

William and Mary Ward House
Name of Property

Middlesex County, CT
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

 x

Public – Local

Public – State

Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

 x

District

Site

Structure

Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

0

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

0

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: concrete

Walls: glass and Masonite fiberboard panels; clapboard

Roof: rolled composition

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The William and Mary Ward House is a cube-shaped, Modern-style residence located in Middletown, Middlesex County, Connecticut and built in 1964 for William Ward, a professor of theatre and design at the nearby Wesleyan University. The house is one of a group of commissions, primarily residential, completed in Greater Middletown by local architect John Martin, a colleague on the Wesleyan faculty. Set within a wooded neighborhood, the house has a two-story cube-shaped form that seemingly floats on a small rise. The exterior is composed of 4-ft. by 8-ft. modular panels of alternating glass and Masonite hardboard within an expressed wood frame. The locations of the public and private interior spaces are articulated on the exterior through changes in the amount of glass, solid panels, and clapboard. Few alterations have been made to the house since construction. Archetypical features of Modern residential design are evident in the efficient structural system, cube-shaped form, mid-twentieth-century materials, and integration of the house into the surrounding natural landscape.

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Narrative Description

Setting

The William and Mary Ward House is located in the southwest corner of Middletown, Connecticut, well beyond the downtown area. Paterson Drive is a cul-de-sac road in rolling hills that rise gradually westward. The William and Mary Ward House is one of three abutting houses designed by the architect and sits on a mostly wooded, 3.5-acre, irregular L-shaped lot (*Figures 1, 2 and 3*). The land slopes upward to the west from Paterson Drive, to a level area where the house is located, before rising again behind it. The house itself is a simple rectangular box set back approximately 226 ft. from Paterson Drive and is oriented essentially on a north/south axis. A slightly curved paved driveway provides access from Paterson Drive to a parking area on the north side of the house (*Photograph 1; Figure 4 for photograph key*). The house appears to float on its north, east and south sides, while the west side is nearly flush with the ground. Extensive glazing on the south half of the house creates a sense of openness and connection between interior and exterior. Set amid a deciduous woodland, the house is surrounded by lawn to the south and east and pachysandra, perennial plantings and several pines to the west and north. A flat terrace on the west side offers private outdoor space and access to the interior acreage of the property through an opening in a dry-laid fieldstone wall, which runs parallel to the road across the entirety of the property and beyond, about 40 ft. from the house (*Photograph 2*). Beyond the stone wall are a modest clearing where a playhouse once stood and steps leading up to a path through the woodland.

Exterior

The house is a pure cuboid of modest size that sits atop a smaller rectangular foundation and basement, elevated off the ground as though the form is floating on the landscape. A narrow opaque skirt board beneath the sill plate is used to emphasize this illusion. The whole is capped by a flat roof with a slight but noticeable open eave overhang. Two stories in height, the house is essentially an open volume, measuring 30 ft. by 38 ft. with the longer elevations facing east and west. The east and west elevations are based on a configuration of nine 48 in. wide bays; the north and south elevations are comprised of seven 48 in.-wide bays. Structurally, widely spaced slender two-story vertical posts support the roof joists and are connected by plates at the floor and roof levels and by centered girts; a central beam between the fourth and fifth bays from the south provides additional roof joist support. The framing members project beyond the panels on both exterior and interior and create a grid with 4 ft. wide by 8 ft. high openings. The system allows for greater flexibility in both interior space and exterior sheathing. Varying grid infill materials - glass, doors, solid panels, and clapboard - reflect the different spaces inside the house. At the corners, the posts project from each face in an open L-shaped configuration (*Figures 5a and b*). Areas of clapboard on all four elevations indicate the combining of bays, into either two or two-and-a-half widths. Public space on the south end of house is expressed on the exterior through equally sized glazed and solid modular panels, while private space at the north end of house is marked by the combination of opaque panels, multiple bay clapboard and half-width casement windows. (The weight of the glass panels was such that during installation, a structural counterweight had to be installed within the

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north end of the structure.) The wood frame and clapboard are stained a dark brown, while the opaque panels and doors are painted in either bright orange or off white. There is no unnecessary hardware or ornamentation, only simple doorknobs and original floodlights mounted on the clapboard on each of the four elevations.

The parallel east and west elevations (*Photographs 3 and 4*) share overall grid patterns, but the arrangement of glass and solid panels on each side varies, thereby creating an asymmetrical counterpoint. Door openings in the center bay (fifth from the south elevation) of these opposing walls mirror each other; they both have a pair of flush full-height slab door fronts. The openings are otherwise distinguished visually: floating open wood stair treads lead to the elevated front door opening, above which is an opaque module; a wood platform and single stair tread are at the back door, above which the module is glass. The private interior space is indicated on these elevations by two-and-a-half-bay-wide clapboarded sections from sill to roofline, before ending at the north end of each wall with a half width bay punctuated with a tall slender casement on each floor set in opaque panels. Here the modular framing is no longer articulated, and the bays are more vertical in feeling.

On the west and south elevations (*Photographs 4 and 5*), two bays have been combined to accommodate ground floor openings for sliding glass doors; above the doors, the bays are clapboarded to the roofline. This design repetition allows for easy recognition of openings between interior and exterior, while adding asymmetry through their placement on non-parallel walls at differing bay locations within those walls.

The north elevation (*Photograph 6*) is distinct from the others as the entire wall shelters the private spaces. While the bays are still based upon the 48" modular dimension, only three bays, all solid, echo the framing/pattern of the south elevation. A two-bay run of clapboard from the sill to the roofline is asymmetrically located on the eastern end of the wall and flanked by half-width bays with slender casement windows on both levels. The second bay from the west has paired casement windows on both floors.

Interior

The interior has approximately 1,710 sq. ft. of living space on two levels, and a partial unfinished basement. The living/dining and entry spaces are open to the full two-story 17 ft.-6 in. height of the house with extensive glazing allowing passive solar heating; two pairs of 8 ft.-wide sliding glass doors on the south and west elevations allow for ventilation. Exposed redwood framing, ceiling joists and cedar tongue-and-groove ceiling boards all survive in their original finish. A free-standing, prefabricated metal firehood fireplace, attributed to mid-twentieth-century industrial designer Wendell Lovell and original to the house, is centrally located between the living and dining areas. It vents straight up through the roof, visually emphasizing the verticality of the double-height space. The kitchen, stairwell, loft and bathroom spaces are organized into a central core, behind which are the private rooms on two floors at the north end of the house (*Photographs 7, 8 and 9*).

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In the core, the kitchen, above which is the loft supported by an exposed cross beam, is open to the living/dining space. Original cabinets are solid wood, and vertically mounted clapboard on the sides of the counter facing out evokes the exterior clapboard (of which it is remnant; *Photograph 10*). The stairs to the cellar and second floor run between solid walls enclosing the kitchen and bathrooms; open walls at either end and open risers emphasize the slot-like nature of the stairwell as well as openness and views through the staircase (*Photographs 11 and 12*). Deeply recessed screws secure the treads. The wall-mounted rectangular wood handrail has screw holes finished with wood plugs. The core also contains a bathroom on each floor and the utilities.

The private space behind the core is characterized by regular-height drywall ceilings and walls, built-in furniture, and the exposed framing of the casement window bays (*Photograph 13*). A study at the northwest corner of the first floor retains its original built-in closet, shelf, desk and bookcase (*Photograph 14*). It opens into the master bedroom at the northeast corner, and the first-floor bathroom. The door between the bedroom and the front transitional entry is a flexible two-part standard size sliding door which can be opened to either side or fully closed (*Photograph 15*). Twelve in. wide plank redwood flooring throughout the first floor provides a warm counterpoint to the modular solid and glazed panels and is interrupted only by a flush slate hearth beneath the fireplace, slate flooring in the west entry and kitchen area, and sheet vinyl in the bathroom.

The second-floor plan, approximately half the footprint of the first floor, has been modified by combining three small bedrooms into one large one (*Photograph 16*). A half wall overlooks the front (east) entry area below. The loft is lined on two sides by a wood railing with balusters that overlap the floor fascia in alternating lengths and repeat the detail of the deeply recessed screws used on the stairwell (*Photographs 8 and 17*). The redwood ceiling joists and cedar deck are exposed throughout (except in the bathroom); the center structural cross beam supporting the roof joists sits atop sheetrock partitions that do not rise full height to the ceiling; this is a recurring design element of the architect (*Photograph 18*). The second-story floors are carpeted; the bathroom has a skylight hatch installed by the owner c.1978 to access the roof for maintenance.

Integrity

The William and Mary Ward House retains all seven aspects of integrity. It remains in its original suburban location in a natural setting with dense vegetation and a gradual stepped slope. Some trees and shrubs that nestled around the house were removed. The structure itself retains the clean, strong lines of its original design, from its floating cuboid volume and construction materials to its internal plan and spatial organization. The only physical alterations to the building are the replacement of first floor glass slider doors in a finish to match existing original first floor casement windows, replacement of second floor casement windows with like materials, the loss of upper kitchen cabinets (*Figures 6a and b*) and removal of some second-floor walls including the half wall open to the entry. The historic design is unaltered, and virtually all original materials remain. The house expresses the feeling and association of a Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern residence, as articulated in Connecticut.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

1964-1971

Significant Dates

1964: construction

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Martin, John (1921-1999)

Ward, William (1930-2010)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The William and Mary Ward house is significant at the local level under Criteria A for Social History and C for Architecture for its associations with mid-twentieth-century design and artistic networks in greater Middletown, Connecticut. The property meets Criterion A for its association with the social, intellectual and artistic community centered around Wesleyan University through which ideas about mid-twentieth-century Modern architecture and aesthetics were shared, appreciated and supported by architectural commissions from within that community. The owner, the architect and virtually all of his clients were associated with Wesleyan University. Furthermore, the house is among a group of mid-century modern buildings in Middletown and surrounding towns that speak to the cultural awareness and interests of people in an academic community. Under Criterion C, the building expresses a minimalist Modern style design influenced by the aesthetic of Charles and Ray Eames, Piet Mondrian's color block abstraction and perhaps more contemporaneous functional design such as John Black Lee's System House, scaled to be economically accessible. A collaboration between local architect John Martin and its owner William Ward, the house reflects the aesthetic and wherewithal of the owner, who guided the design, more than that of the architect. Within four years of its construction, in May 1968, the house was featured in the annual Northern Middlesex YMCA Tour of Homes.

The William and Mary Ward House meets the requirements for listing under property type Number F.2 Geometric I, as defined in the Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in Connecticut MPDF, and contributes to the Modern Architecture Movement in the United States, 1920-1979 and Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residential Architecture in Connecticut, 1930-1979 historical context themes described in the MPDF. Recognition of this property also adds to the understanding of the proliferation of modernism in Connecticut by highlighting a locally based community of modernists at Wesleyan University, which was not documented in the MPDF. The period of significance begins with its construction in 1964 and ends with the 50-year cut-off in 1971, as the owner continued finish work on the house and used it as creative studio and gathering spot for the sharing of ideas among students, faculty, and artists during these years.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Social History

Middletown and Wesleyan University

The William and Mary Ward house is significant in social history in the third quarter of the twentieth century as an exemplar of the creative and artistic endeavors fostered by a thriving, engaged intellectual community in Middletown with roots in Wesleyan University. As with

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many college towns, it attracted people like designer William Ward and architect John Martin who could explore their interests in Modern design and architecture in its open-minded milieu.

In the nearby New Haven area, much of the modernist architecture can be traced back to figures in the administration and faculty at Yale University and the School of Architecture. A similar dynamic, at a lesser scale, was at play in the Middletown area because of connections among Wesleyan faculty and administration. Without an architecture program such as Yale's which enabled it to become influential in mid-century modernist ideas and commissions, Wesleyan nonetheless fostered the exploration of modern art and architecture through the leadership of an open-minded president. Victor L. Butterfield (1904-1975), who served from 1943 to 1967, aspired to create a strong university that would be relevant in the post-World War II era to students who had already experienced much during the years of America's military engagement. He recruited faculty from leading graduate schools (including both the architect and owner of the Ward house), encouraged interdisciplinary study and established new programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in social studies and liberal arts. He began a residential college program in the model of larger universities like Yale and a campus building campaign hiring Modernist architectural firms.¹

Among the campus construction projects during this period were residential buildings designed by Brown Lawford and Forbes, including the 1957 Foss Hill Dormitory complex, a group of irregularly sized and sited buildings; McConaughey Hall, a 1962 freshman dining venue referred to as 'spaceship-like' (demolished in 2007); and the 1965 Lawn Avenue Colleges, now known as the Victor L. Butterfield Colleges, three interconnected dorms with floor length windows for maximum natural light around a common courtyard. John Martin designed the dorm building for Delta Tau Delta Fraternity in 1966. The concrete, Brutalist-style Williams Street Apartments, by Ulrich Franzen Associates architects, opened in 1973.²

Other modern commercial and college commissions in Middletown included the renovation and art gallery addition to the 1839 Alsop House in 1952 by Shreve, Lamb and Harmon Associates to create the Davison Art Center³; the 1961 office center at 55 High Street by Warner Burns Toan and Lunde with ribbon windows punctuated by rectilinear engaged columns to house the publisher of "My Weekly Reader" which Butterfield had purchased in 1949 (renovated by John Martin in 1974); the 1965 concrete Brutalist Science Center I by Haines Lundberg Smith and Waehler, who followed up with Science Center II in 1971; the barrel shaped Wesleyan Arena (now Spurrier-Snyder Rink) by Warner Burns Toan and Lunde in 1971; and in 1973, the critically acclaimed Center for the Arts by Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates, composed of ten simply massed, planar limestone buildings arranged around open space and walkways.⁴

¹ "Wesleyan's Eleventh President", Office of the President, Wesleyan University, <https://www.wesleyan.edu/president/pastpresidents/butterfield.html>, accessed 7/2020.

² Town Files, "Middletown," Preservation Connecticut; Wikipedia.

³ "The Alsop House," Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, <https://www.wesleyan.edu/dac/about/alsop-house.html>, accessed 7/2020.

⁴ Town Files, "Middletown," Preservation Connecticut; Wikipedia.

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Outside of the university, Wesleyan collaborated with the Hill Development Corporation in 1968 on a new planned unit development that eschewed the cookie-cutter lots, landscapes and houses of the immediate post World War II suburban Levittown style development. A variety of housing designs by Richard McCurdy and Louis Sauer, a champion of low-rise high-density housing, were built on small neighborhoods around common greens on cul-de-sacs laid out by planner Emil Harslin.⁵

In the atmosphere of collegial exchange encouraged by Butterfield, Wesleyan faculty and staff developed social relationships and shared rich cultural and intellectual experiences that grew from their interests and those of like-minded people drawn to the larger Middletown community. In 1948, a group of women interested in creating pottery began a class together which evolved into Wesleyan Potters; Wesleyan professors Mary Risley and William Ward (both clients of John Martin) taught classes there.⁶ Shared concerns about the quality of elementary education led a group of Wesleyan faculty wives to found the Independent Day School in 1960; John Martin designed the first building in Middlefield.⁷ In 1972, city leaders established the Middletown Commission on the Arts & Cultural Activities, and a group of Wesleyan students founded the Oddfellows Playhouse Youth Theater in 1975; both remain active.⁸

Municipal officials in Middletown also displayed an openness to modernist design through building commissions. The 1954 Wilbert Snow Elementary School had an unusual, progressive campus by Warren Ashley that set five separate classroom buildings around buildings housing common functions; the project won a better school design award in 1956 from the School Executive Magazine. Gilbert Schwitzer was commissioned by the Middletown Housing Authority to design a housing complex for the elderly; the twelve-story brick Sbona Towers with Brutalist massing opened in 1972.⁹

John Martin, architect

Like Victor Butterfield, a graduate of Cornell University, John Martin (1921-1999) joined the Wesleyan faculty in the art department in 1957. He became the first chairman of the Creative Arts Program in 1965, in charge of both its pedagogical and structural components.¹⁰ He worked with colleagues, notably William Ward, on planning for the physical facility over some ten years.¹¹

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "History," Wesleyan Potters Inc., <https://www.wesleyanpotters.com/about/history/>, accessed 7/2020; "Wesleyan Crafts Group to Start New Classes," *Record-Journal*, Meriden CT, 29 December 1970, p.3, accessed 7/2020.

⁷ "History of Independent Day School," Independent Day School, independentschool.org/about-ids/history-of-ids, accessed 7/2020.

⁸ <http://cityofmiddletown.com/434/Middletown-Commission-on-the-Arts-MCA>; Oddfellows Playhouse Main Street Theater - Bonding Spending Plan 2012, pg.2, <http://www.middletownct.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6593/Oddfellows-Playhouse-Main-Street-Theater---Bonding-Spending-Plan-2012-PDF?bidId=>, accessed 7/2020

⁹ Town Files, "Middletown," Preservation Connecticut.

¹⁰ Boyd, Richard W. Letter to faculty reporting death of John Martin and Rev. William Spurrier III, 11/30/1999.

¹¹ "Siry Recalls the Design and Construction of Wesleyan's Center for the Arts," Wesleyan University, accessed 7/2020, <https://newsletter.blogs.wesleyan.edu/2016/10/13/wescfa/>; Ward, William. "A Report of the Sabbatical of William Ward, 2nd Semester 1971-72," 9/18/1972; Bruno, Joseph W. Email to faculty and staff reporting death of William Ward, 6/17/2010.

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Born in New York in 1921, Martin had begun to pursue his interests in art and architecture as a young man. Having moved to England as a boy with his family, he attended classes at the Liverpool City School of Art from 1938 through 1942 and from 1942 through 1946 at London Polytech School of Architecture.¹² In the mid-1940s he also was involved with the Amersham Repertory Theatre and the Ealing film and television studios in London (Amersham Museum; Wesleyan clipping Reed).¹³ He served in the US Army Signal Corps, thereby taking advantage of the GI bill to finish his education with an architecture degree from Cornell in 1951.¹⁴ At the time, the architecture program had a limited enrollment, and students were encouraged to think of the profession as combining design, engineering and consideration of client interests, lessons that Martin appears to have put into practice in his professional career. The school hosted important Modernist architects as guest lecturers, including during Martin's attendance, Walter Gropius in 1947 and Philip Johnson in 1950.¹⁵ A Wesleyan colleague and professor of architectural history, Joseph Siry, recalled that Martin "identified with the Modern Movement, having been trained at Cornell University."¹⁶

Martin moved to Haddam, Connecticut after Cornell and worked in exhibit design for two years as part of the Teague Associates team creating the new Hagley Museum in Delaware¹⁷, before being hired as part-time studio lecturer by Wesleyan in 1957.¹⁸ He soon became a full-time adjunct professor.

Beginning in 1961, Martin, together with William Ward and other faculty in the arts, took an active part in discussions about the need for an arts center where curricula for the various disciplines – art, music, and theatre – could be expanded and bring vitality to cultural programs at Wesleyan. In 1965 he was named the Chairman of the Creative Arts Program, one of the integrated interdisciplinary programs established under Butterfield. In that capacity, which he held until 1978, he was responsible not only for coordinating the programs of the departments, but for bringing to fruition the physical Center for the Arts, part of a broader campus expansion plan. Martin acted as liaison with Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates, the selected architects.¹⁹ He taught until his retirement in 1988.²⁰

¹² Koyl, George S. ed. *American Architects Directory*, Second Edition (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1962), 466, http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/Bowker_1962_M.pdf (Martin, John, page 466), accessed 5/2020.

¹³ "Martin Appointed Director of Creative Arts Center," *Wesleyan University News*, October 1965; "Amersham Playhouse Dec 1936- March 1949 Personnel: First Mentions," <https://amershammuseum.org/history/research/sport-entertainment/the-playhouse>, accessed 7/2020.

¹⁴ Reed, Joseph W. "John Martin, Professor of Art," *Wesleyan University Alumnus*, Fall 1988.

¹⁵ "History of the Department of Architecture," Cornell University Architecture Art Planning, <https://aap.cornell.edu/academics/architecture/about/history>, accessed 7/2020.

¹⁶ Siry, Joseph. Email correspondence re John Martin, to Jordan Sorensen, 4/1/2020.

¹⁷ "Firm Retained to Lay Out Hagley Museum Exhibits," *The News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware) 8/1/1955, accessed through Ancestry.com.

¹⁸ Boyd.

¹⁹ "Martin Appointed Director of Creative Arts Center," *Wesleyan University News*, October 1965.

²⁰ Boyd.

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Martin established his own architecture practice in 1957, with an office in the Masonic Building at 119 Main Street in Middletown.²¹ Through the social and collegial Wesleyan network, Martin found a clientele for his architectural practice, and his commissions stemmed almost exclusively from relationships with faculty or staff at Wesleyan or people otherwise associated with the university, local cultural groups such as Wesleyan Potters, or community figures.

His first known executed commissions were the 1959 Thomas residence at 49 Walkley Hill Road in Haddam, Witten residence in Portland (1 Scenic Drive), and Arnault residence at 23 Coleman Road in Middletown.²² A. C. Thomas was a doctor, likely associated with Middlesex Hospital; Kathleen Witten was the reference librarian at Wesleyan's Olin Memorial Library; and Donald Arnault was an associate physician at Wesleyan and surgeon at Middlesex Hospital.

Between 1960 and 1964 when the Ward house was built, Martin designed six houses and four commercial buildings. Residential clients included Gordon LaVelle, a physician at Middlesex Hospital; Ted and Carmelina Stein, a couple who had met at Wesleyan where she worked; Wesleyan's Director of Admissions, Robert Norwine; the Risleys who both taught in the Art Department; and Basil Moore, noted Professor of Economics. One of the commercial commissions was for a new private elementary school, Independent Day School in Middlefield (1960), previously mentioned. The others were a new building for the owners of the Durham Pharmacy (1961), design of the State Library Service Center (1963) in Middletown, and remodeling of a former technical school into the Middletown Police Station (1964, since demolished).²³

After working with Ward on his house, Martin fulfilled another dozen residential commissions, again largely for people within the Wesleyan circle, including William Manchester, perhaps best known as the author of a book about the death of John F. Kennedy authorized by Jacqueline Kennedy (listed on the State Register of Historic Places), William and Susan Wasch, who later established the Wasch Center for Retired Faculty at Wesleyan, and his last commission for John and Susan Frazer, both Wesleyan teachers.²⁴

In a 1995 *New York Times* article by Tracie Rozhan, Frazer spoke of his 25-year friendship with Martin and his design process: "John is wonderfully client-sensitive," Mr. Frazer said. "I know all architects probably think that of themselves, but John won't even talk to you about design for six months, until he's talked enough about you and your needs and your desires."²⁵ John Frazer had physical mobility problems which might eventually require a wheelchair; the house had to accommodate that likelihood, but neither man wanted the design to make it apparent. Wesleyan professor Andy Curran, who lives in a Martin-designed house and wrote about the architect,

²¹ Reed.

²² Koyl, 466.

²³ Koyl, 466; Maynard, Jean. "Houses by John Martin," hand-written list, 3/22/2019; "New Drug Store," *The Hartford Courant*, 12/29/1961, pg.13 and "Architect Picked For Police Station," *The Hartford Courant*, 7/16/1963, accessed through Newspapers.com.

²⁴ Maynard, list, op.cit.

²⁵ Rozhon, Tracie. "Habitats/Middletown, Conn: A Design that Keeps in Mind the Owner's Disability." *New York Times*, 5/7/1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/07/realestate/habitats-middletown-conn-a-design-that-keeps-in-mind-the-owner-s-disability.html>, accessed 7/2020.

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identified some of the features of Martin's modernist designs as "huge rooms, innovative light play, passive solar construction and unconventional exteriors" and natural viewsheds.²⁶ In Martin's December 1999 obituary in *The Hartford Courant*, his friend, colleague and client William Ward remarked that Martin looked at how a building was situated to advantage on its lot, what building materials were appropriate, and how the space should meet the needs of those who would live in it.²⁷

Commercial work after 1964 included the previously mentioned designs for Wesleyan as well as an addition to the north side of Olin Library,²⁸ interiors for offices for the Farmers and Mechanics Bank (now Liberty Bank) in East Hampton and Middletown,²⁹ work for the Goodspeed Opera House,³⁰ and in 1974 the renovation of the Wesleyan owned office park at 55 High Street where he relocated his architecture office.³¹

Martin was an engaged citizen, serving over the years on the Haddam Planning Commission, Board of Selectmen and Democratic Town Committee, on the Wesleyan Landmarks Advisory Board, Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, as a charter member of the Mid-State Regional Planning Agency, and in the Connecticut Chapter of AIA.³²

Though John Martin never reached national, or even statewide prominence, he was a locally important architect, whose work reflected his interests in modernist ideas, his respect for clients, and his understanding of community. He is remembered today by Wesleyan professors who knew him and architects who studied or collaborated with him. At least two of his residential designs were featured on the annual YMCA fund-raising house tours: the Hanson residence on Millbrook Road in 1967 and the Ward house in 1968.³³

William and Mary Ward, owners

A native of Indiana, and a graduate of Ball State Teacher's College, William Roger Ward (1930-2010) obtained his MFA at the University of Illinois in 1953. He had married fellow Indiana native, Ball State graduate and violinist Mary Lou Puterbaugh in 1952. He and his wife were both hired during Victor Butterfield's tenure. Mary worked in the Graduate Liberal Studies Administration office and was involved in the local music scene.³⁴ William joined the faculty in 1956 as an instructor of art, becoming associate professor in 1963 and full professor of Theatre and Design in 1969. During his tenure at the university, he designed sets and scenery for the variety of productions, from dance to opera, put on by Wesleyan students, faculty and guests – more than

²⁶ Curran, Andrew. "Connecticut Modern: The William Manchester House," *Atomic Ranch: Midcentury Marvels*, Fall 2010, pg 36.

²⁷ "Martin Remembered as Caring Man Of Vision," *The Hartford Courant*, 12/1/1999, B5.

²⁸ Martin, John. "Sabbatical Report for the fall of 1978."

²⁹ "Martin on Main St.," clipping from unidentified newspaper, 3/5/1971.

³⁰ Munkittrick, Alain. Email correspondence re John Martin, to Jordan Sorensen, 6/2/2020.

³¹ "Martin Remembered," op.cit.

³² "Martin Appointed," op.cit.

³³ "Y Tour of Home Attracts," *The Middletown (Conn) Press*, 5/22/1968, pg.4.

³⁴ Meyst, Laurie. Zoom interview by Jordan Sorensen and Renée Tribert, 7/2/2020.

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100 across his 42-year career. He led drama workshop series, introducing students to various technical aspects such as lighting design.³⁵

Ward was also “one of the principal faculty involved in proposing the Center for the Arts complex, for which he served as design consultant.”³⁶ And in his sabbatical notes for 1971-72, he wrote, “I have been, from the beginning, one of the very few involved in the total project – not only in the theater aspects, but in determinations that affect all three departments and their inter-action.”³⁷ During that sabbatical, he continued to consult on the project and visited other art centers to broaden his understanding of the best equipment choices for the new center, soon to open. He worked closely with John Martin in its development. Ward said his vision was about the space that would be created by such a complex in which students from the arts disciplines could interact, influence and inspire one another.³⁸

That thinking, about the richness of interaction amongst students and faculty, permeated Ward’s teaching career. He had a hands-on style with students, working on projects in the scene shop with them. He and his wife entertained often at their home, and included students in gatherings with other faculty, such as close friends the Martins and Risleys, and visiting artists.³⁹ “This house was a theatre in itself; there were many famous people who came to this house after their performances at the university,” his daughter, Laurie Meyst, remembers. Twyla Tharp (who performed at Wesleyan in 1975 and 1980), Merce Cunningham (who performed in 1961 and 1991 and received an honorary degree in 1995) and New York City Ballet’s Edward Villella mingled there with students and faculty.⁴⁰

Like Martin, Ward gave his time to activities and interests outside of his faculty responsibilities. When he was not working on theatre or dance productions at Wesleyan, he was making silver jewelry or teaching classes at Wesleyan Potters and fulfilling commercial design commissions.⁴¹ He volunteered as a judge for Scholastic Art Awards (1961)⁴² and offered his design expertise on the Middletown Children’s Library (1972)⁴³ and a local Lutheran Church.⁴⁴ On later sabbaticals, he went behind the iron curtain to Bratislava and Prague to pursue his interest in the Czech designer Jose Svoboda in 1976, and to London in 1980 with his family to saturate himself in British theatre and museums.⁴⁵

³⁵ “17 Join Teaching Staff at Wesleyan University,” *The Hartford Courant*, 9/28/1956, accessed through Newspapers.com; Bruno, op.cit.

³⁶ Bruno, op.cit.

³⁷ Ward, William. “A Report of the Sabbatical of William Ward, 2nd Semester 1971-72.”

³⁸ Bruno, op.cit.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Meyst, Laurie. Email correspondence re Ward House, to Renée Tribert, 6/10/2020; Zoom interview by Jordan Sorensen and Renée Tribert, 7/2/2020.

⁴¹ Ward, William. “A Report of the Sabbatical of William Ward, 2nd Semester 1971-72.”

⁴² “Work of Young Artists Show Neutral Approach,” *The Hartford Courant*, 1/26/1961, accessed through Newspapers.com.

⁴³ Ward, William. “A Report of the Sabbatical of William Ward, 2nd Semester 1971-72.”

⁴⁴ Meyst, Zoom interview, op.cit.

⁴⁵ Ward, William. “Sabbatical Report, 2nd Semester, 1976,” and “Sabbatical Report, Spring Semester, 1980.”

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Ward retired from Wesleyan in 1998 and was honored that May with an exhibition at the Center for the Arts, in which he had been so instrumental, entitled “Bill Ward: Five Decades of Design.”⁴⁶

Ward, Martin, and the Ward House

In 1963, perhaps with the security of being newly tenured as associate professor, William and Mary Ward bought the acreage for their new home on the recently created Paterson Drive. Of the two existing houses on the street, number 31 was designed by John Martin and built in 1961 for Theodore and Carmelina Stein, who also worked at Wesleyan. The Ward property abutted another faculty-owned house designed by Martin to the west at 540 Maple Shade Road, built in 1962 for Basil Moore, Economics Professor.⁴⁷

Having joined the Wesleyan University community within a year of one another, William Ward and John Martin were not only colleagues but friends. According to Jean Maynard, Martin’s assistant from 1960 to 1965 (and later Coordinator of the Honors Program at Wesleyan), Martin would discuss design ideas with William, and William would occasionally help John with his drawings and renderings.⁴⁸ In their academic, professional and personal relationship, both men exhibited the collaborative spirit that often typified Modernist architects and designers.

It has been established that Martin strove to create homes to accommodate the particular needs of his clients, but the Ward house was more of a joint effort. Ward made many of the design decisions, some of which appear to have been made with affordability in mind, and Martin provided the architectural and structural framework. By this time, Martin had completed nine residential and two commercial commissions.

Ward brought his design education and experience to bear on his new home. According to his daughter, he created a complete model of the house, something he routinely did for his set design work. The floor plan he laid out essentially made the first floor the domain of adults and the second floor that of the three daughters, each with their own bedroom, a shared bathroom, and a kind of playroom in the small balcony. Ward was often at the building site to ensure that work met his vision and participated in the actual work. To achieve a connection with the landscape from within the house, he required the construction crew to protect trees immediately outside of the house walls (*Figures 7a and b*).⁴⁹ He later explained, “It’s basically a glass and wood box set in a wooded setting so our walls are basically the trees outside.”⁵⁰ Though Martin would certainly have agreed with his choice of material, Ward selected redwood and cedar for the framing and roof deck. He chose the panel paint, using colors that echoed Mondrian’s palette. He installed many interior finishes as time and his health allowed. When the house was opened for the 1968 YMCA house tour, four years after construction had started, the floors were still plywood, except for the slate in the kitchen area and beneath the fireplace – the wide board planks came later (*Figures 8 and 9*).

⁴⁶ Kamins, Richard. “Schools Out at Wesleyan, But Still Much To Do,” *The Hartford Courant*, 5/13/1998, accessed through Newspapers.com.

⁴⁷ Maynard, list, op.cit.

⁴⁸ Maynard, Jean. Telephone interview by Renée Tribert, 3/12/2019.

⁴⁹ Meyst, Zoom interview, op.cit.

⁵⁰ “Martin Remembered,” op.cit.

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He also furnished the home with contemporary pieces, including molded plastic Eames chairs for the dining table, Eames lounge chairs, a Hardoy butterfly chair and a Bertoia diamond chair, as well as contemporary art, including some of his own (*Figures 8 through 12*).⁵¹ Ward (*Figures 12 and 13*) demonstrated aesthetic choices in his own home that hewed to the notion of the ‘unification of the arts’ discussed in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut MPDF.⁵²

William and Mary Ward lived in the house from 1964 until their deaths. William Ward found inspiration in the house and its setting, often using it as his creative studio, making mock-ups and models for his theatre set designs. Their three daughters grew up here. It was the family’s primary residence for more than fifty years before being sold in 2017 to the current owner, Peter Segalla.

Criterion C: Architecture

The William and Mary Ward house is a significant local interpretation of the property type F.2 Geometric I identified in the Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in Connecticut MPDF. It exemplifies the patterns of solids and voids within a single cubic volume identified as a characteristic of the F.2 Geometric I type, which is slightly more complex than the F.1 Box type. The Ward house is a full two-story height on a simple rectangular footprint, a configuration reminiscent of the core of the 1961 John Black Lee and Harrison DeSilver prototype System House in New Canaan, Connecticut. And while it is reasonable to assume that John Martin, as architect, was interpreting concepts from examples of Modernist design in the literature and on the ground in Connecticut, more importantly William Ward himself embraced the Modernist aesthetic of economy of form and space and the integration of furnishings, building, and landscape in the design of his house.

The balanced asymmetry sometimes associated with the type is achieved on the exterior through the careful placement of clear and solid elements which define practical features such as doorways and the location of public versus private spaces while creating visual interest. The large modular alternating glass and opaque panels blur the relationship between inside and outside while also focusing and defining it. The rolling woodland setting and raised first floor, both typical features of the F.2 Geometric I type, make this connection between the house and the landscape possible. The floor plan creates the open-concept public space and walled private spaces associated with mid-twentieth century modern design. The use of standard size modular and readily available materials kept construction costs down and hewed to the themes of economical, mass-produced, contrasting components used by other Modernist architects.

The house reflects the owner’s personal aesthetic heightened by his experience as a theatrical set designer, as well as the architect’s willingness to work toward that aesthetic. By the time John Martin and William Ward created this house, Martin had designed at least nine other residences in the Middletown area. The body of his residential design work is generally more horizontal in massing and complex in form than the Ward house. According to Jeffrey Bianco, an architect

⁵¹ Meyst, Laurie. Family photographs of Ward House, c.1964-70.

⁵² Adams, Virginia et al. “Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut, 1930-1979,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2010, 14.

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based in Middletown, Martin's residential designs were often described as having Frank Lloyd Wright influence, with low pitched roofs, wide overhangs and irregular open floor plans, but the Ward house was "a lovely design of a cube in the woods, and as far as I know an outlier in John's house compositions."⁵³ In remembering the house, Ward's daughter, Laurie Meyst said "This house was truly my father's dream, his design... He and John Martin were good friends and John helped him with the engineering, but this was my Dad's baby... He loved the modern look, Eames, Frank Lloyd Wright and Mondrian color palette."⁵⁴ Different facets of the house evoke all three. The framing grid and asymmetrical use of painted panels brings to mind a simplified Mondrian block composition; the alternating solid and glass panels both open and interrupt views as in the Eames' Case Study House No.8;⁵⁵ the exposed wood framing references some of Wright's design ideas. Beyond that, the simplified structural system, expansive windows and upland woodland setting all reflected established Modernist principles in practice.

⁵³ Bianco, Jeffrey. Email correspondence re John Martin, to Jordan Sorensen, 7/2/2020.

⁵⁴ Meyst, Laurie. Email op.cit.

⁵⁵ Columina, Beatriz. "Reflections on the Eames House" in *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1997), pg.144.

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Meyst, Laurie. Zoom interview re Ward House, by Jordan Sorensen and Renée Tribert, 7/2/2020.

Munkittrick, Alain. Email correspondence re John Martin, to Jordan Sorensen, 6/2/2020.

Siry, Joseph. Email correspondence re John Martin, to Jordan Sorensen, 4/1/2020.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

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Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.5 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 41.517476 Longitude: -72.656143

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property boundaries are those legally recorded as Lot 50, Tax Map 39 in the Middletown, Connecticut, assessor records (Figure 2).

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary lines are consistent with those of the original parcel on which the historic resource was built in 1964.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Renée E. Tribert and Jordan Sorensen, Architectural Historians
organization: Preservation Connecticut
street & number: 940 Whitney Avenue
city or town: Hamden state: CT zip code: 06517
e-mail rtribert@preservationct.org
telephone: 203-562-6312
date: October 16, 2020

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: William and Mary Ward House

City or Vicinity: Middletown

County: Middlesex

State: Connecticut

Photographer: Jordan Sorensen and Renée Tribert

Date Photographed: March and August, 2020

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

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- 1 of 18. House as seen up driveway approach; camera facing west.
- 2 of 18. Rear yard, stone wall and path to woods from northwest corner of house; camera facing south/southwest.
- 3 of 18. East (front) elevation, camera facing west.
- 4 of 18. West elevation, camera facing east.
- 5 of 18. South elevation, camera facing north.
- 6 of 18. North elevation of bedrooms and study; camera facing south.
- 7 of 18. Living space; camera facing east.
- 8 of 18. View from within living space toward central core of kitchen, stairs and bathrooms behind which are private study and bedrooms; camera facing north.
- 9 of 18. Detail of exposed ceiling joists and deck over living area.
- 10 of 18. Kitchen with clapboard facing, loft above and study at rear.
- 11 of 18. Stair well and open steps to second floor (steps to basement beneath).
- 12 of 18. Looking through stairwell to living space.
- 13 of 18. Example of interior casement window framing in private spaces.
- 14 of 18. Built-in shelves, desk and cabinets in first floor study, looking toward master bedroom.
- 15 of 18. Hanging sliding door between master bedroom and front entry.
- 16 of 18. Second floor bedroom space, once three rooms, now one.
- 17 of 18. The loft over the kitchen, looking out toward the back yard.
- 18 of 18. The center cross beam atop the western stairwell wall.

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Site Maps/Images:

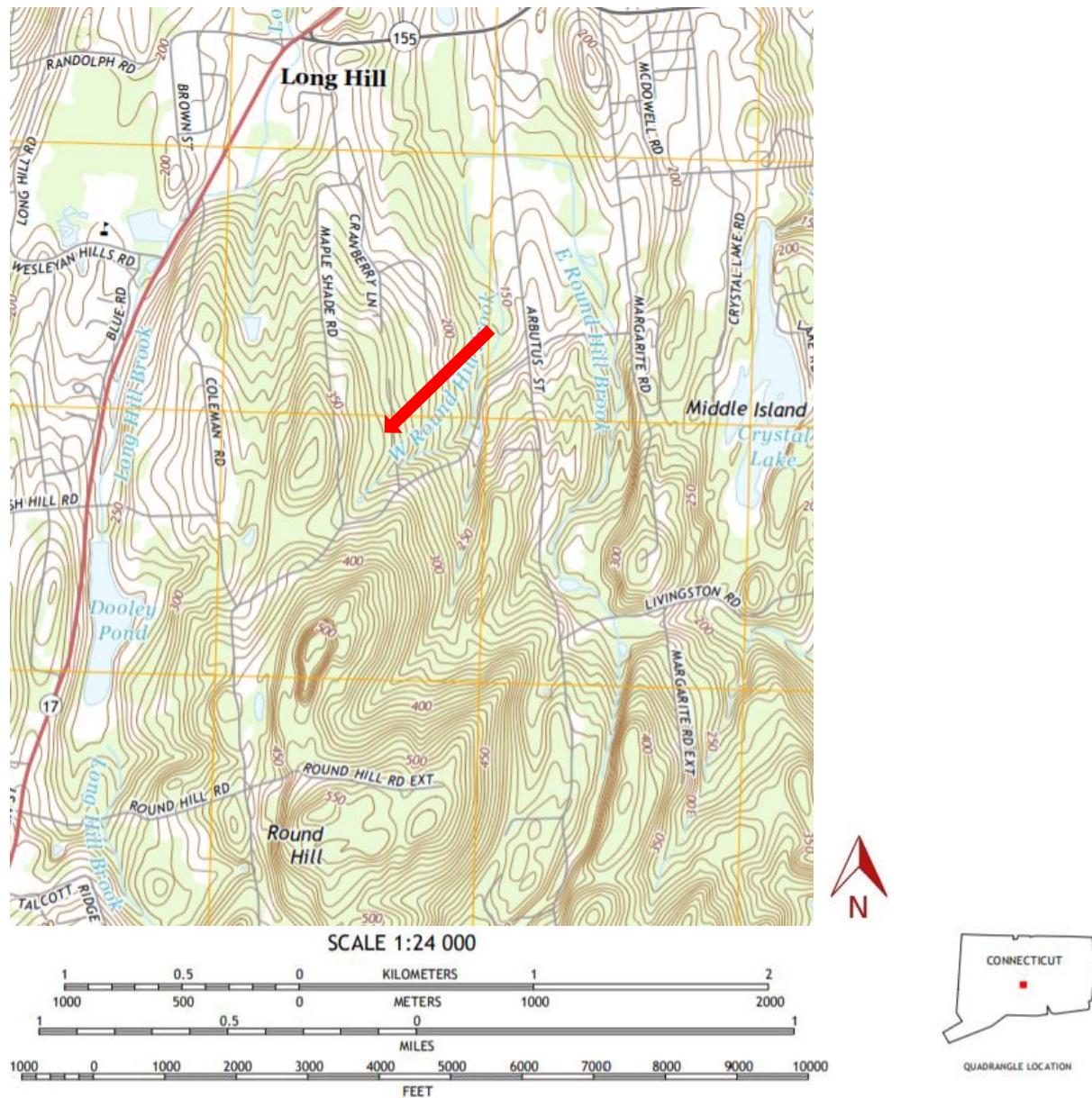


Figure 1. Approximate location of 45 Paterson Drive; USGS Middletown Quadrangle Map.

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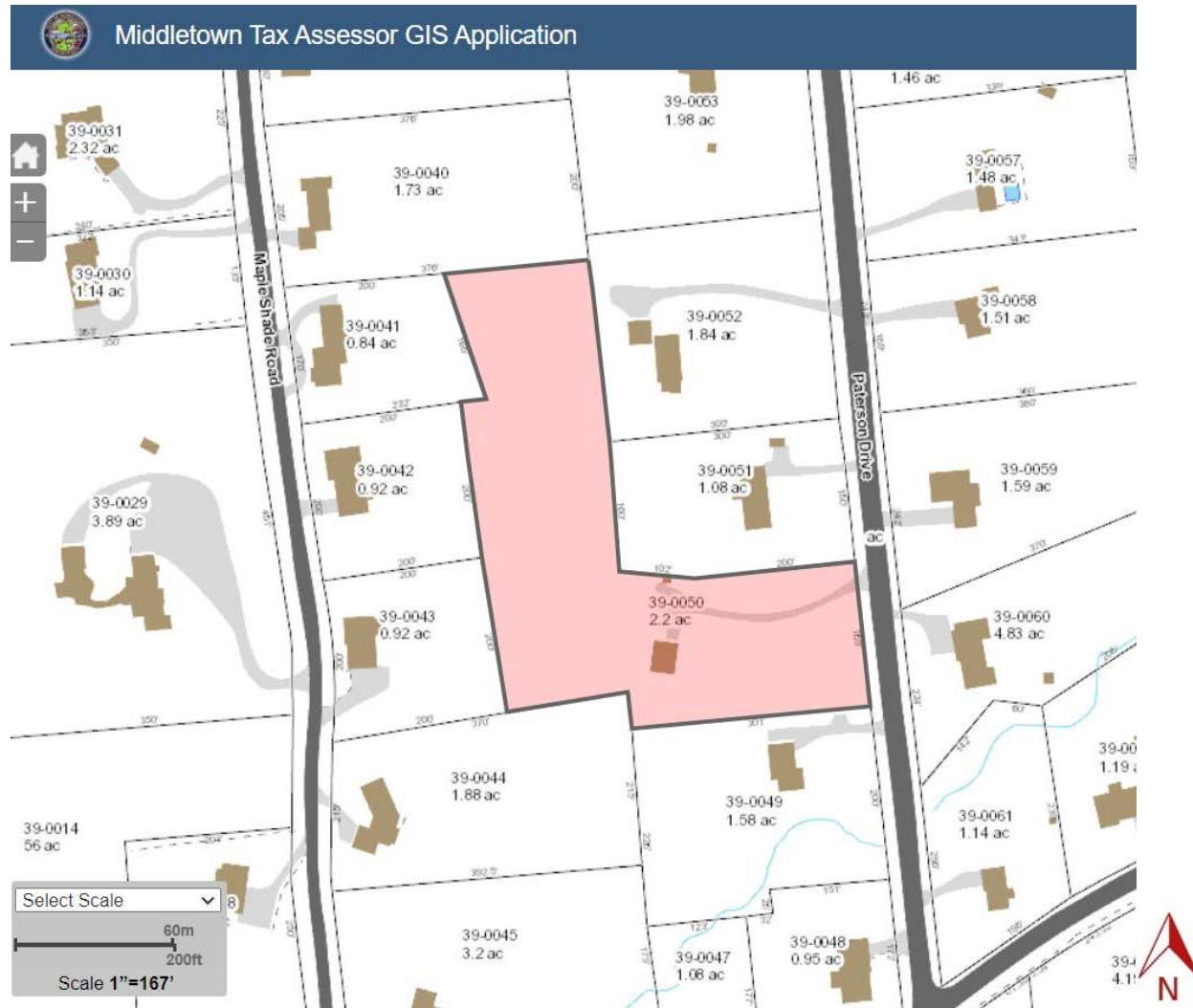


Figure 2. Parcel map; Middletown CT GIS.

(Notes: the property boundary is outlined; the acreage on the assessor map is for the interior land only; the parcel on the street is 1.3 acres and the interior parcel is 2.2 acres in size.)

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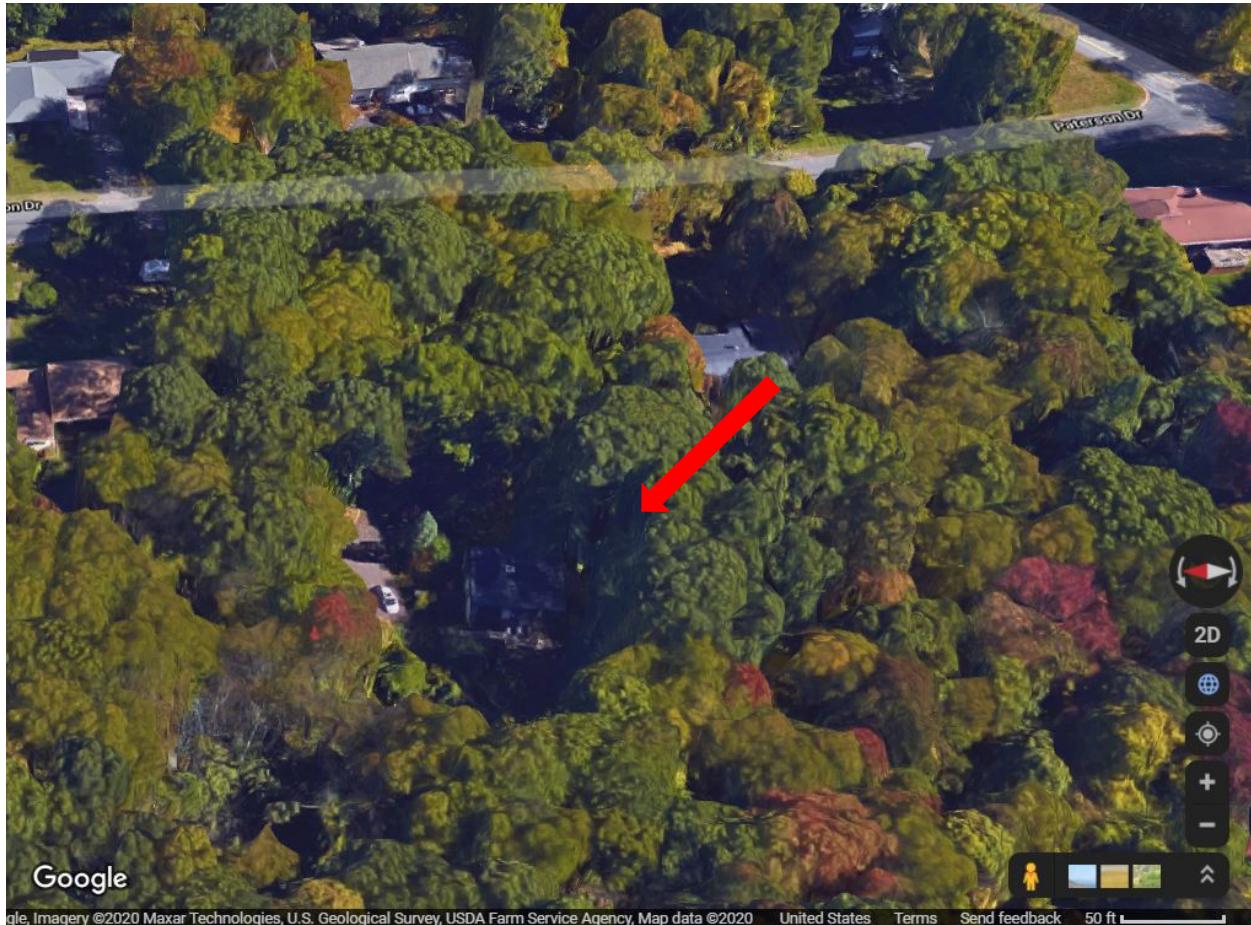
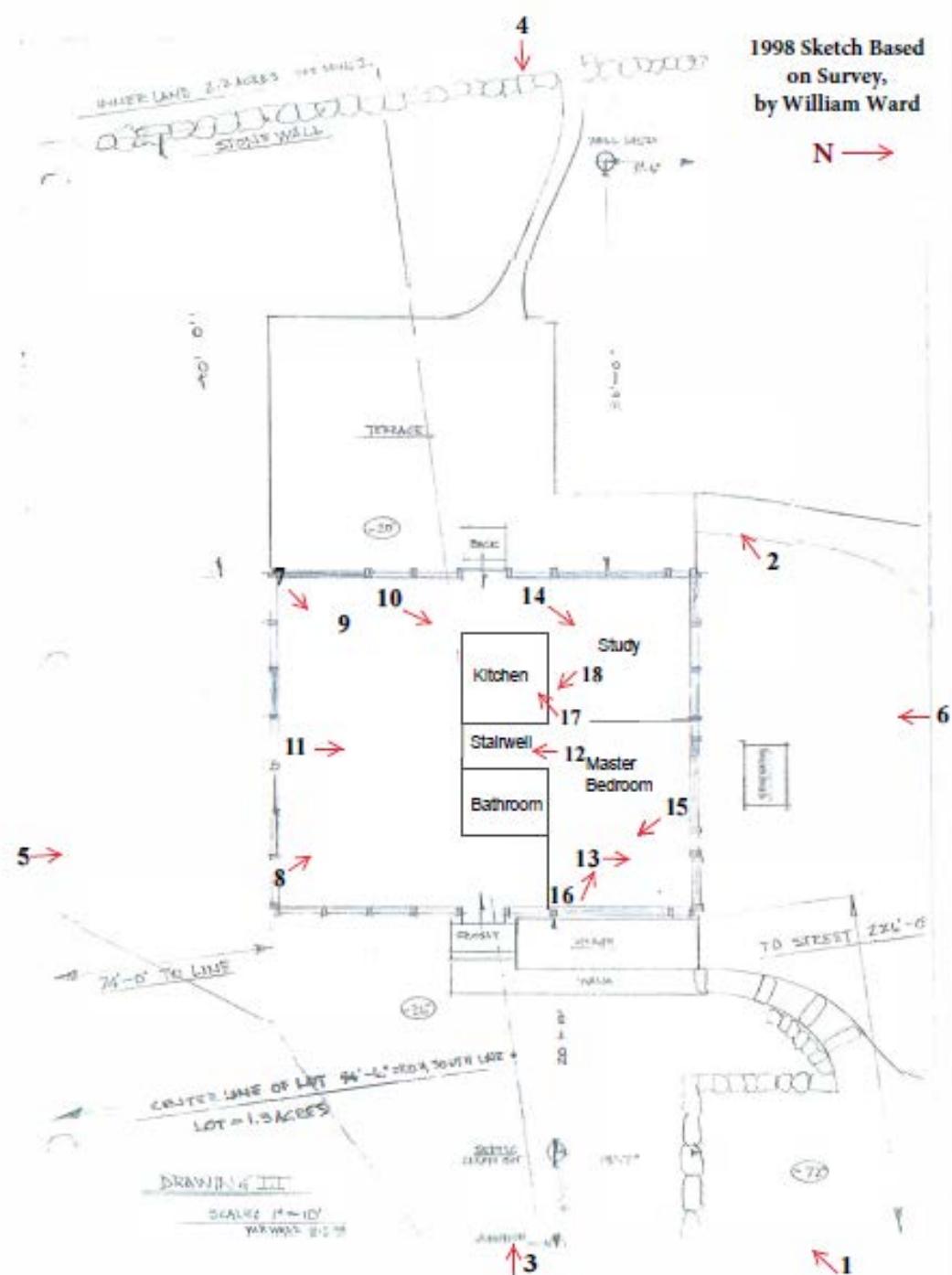


Figure 3. Bird's eye aerial, camera facing east toward Paterson Drive, showing house set back from road in wooded landscape; Google Maps, 2020.

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Figures 5a and 5b. Corner "L" construction details: (L) photo taken by owner during 1964 construction, courtesy Laurie Meyst; (R) 3/2020.



Figures 6a and 6b. Kitchen detail: (L) with original cabinets prior to 2017 sale; (R) 3/2020.

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Figures 7a and 7b. Trees kept just beyond perimeter of house: (L) northwest corner during construction in 1964, (R) undated view out living area east elevation. Courtesy Laurie Meyst.



Figures 8 and 9. Interior views between 1964 and c.1970: plywood flooring prior to laying of wide wood planks, and contemporary furnishings including Eames lounge chair, Hardoy butterfly chair, molded plastic Eames chairs. Courtesy Laurie Meyst.

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Figures 10 and 11. Undated interior views with contemporary furnishings and artwork, and original configuration at front entry area. Courtesy Laurie Meyst.



Figures 12 and 13. Undated photographs of William Ward and house: (L) at dining room table and (R) at front/east elevation. Courtesy Laurie Meyst.

William and Mary Ward House, Middletown, National Register Nomination Photographs



Photograph 1 of 18. House as seen up driveway approach; camera facing west.



Photograph 2 of 18. Rear yard, stone wall and path to woods from northwest corner of house; camera facing south/southwest.



Photograph 3 of 18. Front/east elevation, camera facing west.



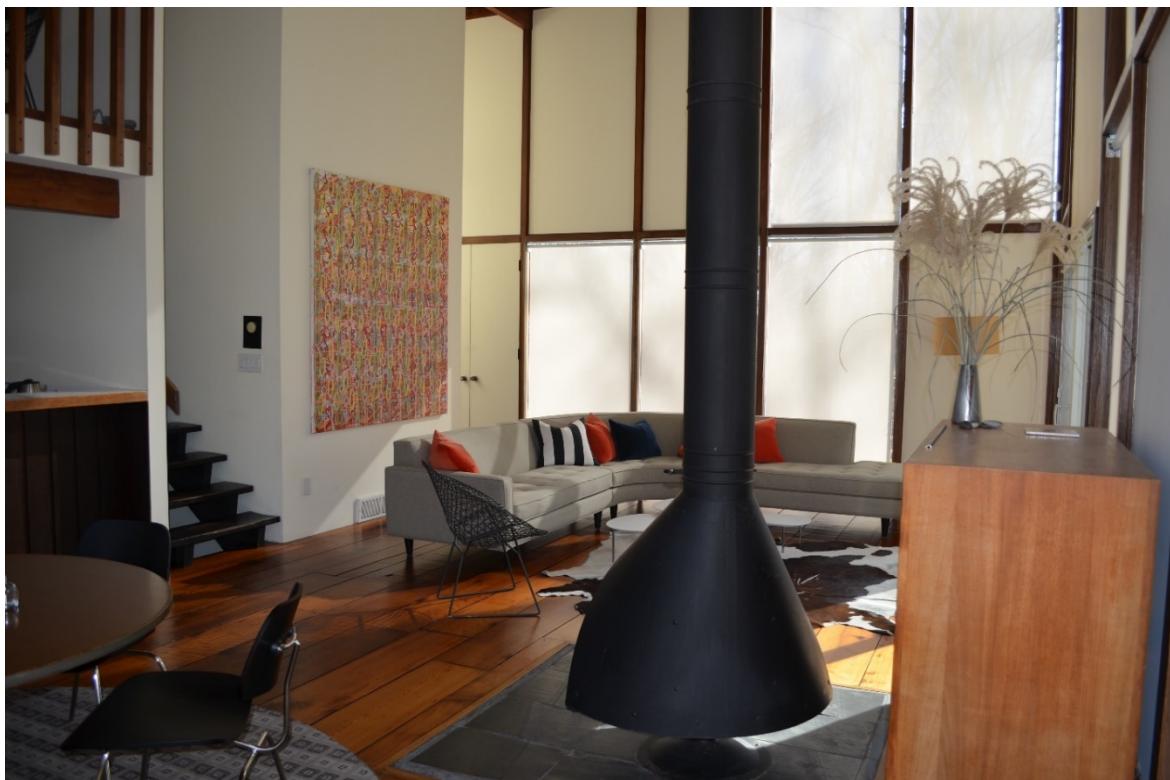
Photograph 4 of 18. West elevation, camera facing east.



Photograph 5 of 18. South elevation, camera facing north.



Photograph 6 of 18. North elevation of bedrooms and study; camera facing south.



Photograph 7 of 18. Living space; camera facing east.



Photograph 8 of 18. View from within living space toward central core of kitchen, stairs and bathrooms behind which are private study and bedrooms; camera facing north.



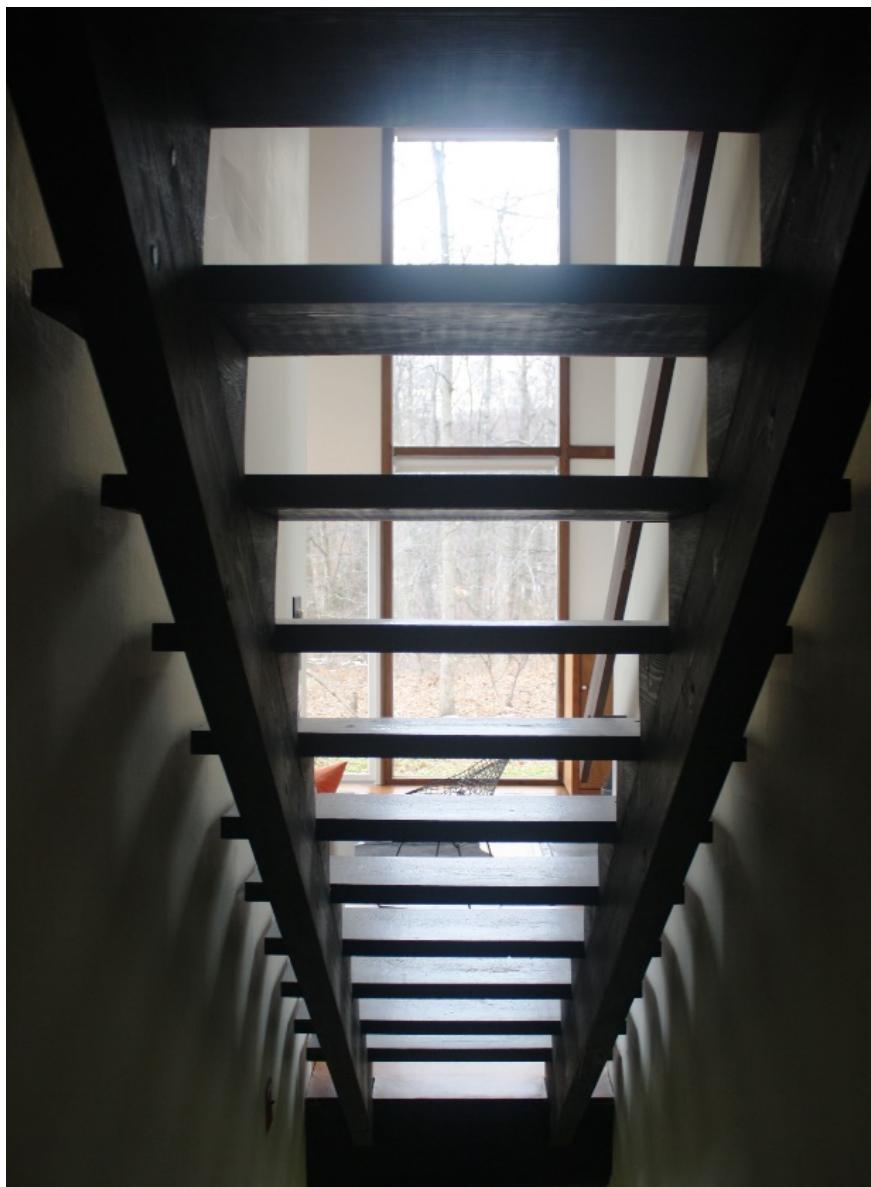
Photograph 9 of 18. Detail of exposed ceiling joists and deck over living area.



Photograph 10 of 18. Kitchen with clapboard facing, loft above and study at rear.



Photograph 11 of 18. Stair well and open steps to second floor (steps to basement beneath).



Photograph 12 of 18. Looking through stair well to living space.



Photograph 13 of 18. Example of interior casement window framing in private spaces.



Photograph 14 of 18. Built-in shelves, desk and cabinets in first floor study, looking toward master bedroom.



Photograph 15 of 18. Hanging sliding door between master bedroom and front entry.



Photograph 16 of 18. Second floor bedroom space, once three rooms, now one.



Photograph 17 of 18. The loft over the kitchen, looking out toward the back yard.



Photograph 18 of 18. The center cross beam atop the western stairwell wall.