

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

014-0030	Marblehead North		WNH.178
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Town/City: Wenham

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Photograph



Front (NE) façade

Address: 10 Walnut Road

Historic Name: Wentworth and Eleanor Fay Kennard House

Uses: Present: Single Family Residence

Original: Single Family Residence

Date of Construction: 1936

Source: construction records (current owner)

Style/Form: International Style

Architect/Builder: Thomas B. Epps and Harold S. Graves (architects) / Hans Tobiason (builder)

Exterior Material:

Foundation: poured concrete

Wall/Trim: concrete block; brick window sills

Roof: rubber membrane

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Shed

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Replacement window sash (1984); rear addition (1986); sloped roof over staircase (1960s)

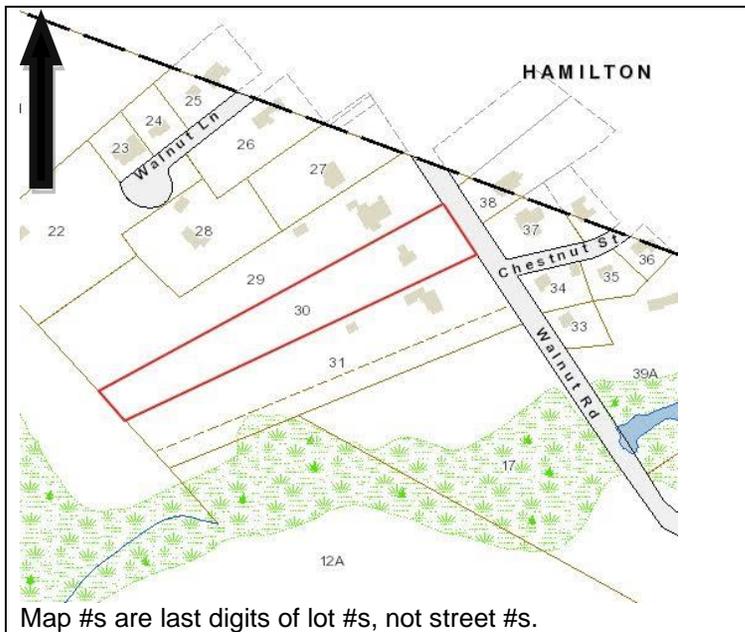
Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 2.5

Setting: Set near the Hamilton town line on a major route between the village of South Hamilton and the town of Essex. Neighboring development on Walnut Road consists primarily of large, early 20th century houses.

Locus Map (north is at top)



Map #s are last digits of lot #s, not street #s.

Recorded by: Stacy Spies and Wendy Frontiero

Organization: Wenham Historical Commission

Date: June 2017

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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.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

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

The Kennard House occupies a long and narrow, nearly rectangular lot on the southwest side of Walnut Road. The parcel is generally flat, sloping very gently down to the southwest. The front setback is deep and consistent with adjacent houses. The house is centered between the side lot lines, which are edged with mature evergreen trees, including a distinctive row of larch trees on the northern boundary. The land surrounding the house is maintained in natural ground cover; the forested west end of the lot contains wetland and a brook. Trees and shrubs screen the street edge of the property. A modest, modern wood shed is located near the southeast corner of the house, within the front setback.

The house rises two stories from a low raised basement to a flat roof, originally clad with tar and gravel. Walls are constructed of concrete block, alternating wide and narrow courses; they were originally painted white. Window openings presently contain paired, vinyl-clad casement windows, header brick sills, and concrete lintels; they originally had steel casement sash painted red. The front door, accessed by a recessed porch behind the two-bay garage, features a single leaf door with an incised diamond pattern and a single sidelight with its original steel sash. All but one corner of the building display corner windows, with a pair of casements on each side. Fenestration is otherwise irregular. An interior chimney rises near the front of the house; a second, exterior chimney rises up the rear elevation; both are constructed of concrete block.

The asymmetrical front (northeast) façade contains a projecting one-story garage with two vehicle bays and a flat roof. A curving flagstone walk leads from the L-shaped paved driveway to the recessed main entrance on the right end of the façade. A secondary entrance to the left of the garage is located beneath a flat-roofed porch that features a steel lally column at its outer corner, exposed rafters, a single-leaf door into the laundry room, and a single-leaf door to the garage. Rising above the center of the garage, the interior staircase has two levels of glass block windows facing the street; its roof was originally stepped, but a sloped roof has been added, obscuring the upper window. The rear (southwest) elevation has two window bays on the center projection; the similarly scaled northwest elevation also has two window bays. The long southeast elevation has irregular fenestration.

A 1980s addition at the south corner of the house includes an enclosed extension of the original ground-level porch, featuring multiple modern sliding doors and a shed roof. An added second story room above has a flat roof; it replaced an original open deck off the master bedroom.

The interior contains a front entry hall and staircase, study, full bathroom, living room, dining room, galley kitchen, laundry room, and utility/work room on the first floor. Three bedrooms and a full bath occupy the second floor.

The original design of the Kennard House has been significantly altered by the replacement of original steel window sash, the sloped roof cap added over the front staircase, and the enclosure and expansion of the back porches. Nonetheless, the building survives as a remarkable example of the early International Style in this region. The modest design is notable for its flat roof, concrete-block construction, two-story wings and projections, the expression of the staircase on the exterior, corner windows, and integral garage. The interior is distinctive for orienting the main public rooms of the house towards the rear of the lot.

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.

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The Kennard House is one of a small group of modernist 20th century houses in Wenham and the only known example of the International Style in the vicinity. The house was built in 1936 for Wentworth and Eleanor Fay Kennard, who purchased the land in 1935 and started planning the house in that year. Family tradition holds that the Kennards' choice of architectural style was inspired by a visit to the Chicago World's Fair of 1933-34, whose theme of technological innovation embraced a "Homes of Tomorrow" exhibition with twelve model houses. Massing and fenestration of some of these homes are remarkably similar to the Kennard House.

Educated at Harvard College, Wentworth Kennard (1906-1966) was an electrical engineer who worked at Raytheon and the Radiation Laboratory at MIT; in the 1940 census he is listed as a traffic engineer working for New England Telephone. Eleanor Fay Kennard (1910-1979) had an undergraduate degree from Vassar College and pursued graduate work in math and astronomy at Radcliffe College. Her father was Frederic H. Fay, one of three founders, in 1914, of the prominent Boston consulting firm Fay, Spofford & Thorndike, which provided engineering, transportation planning, and environmental consulting services for more than a century.

Mr. Kennard's father, William Wentworth Kennard, financed the purchase of the land, the house construction, and an interior designer who accompanied the clients on a trip to New York to furnish the house. The elder Kennard was a lawyer who lived in Somerville; he is said to have wanted his grandchildren to grow up outside of the city. At the time the house was constructed, Wentworth and Eleanor had one child; three other children were born while they lived in Wenham.

The architects for the house at 10 Walnut Road were Thomas Byrd Epps (1896-1980) and Harold Symmes Graves (1876-1952), who were in an apparently loose partnership from the late 1920s through the mid 1940s. Graves's career began in the office of Boston architect James T. Kelley in the mid-1890s, where he worked until Kelley retired in 1926. Epps received an architectural degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1920, winning Beaux Arts competition awards in 1919 and 1920; he opened his own office in Boston in 1922. MHC's MACRIS database contains thirteen properties associated with Harold Graves and nine with Thomas Epps, mostly in affluent suburban communities. Other known work by Epps and Graves consists chiefly of Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival style residences.

The contract for full architectural services for the Kennard House was made with Epps; Graves handled the construction services, according to the family records. The Kennards reportedly drew up the floor plans themselves. Family records include numerous construction documents, from general construction specifications to kitchen cabinet and steel window catalogues to paint schedules. (See attached transcription of 1936 newspaper article.)

In 1984, after Wentworth and Eleanor Kennard's deaths, the property was purchased and occupied by their daughter, Beth Myers and her husband, Peter Myers. Beth Myers worked as a medical technologist; Peter Myers was a systems analyst. The property is still owned and occupied by the Myers family.

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Salem Evening News. "Places and People; Modernist Home in Wenham". October [unknown date] 1936.
U.S. Federal Census, 1910, 1930, 1940.

SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



Southeast and northeast (façade) elevations.



Northwest and southwest (rear) elevations.



Southwest (rear) and southeast elevations.



Southwest (rear) elevation, ca. 1937. (Courtesy of Beth Myers)

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**KENNARD HOUSE, 10 Walnut Road, Wenham
THE SALEM EVENING NEWS, October [1936]****Title of column**

PLACES AND PEOPLE; As Pictured By The News Rambler

Caption to photograph (street elevation of house)

MODERNISTIC HOME IN WENHAM. Residence of Wentworth Kennard just completed on Walnut road which in design and construction proves residents of this vicinity with their first contact with the type of building becoming increasingly popular in Continental Europe, and some sections of this country.

Text of article

Resident [sic] of the conservative little town of Wenham have for the past five months watched with mingled emotions the erection of a home on Walnut road in that town, the architectural design and construction of which has never before been seen anywhere in this section. From the time the steam shovel moved from the lot leaving a cellar with a depth of but three and a half feet, there have been various opinions regarding the place set forth by the townspeople. One group, coming from those who accept changes slowly, have been far from complimentary; others, however, advanced by persons who appreciate that even staid building methods must eventually yield to the march of progress, have been most enthusiastic toward the project, a new development in home construction in this section.

The owner of this ultra modern dwelling is Wentworth Kennard of Cambridge who with his family moved into the now completed structure this past week. Working with their architect, Harold S. Graves of Boston, and the builder Hans Tobiason of Arlington, Mr. and Mrs. Kennard themselves drew up floor plans for their dwelling stressing the idea of building a house that was not just livable but rather the peak of perfection with regard to convenience and comfort. Whereas for most home construction the interior is designed to fit the external appearance of the structure, in this instance that method was reversed, with the result that there are few houses in this section with greater conveniences or more complete utilization of available space.

Built of concrete cinder blocks painted white, with the garage and rear of the house facing the street, this building does present an appearance unusual for homes in this vicinity. Its modernistic flat-roofed, square-cornered design, its terrace over the garage, its set back walls over the front staircase following the modern idea of having the exterior more clearly reflect the interior use-- all give an atmosphere of the new construction going on in lands where massed planning is at its height. Casement windows of crimson painted steel frames placed not as in other houses, but rather at each of the four corners of the structure thereby insuring a maximum wall space as well as providing extra light within the rooms are but one of the many features of the place that catch the eye of the casual passerby. The absence of gutters from the place is due to a system whereby the roof slopes from the four corners toward the center where a conduit which runs through the center of the house to the ground carries off all water which might otherwise be dripping over the edges as happens where the gutters become clogged.

One thing that attracts all and causes much query is the set back wall already mentioned as covering the front staircase. This is covered with a glass block made of pyrex, similar to that used in the making of dishes, and which recently has been utilized to build whole exterior walls of buildings. Used as windows for this stairway, they eliminate the need for curtains, inasmuch as they are not transparent, yet transmit 75 per cent of the light which strikes

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them. Furthermore, they are so constructed that as one glances at them from the inside, the pattern changes as one moves one's position.

So much for the general exterior appearance. Naturally enough a house planned such as this one with the interior uppermost in the minds of the designers can best be described from the interior. Yet so many features has it that it is difficult to even list the outstanding conveniences and arrangements which make the place so ideal for the modern housewife. The structure of the place is such that there need be little waste room given over to partitions and walls, with the result that every inch of available space is utilized to the fullest extent, with cupboards, closets, built in cabinets and book cases in great profusion.

With no attick [sic] and practically no cellar, the three and a half foot ventilation space providing but a minimum of storage room, closets are necessary, and the plans have called for many, every room having at least one, with the bedrooms all containing two or more. Such little niceties as a built-in telephone cabinet tucked away beneath the stairs and card table racks in a game closet give this portion of the planning an air of completeness rarely seen in the average home.

A kitchen with the walls completely lined with various cabinets, units, and the like, provide every bit of space that should be necessary for storage of food and utensils, all located at arms' length from almost any portion of the room. Indirect lighting over the sink, and all-electric kitchen appliances are further evidence of the modern touch in this portion of the house, where breakfast nook and laundry are combined in most unobtrusive manner [sic].

The technical-minded person would delight in the many applications of modern engineering technique not only in the construction of the house, but in the conveniences and devices which one notes throughout the place. Many are wondering how the place exists without a cellar, and where the heating equipment is placed under such a plan. Perfect insulation in the walls and flooring aided by the three and a half foot air space ventilated by windows at either end of the undersized cellar eliminate the necessity of greater depth for the foundation.

The heating equipment location, however, is one of the features of the house. In a space set off from the kitchen, extending from the cellar clear to the ceiling level of the first floor, and set off by iron rails not unlike those of a ship's engine room, there is situated the heating unit, an oil burner with a hot air forced draft air-conditioned system, a system which permits the forced circularization of air during the summer months when the heater is not running.

Also located in this room is the electric water pump necessary since the town has no running water, an electric refuse incinerator, and a small automatic oil heater which insures a steady flow of hot water at all times at a low cost. Thus one finds the two most modern power and heating elements, electricity and oil providing all necessary to complete the self-sufficiency of this place.

Indirect lighting, the extensive use of lumiline [sic] lamps, and such luxuries as a Tim-o-state in addition to a thermostatic control on the heating system add further to the completeness and convenience of life in this house. Painted walls throughout the interior add to the modernistic lines of the exterior, while Venitian [sic] blinds in the windows tend to eliminate some of the bareness often created by improper use of modern furnishings and designs.

To many the idea of having the garage and rear of the house the most prominent to the passerby is not easily accepted, yet with the highways yearly becoming more congested and noisy, the idea of facing the house toward a peaceful

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garden scene with the noise of the busy thoroughfare in the rear may spread and become the accepted plan for the homes of the future.

Unique in appearance, caused chiefly by the fact that it represents a radical departure from the customary plans of home construction, this modernistic dwelling in Wenham may prove to be the fore-runner of many similar places in this section in years to come. True, it stands today subject of comment and criticism [sic] both favorable and unfavorable, but as progress sweeps ahead, it will be interesting to watch the manner with which this new type of home construction stands the test of public approval.

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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 Stacy Spies and Wendy Frontiero
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Kennard House at 10 Walnut Street is one of a small group of modernist 20th century houses in Wenham and the only known example of the International Style in the vicinity. An unusual example of suburban construction in Wenham during the Early Modern Period, the Kennard House was constructed in 1936 for Wentworth and Eleanor Fay Kennard. Wentworth worked as an electrical engineer at Raytheon and at the Radiation Laboratory at MIT. Eleanor pursued graduate work in mathematics and astronomy at Radcliffe. The house is an early representative of a small, but notable, trend in the suburban north shore after World War II away from traditional, Colonial Revival-style dwellings. A high number of these innovative designs were built for scientists, engineers, and academics.