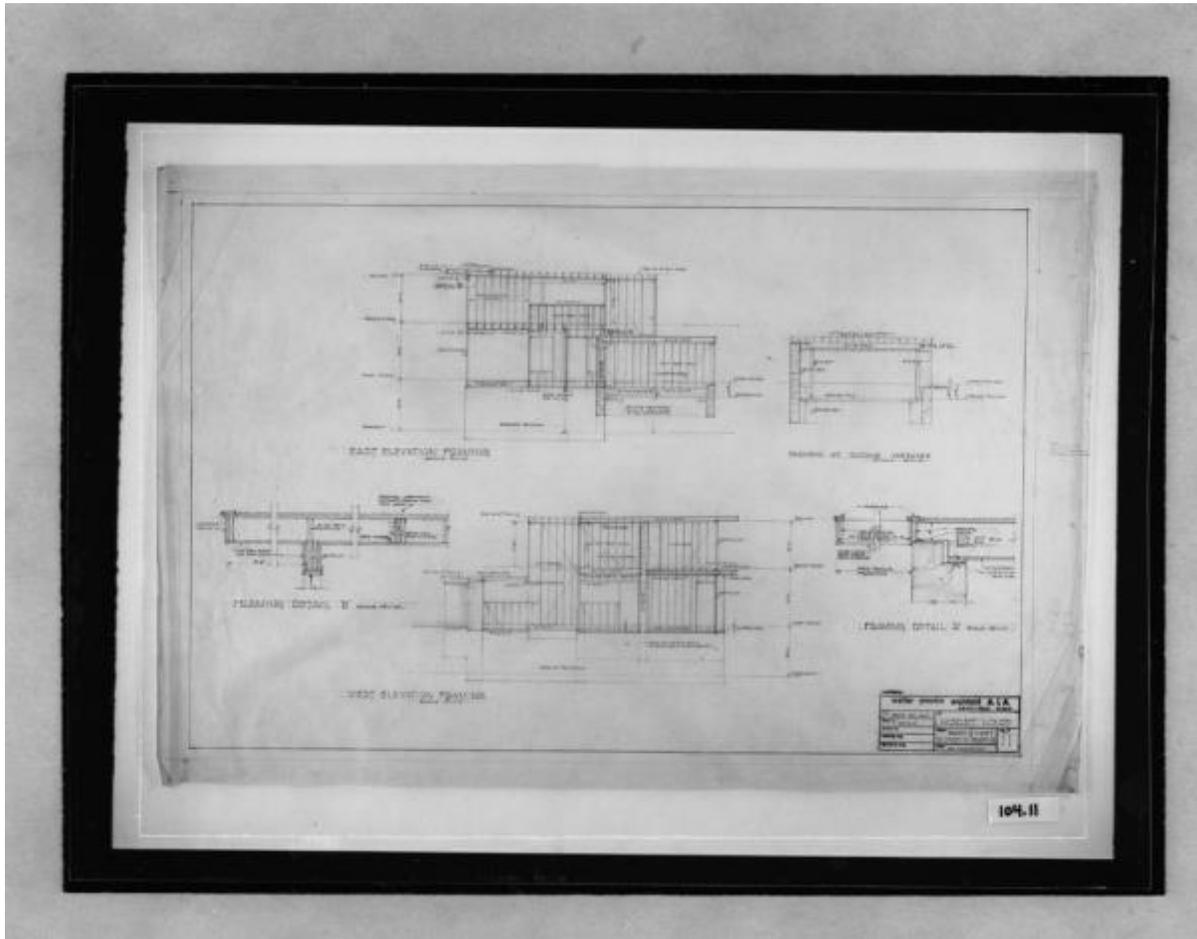
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Howlett House drawing

Source: Harvard Art Museums

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Howlett House

Source: www.ncmodernist.org

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Interior, Howlett House Living Room

Source: Lange, Alexandra and Jane Thompson. *Design Research: The Store that Brought Modern Living to American Homes*. Chronicle Books, 2012.

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible **only** in a historic district
- Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: **A** **B** **C** **D**

Criteria Considerations: **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G**

Statement of Significance by Lisa Mausolf

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Clarence Howlett House at 69 Pinehurst Road is eligible for the National Register, Criterion C, as a unique local example of the work of preeminent architect Walter Gropius working in concert with Benjamin Thompson (The Architects Collaborative). Constructed in 1948, the house was featured in the respected journal, *Architectural Forum*, in June 1950. It is a well-preserved example of the International Style which has seen minimal alteration since its construction.