

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Fisher, Dr. Norman and Doris, House  
Other names/site number: Fisher-Kahn House  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

### 2. Location

Street & number: 197 East Mill Road  
City or town: Hatboro State: Pennsylvania County: Montgomery  
Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: X national     statewide     local

Applicable National Register Criteria:     A     B X C     D

Andrea McDonald 2/6/2014  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Deputy SHPO/Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission  
Title/State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.  
  
Signature of commenting official: Date  
  
Title/State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 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:)

Patrick Andrus 3/31/2014  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property** (Select as many as apply.)

Private  X  
Public – Local  —  
Public – State  —  
Public – Federal  —

**Category of Property** (Select only one.)

Building(s)  X  
District  —  
Site  —  
Structure  —  
Object  —

**Number of Resources within Property** (Do not include previously listed resources)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>                    </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>                    </u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>                    0</u>	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  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
TRANSPORTATION/pedestrian footbridge

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
TRANSPORTATION/pedestrian footbridge

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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:

WALLS: Wood/Tidewater Cypress Weatherboard

FOUNDATION: Stone

### 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.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

The Fisher House is a nationally significant 1967 Modern single-family residence designed by architect Louis I. Kahn for Dr. Norman and Doris Fisher. Located on a site north of Philadelphia in the residential suburb of Hatboro, the Fisher House is one of only nine Kahn-designed residences in existence. The 1.5-acre site is situated in a small residential neighborhood and is comprised of a long, narrow landscaped lot that slopes down towards a creek at the rear of the house creating a picturesque setting. The key character-defining design features are the two cypress-clad cubic volumes set atop a local "Montgomeryville" stone foundation functionally separating the house into "living" and "sleeping" cubes, the masterfully crafted built-in oak millwork details, and the integration of natural light and traditional materials on both the interior and exterior of the house. In addition to the house, a utility shed and footbridge, both designed by Kahn, and the property's designed landscape are included as contributing resources. The buildings, bridge, and surrounding landscape retain historic integrity and have undergone no major campaigns of renovation or alteration. Overall, the resources are in excellent condition, with minimal signs of aging due to the meticulous upkeep and maintenance performed by the Fishers.

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#### Narrative Description

##### Site and Location

The Fisher House is located at 197 East Mill Road in Hatboro, Pennsylvania, a small borough in southern Montgomery County located roughly thirty miles north of Philadelphia with a total land area of 1.42 square miles (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> East Mill Road runs parallel with Pennypack Creek, a twenty-two mile long

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<sup>1</sup> Historically named Mill Street on 1877 map. *U.S., Indexed County Land Ownership Maps, 1860-1918*, Map, Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010, accessed September 1, 2012, <http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1127>.

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waterway that runs southeast through Montgomery County, lower Bucks County, and northeast Philadelphia before emptying into the Delaware River (Fig. 2). Today, the neighborhood is comprised of a mixture of post-war Colonial Revival house types, interspersed with a small number of late nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century stone houses (Fig. 3).

The positioning and composition of the Fisher House was determined by the location of both the Pennypack Creek and the surrounding homes. The house was constructed on a one-and-a-half acre lot that slopes from East Mill Road towards Pennypack Creek. From the rear of the house, the site slopes down to the creek, which bisects the long, narrow lot, creating a picturesque yard at the rear of the house, and a wooded area across the creek that the Fishers called "the meadow". The house is located fifty-two feet to the northeast of East Mill Road, and the distance from the northernmost corner of the rear of the house to the water's edge is approximately sixty feet. To the east of the Fisher House is a single-family dwelling dating to the 1950s; to the west is a parcel of land purchased by the Fishers in 1982 containing a shed and a pool. The 1982 parcel of land is not included within the nominated boundary. West of the pool parcel is another single-family dwelling set farther back than any others on the street, dating to the 1950s. The house is located 22 feet from the east property boundary and 110 feet from the west property boundary. At the front of the property, the house is located 52 feet from the south property boundary, and at the rear, the house is 520 feet from the north boundary.

The property boundaries were clearly laid out in a property survey conducted in February 1952 by George B. Mebus, a registered professional engineer. Mebus conducted another survey in April 1982 for the subdivision of the property to the northwest of the Fisher House (Fig.4). This property consisted of a house, springhouse, shed, and pool. Following the subdivision of the property, the Fishers purchased a portion of the lot containing the pool and shed surrounded by a split-rail fence. The original Fisher lot was 100 feet wide and 652 feet deep. The purchase of the additional lot in 1982 expanded the width of the Fisher's property to 182 feet facing East Mill Road, and increased the acreage of the site from 1.5 to 2.6 acres. As the 1982 lot does not directly relate to the significance of the original property, it was not included within the nominated boundary.

### **Designed Landscape Setting**

When the house was completed in June 1967, the area surrounding the house had been landscaped, grass had been planted, the driveway had been laid, and the Kahn-designed front and back flagstone terraces had been put in place.<sup>2</sup> The driveway is of crushed stone and at its eastern edge there is a flagstone walkway that extends to the main entrance. This walkway wraps around the north side of the house to the secondary entrance off the kitchen. From this entrance there are seventeen steps leading down the sloped terrain towards the rear flagstone terrace. The landscape evolved over time, with the Fishers adding a number of landscape features that still exist today.<sup>3</sup>

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Labeled Mill Avenue on a July 1930 Sanborn Map. *Hatboro, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania*, Map, New York: Sanborn Map Company, July 1930, Sheet 9, accessed September 1, 2012, <http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:5472/pa/7709/dateid-000004.htm?CCSI=2429n>.

<sup>2</sup> Information on the original landscaping based on historic photographs and William Whitaker, Interviewed by Kimber VanSant, In-Person Interview, July 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Doris Fisher studied horticulture at the Barnes Foundation and continually developed the landscape around the house.

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When the Fisher House was first constructed, there were a limited number of large trees on the property and those that exist today are a mixture of original and new. The Fishers purposefully saved a small number of trees that were on the property prior to construction of the house. These original trees include the large Kentucky coffee tree just to the southeast of the driveway and the Norway spruce just to the northwest. Additionally, there is a large ash tree just to the northeast of the spruce as well as two maples in the backyard. Soon after moving in, Doris Fisher added white European birches along the southern edge of the sleeping cube and in the 1980s had Cryptomeria and river birches planted in the backyard, along the edge of the creek. The wooded area across the creek includes large deciduous and evergreen trees, along with undergrowth that includes bamboo planted more recently by Dr. Fisher.

In an effort to remediate runoff issues, the site was augmented in 1983 by landscape architect Rodney Robinson.<sup>4</sup> His design (Fig. 5) maintained all existing landscape features and added elements to alleviate the runoff of debris onto the front and rear terraces. Stone edging was added around the northern edge of the driveway and two broad stone entrance steps were added at the head of the driveway, leading toward the flagstone walkway. Additional flagstone was added to the border of the walkway at the main entrance to enlarge and reshape the area. At the rear of the house, five steps made from railroad ties were added, leading from the rear (north) terrace down the sloping hill towards the creek. At the south end of the rear terrace, bordering the east elevation of the sleeping cube, the sloping garden area was terraced by embedding pressure-treated wooden railroad ties down the hill. Following this landscape campaign, the Fishers added benches on the main terrace that form an L-shaped border between the terrace and the sloping garden beyond. There is an additional bench in the sloping terraced garden on the eastern edge of the sleeping cube.

### **Structural Organization**

The Fisher House is composed of a pair of two-story, cypress-clad cubic volumes connected at a forty-five degree angle, with each volume serving different functions. They are referred to as the "living" cube and the "sleeping" cube. The south corner of the living cube connects with the north face of the sleeping cube along a north-south axis. The sleeping cube measures 25 feet 6 inches by 25 feet 6 inches and is sited at a 45-degree angle to the street. This volume contains the main entrance and recessed porch area, bedrooms, bathrooms, and closets. The living cube measures 28 feet 6 inches by 23 feet 6 inches and sits slightly to the north of the sleeping cube. This volume is an open area with eighteen-foot-high ceilings broken into living, dining, and kitchen areas. From the rear, the house is three stories, rising thirty-five feet in height, with a one-story stone foundation supporting the two-story wooden house structure. The bottom level under the living cube serves as a full basement and houses mechanical spaces, a laundry, and storage. A workroom is located in the excavated area under the sleeping cube. The two volumes are equal in height and when viewed from the exterior neither volume is given hierarchy over the other.

A cypress-clad utility shed was constructed at the same time as the house, primarily to house the air conditioning condenser and utility meters. The utility shed is positioned five feet from the west elevation of the living cube and its design echoes the form and materiality of the house. Further,

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<sup>4</sup> "Garden Layout Plan," Fisher Family Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

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although the utility shed appears to have a flat roof, it in fact has an inverted sloped roof (marked by V-shaped water table on the north and south elevations), which creates a well for the air condenser unit.

In the spring of 1969, in anticipation of their daughter's impending wedding in the meadow on the opposite side of the creek, the Fishers commissioned Kahn to design a wood bridge spanning Pennypack Creek. On the Plot Plan drawn up by Kahn's office in July 1964, there is a detail drawing of piers in the creek with a notation "Existing piers for future wood bridge." (Fig. 6)<sup>5</sup> Kahn collaborated with Vincent Rivera on the design of the bridge and together they worked through hundreds of drawings before settling on the design.

### **Fisher House Exterior**

The Fisher House is organized as two connected cypress-clad cubic volumes set atop a stone foundation. The two cubic volumes that comprise the upper two stories of the Fisher House are clad in tidewater cypress siding. This generally honey-colored wood is long lasting and strong and is similar to cedar or redwood in its ability to withstand insects and weathering. The siding is composed of long, narrow strips of wood that were installed vertically with horizontal battens covering the joints at the first and second story floor levels at each elevation. Beneath many of the large windows are broad panels designed in a wainscoting motif that maintain a similar scale as the door and shutter compositions.<sup>6</sup> With its smooth surface and meticulous joinery, the woodwork on the exterior is comparable to that of handcrafted cabinetry. The current warm coloration of the exterior wood is due in part to wood preservatives and colorants added to the surface finish by the Fishers.<sup>7</sup>

The foundation is constructed of "Montgomeryville" stone, a locally-quarried regional limestone, with a cement-lime mortar. Because of the sloping house site, the stone foundation is most visible from the rear of the house (being only minimally visible at those elevations viewable from the road). At the rear of the house, the foundation forms a one-story base pierced by a pair of inset openings that lead to the basement. Between these two openings and the stone basement wall is a shallow, covered alcove that envelops a portion of the base of the monumental chimney. Set within the base of the chimney is a built-in outdoor barbecue grill.

The main entrance is inset into the west elevation of the sleeping cube. On the small, elevated porch within the reveal, there is a slate floor, a slate step leading into the house, and a low wooden built-in bench to the left of the entrance. Within this alcove, to the right of the entry door, is a small window that offers a view of the stair hall and oak balustrade. Just outside the main entry door, an oak-framed screen door is the initial point of entry. There is a large square window set within the top portion of the oak entry door, which features eloquently joined millwork, with rails, stiles, and panels flush to the exterior. A secondary entrance, leading into the kitchen and accessed through northwest elevation of the living cube, is constructed in the same way as the main entry door. The doors throughout the house are all flush on one side and recessed on the opposite side.<sup>8</sup> Both mill-worked exterior doors are flush to the outside so that rain will run down the face of the door and not pool on inset panels.

<sup>5</sup> "Site Plan and Sections," Fisher Family Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>6</sup> Pierson Booher, "Louis I. Kahn's Fisher House: A Case Study on the Architectural Detail and Design Intent" (Master's Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 88.

<sup>7</sup> George H. Marcus and William Whitaker, *The Houses of Louis Kahn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 215.

<sup>8</sup> The downstairs hall doors, all closet doors, and the door to the basement are flush to the interior. The doors to the bedrooms

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Each exterior elevation of the Fisher House features a series of large windows flush to the interior as well as narrow vertical deeply-inset window units. The windows are made up of six-by-six-inch jambs and four-by-six-inch headers of cypress. The windows required prefabrication and installation prior to the framing of the walls to enable precise alignment of interior and exterior finishes. The bedroom windows on the south and west elevations of the sleeping cube are narrow vertical deeply-inset windows. These windows face the street and neighboring houses and are designed with narrow apertures to provide privacy as well as exhibit monumentality through the use of differing scale. The windows on the northeast and southeast elevations of the living cube, as well as those on the east elevation of the sleeping cube, face the woods and creek, and thus are larger and allow the exterior landscape to be more fully experienced from inside. There are deeply-inset window units with narrow apertures in every room of the house except the bathrooms and closets. Lead-coated copper drip pans line the bottom of each of these window units. The flat roof of the house is constructed of a membrane covered in roll roofing and the roof soffit is of lead-coated copper. The top portion of the chimney pierces the roof and rises eighteen inches above the roofline.

### **Fisher House Interior**

The interior of the Fisher House is organized around two distinct cubic volumes that connect at a forty-five degree angle. The living cube is an open space with eighteen-foot-high ceilings, a semi-circular limestone chimney and hearth, a built-in window seat, and a two-sided partition that is built off of the southwest wall and encloses the kitchen area. The sleeping cube is two stories in height and contains on the ground story an entry hall lined with closets, the master bedroom and bathroom, bedroom closets, powder room, storage closet, and stair hall (Fig. 7). The second floor contains a bathroom, two bedrooms, a small guest bedroom, and a walk-in closet (Fig. 8). The basement runs beneath both cubes of the house and is accessed from either an interior stairwell off of the kitchen or from the rear terrace of the house (Fig. 9).

All of the interior walls are finished in an unpainted, off-white plaster. This original plasterwork is rough, with an uneven texture that gives the interior "a beautiful patina" and creates shadows that animate the surface of the wall.<sup>9</sup> The rough textured plaster was requested by the Fishers, who wanted a rustic, unfinished surface reminiscent of a traditional eighteenth-century farmhouse.<sup>10</sup> The plasterers tried numerous techniques to achieve the requested texture and, in the end, it was a plastic trowel that gave the intended rough texture. The Fishers intentionally left the walls unpainted so that the unique textural quality was left intact.

Kahn used cypress and red oak for the interior millwork, intentionally choosing the locations of each. Known for its sturdiness and durability, he used red oak in the places where people would touch and interact with it most. This includes the flooring, stairs, window seat, built-in desks, and the kitchen and bathroom cabinetry. He used cypress for the interior doors, windows, trim, and baseboards. These uses were deliberate, as he desired continuity between the look and finish of interior and exterior woodwork.

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and bathrooms and all exterior doors are all flush to the exterior.

<sup>9</sup> Norman Fisher interviewed by Peter Kirby, video recording, May 29, 1992, MOCA Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>10</sup> Norman Fisher and Doris Fisher, "Seven Years with Louis I. Kahn," in Yutaka Saito, *Louis I. Kahn: Houses* (New York: Toto, 2003), 159.

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There are deeply-inset window units throughout the Fisher House. These windows are sculptural in form and each is outfitted with an integrated roller screen. The Fishers later added blinds to these units for easier regulation of light. The utilization of these narrow windows in the bedrooms allows light to enter the room while preserving the inhabitants' privacy. Functionally, aside from regulating natural light, these windows also allow for cross ventilation and offer another way for the inhabitants to connect with nature from inside the house. Further, Kahn designed these windows to remain open during heavy rainstorms, allowing the experience of the storm without rainwater infiltration.

All of the doors in the house are custom-designed millwork, with every detail, including the direction of the wood grain, designed by Kahn. Each is comprised of an upper, lower, and lock rail with two outer stiles and two inner stiles that effectively divide the door in half. Within the doors, Kahn employed floating panels that sit within the lock and rail composition. The historic function of this type of traditionally constructed door allows the wood to respond to changing moisture levels by expanding and contracting freely without damaging the integrity of the surrounding wood members.<sup>11</sup> Like the exterior doors, the interior doors are all flush on one side and recessed on the other.

The entry hall runs along an east-west axis for the length of the sleeping cube and is dramatically integrated as a connector of the two cubes. This hall contains two closets along the south wall and terminates in a floor-to-ceiling window that is the width of the hall and reveals a striking view of the pastoral woods across the Pennypack Creek at the rear of the house. This view is the first of many intimate links with nature provided within the Fisher House. An oak staircase leading to the second story is located in a small stair hall to the south of the entry hall, just inside the main (west) entrance.

The master bedroom, which comprises the majority of the first story of the sleeping cube, is accessed from the small stair hall. There are three deeply-inset window units in the room, one oriented to the south and the other two toward the east. The east wall of the master bedroom looks out onto the wooded backyard area and features a large window with a wainscoting motif below. The north wall incorporates a built-in desk abutting a deeply-inset window unit that sheds natural light onto the desktop. A hallway leading off of the master bedroom is lined with closets on both sides and terminates in a powder area with a sink and a mirror. All bathrooms in the house have rift-sawn-oak base cabinets and clear black Pennsylvania slate counter tops with a honed finish.

The staircase that leads to the second story of the sleeping cube is constructed entirely of oak millwork. The staircase is adjacent to the west entry porch and features a small window on the first landing that overlooks the entry porch and provides natural light to the stair hall. At the top of the stairs, a bathroom is located to the north and the smallest bedroom, originally intended as a maid's room, to the south. This small bedroom has two deeply-inset window units that allow light to enter the room from the south and the west. Two identically sized bedrooms, used by the Fishers' daughters, are located on the east side of the second story stair hall. Each of these rooms has a closet, built-in desk, and deeply-inset window unit aligned against the east wall. The northeast bedroom has an additional deeply-inset window unit that is oriented to the northwest wall of the living cube.

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<sup>11</sup> Booher, "Fisher House," 84.

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The living cube is accessed from the entry hall at the point where the southern corner of the living cube intersects with the northern wall of the sleeping cube. The semi-cylindrical chimney rises from the basement story to eighteen-inches above the roofline and serves as an anchor for the house and the centerpiece of the living cube. The hearth is rotated at a twenty-degree angle towards the southeast wall of the living cube and is set four-feet-eleven-inches away from the northeast wall. Constructed of random rubble "Montgomeryville" stone, the pattern of the stonework is random except for the area surrounding the hearth. On each side of the hearth opening are large slabs of limestone set vertically and on top of the hearth is a long slab of limestone that horizontally spans the width of the chimney, altogether these elements frame the opening. A keystone element is centered on the face of the chimney and is located two feet two inches above the hearth opening. The placement of these principal stones was specified by Kahn through detailed drawings, as were the deeply-raked mortar joints. These joints are so deeply raked that the chimney appears to be dry set and reminiscent of a fieldstone wall. The deep-set mortar was a conscious choice made by Kahn, who envisioned the structural quality created when the light hit the stonework.

In the east corner of the living cube, Kahn designed a built-in window seat to complement the hearth and create a space where people could gather and enjoy the natural light from the surrounding windows. Constructed of red oak, the seat is cantilevered out on continuous 2-5/8 inch wide planks and features hidden built-in storage areas.<sup>12</sup> Deeply-inset window units are located on each side of the window seat, one letting in light from the southeast and the other from the northeast. Above the window seat, two windows of a giant order meet in the northeast corner of the living cube and rise up to meet the ceiling. The natural light that pours in through these corner windows strikes the precise wood joinery of the seat and powerful stonework of the fireplace, altering the atmosphere of the room throughout the day. The composition created by the fireplace, built-in window seat, and surrounding windows forms the nucleus of the Fisher House.

Another deeply-inset window unit is located on the southwest wall of the living cube opposite the window seat. Next to this window is a large window that looks out onto the driveway area with a wainscoting panel underneath. The partition surrounding (and separating) the kitchen abuts the north edge of this window. At this juncture, at the west end of the partition wall, Kahn added a built-in wet bar with a sink and shelving hidden behind mill-worked doors.

The north corner of the living cube comprises the dining area, originally referred to by Kahn as the "inglenook." When originally built, the dining area featured a narrow, offset window located on the east wall. After moving in, however, the Fishers persuaded Kahn to replace the original window with a much larger, eight-by-ten foot window. Because the installation of this monumental new window required some of the timber-framed structural elements to be removed, exposed structural beams had to be added around the new window. Like all of the wood elements in the house, these beams are masterfully crafted and the joints connecting the beams are beautifully precise. At the west side of the new window is a large, shuttered window opening, which contains no glass, thus truly opening the inside of the house to the outside. The millwork and inset panels on these shutters mimic that of the doors found throughout the house.

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<sup>12</sup> Marcus and Whitaker, *Houses*, 215.

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The kitchen is located behind two eight-foot-high partition walls that Kahn designed to extend from the living cube's southwest wall. Despite these partition walls, kitchen, dining, and living functions remain intertwined under the high open ceiling of the living cube. On the northwest wall of the living cube, in the dining area opposite the kitchen, is a rectilinear "breakfast table" with pullout drawers and a distinctive deeply-inset window above. In the west corner of the living cube, beyond the kitchen on the southwest wall, is a pantry closet with built-in shelving. The secondary entrance to the house is also located in this west corner of the living cube, on the northwest wall, and leads from the kitchen to the shed. Opposite this west entrance door, and abutting the pantry, is the doorway leading to the basement staircase.

Kahn originally intended for the space below the living cube to be a functional basement and the space below the sleeping cube to be a crawlspace; he had no intention of creating useable space in that area due to there being no way to bring in natural light. The Fishers' desire for functional space in this area, however, led Kahn to include a non-descript basement on the construction documents just before construction began. Composed of several simple, open spaces enclosed by the stone foundation walls, the basement's primary functions are to house mechanical functions, the laundry, storage, and a workshop space.

### **Integrity Assessment**

Both the interior and the exterior of the Fisher House have been well-maintained and retain integrity. Regarding exterior workmanship and materials, all of the cypress cladding has been maintained by the Fishers through the application of clear finishes, most typically Tung oil products. Kahn's original vision for the cypress siding was for it to remain uncoated and weather gradually over time. Due to the precise woodwork and joinery of the exterior, the Fishers decided that the wood needed to be preserved to prevent deterioration and thus began diligent and routine treatment of the exterior wood features. They thoughtfully reexamined Kahn's basic philosophy regarding the natural finish and worked to protect the wood with a cyclical regimen of cleaning and treatment. The house has been cleaned and refinished every four or so years since approximately 1978.<sup>13</sup> The treatment involves scrubbing with a bristle brush and a solution of bleach and water, followed by hand-sanding and application of a stain and protective coating for exterior wood. Additionally, a small number of repairs have been made to the exterior, including filling small holes with wood putty, and in significantly damaged areas, replacing deteriorated pieces of siding with visually similar cypress.<sup>14</sup> The foundation of "Montgomeryville" limestone and cement-lime mortar also retains its appearance and physical integrity.

As for interior workmanship and materials, the interior plasterwork has sustained a minor degree of soiling, but a recent conservation assessment has identified simple, yet appropriate, strategies for cleaning and maintaining the interior plaster and oak millwork as well as the exterior cypress. The only major alteration made to the house following its original construction was the 1968 removal of the small window in the dining area, and its replacement with the existing larger one. Kahn had originally intended the dining area to be a closed-off escape from the openness of the rest of the house, but the alteration to accommodate a larger window is in keeping with the rest of the design and was executed

<sup>13</sup> Shantia Anderheggen and Nino Tripoldi, Conversation, Hatboro, PA, March, 20 2012 and Shantia Anderheggen and Michael Gohl (husband of Claudia Fisher Gohl), Conversation, Hatboro, PA, March 19 2012. From Dorothy S. Krotzer to Shantia Anderheggen, April 6, 2012, Building Conservation Associates, Inc., Fisher House Conservation Assessment Memorandum.

<sup>14</sup> Anderheggen and Tripoldi, BCA Conservation assessment, 2.

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per Kahn's adjusted design.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the site and its designed landscape setting have retained integrity. Despite tree plantings in the 1980s and an alteration to remediate runoff problems in 1983, all original landscape features, including the Kahn-designed flagstone terraces, remain intact and as part of the cohesive landscape today. Although not a part of the original construction efforts, the addition of the bridge over Pennypack Creek in 1969 is a reflection of the original design intent and contributes to both the integrity of the setting, location, and design of both the house and site. The integrity of the feeling of the Fisher House and the surrounding site has remained intact since the house was constructed and is evocative of not just Kahn's design aesthetic, but also the period during which it was designed and constructed. The Fisher house is inextricably linked with both the Fisher family and Louis Kahn, and efforts to respect their visions for the property continue.

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<sup>15</sup> Booher, "Fisher House," 70.

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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

### Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

### Period of Significance

1967-1969

### Significant Dates

1967, 1969

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**Significant Person** (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Kahn, Louis I., architect

E. Arol Fesmire, builder

Saldutti, Carl, stonemason

**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.)

This extremely intact residence designed by architect Louis I. Kahn possesses national architectural significance under Criterion C as an important residential example of the Modern style and the work of a 20<sup>th</sup> century master. Known for his monumental and institutional works, Kahn's few residential designs are especially important as representations of his core architectural principles applied on a smaller scale. Construction of the Fisher House commenced in October 1964 and was completed in June 1967. The addition of a Kahn-designed footbridge over Pennypack Creek in 1969 extends the period of significance to span from 1967 to 1969. The Fisher House meets Consideration G as a property achieving significance within the past 50 years. Although less than 50 years in age, sufficient time has passed to understand the importance of this design within Kahn's body of work and within Modern residential design. The design of the Fisher House was radical for its time and stands as one of the most significant residential projects by this influential architect.

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

**Abstract**

The Fisher House is a nationally significant Modern residence designed by the internationally important architect Louis I. Kahn. Designed from 1960-1964 and constructed from 1964-1967, the house is one of only nine Kahn-designed residences in existence. Located in a residential neighborhood in Hatboro, PA, an outer suburb approximately 30 miles from Philadelphia, the house is situated on a narrow sloping site that includes a 1969 Kahn-designed bridge built over Pennypack Creek. The house is used as a private residence and has been meticulously maintained and preserved since its construction and thus maintains historic integrity. The Fisher House is a clear statement on how Kahn's personal style of architecture had evolved by the mid-sixties and is an important example of a Kahn-designed Modern residence. Kahn discovered through his house designs that Modern architecture could be sustained without any of the assumed orthodoxies. Although the exterior form of the Fisher House is far from traditional, the juxtaposed cubic volumes of warm wood and rugged stonework stand as a rejection of the cold glass and steel houses that had become a mainstay of Modernism.

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The Fisher House is a significant example of Modern residential architecture because it is representative of the aspects of Kahn's designs that made him internationally influential and embodies several of the fundamental concepts that led to his recognition as significant in the history of American Architecture. First, the house represents Kahn's resolutions of form and design through his response to classical themes and utilization of historic and vernacular traditions. Second, the layered juxtapositions of Kahn's designs and his thoughtful integration of natural light are elements for which he is renowned and which are both clearly exhibited in the Fisher House. Third, the house displays the reintroduction of mass and expression of monumentality that is a trademark of Kahn's later work, particularly his larger projects. Further, differentiation of space and the functional separation of the structure are also realized here. And lastly, his humanistic approach to design and thoughtful usage of materials are important features of Kahn's work and are very well demonstrated at the Fisher property. Signaling a new direction in architecture, these central design ideas were acknowledged as extremely important for breaking from the then-current ideology in architectural design. The unification of all of these elements in such a refined manner in the Fisher House is nothing less than a masterpiece. The design of the Fisher House was radical for its time, and one whose influence has only grown over time.

### **History of the Site**

The Fisher House is located in a residential neighborhood at 197 East Mill Road in Hatboro, PA. The population of Hatboro, like many suburban Philadelphia communities, rose dramatically following World War II, from approximately 2,600 in 1940 to 7,300 in 1960. The population continued to rise to nearly 8,900 in 1970 and as of 2010 the population was 7,360.<sup>16</sup> Settlement in Montgomery County follows a similar trend, with population surges in 1930 and again in 1960.

The building types and land use along East Mill Road have dramatically evolved since the late-nineteenth century. An 1877 Indexed County Land Ownership Map (Fig. 10) lists three property owners for three large parcels of land along East Mill Road (then named Mill Street), two of which resided elsewhere with the third listed as a farmer on the 1880 census.<sup>17</sup> A 1905 Sanborn Map shows a mill complex located near the intersection of East Mill Road (then named Mill Avenue) and Warminster Road with the label "Formerly Eastern Milling Co. Closed." (Fig. 11)<sup>18</sup> This same structure is labeled "Ruins" on a 1922 Sanborn Map (Fig. 12), and is completely gone by 1930. Residential development on East Mill Road was gradual. In 1922, the south side of East Mill Road was divided into three lots, each with a large house and outbuildings. The 1880 census records as well as the inclusion of a barn and a henhouse on the 1922 map (Fig. 13) indicate that this land was once farmland. The north side of the road was divided into two parcels, with one structure on the western end and two structures and the Mill ruins on the eastern end. By 1930, the north side had been subdivided and on the eastern end of the road there were now six residences (Fig. 14). A 1952 plan of the properties on East Mill Road (then named Mill Road) shows that the land on the north side had been subdivided into twenty-three lots (Fig. 15). The current residential housing stock of the neighborhood is primarily a mixture of post-war colonial revival house types among a small number of late nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century stone houses. The Fisher-Kahn House is one of six mid-twentieth-century houses built on East Mill Road.

<sup>16</sup> All census figures on Hatboro are from the U.S. Census Bureau, "Hatboro (borough) Quickfacts from the US Census Bureau," United States Census Bureau, accessed September 1, 2012, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/42/4233088.html>.

<sup>17</sup> *U.S., Indexed County Land Ownership Maps*, Ancestry.com, 1860-1918.

<sup>18</sup> Sanborn Map Company, *Map of Hatboro, Sheet 1*, Map, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1905. From ProQuest, *Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*, accessed September 1, 2012, <http://sanborn.umi.com/pa/7709/dateid-000001.htm?CCSI=2429n>.

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### History of the Project

Dr. Norman Fisher and his wife Doris purchased a one-and-a-half acre lot in 1957 with the intention of building a new house for themselves and their two daughters. The land was located three blocks from the Colonial-style house where they lived at the time, which also housed Norman Fisher's medical practice. The couple's interest in contemporary furniture fed their desire to build a more modern home. In 1960, the Fishers interviewed a number of firms, one of which was Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham (GBQC), who told the Fishers that they "had no financial need to do private homes but their mentor, Louis I. Kahn, still did them."<sup>19</sup> With that, they arranged a meeting with Kahn and were won over by his captivating exploration of their needs as well as his "intellect, energy, humor and warmth."<sup>20</sup>

The Fishers signed a contract with Kahn on August 23, 1960, and set their budget at \$45,000. With no urgency to move, they met with Kahn approximately every two months, working through four schemes over the course of the next four years.<sup>21</sup> The lengthy duration of the design and construction processes reflected a desire on the part of the architect and clients to attain a high degree of refinement. Their disciplined collaboration is reflected in the taut planning and the superior craftsmanship of the house.<sup>22</sup> The Fishers remarked on Kahn's meticulous design process, "If we were not satisfied with a set of plans, he would not modify them but insisted on starting over."<sup>23</sup>

The design of the Fisher House evolved through four distinct schemes over the course of as many years, from 1960 to 1964, with each plan separating the living and dining functions, the core of domestic life, from the more private functions of the house. The initial plan for the Fisher House was produced in the summer of 1960. The design was a unified, two-story volume bisected by an entry hall that led to a high-ceilinged fifteen-by-thirty-foot living room. This plan integrated a doctor's office on the ground floor of the sleeping cube, at a distance from the living cube.<sup>24</sup> The focus of the plan was a stone dining cube which came to be called the "inglenook" containing a seating area, a dining table, and a monumental stone fireplace positioned off of the living cube. This plan was difficult to resolve to the site primarily because the house was set perpendicular to the grade, causing the bedrooms to all face an adjacent house. This scheme, however, established the foundational element of the design – the separation of living and private functions.

Completed in August 1961, the second plan for the Fisher House realigned the elements of the house into a linear arrangement set parallel to the slope of the land. The inglenook now had a paved terrace and alcoves were added that provided areas for study or relaxation in the living room and master bedroom. These elements are the genesis of Kahn's desire to incorporate natural light into the house in a significant way. The private and living areas were brought onto equal levels and the roof levels were unified.

<sup>19</sup> Fisher and Fisher, "Seven Years," 149.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Fisher and Fisher, "Seven Years," 149.

<sup>22</sup> Whitaker, "Houses by Louis I. Kahn," 25.

<sup>23</sup> Fisher and Fisher, "Seven Years," 151.

<sup>24</sup> Booher, "Fisher House," 32.

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Cost considerations necessitated a third scheme in the winter of 1961-62. The overall square footage was reduced, while the dimensions of the inglenook increased. The inglenook was the core element of the design and in this plan its thick walls and cylindrical interior reflected Kahn's attraction to the archaic. In the spring semester of 1963, Kahn assigned the Fishers' house and site program to his Master Class at the University of Pennsylvania. The problem presented to the students was "to discover from [the] sense of living today what these rooms really are" and students were told that the Fishers "love stone—would like a fireplace."<sup>25</sup> It is not believed that any of the student work influenced the final design for the house, as the final design shows a natural progression from previous plans.

The final plan was presented to the Fishers in December of 1963. The lag between plans was due to Kahn concurrently working on several large-scale projects, including the Salk Institute, Erdman dorms at Bryn Mawr, Fort Wayne Fine Arts Center, Indian Institute of Management, and the Capital Complex in Dhaka. The final plan for the Fishers' house was a configuration of two cubic volumes of slightly different dimensions set atop a stone base. This plan reduced the floor area by thirty-five percent and maintained the newly revised inglenook as the center of family life. The fireplace broke from the inglenook and was now a freestanding semicircular stone mass oriented toward the living room facing a built-in window seat.

The materials chosen for the exterior were tidewater cypress for the two cubic volumes and local "Montgomeryville" stone for the foundation. Kahn had a preference for the dualistic selection of materials and referred to the composition as "a wood house on a stone plinth."<sup>26</sup> The stone chosen was local "Montgomeryville" stone, a greenish-red limestone that had been used in the area since the early eighteenth-century.<sup>27</sup> Kahn's vision for the look of the random rubble foundation specified that the stones were to be laid in units as large as could be handled by two men. The battered surfaces of the stones were preserved, as Kahn requested that the stone "not to be dressed but [laid up] in a rough selected way. [The wall] must be rugged but not grotesque."<sup>28</sup> Kahn's masonry designs were often finished so that evidence revealing the method of production was left intact. The mortar joints are deeply raked, as Kahn wanted to give the appearance of a dry-set wall. Kahn was extraordinarily hands-on in the construction of the monumental foundation and chimney, making at least five inspection trips to ensure that his design was being properly executed. At one point, he demanded that a section of the stone wall be torn down and rebuilt, as he felt the layout had become too irregular.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Marcus and Whitaker, *Houses*, 201. Kahn may have even invited the couple to attend the final juries; see calendar entry for March 25, 1963: "Call Dr. Fisher," Kahn Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania. The students never met the Fishers nor learned their names. The problem was assigned January 21, 1963, and the last class discussion was February 25, from Master Class notes (Louis I. Kahn), Personal notebook of David De Long, courtesy David G. De Long.

<sup>26</sup> "Drawings," Fisher Family Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania. Handwritten note by Kahn on first-floor plan drawing, dated December 22, 1963.

<sup>27</sup> George H. Marcus and William Whitaker, "Fisher House," *The Houses of Louis Kahn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 7. Manuscript submitted for publication. Will be published by Yale University Press in 2013. All page numbers are from submitted draft.

<sup>28</sup> "Meeting minutes, August 15, 1964," Fisher Family Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>29</sup> Marcus and Whitaker, *Houses*, 207.

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Bids were taken for a builder in September of 1964 and local builder E. Arol Fesmire signed a contract on October 24, 1964.<sup>30</sup> Residing in nearby Lower Moreland Township, he was a skilled builder, respected by architects for his meticulous detail work and his residential and church construction. Carl Saldutti, a stonemason from Naples, was responsible for the construction of the foundation, basement walls, and chimney.<sup>31</sup> Construction commenced in late 1964 and lasted three years, with the Fisher family moving into the house on June 14, 1967.

In 1994, the Fishers gifted their house, retaining a life estate, to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a national non-profit organization dedicated to preserving America's historic resources. The couple wrote that their original hope "was to build a special home for ourselves, not a museum or a monument. Living in a Kahn house you didn't have a choice. Because of that, we have given our home to the National Trust for Historic Preservation with the hope it will be preserved unchanged for future architectural students, architects, and historians to study [and] that others may share in the discoveries that abound here." Norman Fisher died in 2007, and in 2008, Doris Fisher moved out of the house to live closer to her youngest daughter, Nina. The National Trust assumed full ownership of the property in April 2012. The interior and exterior of the house, as well as the shed, Kahn-designed bridge, and surrounding landscape, will be preserved through a preservation and conservation easement, which additionally, will ensure routine public access to all preserved features of the property.

### **Significance of the Fisher House**

The design of the Fisher House was profoundly radical for its time as it challenged the tenets of traditional residential Modernism. It rejected the philosophy of International Modernism through its renewed emphasis on mass, spatial division grounded by the specifics of space, radical plan form, sense of abstract purity and austerity, and its monumental presence. Despite its radical design, the Fisher House never loses the deep human connection embodied in all of Kahn's great works. The sense of human scale is exhibited not only through the dimensions, but also through the expressive use and detail of traditional materials. The integration of natural light most profoundly makes this human connection. These core ideas are central to the design of the Fisher House and are those for which Kahn has become recognized as significant in the history of modern architecture. The appreciation of the significance of Kahn's buildings has only grown over time, particularly the significance of his house designs.

The Fisher House is the simplest expression of Kahn's resolution of form and design, for here he sacrificed axial order by separating and rotating the two principal volumes.<sup>32</sup> Kahn resolved form and design by responding to classical themes and utilizing vernacular traditions. He approached each project in the same way, as he stated in 1973, "I always start with a square, no matter what the problem is."<sup>33</sup> With the square as the starting point, he would work outwards and incorporate the programmatic needs

<sup>30</sup> "Owner / Contractor agreement," signed and dated October 24, 1964, Fisher Family Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania. A series of 35 mm slides dated 11/64 show a bulldozer clearing the site.

<sup>31</sup> Vincent Saldutti (Carl's brother), interviewed by William Whitaker, Phone interview, January 3, 2012. Saldutti's father, Vincenzo, immigrated to the United States from Naples in 1903, establishing himself as a stonemason by 1920. Father and son, whose work was almost exclusively residential, frequently found themselves on Fesmire job sites, but on occasion they also built "cut stone houses" on the Main Line.

<sup>32</sup> Reed, "Esherick and Fisher Houses," 5.

<sup>33</sup> Heinz Ronner and Sharad Jhaveri, *Louis I. Kahn: Complete Work, 1935-1974* (New York: Birkhauser Verlag AG, 1987), 98.

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of the building. Historic precedents provided Kahn with models and patterns for how to best organize space in modern designs, but these served as a means rather than an end.<sup>34</sup> Kahn saw his work more as the discovery of an ideal preexisting “form” as opposed to the invention of something new.<sup>35</sup> He articulated the differences between “form” and “design,” stating, “Form is ‘what’. Design is ‘how’. Form is impersonal. Design belongs to the designer. Design is a circumstantial act . . . . Form has nothing to do with circumstantial conditions.”<sup>36</sup>

His design for the Fisher House stood out from his Modernist contemporaries in that it rejected the typical linear plan and focused on simple geometric forms. He believed that the flexible use of space and removal of most interior walls stripped a house of its purposeful spaces. Kahn believed that “architecture is the thoughtful making of spaces,” and this thoughtfulness is clearly seen in his house designs. Kahn recognized the room as the fundamental unit of architecture, explaining, “A plan is a society of rooms. A real plan is one in which rooms have talked to each other.”<sup>37</sup> Kahn had a fondness for the partitioning of rooms in Colonial houses, and admired the room separations that made responsive places. His design and layout of the rooms at the Fisher House encouraged human interaction and circulation between the rooms. In a conversation with the Fishers in 1970, Kahn explained, “A house is only good if the tenant who lives in it after the original owner is comfortable . . . it’s a confirmation . . . a house that has a sense of agreement about it. An agreement means a sense of commonness. A sense of prevalence which is a prevalence of harmony – a kind of rapport with the next person.”<sup>38</sup> Regarding the universality of his residential designs, he stated in “Form and Design” in 1960, “This house created for the particular family must have the character of being good for another. The design in this way reflects its trueness to form.”<sup>39</sup>

Kahn sought beginnings, and in doing so designed each building as if it was the first of its kind.<sup>40</sup> For the Fisher House he reduced the plan to its most basic human elements. At its core, the Fisher House was an attempt to redefine the inherent nature of the domestic house.<sup>41</sup>

I honor beginnings. Of all things, I honor beginnings. I believe that what was has always been, and what is has always been, and what will be has always been. I don’t think the circumstantial play from year-to-year and era-to-era means anything, but what has become available to you from time to time as expressive instinct does. The man of old had the same brilliance of mind as we assume we have only now. And that which made a thing become manifest for the first time is our great, great moment of creative happening.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Brownlee and De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, 71.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Louis I. Kahn, “Form and Design,” *Architectural Design* 31 (April 1961): 145.

<sup>37</sup> Alessandra Latour, ed., *Louis I. Kahn: Writings, Lectures, Interviews* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 291.

<sup>38</sup> Louis I. Kahn in conversation with Doris Fisher, “A House Within a House,” transcribed and edited by Melissa Steeley and William Whitaker, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>39</sup> Louis I. Kahn, “Form and Design,” in Robert Twombly, ed., *Louis Kahn: Essential Texts* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 2003), 64.

<sup>40</sup> Brownlee and De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, 73.

<sup>41</sup> Booher, “Fisher House,” 62.

<sup>42</sup> Kahn quoted in Latour, *Writings, Lectures, Interviews*, 329.

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These statements can be interpreted as expressions of a desire to return to archetypes, i.e. to return to what there was before history and before the styles.<sup>43</sup> These ageless themes are also fully expressed in Kahn's design for the Dominican Motherhouse, Media, Pennsylvania (1965-1969, unbuilt).

The materials Kahn chose for the Fisher House were representative of the region's vernacular building traditions. This was a common theme for Kahn, who often incorporated regionally crafted or locally attained materials in his designs. Kahn recalled a visit to fellow architect Luis Barragan's house in Mexico City in 1948, saying, "His house is not merely a house but *house* itself. Anyone could feel at home. Its material is traditional, its character eternal."<sup>44</sup> The retranslation of traditional building methods and use of traditional materials was a signature of Kahn's architectural designs, and is fully expressed in the Fisher House. The interior plasterwork is naturalistic and raw in appearance and its rough texture and unpainted surface project a quality more evocative of a historic farmhouse than a mid-twentieth-century suburban house.<sup>45</sup>

The millwork of the Fisher House is finely detailed and reflects traditional Anglo-American construction methods and designs. The millwork designs for the house are responsive to the inherent qualities of the material, which accounts for the expansion and contraction of the wood with the changing seasons.<sup>46</sup> This "trueness to form" is achieved through handcrafted tongue-and-groove joinery. The custom designed millwork details in the Fisher House, namely the built-in window seat, suggest the idea of the joinery elements being pieces of architecture in themselves.<sup>47</sup> Masterfully crafted millwork details like those found in the Fisher House were a common design motif in most of Kahn's late works. Similar millwork details can be found at most of Kahn's projects from this period, both residential and institutional, including the Margaret Esherick House, the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, the Philips Exeter Academy Library, the Kimbell Art Museum, the Yale Center for British Art, and the Steven and Toby Korman House. The millwork details for these projects are highly individualized and are reflective of the specific character of each project.

The masonry foundation and chimney were both created from local stone representative of eastern Pennsylvania's vernacular building traditions and each conveys a self-conscious admiration for earlier building forms. Kahn was fascinated by the origins of architectural form, and believed that good building would produce a marvelous ruin. When he designed the monumental stone foundation for the Fisher House, he undoubtedly envisioned it as an eventual ruin. The foundation as ruin represented permanence and the Fisher House's eternal ties to the site. For Kahn, the chimney emphasized the peripheral space between interior and exterior. He wrote, "The fireplace plays a strong part in my houses. I feel it represents the presence of man . . . I'm designing a fireplace that is a really little house, a clump that sits there and has all its own architecture, and the rest of the house just sort of rambles around it. It's done in stone, rather than large limestone blocks. It's as though the fireplace room were brought in from the outside. Wonderful, because you can go there and be alone."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *The Principles of Modern Architecture*, 110.

<sup>44</sup> Louis I. Kahn, "Silence and Light," in Robert Twombly, ed., *Louis Kahn: Essential Texts* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 2003), 235.

<sup>45</sup> Krotzer, BCA Conservation Assessment, 5.

<sup>46</sup> Booher, "Fisher House," 86.

<sup>47</sup> Stephen Greenberg, "Re-examining the House," *Architect's Journal* 195 (March 1992): 23.

<sup>48</sup> Maniaque, "House, A House, Home," 33.

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Kahn felt that it was vitally important to identify human beliefs in order to discover ideal form.<sup>49</sup> His residential designs were created from the translation of geometry, mass, and light into forms that would serve and reflect the beauty and resilience of the human spirit.<sup>50</sup> In his design for the Fisher House, Kahn was not designing the house for any particular family, but rather a structure that would resonate with all who encountered it. He stated, “a house must always be as good . . . must be so good that those who will live in it after the person who ordered it would feel comfortable in it.”<sup>51</sup> He had a humanistic approach to his residential designs, as seen in his consideration of the spaces where the family would gather in the Fisher House. He designed the “inglenook” (dining) area with the specific vision of it being the most important area of the house and the central meeting place for the family. While Kahn’s original vision for this area was for the family to focus inward when in this area of the house, what both Kahn and the Fishers overlooked was that Doris would be alone in that area on weekday afternoons. A window was needed, and Kahn incorporated one into that space (see page 7/11). In a later interview with Norman Fisher, he stated that Kahn was pleased with this change that facilitated a view of the creek and the wooded area behind the house.

Kahn’s thoughtful examination of the nature of connections seen in the Fisher House represented a significant breakthrough in his architecture. He believed, “The architecture of connection . . . that which connects usable space, this is the measure of the architect—the organization of the connecting spaces.”<sup>52</sup> He believed that “A building must show the way it was made . . . the joint is the beginning of ornament. And must be distinguished from decoration which is simply applied.”<sup>53</sup> He usually applied this idea to minor structural elements, but at the Fisher House used the joint to create a dynamic composition. The cubes are juxtaposed at a forty-five-degree angle and from every vantage point, the view is always oblique; the relationship of one cube to the other, a dialectic.<sup>54</sup>

The layered juxtaposition of the Fisher House was conceived, in part, as a result of design resolutions for Erdman Dormitory at Bryn Mawr College and the Capitol Building at Dhaka. The design for Erdman Hall is composed of three parallel squares joined at the corners. This plan is passive, repetitive, and there is no differentiation of the parts. This rotation of one of the cubes at the Fisher House represents a different approach to spatial organization in Kahn’s work. He stated, “I had never thought that I could just rotate the square so that it makes its own connection.”<sup>55</sup> Kahn was working on the Dhaka Capitol project at the same time as he was wrestling with the design of the Fisher House. His realization that the mosque and the assembly must “speak” to each other, coupled with the need for the mosque to face Mecca, drove him to break the overall geometry of the plan and create a discordant note by angling the geometries. His exploration of this idea of an aggressive interconnection at Dhaka helped him conceive the final design for the Fisher House. The diagonally aligned linking of one square at its corner to a second seen in the designs for the Fisher House and the Capitol Building was a conscious motif that had

<sup>49</sup> Brownlee and De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, 73.

<sup>50</sup> Julie V. Iovine and Todd Eberle, *Louis I. Kahn: Esherick House* (Chicago: Wright, 2008), np (5).

<sup>51</sup> Kahn and Fisher, “A House Within a House.”

<sup>52</sup> Louis I. Kahn, “Law and Rule in Architecture,” in Robert Twombly, ed., *Louis Kahn: Essential Texts* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 131.

<sup>53</sup> Neil E. Johnson, *Light is the Theme: Louis I. Kahn and the Kimbell Art Museum* (Fort Worth, TX: Kimbell Art Museum, 1975), 43.

<sup>54</sup> Reed, “Esherick and Fisher Houses,” 5.

<sup>55</sup> Maniaque, “House, A House, Home,” 23.

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no parallel in Kahn's earlier work, nor was it a familiar plan elsewhere.<sup>56</sup> This assertive juxtaposition of elements is also seen in his design for the Dominican Motherhouse.

Natural light was an essential structural component in Kahn's designs, used to both define spaces and reveal the character of materials. His ideas regarding light can be summed up with his quote, "A room is not a room without natural light."<sup>57</sup> Throughout the design process for the Fisher House, as the layout of the rooms were being shifted and reorganized, so were the locations and types of window openings. Kahn shaped how each room was used through the placement of windows and subsequent use of natural light. He meticulously planned the placement of each window and the experiential quality of light in each room—at all times of day and seasons of the year—was taken into consideration. He deliberately planned the entry of morning light into the bedrooms, thus placing the master bedroom and the children's bedrooms along the east side of the sleeping cube. Kahn also considered the drama created when the morning light hit the rough-hewn stones of the fireplace and the sculptural built-in window seat as the family gathered in the living cube for breakfast. Kahn was not only carefully crafting the quality of the light in every room, but by incorporating the deeply-inset window units and the large windows, he was also crafting the connection between the inhabitants and their natural surroundings. Kahn described the rooms of the Fisher House as "houses within the house," saying, "They have their own light, filtered and softened by this recessed system. I tried to reduce the impact of the windows while always leaving the wall the possibility to reveal the weather."<sup>58</sup>

Upon entering the Fisher House, one is immediately struck by the floor-to-ceiling window at the end of the entry hall that boldly announces the presence of the landscape. This well-lit corridor unexpectedly contrasts with the opaque impression given by the street façade.<sup>59</sup> In speaking of his remarkable skylight system at the Kimbell Art Museum, he eloquently explained his desire for the intermingling of the interior with the outside world, "And the cloud that passes over gives the room a feeling of association with the person that is in it, knowing that there is life outside of the room."<sup>60</sup> His careful design of the entry of natural light into the Fisher House also had to take into account the privacy of the Fisher family, whose bedrooms were fifty feet from a street and even closer to neighboring houses. The methodically crafted deeply-inset narrow window openings are set vertically into the wall and control the influx of natural light into the bedrooms at sunrise, while simultaneously thoughtfully considering the family's privacy.

Kahn crafted the influx of light at the Fisher House while taking into account the privacy of the inhabitants, their connection with the landscape, and the mood created by the light. The house is a composition of inspired serenity and from within the inhabitant is consistently drawn into the landscape beyond.<sup>61</sup> He discussed this at the Fisher House in a conversation with Doris Fisher in 1970:

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<sup>56</sup> Brownlee and De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, 83.

<sup>57</sup> Louis Kahn, "The Room," Charcoal drawing on tracing paper, *Drawing for City/2 Exhibition*, Philadelphia, Museum of Modern Art, 1971.

<sup>58</sup> Maniaque, "House, A House, Home," 32.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>60</sup> Johnson, *Light is the Theme*, 18.

<sup>61</sup> Marcus and Whitaker, *Houses*, 2.

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The windows are much freer [in the living room]; they look out onto the landscape. Especially yours, where you can bring the trees from outside inside and you consider that there is no need for intimacy and privacy in much of the space in the living room. And in the bedroom, you tend to reduce the fenestration but never reduce it to the point where walls cannot receive the mood of the time of the day and the seasons of the year. And still when you get up you want to feel that you are hugged by the room. And that's not what you have to feel in the living room.<sup>62</sup>

Just weeks after his return from his extraordinarily influential time in Rome, Kahn began to experiment with a renewed emphasis of mass into his work. The Yale Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut (1951-1953), through its pyramidal forms and hollow tetrahedral concrete ceiling, expressed in the physicality and materiality of the structural detailing a powerful tension between classicism and modernism that opened up new avenues for architecture.<sup>63</sup> The Roman columns and pediments did not interest him as much as the "vast geometric interiors, stripped of their marble cladding, with their bold structural masonry illuminated in natural overhead light."<sup>64</sup> He was attracted to the Baths of Caracalla, specifically the massive, brick-faced ruins that, with their original decoration missing, were revealed as pure geometric volumes of thick walls and concrete vaults.<sup>65</sup> The two cubic volumes and the monumental stone foundation of the Fisher House exhibit a similar stripped-down mass to the Roman ruins. The Fisher House is a demonstration of Kahn's ability to create monumental architecture that functioned on a human scale. Domestic programs are rarely seen as monumental, and through the utilization of geometric volumes at the Fisher House, he broke free of the "home" conception and proposed a "monument."<sup>66</sup> Kahn believed "Monumentality in architecture may be defined as...a spiritual quality inherent in a structure which conveys the feeling, in its eternity, that it cannot be added to or changed."<sup>67</sup> Monumentality is also achieved through Kahn's choice of materials for the Fisher House. The mass of the roughly hewn stones confers sculptural force and a thickness that lends an impression of stability.<sup>68</sup>

The differentiation of space and functional separation of the structure in the design for the Fisher House is another central theme seen in both Kahn's residential and institutional projects. Kahn challenged the modernist ideal of spatial continuity through the differentiation of space in his designs.<sup>69</sup> Although formal distinction of space can be seen in many of his earlier designs, Kahn's Richards Medical Building was the first that gained acclaim for its functional separation of spaces. In this building, he clearly articulated the separation of space into "served" and "servant" (spaces that serve other spaces).

In the Fisher House, the spatial separation occurs between the "private" and the "public" areas of the house. Here he made a clear distinction between areas where individuals gather and areas where the family would gather. In a sketch from 1971 entitled "The Room," Kahn writes, "The Room is the place of

<sup>62</sup> Kahn and Fisher, "A House Within a House."

<sup>63</sup> Vincent Scully, *Modern Architecture and Other Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 253.

<sup>64</sup> Filler, *Makers of Modern Architecture*, 124.

<sup>65</sup> Brownlee and De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, 50.

<sup>66</sup> Maniaque, "House, A House, Home," 5.

<sup>67</sup> Louis I. Kahn, "Monumentality," in Robert Twombly, ed., *Louis Kahn: Essential Texts* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 21.

<sup>68</sup> Maniaque, "House, A House, Home," 15.

<sup>69</sup> Brownlee and De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, 53.

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mind. In a small room one does not say what one would in a large room. A room with only one other person could be generative. The vectors of each meet."<sup>70</sup> For the Fisher House, he broke from the geometric unity that was prevalent in much Modernist architecture by separating the house into two cubes juxtaposed at a forty-five degree angle. The two cubes signify the bipartite distribution of the space into the primary functions of living and sleeping as each are assigned their own separate geometric unit. This extraordinary gesture results in a spatially complex composition of oblique angles that is more dynamic than his previous residences.

One of the central tenets of Kahn's residential building designs is the logical organization of the programmatic needs of the house and its client. He would first examine the problem by identifying its individual parts, in this case the primary functions of the house. He would then reassemble the parts so that needs were met and geometric unity was achieved. He stated, "In searching for the nature of the space of a house might they not be separated a distance from each other theoretically before they are brought together."<sup>71</sup>

Kahn's house designs often allowed him to work out design issues and served as proving grounds for his monumental works. Vincent Rivera worked in Kahn's office and stated that Kahn treated his residential projects as experiments, providing him with an opportunity to explore many of the ideas he had running through his head.<sup>72</sup> His investigation of the rational division of space in the design for the Adler House guided his design of the Trenton Bathhouse.<sup>73</sup> In the 1960s, with the sharp increase in commissions, Kahn was often working on several projects concurrently. This allowed questions and issues from one project to aid in the resolution of another. The individual carrels at the Exeter Library have finely crafted millwork details and window shades for controlling daylight, and are reminiscent of the millwork in the Fisher House.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, the light oak interior walls of the Yale Center for British Art are reminiscent of the walls in the Korman House.

The Fisher House and the resolution of its design proved significant in Kahn's teaching at the University of Pennsylvania. Kahn and the Fishers worked together on the design of the Fisher House from 1960 to 1964. In the first three years, three distinct schemes were created, none of which fully satisfied the needs of the architect or the clients. The resolution of the design for the Fisher House was of such great importance to Kahn that in the spring semester of 1963, he assigned it as the project for his master class at the University of Pennsylvania. Although none of the plans generated had consequence on Kahn's final design for the house, its inclusion in his curriculum shows how important it was for him to resolve these design issues. In the following semester, his master class worked on the design for the Capitol Complex in Dhaka.

Like most of Kahn's residences, the Fisher House did not receive much recognition when it was completed in 1967, but in the decades since has come to be fully appreciated. In Japan, Kahn's sense of detail and attention to craft and material has been of continual fascination, and the Fisher House has

<sup>70</sup> Louis Kahn, *The Room*, Drawing, 1971.

<sup>71</sup> Kahn quoted in Latour, *Writings, Lectures, Interviews*, 60.

<sup>72</sup> Vincent Rivera interviewed by Taryn D'Ambrogi, Caitlin Kramer, and William Whitaker at the University of Pennsylvania Architectural Archives, October 15, 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Brownlee and De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, 56.

<sup>74</sup> Maniaque, "House, A House, Home," 14.

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been written on extensively there.<sup>75</sup> In a special supplement of *Global Architecture*, a Japanese publication, architectural historian Peter S. Reed explains that the Fisher House has “a compelling structural clarity and hierarchical relationship of elements, a masterful integration of light and mass, and a sensitive relationship to the site and humanity.”<sup>76</sup> He adds, “The Esherick and Fisher Houses are among the masterpieces of his later, mature work . . . Both houses are brilliant demonstrations of Kahn’s architectural philosophy and offer insights into his ideas of universal order and particular place.”<sup>77</sup> In her 2010 book *Living Architecture: Greatest American Houses of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Dominique Browning lists the Fisher House among the twenty most significant houses built in the twentieth century.<sup>78</sup> Daughter Nina Fisher says of the home’s early admirers, “We did have a few architects stopping by,” adding that the lure has grown “exponentially” in the last two decades. “It’s a rare visit when we’re there that some group or another doesn’t stop by to see the house.”<sup>79</sup>

### Kahn Biography

Louis Isadore Kahn was born Leiser-Itze Schmuilowsky in Pernow, Russia (now Pärnu, Estonia) on February 20, 1901.<sup>80</sup> In June of that year, his father Leib Schmuilowsky (later Leopold Kahn) immigrated to America, and in 1906 the family joined him. Settling in Philadelphia’s immigrant slum of Northern Liberties, they moved a dozen times during their first decade in America.<sup>81</sup> His father was employed in a shirtwaist factory until a back injury limited his ability to work. His mother supported the family by making samples of knitted woolen clothing for local manufacturers. In 1915, the family became naturalized citizens and changed their surname from Schmuilowsky to Kahn.<sup>82</sup>

Despite the fact that the family was poor, Louis was able to receive an exceptional education in Philadelphia’s public school system. His education was strongly influenced by the Progressive Movement, a reform-minded community that championed public art education with special schools and programs in the fine and industrial arts.<sup>83</sup> He enrolled in Central High School in 1916 and continued his art studies through free Saturday classes at the Graphic Sketch Club (later the Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial). In his senior year, Kahn was introduced to architecture by the school’s professor of art history, William F. Gray. He described that he found himself “struck...between the eye and the eyeball” by architecture and that it “combined my love and desire for artistic creation, painting, and being able to express and stand out. I was intensely dedicated.”<sup>84</sup>

<sup>75</sup> See Maniaque, “House, A House, Home”; Reed, “Louis I. Kahn”; Fisher, “Fisher House”; Saito, *Houses*; “Houses,” A + U.

<sup>76</sup> Peter S. Reed, “Louis I. Kahn’s Esherick and Fisher Houses,” *GA Houses* 76 (1996), 7.

<sup>77</sup> Reed, “Esherick and Fisher Houses,” 2.

<sup>78</sup> Dominique Browning and Lucy Gilmour, *Living Architecture: Greatest American Houses of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: Assouline, 2010), 60.

<sup>79</sup> “Inside Look at Kahn House,” *Hatboro-Horsham Patch*, April 4, 2012, accessed September 1, 2012,

<http://horsham.patch.com/articles/inside-look-at-kahn-house>.

<sup>80</sup> This date was recorded under the old Julian calendar that was still in use in Russia at the time of Kahn’s birth. This translates to March 5 in the modern system.

<sup>81</sup> Carter Wiseman, *Louis I. Kahn: Beyond Time and Style: A Life in Architecture* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 12-13.

<sup>82</sup> Majority of biographical information from William Whitaker, “Chronology,” in Jochen Eisenbrand, Mateo Kries, and Stanislaus von Moos, *Louis I. Kahn: The Power of Architecture*. (Weil am Rhein, Germany: Vitra Design Museum, 2012).

<sup>83</sup> Whitaker, “Chronology,” in *The Power of Architecture*, 22.

<sup>84</sup> Patricia McLaughlin, “How’m I Doing, Corbusier? An Interview with Louis Kahn,” *Pennsylvania Gazette* 71 (December 1972): 19.

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In September 1920 Kahn entered the School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania, considered to be the finest architecture program in the country at the time. Here the curriculum was firmly rooted in classicism, which focused on design as a problem-solving art and not simply a matter of historical styles. He studied under the distinguished Ecole des Beaux-Arts trained architect Paul Phillipe Cret, obtaining his Bachelor of Architecture in 1924. Soon after graduating, he began work in the office of John Molitor, the City Architect of Philadelphia. As Chief of Design for the 1926 Sesquicentennial Exposition, he worked on designs for six buildings encompassing more than 1.5 million square feet.<sup>85</sup> In 1927, Kahn worked for a year in the office of William H. Lee, a prolific cinema architect, and then in May 1928, departed Philadelphia on a year-long tour of Europe that allowed him to see and sketch what he saw, with special attention paid to the medieval and vernacular architecture of Rome. It was during this period of travel that he developed a special affection for Greek and Roman antiquity.

Upon his return to Philadelphia in 1929, Kahn secured employment in Cret's office, hired to work on The 1933 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago. While there he worked on the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. as well as bridge designs for the Pennsylvania Railroad. In 1930, he married Esther Isreali and in that same year was released from his job in Cret's office; the economic tumult of the Great Depression naturally affected the demand for new construction and architectural projects. Cret helped him secure a job at the office of Zantzinger, Borie & Medary, working on the design of the U.S. Department of Justice Building in Washington, D.C. Upon completion of this project in 1932, Kahn was once again let go.

Kahn and Dominique Berninger formed the Architectural Research Group (ARG) in 1932 with a group of young, progressive-minded architects who would meet weekly and discuss current issues in modern architecture and design. This incubator for modern design was primarily focused on studying housing conditions in Philadelphia and making proposals for housing, slum clearance, and new construction methods. Kahn briefly returned to Cret's office in 1930 to work on the design for the 2601 Parkway Apartment building, his earliest known venture into housing design. From 1933-1935 he worked as the "Squad Head in Charge of Housing Studies" for the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. In December 1935 he accepted a position under Alfred Kastner as assistant principal architect for the Resettlement Administration in Washington, D.C., to design the Jersey Homesteads project in Roosevelt, New Jersey. Completed in 1937, this project was included in the "Architecture in Government Housing" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York and was picked by influential architecture critic Lewis Mumford as "the most adventurous, the most stimulating" on exhibit. In 1939 his work was again exhibited at MOMA, this time his *Rational City Plan* was shown in the "Houses and Housing" section of the "Art in our Time" exhibition.

Kahn formed a partnership with George Howe in April 1941 to pursue war-related housing work, with Oskar Stonorov joining the partnership later that year.<sup>86</sup> Carver Court Housing, a 100-unit housing project for steelworkers near Coatesville, Pennsylvania, was a significant work. This project gave Kahn public exposure as it was included in the "Built in the U.S.A., 1932-1944" exhibition at MOMA in 1944.<sup>87</sup> Howe resigned in February 1943 and Kahn continued to work in a partnership with Stonorov on low-

<sup>85</sup> Wiseman, *Beyond Time and Style*, 31.

<sup>86</sup> Howe was primarily known for his 1932 Philadelphia Savings Fund Society Building.

<sup>87</sup> Wiseman, *Beyond Time and Style*, 47.

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income housing projects, row houses, renovations, and camp dormitories.<sup>88</sup> Together they designed seven workers' communities, with five of them being built, totaling two thousand units. In 1947 their partnership formally dissolved, and in 1951 Kahn continued working with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission through a series of Redevelopment Area Studies. Philadelphia's Mill Creek Public Housing was built in stages from 1950-1962 and allowed Kahn to showcase his ability as an architect of large projects.

Kahn's entry into academia came in 1947, with an appointment at the Yale School of Fine Arts. In 1949, his continuing alliance with George Howe led Kahn to recommend him for the position of chairman of the architecture department at Yale, a position Howe accepted in 1950. In this same year, Kahn was named Architect in Residence at the American Academy in Rome, through the recommendation of Howe. The three months that Kahn spent in Rome marked a turning point in his career, after which the direction of his work began to fundamentally change. He traveled to many buildings and sites in Italy, Greece and Egypt, drawing and sketching much of what he saw and taking away crucial lessons about light, form, mass, and monumentality that would influence all of his future work.

Upon his return to the U.S. in 1951, Kahn received the consequential commission for the Yale University Art Gallery. His design had the same Modernist elements of his previous work, but it was clear that his time in Rome had been influential, namely through the introduction of mass into the design in the form of a three-foot-thick system of concrete floor slabs. The exposed structure and hard lines of the Gallery marked a transitional period for Kahn and were a clear departure from the smooth volumes of orthodox Modernism. This building's monumentality not only represented a change in Kahn's design aesthetic, it also signaled a sea change in modern architecture.

In May 1955, he completed construction drawings for his pivotal Jewish Community Center (often referred to as the "Trenton Bath House") in Ewing Township, New Jersey. Kahn's first realization of his new order of conjoining room and structure are fully expressed in this design. The plan is in the form of a Greek cross and in the design he orders and differentiates the spaces, the functions of the structural elements, and the composition based on simple geometric volumes.<sup>89</sup> These elements are first introduced here, and are employed in each subsequent building he designed. He stated, "The world discovered me after I designed the Richards Medical Building, but I discovered myself after designing that little concrete block bath house in Trenton."<sup>90</sup>

Kahn resigned from his teaching position at Yale in 1955, following Howe's retirement, and returned to the University of Pennsylvania to teach in the School of Fine Arts. Here he became a central figure in a faculty that came to be known as the "Philadelphia School." This group of close colleagues included Robert Venturi, Romaldo Giurgola, Robert Geddes, Ian McHarg, and Robert LeRicolais. He taught the "Master's Studio," a one-year post-professional master's degree program which allowed students two semesters with Kahn. In addition to teaching at Yale and Penn, Kahn also taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Princeton University. In 1956, he was named the Alfred F. Bemis Professor of Architecture and Planning at M.I.T., and from 1961-1967, he was the Class of 1913 Visiting Lecturer at

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>89</sup> Carolyn Maniaque, "House, A House, Home," *Global Architecture Houses* 44 (1994): 13.

<sup>90</sup> "Advocacy: Trenton Bath House," *Docomomo-US, New York Tri-State*, accessed September 1, 2012, <http://docomomo-nytri.org/advocacy/trenton-bath-houses>.

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Princeton University. In addition to his academic positions, from 1960 until his death he lectured extensively through the North America, South America, Europe, and Japan.

In 1957, Kahn received the commission for the Alfred Newton Richards Medical Research Building at the University of Pennsylvania, due in large part to the efforts of G. Holmes Perkins, Dean of the Architecture School. This project was a major turning point for Kahn, in that it defined his emergence on the international stage and was viewed as a directional shift in modern architecture through his articulation of “servant and served spaces.” The building is laid out as a group of concrete laboratory towers and a central service tower, with peripheral brick shafts containing stairwells and air ducts. The building was a clear rejection of International Modernism and a 1959 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article stated, “that massive, raw-boned structure on University Avenue...will suit the architecture of the campus in a way that no shimmering tube of glass and steel could.” *Progressive Architecture* published an article on the building in June 1960 proclaiming “what may well prove to be one of the most significant buildings of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been dedicated at the University of Pennsylvania.”<sup>91</sup> In June 1961, MOMA put on a single-building exhibition of the Richards Medical Building, with curator Wilder Green pronouncing it, “probably the single most consequential building constructed in the United States since the [Second World] war.”<sup>92</sup> Influential art historian and professor Vincent Scully called it “one of the greatest buildings of modern times”<sup>93</sup> while fellow architect Paul Rudolph labeled it “the most significant building of the decade.”<sup>94</sup>

Following the success of the Richards Building, Kahn’s practice expanded and commissions increased for projects in the United States and abroad. Between 1959 and 1960, Kahn received commissions for the following projects: Margaret Esherick House, Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania (1959-1962), Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla, California (1959-1965), First Unitarian Church, Rochester, New York (1965-1969), Eleanor Donnelley Erdman Hall at Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania (1960-1965), and Fisher House, Hatboro, Pennsylvania (1960-1967). His practice soon had commissions for many international projects, these include the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, India (1962-1974), Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Capitol of Bangladesh (1962–1983), President’s Estate, Islamabad, Pakistan (1963–1966), Hurva Synagogue, Jerusalem, Israel (1967–1974), Palazzo dei Congressi, Venice, Italy (1968–1974), Family Planning Center, Kathmandu, Nepal (1970–1975), and Government House Hill Development, Jerusalem, Israel (1971–1973), in addition to development projects in Rabat, Morocco, and Tehran, Iran.<sup>95</sup> Additional significant domestic projects include Library and Dining Hall, Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, New Hampshire (1965-1972), Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas (1966-1972), Yale Center for British Art (1969-1974), and Mr. and Mrs. Steven Korman House, Fort Washington, Pennsylvania (1971-1973).

<sup>91</sup> Anon., “Kahn’s Medical Science Building Dedicated at U of P,” *Progressive Architecture* 41 (June 1960): 61.

<sup>92</sup> Wilder Green, *Louis I. Kahn, Architect: Richards Medical Research Building*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art Bulletin 28, 1961), 3.

<sup>93</sup> Vincent Scully, *Louis I. Kahn* (New York: George Braziller, 1962), 27.

<sup>94</sup> Anon., “Ten Americans to Watch in 1961,” *Pageant* 16 (February 1961): 60. Johnson’s comments originally appeared in an article published in *Art in America*.

<sup>95</sup> Whitaker, “Project List,” in *The Power of Architecture*, 265-272.

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### Significance of Louis I. Kahn

The significance of Kahn's principal design concepts was acknowledged and embraced in the early 1960s by critics, scholars, and popular audiences as exceedingly important ideas countering International Modernism. Following the dedication of the Richards Medical Research Laboratories (Richards Building) in the spring of 1960, *Time* magazine declared Kahn a "poet-visionar[y]."<sup>96</sup> The first important book about Kahn and his work was the 1962-pioneering monograph by renowned architectural historian Vincent Scully. Referring to the Richards Building, he declared, "Kahn's achievement of a single decade now places him unquestionably first in professional importance among living American architects."<sup>97</sup> The Richards Building propelled Kahn into the international spotlight, and signaled the start of the reverberating assessments of his emerging importance.

The monumentality exhibited in Kahn's works was born out of what he believed was the essence of the archaic spirit of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, something he felt was missing from mainstream Modernist architecture.<sup>98</sup> Scully credits Kahn with the "revival of the classical and vernacular traditions of architecture and their reincorporation into the mainstream of modern architecture," which he deems "the most important architectural development of the second half of the twentieth century."<sup>99</sup> Architect James Marston Fitch wrote an article for *Architectural Forum* in July 1960 on the importance of Kahn's Richards Building and described his connection to historic materials and forms.<sup>100</sup> Distinguished architectural historian Leland Roth felt that Kahn's work assumed a timeless monumentality and authority, stating, "Certainly his was among the best work of the 1960s, and perhaps of the century."<sup>101</sup> In the seminal 1992 *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, David Brownlee writes, "Along with the pleasure of making architecture, Kahn had restored its importance. He rescued modernism from the banality induced by its commercial success and reattached it to serious themes: the sheltering of human institutions and the definition of structure, mass, and light."<sup>102</sup>

Kahn's adoption of monumental scale and massing contrasted with Modernism and the International Style designs built in the 1950s and 1960s and as a result, he was revered for his singular visionary style. Architectural historian William J. R. Curtis labeled Kahn "the master of monumentality...without a doubt."<sup>103</sup> Writing in 1961 on a group architects deemed the best and brightest, a group made up of Paul Rudolph, John Johansen, Eero Saarinen, Philip Johnson, and Kahn, architectural critic Walter McQuade wrote, "He [Kahn] has been growing his own architectural expression longer than the others, more slowly, more consistently. He is validly rugged, a welcome change from the fragility of the industrialism all these men are fighting in one way or another."<sup>104</sup> Scully writes about Kahn's departure from Modernism: "[Kahn's designs] effectively bring the International Style to a close and open the way to a much solidier modernism, one in which the revival of the vernacular and classical traditions of

<sup>96</sup> Anon., "Form Evokes Function," *Time* 75 (June 6, 1960): 76.

<sup>97</sup> Vincent Scully, *Louis I. Kahn*, 10.

<sup>98</sup> Martin Filler, *Makers of Modern Architecture: From Frank Lloyd Wright to Frank Gehry* (New York: New York Review Books, 2007), 121.

<sup>99</sup> Vincent Scully, "Louis I. Kahn and the Ruins of Rome," *MoMA* 12 (1992), 1.

<sup>100</sup> James Marston Fitch, "A Building of Rugged Fundamentals," *Architectural Forum* 113 (July 1960): 185. (83?)

<sup>101</sup> Leland Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 441-442.

<sup>102</sup> David B. Brownlee and David G. De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, Rizzoli, 1991), 141.

<sup>103</sup> William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 518.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

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architecture...come to play a central role."<sup>105</sup> In a *New York Times* article on the Kahn Retrospective at MOMA in 1992, influential architecture critic Herbert Muschamp championed Kahn's rejection of Modernism: "His major buildings of the 1960s and 70s gave substance to the hope that modern architecture could add its own impressive floats to the parade, that the age of mass production could produce a Parthenon, not just a machine for living."<sup>106</sup>

Since his death in March 1974, Kahn's renown has only continued to grow. In his *New York Times* obituary, Paul Goldberger honored Kahn, saying his "strong forms of brick and concrete influenced a generation of architects and made him, in the opinion of most architectural scholars, America's foremost living architect."<sup>107</sup> Pulitzer prize-winning architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable eulogized Kahn in the *New York Times* in 1974, "Slow to mature and late to be recognized, Mr. Kahn evolved in his 60's as one of the great architects and teachers of this century" adding, "It is an architecture of deceptive sophisticated simplicity, of elegance, power and grace."<sup>108</sup> Later that year she again memorialized Kahn and his architecture: "His buildings, full of strength and grace, have persuasive presence. They belong to their own age, and to all ages with equal ease. Their almost primitive beauty, deceptively simple and yet extraordinarily sophisticated, is already an unassailable part of the progress of civilization and its arts. Louis Kahn was more than an architect; he was an elemental force."<sup>109</sup> In his book on twentieth-century architecture, writer and architectural critic Carter Wiseman wrote that Kahn produced "a magisterial body of work that fundamentally redirected the way architectural questions were posed and answered. He built enough buildings of such high quality to gain him the undisputed status of heir—spiritually if not stylistically—to Wright, Le Corbusier, and Mies."<sup>110</sup> In his biography on Kahn, Wiseman labeled him a monumental figure in the history of architecture, adding, "As time has passed, the names of many of Kahn's most prominent contemporaries – Wallace Harrison, Edward Durrell Stone, Paul Rudolph, and Philip Johnson among them – have slipped in stature, while Kahn's has risen steadily. More than a score of books have been written about Kahn's work."<sup>111</sup> Architect and professor Thomas Leslie writes in his book *Louis I. Kahn: Building Art, Building Science* that "No American architect has been more influential in the past quarter century than Louis. I. Kahn."<sup>112</sup>

Kahn's influence on the younger generation of architects is undeniable. Regarding his house designs, his pavilion plans of the mid-1950s for the Adler and DeVore Houses inspired a line of prominent architects to follow him in the reconsideration of modern domestic spaces. These architects included Charles Moore, John Hejduk, and Peter Eisenman. David De Long explains Kahn's influence: "Like Wright before him, Kahn projected an influence so pervasive as to defy concise summary. By reconnecting architecture with the fundamentals of history, he revitalized its primary forms and principles, and he awakened an entire generation of architects who followed."<sup>113</sup> Architect and architectural historian Christian Norberg-Schulz wrote about Kahn's influence, stating "Kahn's approach to history was used as a point of

<sup>105</sup> Brownlee and De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, 13.

<sup>106</sup> Herbert Muschamp, "A Master of Masses, Last in a Long Line," *New York Times*, June 19, 1992, C1.

<sup>107</sup> Paul Goldberger, "Louis I. Kahn Dies: Architect was 73," *New York Times*, March 20, 1974, 85.

<sup>108</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, "Kahn's Buildings Blended Logic, Power and Grace: An Appraisal," *New York Times*, March 20, 1974, 64.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>110</sup> Carter Wiseman, *Twentieth-Century American Architecture: The Buildings and Their Makers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 189.

<sup>111</sup> Wiseman, *Beyond Time and Style*, 8.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Leslie, *Louis I. Kahn: Building Art, Building Science* (New York: George Braziller, 2005), 2.

<sup>113</sup> Brownlee and De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, 71.

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departure for a younger generation of architects, in particular the works of Jorn Utzon and Mario Botta.”<sup>114</sup> Tadao Ando was, in part, influenced by Kahn, as seen in his stripped down house designs revealing an underlying sense of order, intensified by light, shade, and space.<sup>115</sup>

There have been several notable museum exhibitions on Kahn and his body of work. The Richards Building was the focus of a show at MOMA in 1961, and in April 1966 they held a retrospective exhibition of his body of work entitled “The Architecture of Louis I. Kahn,” comprising 186 original drawings and plans, 22 models, and 69 photomurals and enlargements. In 1968 an installation of his work was presented at the thirty-fourth Annual Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy. The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles organized retrospective on Kahn in 1992 that, in addition to California, was shown in Philadelphia, Paris, New York, Japan, and Texas. David D. Brownlee and David G. De Long’s retrospective *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture* accompanied this exhibition and remains the most comprehensive publication covering Kahn’s work and life.

Kahn remains steadfastly significant still today. In September 2012, Kahn’s Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park opened on Roosevelt Island in New York. Originally proposed in the late 1960s during a period of urban renewal, the project was officially announced and Kahn was appointed as its architect in 1973 by Governor Nelson Rockefeller and Mayor John Lindsey.<sup>116</sup> Kahn finished the design for the park in 1974 and then died shortly thereafter. Kahn’s death, coupled with the City’s financial troubles, postponed the construction of the park 38 years, with construction commencing on March 29, 2010. Also in September 2012, a retrospective exhibition entitled “Louis Kahn: The Power of Architecture” opened at the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI) in Rotterdam. The exhibition features drawings, sketches, photographs, watercolors, film material, and scale models by Kahn in an effort to show a broad public how important architecture can be for society.

Kahn is recognized for the significance of a number of his designs. These include built and unbuilt, institutional buildings, public housing projects, and private residences both in the United States and abroad. There are a group of buildings that have come to be recognized by scholars and critics as his key projects that are accepted as his most important works. Chronologically, this grouping consists of: Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut (1951-1953), Jewish Community Center (“Trenton Bath House”), Ewing Township, New Jersey (1954-1959), Richards and Goddard Buildings, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1957-1965), Margaret Esherick House, Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania (1959- 1962), Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla, California (1959-1965), Dr. and Mrs. Norman Fisher House, Hatboro, Pennsylvania (1960-1967), the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, India (1962-1974), Sher-e-Bangla Nagar/Capitol of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh (1962-1983, completed by David Wisdom & Associates), Library and Dining Hall, Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, New Hampshire (1965-1972), Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas (1966-1972), Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut (1969-1974, completed by Pellechia and Meyers), and Mr. and Mrs. Steven Korman House, Fort Washington, Pennsylvania (1971-1973).

<sup>114</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Principles of Modern Architecture* (London: Papadakis, 2000), 44.

<sup>115</sup> Curtis, *Modern Architecture*, 641.

<sup>116</sup> “About the Park,” FDR Four Freedoms Park, accessed December 15, 2012, <http://www.fdrfourfreedomspark.org/pages/about-the-park>.

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Kahn received numerous honors and awards over the course of his career. In 1953, he was elected as a Fellow in the American Institute of Architects (AIA). He received the Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize from the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1960, and in 1962, he was made a member. In 1973, AIA awarded him the Gold Medal for Architecture. He was made a Fellow of The American Academy of Sciences in 1968. In 1970, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Arts, London. In 1971, he was awarded the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects, and in that same year, he was made a member of the Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1972, he was awarded the Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects. In 1973, he was awarded the Gold Medal for Architecture from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. He was also bestowed honorary degrees from many institutions of higher learning, including, the University of Pennsylvania, Bard College, Yale University, and Columbia University. Posthumous honors include receiving the Furness Prize from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1977, the AIA Twenty-Five-Year Award for the Yale University Art Gallery in 1979, and the Aga Khan Award for Architecture for the National Assembly Building in 1989.

### **Kahn's Residential Architecture**

Kahn designed houses over the course of his entire career. Of the two-dozen houses Kahn designed from 1942 to 1973, nine were constructed, all of which are located in the Philadelphia region. This total does not include his unbuilt early housing projects, or any of his many renovations and additions. In studying Kahn's house designs, a number of core themes emerge and the foundation of Kahn's essential architectural principles are revealed. His house designs allowed him to experiment with ideas and isolate concepts that he applied in the development of his later monumental works. Kahn's house designs gave him the opportunity to explore geometric relationships, the juxtaposition of materials, and the role of landscape in his architecture.<sup>117</sup> He put equal effort into his houses as he did his monumental buildings, and a serious examination reveals that they are every bit as refined and thoughtfully engaged. His house designs often spoke before his larger commissions did, to the issues that stirred him as an architect and made him a singularly revered figure in the history of modern architecture.<sup>118</sup> Less studied than his better-known buildings, the influence and understanding of Kahn's house designs has only grown over time.

Kahn was inspired by his clients and transformed their desires into built form, often completing many of his commissions with designs for their interiors and furnishings.<sup>119</sup> Kahn's houses were designed not for the admiration of other architects or critics, but as structures meant for the fulfillment of the people who lived in them.<sup>120</sup> They are the result of Kahn's conception of a suitable space to unite a family. He also had to take into consideration their suburban locales and respond to the thoughtful implantation of each on its site. His houses typically stand out from surrounding houses in their lack of ostentation and rejection of symbolic signs of domesticity.<sup>121</sup>

During the 1940s and early 1950s, Kahn was developing an understanding of the planning principles of modernism. In his early house designs he adopted binuclear plans with free-flowing space, a design characteristic of the early forties. The Morton and Lenore Weiss House, East Norristown Township,

<sup>117</sup> Wiseman, *Beyond Time and Style*, 116.

<sup>118</sup> Marcus and Whitaker, *Houses*, 2.

<sup>119</sup> Marcus and Whitaker, *Houses*, 3.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>121</sup> Maniaque, "House, A House, Home," 15.

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Pennsylvania (1947-1950) is located on a sloping site with a view of the countryside. Constructed of raw stone, wood, and glass, the contrasting materials evoke traditional Pennsylvania barns and serve as both a color palette and construction technique.<sup>122</sup> The house is made up of three poles comprised of daytime and nighttime wings as well as a service area that incorporates the garage. Both privacy and the quality of light are carefully regulated through over-scaled double-hung windows with alternating glazed and opaque sashes. The Samuel and Ruth Genel House, Wynnewood, Pennsylvania (1948-1951) is a binuclear house in an asymmetrical arrangement that separates activities into distinct functional areas for sleeping versus living, children versus adults, and noise versus quiet.<sup>123</sup> This separation of space foreshadows his "pavilion plans" of the mid-1950s.

In 1952, his approach to residential design radically evolved, as he began to reject free-flowing space and started to study the spatial unit. His designs looked to an internal generation of forms and realized the room as the fundamental unit of architecture. This evolved into repeatable square "units" organized around a functional hierarchy as the central component of his designs. He differentiated the primary areas from the secondary, labeling them "served" and "servant" spaces. The repetitive square unit was at the core of his designs for the H. Leonard and Barbara Fruchter House, New Rochelle, New York (1951-1954, unbuilt), the Francis H. and Marti Adler House, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1954-1955), and the Weber Gerharte and Eleanor Brooks DeVore House, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania (1954-1955). These plans incorporated pavilions supported by columns, with the spaces between the columns taking on a functional role of housing the servant spaces: closets, kitchens, bathrooms, and stairways.<sup>124</sup>

In the mid-fifties, Kahn's house designs began to incorporate a central patio area surrounded by smaller square units. This clustering occurs in the Fred E. and Elaine Cox Clever House, Cherry Hill, New Jersey (1957-1962) and the M. Morton and Mitzi Goldenberg House, Rydal, Pennsylvania (1959, unbuilt). He expands upon this central patio area in the designs for his monumental Phillips Exeter Library, Exeter, New Hampshire (1965-72) and the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut (1969-1974). The Bernard and Norma Shapiro House, Narberth, Pennsylvania (1956-1962) is a symmetrical plan divided into two hip-roofed pavilions, much like the Trenton Bath House.

In 1959, with the Margaret Esherick House, Kahn began to incorporate natural light as a primary strategy for unifying a diverse group of rooms. As in his public buildings, Kahn carefully considered how light enters the house and the experience of the transformation of the light from day to day and through the seasons. Here he also had the realization that rooms no longer needed to be expressed as individual pavilions, and that the plan can be reunified so that each room has its own sensibility of natural light. The Esherick House is an orthogonal stucco building with rusticated woodwork laid out in a single square unit, organized in bands of two rooms separated by a central stairway. On the entrance façade is a large T-shaped keyhole opening that allows for both the entry of light as well as offering an inconspicuous view of the outside. This window is part of an integrated system of operable wooden-framed windows with adjustable shutters. Like the First Unitarian Church, Rochester, New York (1959-1962), the Esherick House is another of Kahn's designs that incorporate light modulation systems. Both also incorporate bookcases and window seats built into the walls. The Fisher House comes at the end of this cycle of

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 13.

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experimentation where his worldview of architecture truly achieved full maturity. This house beautifully embodies the idea that the plan is a society of rooms, brought together in natural light. The plan maintains a radical sensibility that is very human and engaging as well as being very abstract and challenging.

The Steven and Toby Korman House, Fort Washington, Pennsylvania (1971-1973) is a large two-story volume, organized in a binuclear division and laid out in a grid plan. Located on a sprawling seventy-acre parcel of land in an affluent community, this house presents a sequence of formal relationships—tall and short, solid and void, axial—to convey functional and experiential qualities.<sup>125</sup> The principle volume is cypress-clad and contains the living and sleeping areas. Chimneys, bathrooms, kitchen, and garage are additive in nature and clearly secondary elements.<sup>126</sup> The interior is of highly refined red oak and rough sawn Douglas fir with large expanses of fixed glass that capture the changing qualities of light and reveal the surrounding landscape.

### Residential Modernism

The design of private residences experienced a conversion to Modernism in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The majority of early modern homes were constructed just before World War II and were primarily located on the West Coast. These early examples were typically constructed of wood, often with sloping roofs. Examples include a compact house in Fellowship Park, Los Angeles, built in 1935, by Harwell Hamilton Harris, the restrained Aubrey R. Watzek house, built in 1937 in Portland, Oregon, by John Yeon; and the Dunsmuir Apartment Flats, in Los Angeles, built in 1939, by Gregory Ain.<sup>127</sup> Following the war, John Entenza's Arts and Architecture magazine encouraged more progressive house designs and worked with architects including Richard Neutra, Eero Saarinen, and Charles Eames on "case study houses" built in 1945 and subsequently published in the magazine.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Walter Gropius—considered to be the masters of European Modern architecture—had emigrated to the United States prior to the start of the Second World War and each took positions teaching architecture at prominent American universities. The 1932 International Exhibition of Modern Architecture held at the Museum of Modern Art had announced the arrival of their "International Style" of architecture to the United States. This style was characterized by its rejection of historical styles and its focus on pure utilitarian functionalism, its emphasis on enclosed spatial volumes, its utilization of smooth industrial finishes (namely metals and glass), its elimination of applied ornament, and its open, non-symmetrical, non-axial plans.<sup>128</sup>

By the mid-1940s, the International Style was being questioned for its lack of monumentality, initially by architectural historian Sigfried Giedion in his influential essay "Nine Points on Monumentality." Kahn, in an essay entitled "Monumentality," from the 1944 book *New Architecture and City Planning*, also addressed this absence. Here, Kahn addressed the spiritual aspects of monumentality and the importance of incorporation of the past in order to create work for the future, stating "We dare not discard the lessons these buildings teach, for they have the common characteristics of greatness upon

<sup>125</sup> William Whitaker, "Houses by Louis I. Kahn: Korman House," *Architecture and Urbanism* 461 (2009): 156.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Roth, *American Architecture*, 427.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 360.

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which the buildings of our future must, in one sense or another, rely.”<sup>129</sup> Kahn proposed that the genesis for monumental architecture could be discovered in historic motifs and then made modern by the application of technology.<sup>130</sup>

In the early 1950s, *Architectural Record* declared that a “revolution” was taking place in American architecture. Domestic design and Modernist architectural principles had merged and the elegant houses of a lightweight appearance with walls of glass opening to the outside had been deemed the way of the future. *House & Home Magazine* was first published in 1952 and was the flagship publication contributing to the mass marketing of “Good-Life Modernism” or domestic architecture that promised a “better way of life,” and panning the mass-produced ranch-style houses of Levittown and similar developments. Created as platforms for the construction industry, banking establishments, architectural schools and museums, magazines such as *House & Home* facilitated the thrust of domestic modernist aesthetics into the American suburban consciousness. The highly lucrative post-war housing market was ripe for the picking, and the American public was being sold a good life in a Modern home.

In order to avoid the appearance of alienating the middle class, however, Modernist architectural ideology was masked by pragmatism. Instead of lengthy explanations on form and design, they were given common sense articles about how a new modern home could solve problems. An illustration from the September 1954 issue of *House & Home* entitled, “Good Living Rooms Must Solve Special Problems” stated, “In a good living room you do not have to move furniture around every time you want to look at your favorite TV program or watch the fire, or look out of the window. In a good living room, these three views are all visible within a 90’ arc from wherever you sit.”<sup>131</sup> The houses that were being touted to the masses featured all of the standard Modernist architectural elements. They typically included large expanses of glass that allowed for an air of spaciousness and a connection to the outdoors. The interior would characteristically have an oversized stone or brick fireplace, minimal ornamentation, and uncluttered living rooms. The flow of space emphasized “zones” rather than rooms and magazines lavished attention on open living areas.<sup>132</sup> The marketing of this new housing style spoke directly to the suburban middle-class.

The builders who took over Modernist theory and practice from the architects in the 1950s are credited with the mass production of Modern homes. Modernism endorsed standardization, and speculative builders could now generate instant subdivisions indistinguishable from each other.<sup>133</sup> Between 1950 and 1960 more than thirteen million dwelling units went up – eleven million of them in the suburbs, which grew six times faster than the cities.<sup>134</sup> As large developments like Levittown sprung up across suburban America, Modern residential design was slowly being accepted into the cultural zeitgeist. Architects and builders of Modern residential architecture often had to dissuade clients looking for a traditional house.

<sup>129</sup> Louis I. Kahn, “Monumentality,” Twombly, 23.

<sup>130</sup> Brownlee and De Long, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, 43.

<sup>131</sup> Mark Jarzombek, “‘Good-Life Modernism’ and Beyond - The American House in the 1950s and 1960s: A Commentary,” *The Cornell Journal of Architecture* 4 (Fall 1990): 82.

<sup>132</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, *Modern Architectures in History: USA*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 168.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-172.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

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Soon after the Modernist aesthetic began being mass-produced and reaching into the suburbs, it began to be challenged by architects who rejected its domestication. Mies van der Rohe's house for Edith Farnsworth was designed and built between 1945 and 1951, on a rural site in Plano, Illinois. The site was remote and surrounded by trees, allowing the walls to be made entirely of glass with steel structural members. It was raised off the ground and sandwiched between a white concrete floor slab and flat white ceiling slab. Philip Johnson built a similar house in New Canaan, Connecticut in 1949, only his Glass House was sited on the ground and the steel supports and ceiling slab were black. Mies' Farnsworth House and Johnson's Glass House were two of the earliest houses to challenge and redefine the idea of domesticity through their exaggerated conceptual purity, meant to cleanse the house of banal domesticity. Both of these houses were ideological concepts expressing design ideals, examples of "form follows form" and not houses built to live in comfortably. These houses put forth challenges to the stereotypes that were now readily apparent in Modernist American residences.

The Glass House and Farnsworth House were not full-fledged alternatives to Good-Life Modernism; they served as private essays that suited the unique vision of their designers.<sup>135</sup> Modernist housing came under widespread attack in the 1960s, condemned as callous and cold or gaudy and 'plastic.'<sup>136</sup> Sometimes identified as the "death of Modernism," it was simply a return to a consideration of context and history in architecture. Louis Kahn was one of the architects who were rethinking domestic design. His plan for the DeVore House puts forth a simple plan of six eighteen-foot boxes whose placement relative to one another is the only indication of its function as a residence. This is an analytical study of domestic space, which functions as an amalgamation of smaller houses. Many of Kahn's designs for both monumental and residential works question the fundamental principles of Modernism. Other architects who were challenging Modernism at this time were Peter Eisenman's House II, Hardwick, Vermont, (1969) and Robert Venturi's Vanna Venturi House, Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania (1962-9164). Modernism was facing resistance from around the world, but it was Philadelphia's architects of the 1960s and 1970s who were challenging Modernism through their built works. These architects and their work form an exceptional case study of one of the most significant periods of twentieth-century architecture.

In April 1961, the magazine *Progressive Architecture* defined the "Philadelphia School" of architects, a progressive-minded group of designers working in postwar Philadelphia. This group included Louis I. Kahn, Robert Venturi, Robert Geddes, and Ronaldo Giurgola, and was credited as "a new design movement with a powerful ideology and a clearly defined design approach."<sup>137</sup> Many of the buildings that this group produced in Philadelphia are nationally and/or internationally significant. A concern for context and history was a keynote of the Philadelphia School, due in part to their geographic location, amidst 250 years of tangibly preserved history. A common theme of these architects was the Modernist homes they designed in the Philadelphia suburbs and their desire to tie the design of the house into its natural surroundings.

### **Context – Early Philadelphia suburbs**

The growth of Philadelphia's early suburban neighborhoods is due in large part to the introduction of the streetcar and the railroad namely the "Main Line" of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which ran northwest

<sup>135</sup> Jarzombek, "'Good-Life Modernism' and Beyond," 87.

<sup>136</sup> Wright, *Modern Architectures*, 7.

<sup>137</sup> Jan C. Rowan, "Wanting to Be: The Philadelphia School," *Progressive Architecture* 42 (April 1961): 132.

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from downtown Philadelphia. During the 1850s and 1860s Philadelphia was growing and expanding out into the rural areas surrounding the city, creating some of the earliest "streetcar suburbs" in the U.S. This development of communities just outside of the city was encouraged by the building of train stations along the area of the track closest to the city. The Main Line commuter service of 1873 brought the grand estates of the hinterland in closer contact with the city center.<sup>138</sup> The picturesque landscape with convenient transportation into the city attracted Philadelphia's social elite to build their country estates in the areas along the train line, just outside of the city center. Initially these families maintained both city and country houses, but by the early twentieth-century, their relocation to the early Philadelphia suburbs initiated the trend of suburbanization.

The Chestnut Hill Railroad opened in 1854, fueling development in the area and leading to the establishment of one of the best collections of nineteenth- and twentieth-century architect-designed residential buildings in the country. Located in the northwest corner of Philadelphia, approximately twelve miles from the city center, Chestnut Hill is a distinctive residential neighborhood that has evolved over nearly three centuries. It serves as a rare assemblage of nearly all of the residential styles found in the region, and represents the work of nearly every major Philadelphia architect or architectural firm.<sup>139</sup> Noted architects Samuel Sloan, G.W. and W.D. Hewitt, Wilson Eyre, and Horace Trumbauer each have work represented here. In the early twentieth century the firm of Mellor, Meigs & Howe specialized in building houses in Chestnut Hill. In the mid-twentieth century, the area's tradition of residential design excellence continued as residences were being commissioned by such internationally renowned modern architects as Robert Venturi, Richard Neutra, Mitchell/Giurgola, and of course, Louis I. Kahn.

### **Context - Postwar Suburbs**

The modern American suburb was born following World War II as renewal and expansion programs were created in part to meet the housing needs of the returning servicemen and women and their families. The development and growth of the postwar suburbs can be attributed to the mass-production of automobiles and accompanying postwar highway programs. These factors provided Americans working in cities the choice of moving their family away from the city and into the suburbs. Beginning in 1946, the Pennsylvania Department of Highways began making grants to all Pennsylvania cities and boroughs to improve local streets and build express highways in and around urban centers. The Federal-Aid Highway Act was enacted in 1956 and authorized twenty-five billion dollars for the construction of 41,000 miles of the interstate highway system. The explosion in vehicular traffic that followed resulted in rapid development on the outskirts of cities and accelerated suburbanization. Between 1945 and 1960, over one-and-a-half million housing units were built in Pennsylvania, thereby doubling the state's housing stock. Montgomery County grew by 20% during the 1950s, and during the 1960s, grew by 17%, representing the largest percentage growth of any county in Pennsylvania.

### **Comparisons**

There are several examples of modern suburban Philadelphia residences designed by internationally prominent architects. Richard Neutra, celebrated for sleek International Style houses on the west coast, is also known for his work on the Hassrick House in 1958 in the Philadelphia suburb of East Falls.

<sup>138</sup> Walter Kidney, "Philadelphia Architecture Before Kahn: From Sodhouses to PSFS," *Progressive Architecture* (April 1976): 56.

<sup>139</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Chestnut Hill Historic District, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, National Register #85001334.

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Kenneth Hassrick, a local avant-garde metal sculptor, commissioned architect Neutra to design a one-story concrete block house with a garage on the wooded plot of land his wife had inherited along Cherry Lane, on a ridge overlooking the Schuylkill River.<sup>140</sup> The house has a plan typical of Neutra's southern California houses, with an open interior that combined an open kitchen with the living room, dividing these functions by a suspended kitchen cabinet. The exterior of the house is also typical of Neutra's southern California houses, featuring a flat roof and large exuberant expanses of glass that open the house up to the outside. One such opening is the ten-foot-wide floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors in the living room. Thaddeus Longstreth, a student of Neutra's, designed a sculpture studio and two-story welding studio.<sup>141</sup> As one of seven Neutra-designed residences in the region, the Hassrick house is a unique example of Neutra's residential architecture in Philadelphia.

Joel Levinson's Arbor House was designed in 1969 and completed in 1971 and is one of thirty houses in the gated residential community of Latham Park in the Philadelphia suburb of Elkins Park. Like many developments in Philadelphia's suburbs, this area was once a large estate that was later subdivided and turned into a residential development. The Arbor House site was once the sunken garden of one of the original estates of Latham Park. As is common with Modernist homes in Philadelphia's suburbs, the Arbor House stands out as anachronistic, sitting along a row of stone Tudor houses.<sup>142</sup> Designed to be reminiscent of a garden pavilion, the house features nineteen-foot windows in the main living area and cedar lattice wrapped around the upper level to maximize natural light in all rooms except the bathrooms.<sup>143</sup> The house has five bedrooms, all located on the second floor, along with a library and an office overlooking the main living area. There are built-ins throughout the house, including built-in shelving in the master bedroom and a pull-out baking station in the kitchen. The house features outdoor rooms enveloped above by cedar arbors but open to the landscaped one-acre lot at ground level. The use of rustic materials on Arbor House, as well as fine wood detailing and the connection of the interior to the outdoors, reveal the connection between Arbor House and the Fisher House. This is not surprising, given Levinson's statements that he was inspired by Kahn's work.

Constructed in 1964, the Vanna Venturi House (known internationally as "Mother's House") was designed by architect Robert Venturi for his mother and is now considered a classic of contemporary American architecture. It is significant for its fearless re-imagining of Modernism that takes into account the context of historic forms and local context.<sup>144</sup> The plan is based on a symbolic conception rather than upon one that is purely spatially abstract and clearly expresses Venturi's interest in applied

<sup>140</sup> "Hassrick/ Sawyer House," *Preservation Matters* (Philadelphia: Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, Winter 2008), accessed September 1, 2012, [www.preservationalliance.com/files/Winter2008.pdf](http://www.preservationalliance.com/files/Winter2008.pdf).

<sup>141</sup> The date of construction for the welding studio is unknown.

<sup>142</sup> "Philadelphia Home Fall/Winter 2009: Vintage Modern," Philadelphia Home, Fall/Winter 2009, accessed September 1, 2012, <http://www.phillymag.com/articles/philadelphia-home-fall-winter-2009-vintage-modern>.

<sup>143</sup> Mike Powell, "Property Values: What You Get for ... \$675,000," *New York Times*, June 15, 2010, accessed September 1, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/16/realestate/16gh-what.html?\\_r=1&adxnnl=1&ref=realestate&adxnnlx=1341749022-ZsrFlo/7nYc4ldVFBEHbfg](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/16/realestate/16gh-what.html?_r=1&adxnnl=1&ref=realestate&adxnnlx=1341749022-ZsrFlo/7nYc4ldVFBEHbfg).

<sup>144</sup> Malcolm Clendenin, "A Complicated Modernity: Philadelphia Architectural Design 1945-1980," (Philadelphia: Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, 2009), accessed September 1, 2012, <http://www.preservephiladelphia.org/wp-content/uploads/HCSModernism.pdf>.

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decoration, historical references, and the use of traditional elements in a non-traditional manner.<sup>145</sup> Measuring 1800 square feet, the five-room house is dimensionally small in size, but the monumental facade magnifies its scale, with its broken pediment and ornamental appliquéd arch serving as a commentary on the classical system of proportion.<sup>146</sup> The sloping gabled roof of Mother's House is reminiscent of late-nineteenth-century Shingle style architecture, as are the asymmetrically placed windows. The chimney is the primary focal point at the exterior, rising thirty feet high and appearing to split the house in two. Built at essentially the same moment in time, but with different uses of both historic forms as well as materials, the Vanna Venturi and Fisher Houses clearly illustrate two divergent phases of late Modernism in the Philadelphia suburbs.

Designed by Philadelphia architectural firm Mitchell/Giurgola Associates, the Dorothy Shipley White House was constructed in 1963 Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania. With its boxy shape and smooth white exterior walls, it exhibits a close adherence to the characteristics of the International Style. Composed of a series of compartmentalized pavilions, this house's arrangement lends more to aesthetics than having roots in the human condition. An artist and an author, White wanted a home that would provide adequate light for her studio, a place for entertaining, and ample room for her art and antiques collection, while also providing privacy.<sup>147</sup> The light was attained through square clerestory windows located on the elevation of the house that faces away from the road. In addition to providing ample natural light, these high windows also allowed abundant wall space for storage and display of the client's art. The street elevation of the house appears to be a group of simple rectangular volumes, with privacy provided through landscaping. At the interior, the floor plan is open and compositionally, is three cubic spaces that pinwheel around a centralized two-story stair hall with a studio on the second floor. Situated on a knoll overlooking the picturesque Wissahickon Creek, the rear of the house is faced with large glass windows for ample light and unobstructed views, much like the Fisher House.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Vincent Scully, "Robert Venturi's Gentle Architecture," in Christopher Mead, ed., *The Architecture of Robert Venturi* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 11-12. And John Gallery, *Philadelphia Architecture: A Guide to the City* (Philadelphia: Foundation for Architecture, 1994), 117.

<sup>146</sup> Jarzombek, "'Good-Life Modernism' and Beyond," 92.

<sup>147</sup> Alan Jaffe, "Look Up! Chestnut Hill's Modernist Gems," *Plan Philly*, August 16, 2010, accessed September 1, 2012, <http://planphilly.com/look-chestnut-hills-modernist-gems>.

<sup>148</sup> Gallery, *Philadelphia Architecture*, 117-118.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 1.5

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates** (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Latitude: **40.1667007°**

Longitude: **-75.108387°**

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

The Fisher House is located 52' to the northeast of East Mill Road, and the distance from the northernmost corner of the rear of the house to the water's edge is approximately 60'. The house is located 22' from the east property boundary and 28' from the west property boundary. At the front of the property, the house is located 52' from the south property boundary, and at the rear, the house is 520' from the north boundary. See Survey Map (Figure 7).

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Fisher property boundaries were clearly laid out in a property survey conducted in February 1952 by George B. Mebus, a registered professional engineer. Mebus conducted another survey in April 1982 for the subdivision of the property to the northwest of the Fisher House. The original lot was 100' wide and 652' deep. The purchase of the additional lot in 1982 expanded the width of the Fisher's property to 182' facing East Mill Road, and increased the acreage of the site from 1.5 to 2.6 acres. As the period of significance is 1967-1969 and the additional acreage does not contribute to the architectural significance of the nominated property, the 1982 lot is not included within the National Register boundary. The 1982 lot includes an in-ground swimming pool and a shed, neither of which detract from the integrity of the nominated property.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kimber VanSant  
organization: University of Pennsylvania School of Design  
street & number: 4426 Osage Avenue  
city or town: Philadelphia  
state: Pennsylvania zip code: 19104  
e-mail: kimbervansant@gmail.com  
telephone: 215-715-8500  
date: June 12, 2013

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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.)

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**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: **Fisher House**  
City or Vicinity: **Hatboro**  
County: **Montgomery County**  
State: **Pennsylvania**

Photographer: **Tom Crane**  
Date Photographed: **July 2012**  
Number of Photographs: **21**

Number, Description of Photograph, and direction of camera:

- 1 - Northeast elevation of the Fisher House with terrace SW
- 2 - East elevation of sleeping cube, southeast and northeast elevations of living cube N
- 3 - Rear of the Fisher House and sloping yard from the bridge S
- 4 - Bridge over Pennypack Creek N
- 5 - Detail of northeast elevation showing foundation and window details SW
- 6 - West elevation of the sleeping cube showing driveway and walkway details E
- 7 - Main entrance porch on west elevation of the sleeping cube E
- 8 - Entry Hall spanning the length of the first floor of sleeping cube E
- 9 - Master Bedroom - hallway closets and powder area W
- 10 - Master Bedroom - southeast corner window unit E
- 11 - Chimney piece, built-in window seat, and kitchen partition NE
- 12 - Detail of hearth and built-in window seat NE
- 13 - Window unit on southwest wall of the living cube and wet bar SW
- 14 - Living cube showcasing kitchen partition NW
- 15 - Dining Area N
- 16 - Kitchen SE
- 17 - Breakfast table and window unit NW
- 18 - Second floor bedroom (southeast) SE
- 19 - Second floor bedroom (northeast) NE
- 20 - Basement N
- 21 - Rear yard looking towards Pennypack Creek NE

Photographer: **Norman Fisher**  
Date Photographed: **1965, 1966, 1970**  
Number of Photographs: **3**

- 22 - 1965 Foundation N
- 23 - 1966 Architect Louis Kahn standing against northeast elevation N
- 24 - 1970 Dining area W

Photographer: **Leco**  
Date Photographed: **1977**  
Number of Photographs: **1**

- 25 - 1977 Furnished living cube N

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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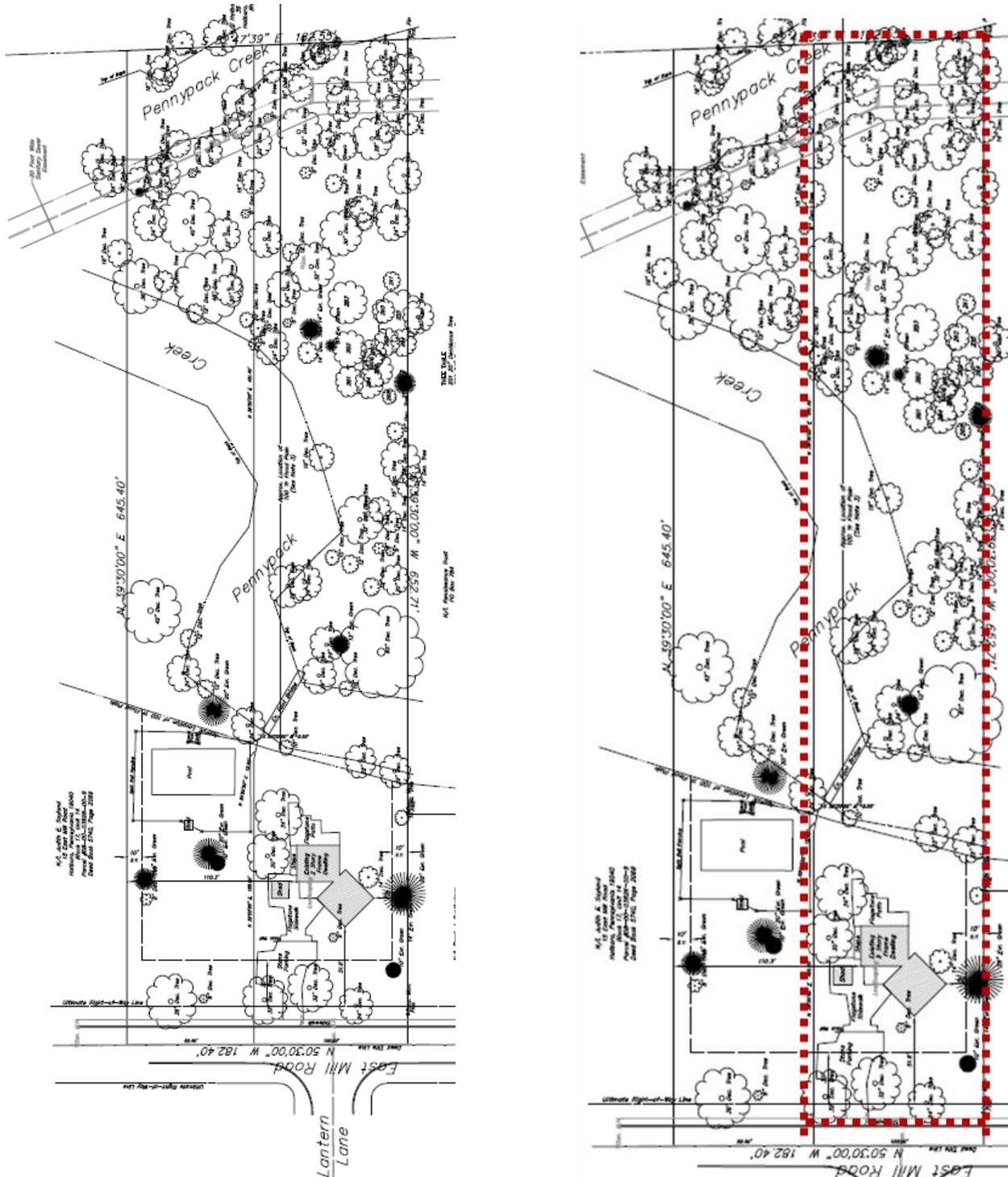


Figure 1. Fisher House Site Plan. Left, showing entire current property, prepared by Tracy Land Services, May 2012; Right detail showing nominated boundary (dash line), which corresponds to original parcel purchased by Fishers.

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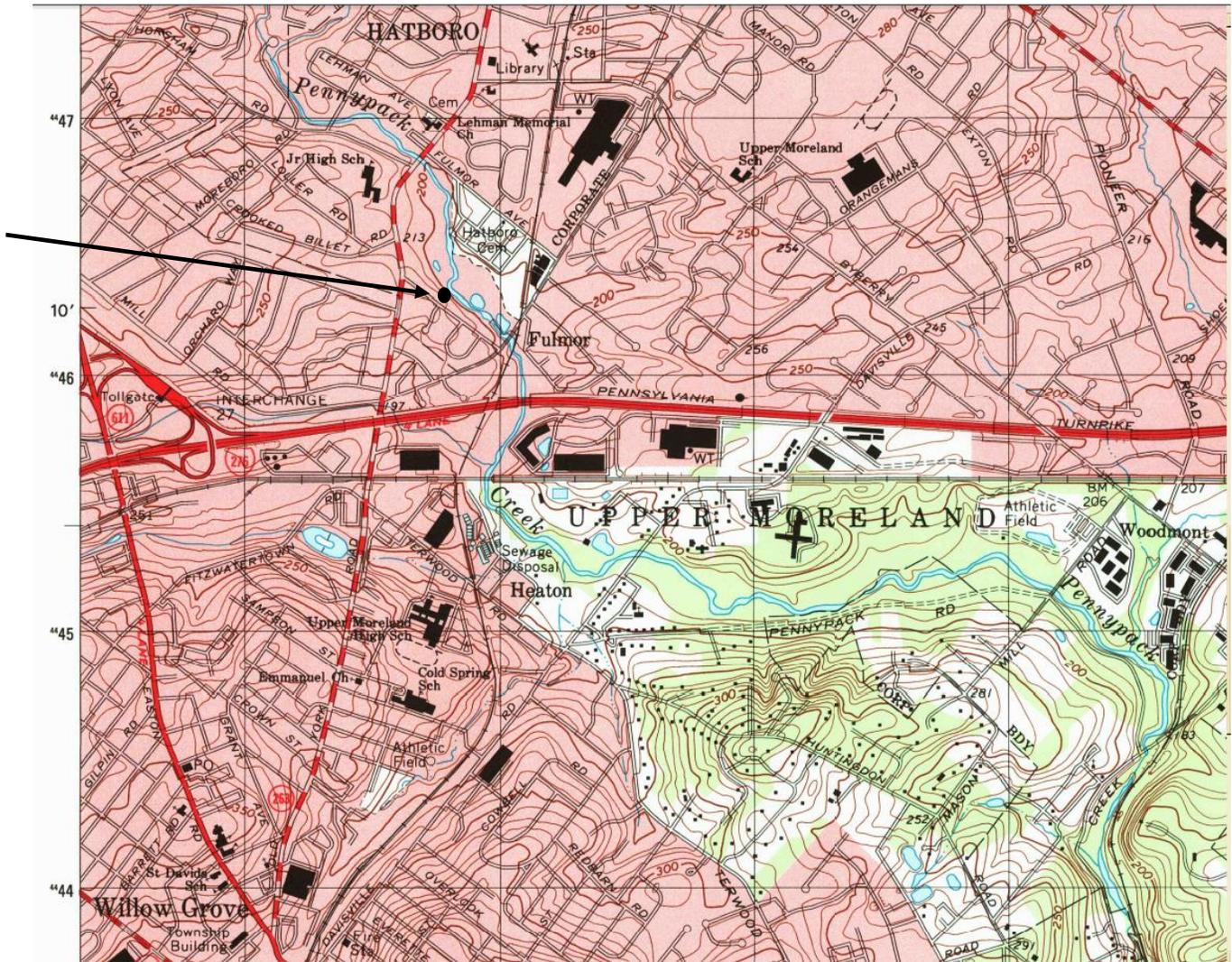


Figure 2. U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Map of Hatboro area, Montgomery Co., PA with an arrow indicating location of the Fisher House. Hatboro Quadrangle.

Latitude: 40.1667007; Longitude: -75.108387

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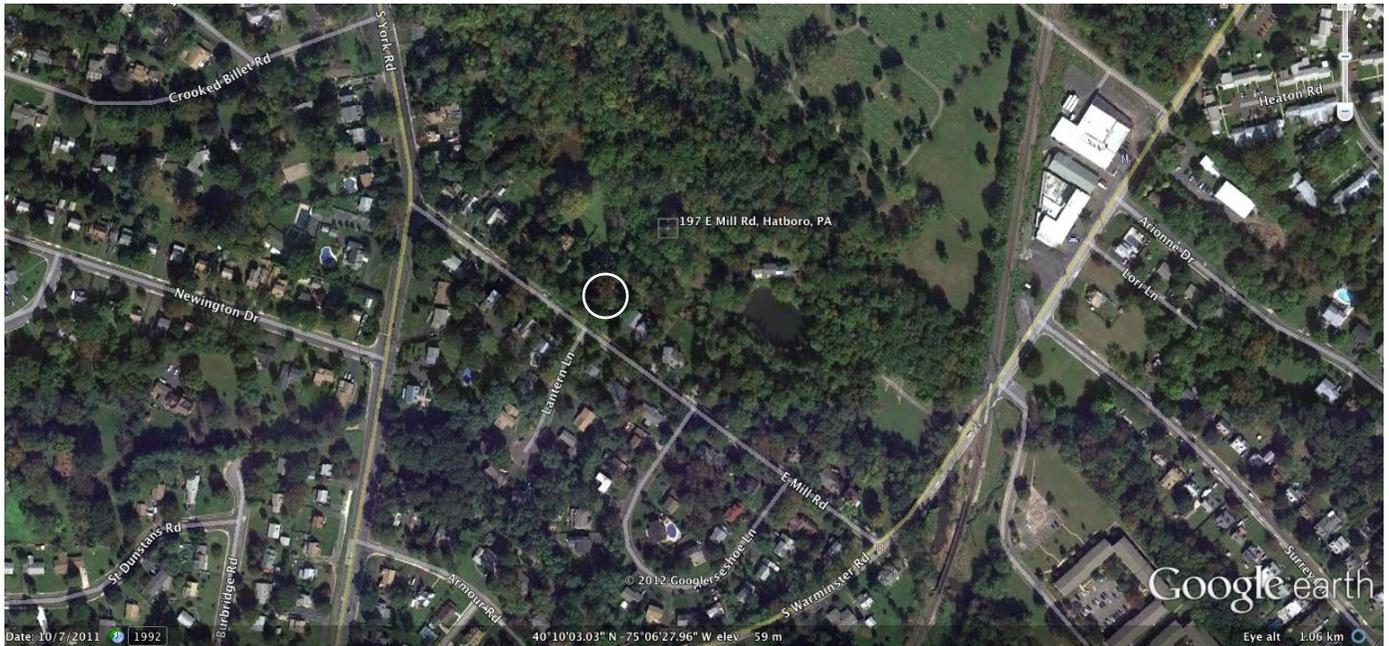
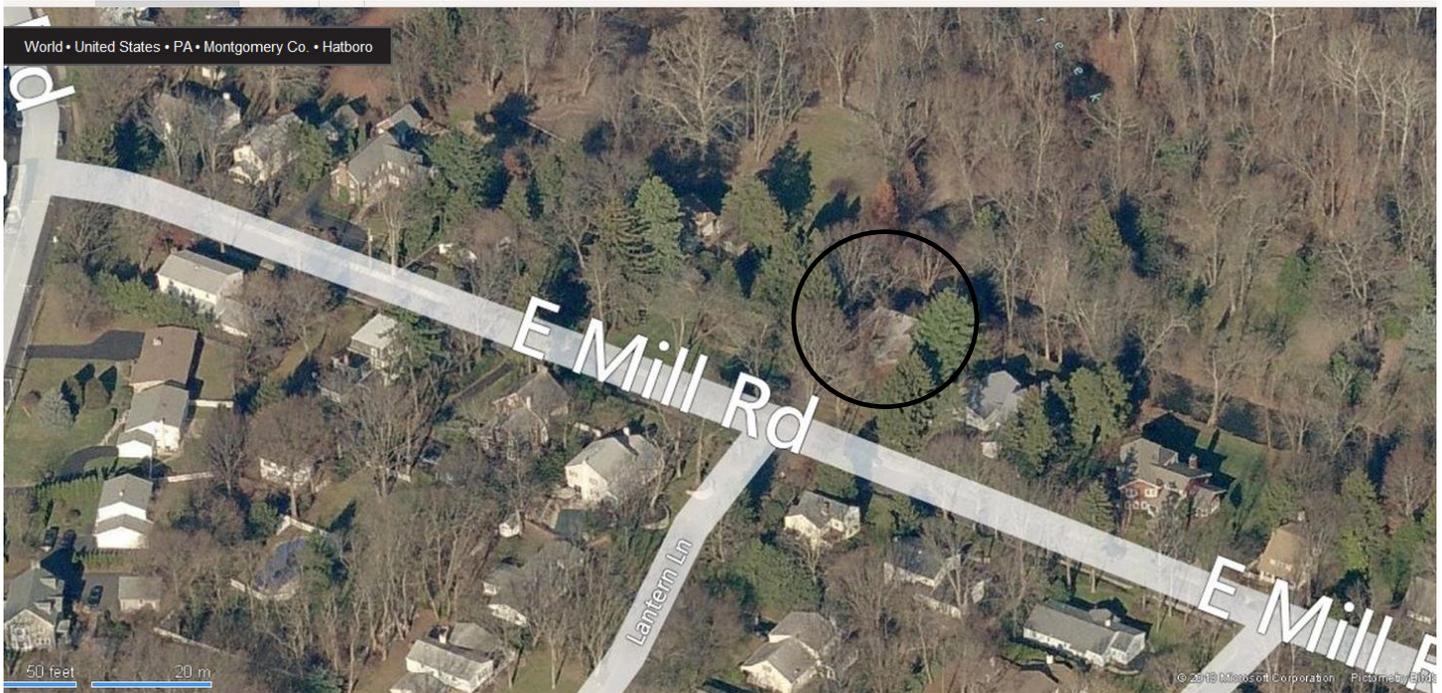


Figure 3. Aerial Maps showing the location of the Fisher House at 197 East Mill Road.

Photograph above courtesy of Google Earth; below courtesy Bing.





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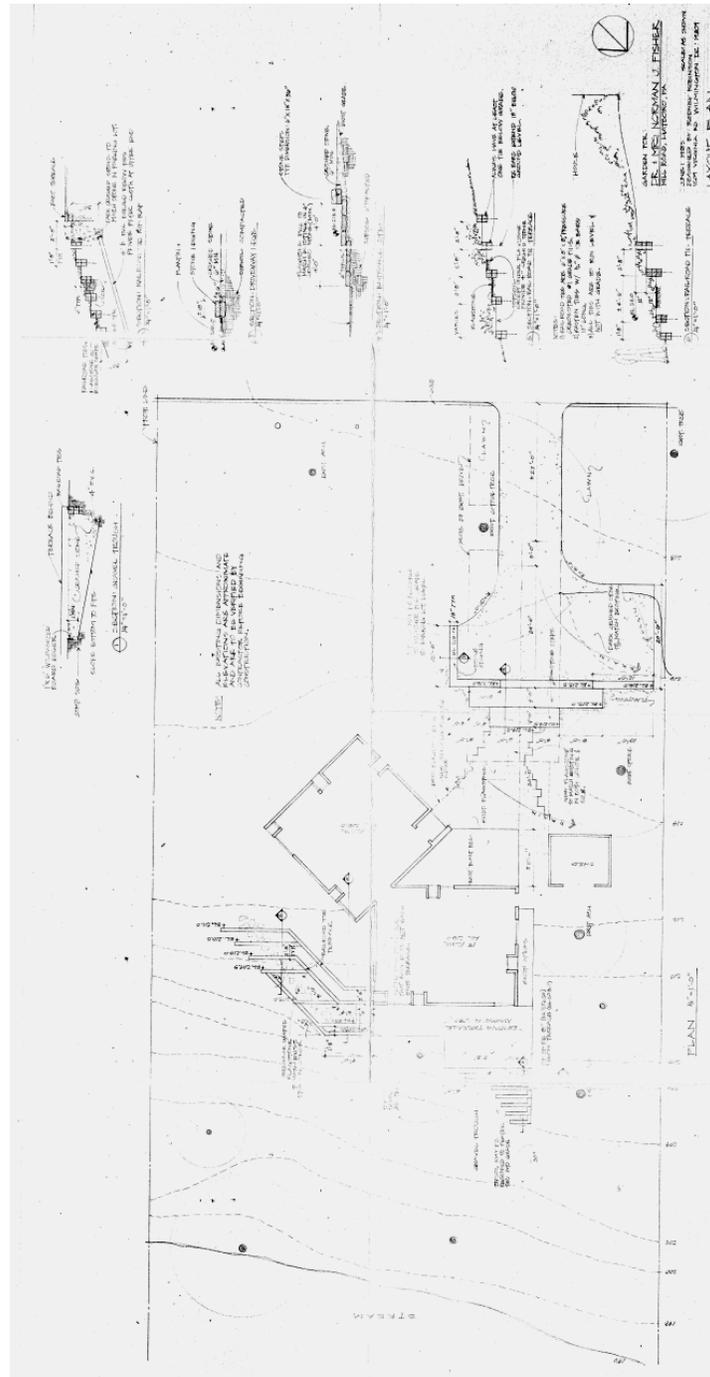


Figure 5. June 1983 Landscape Plan by Rodney Robinson.

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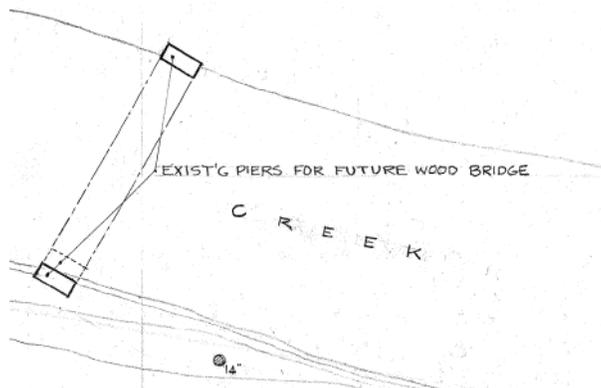
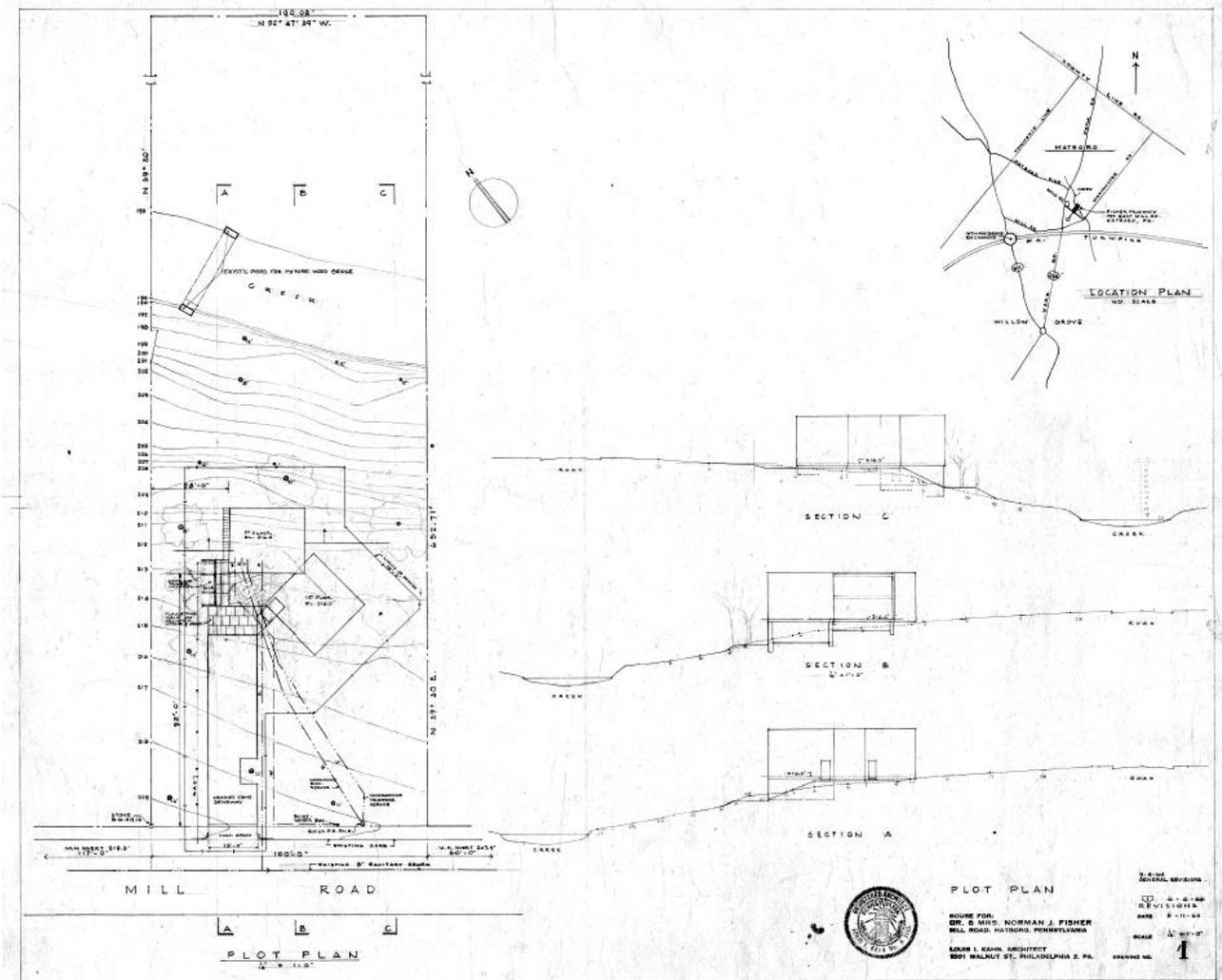


Figure 6. July 1964 Plot Plan by Louis I. Kahn with detail of Bridge, enlarged below.

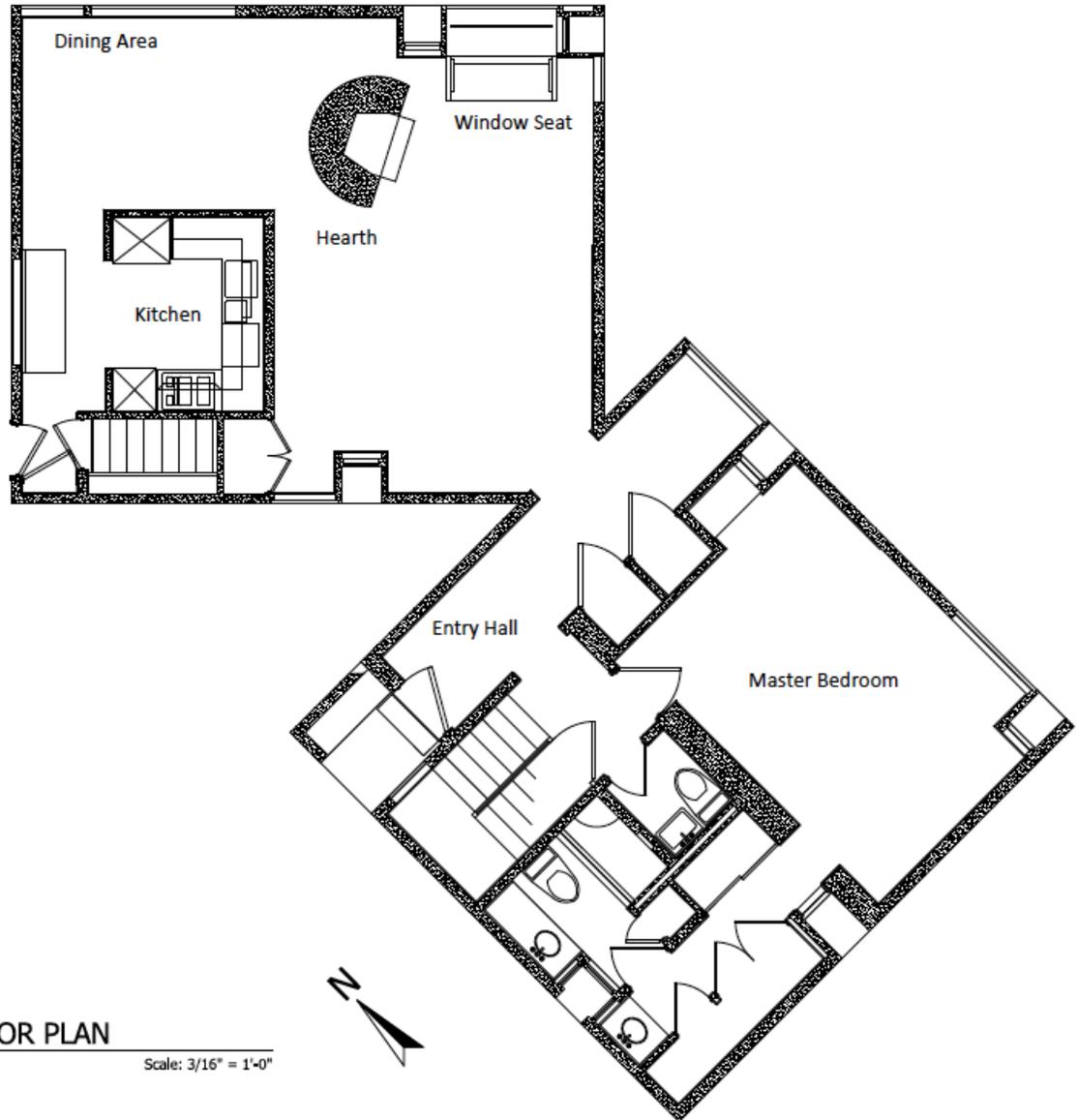
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GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Scale: 3/16" = 1'-0"

Figure 7. Ground/Main Floor Plan of the Fisher House. CAD Drawing provided by Pierson Booher.

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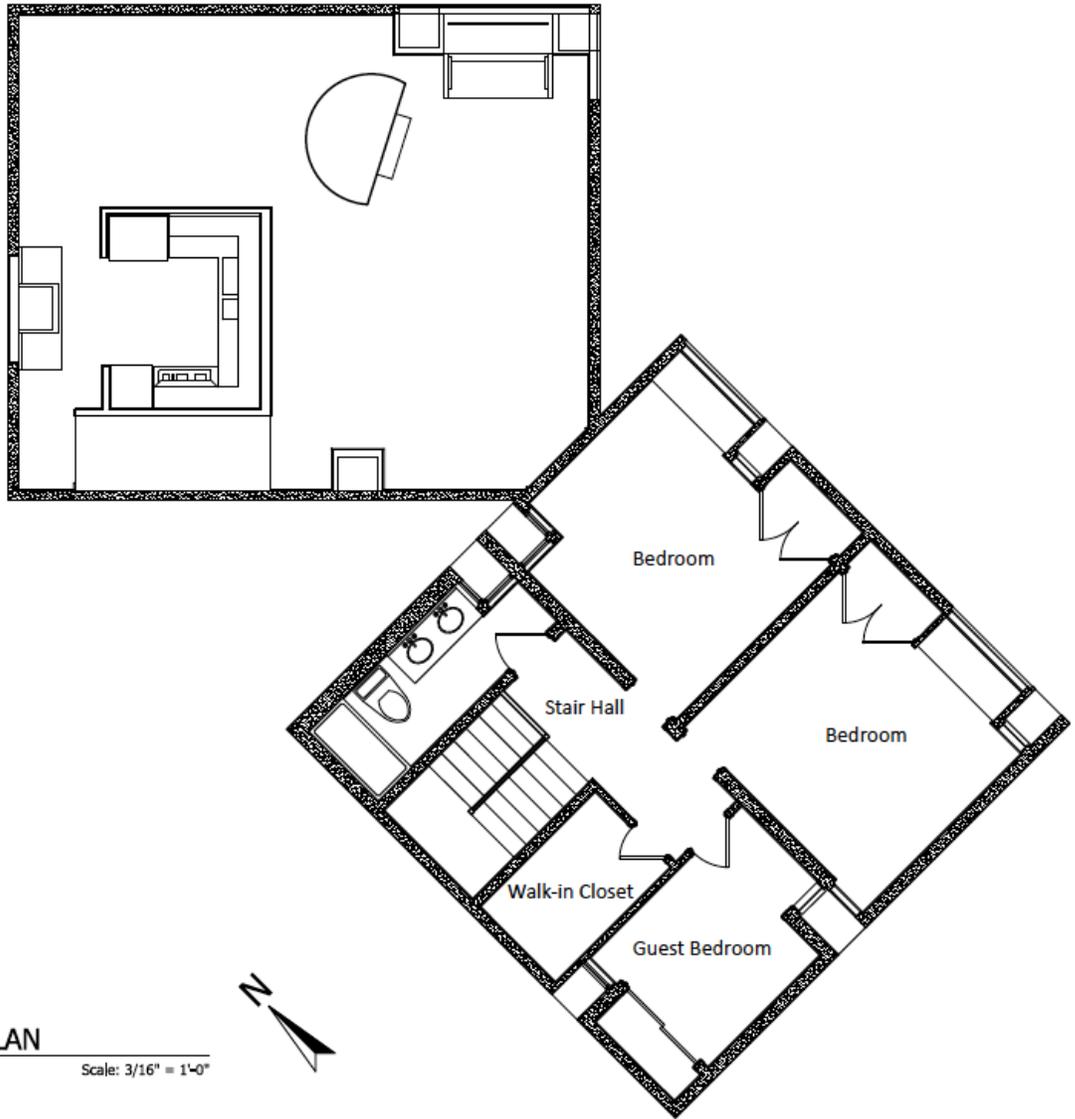
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**SECOND FLOOR PLAN**

Scale: 3/16" = 1'-0"

Figure 8. Second Floor Plan of the Fisher House. CAD Drawing provided by Pierson Booher. (Living Cube is open to Ground/Main Floor.)

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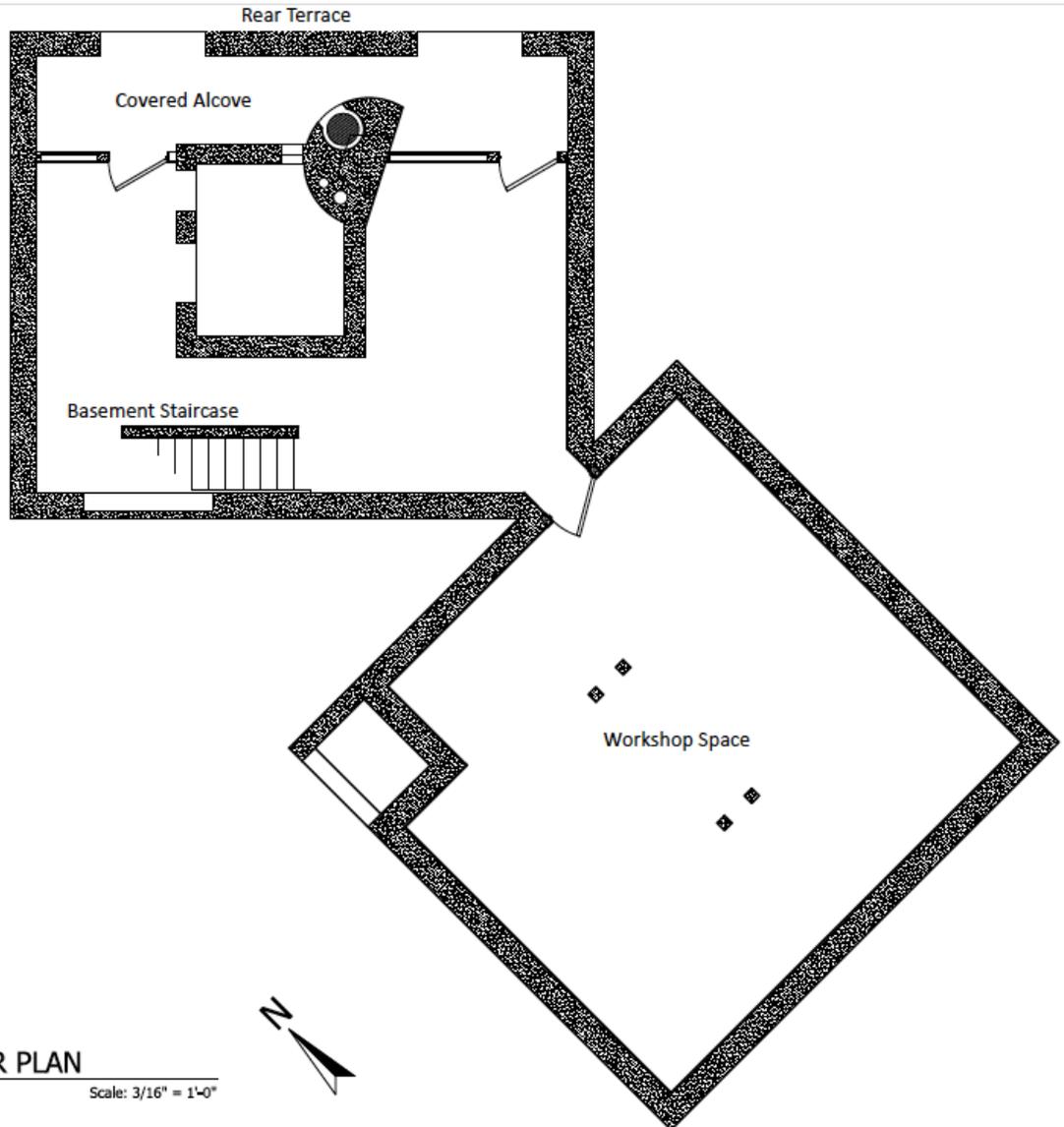


Figure 9. Basement Plan of the Fisher House. CAD Drawing provided by Pierson Booher.

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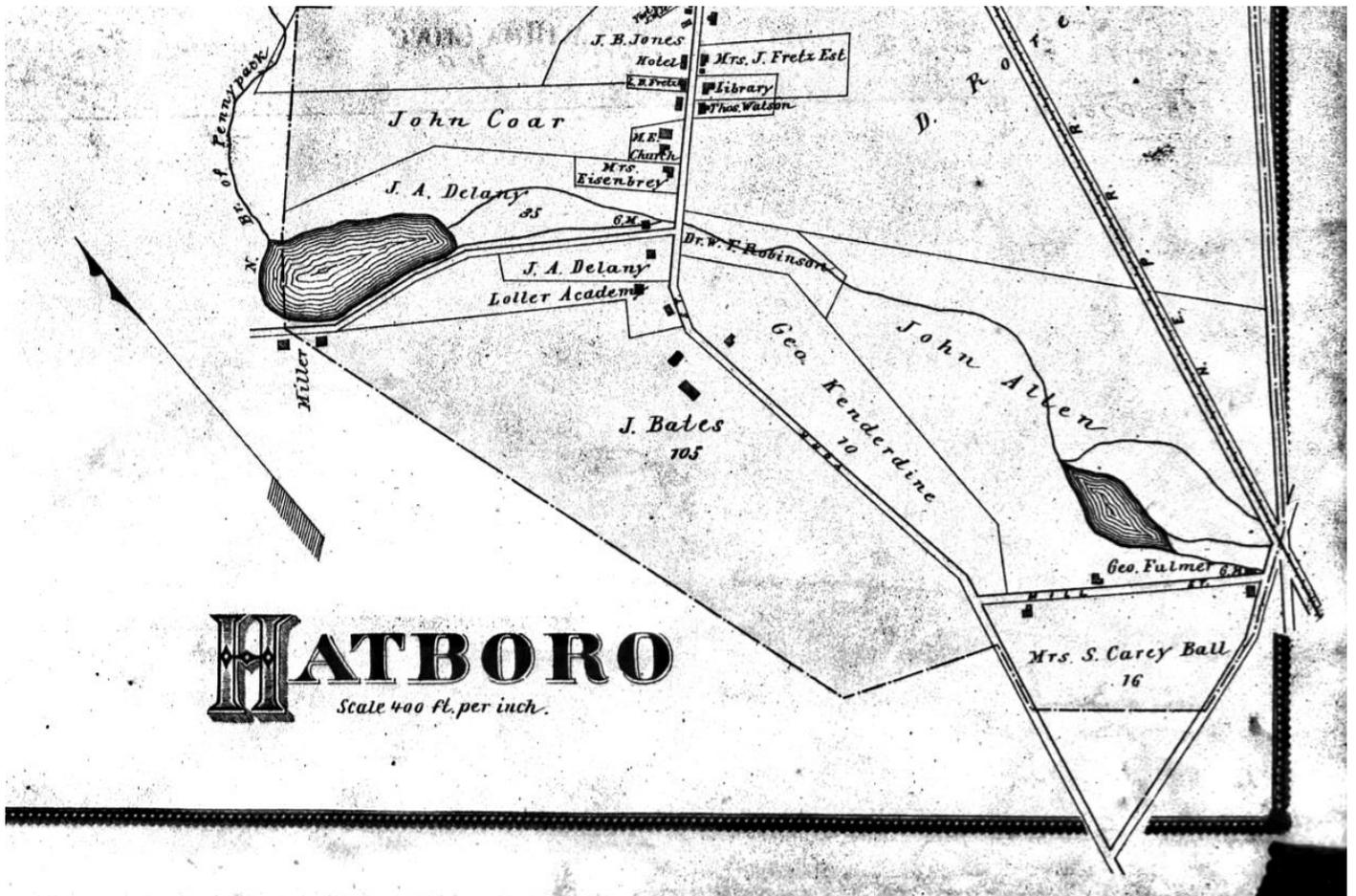


Figure 10. Portion of an 1877 Indexed County Land Ownership Map of Hatboro showing property ownership along Mill Street.

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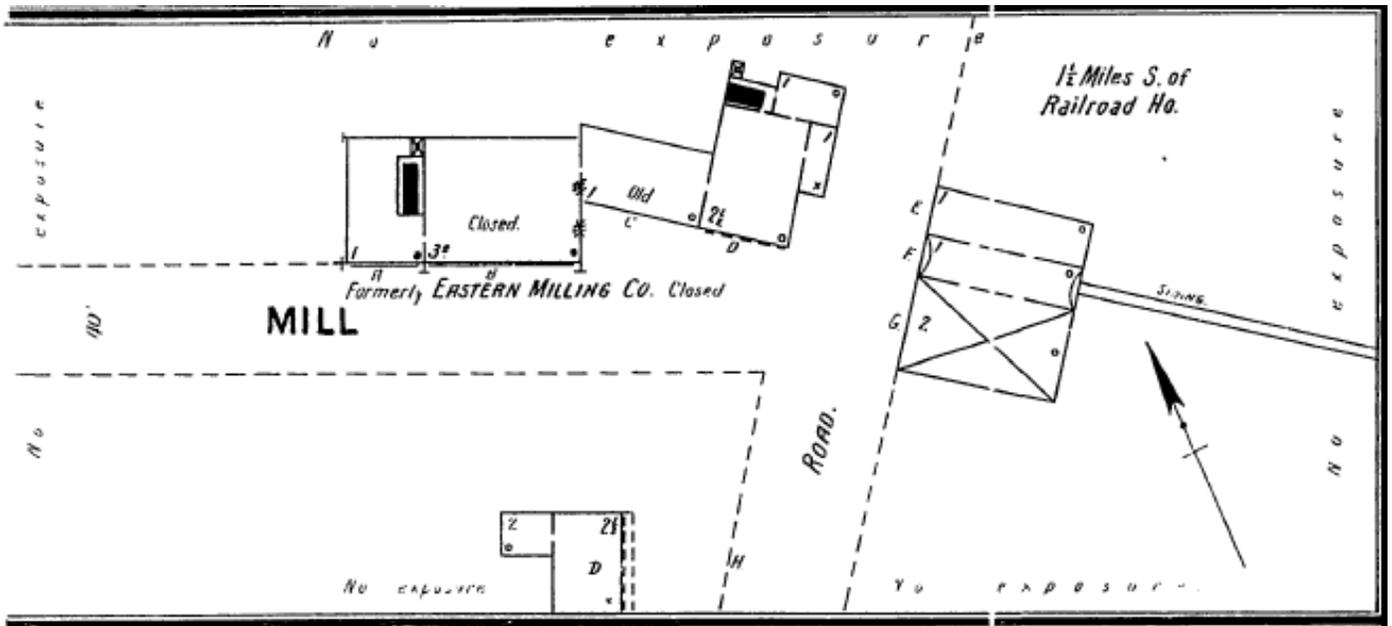


Figure 11. Portion of 1905 Sanborn Map showing site of former Eastern Milling Co. on Mill Road.

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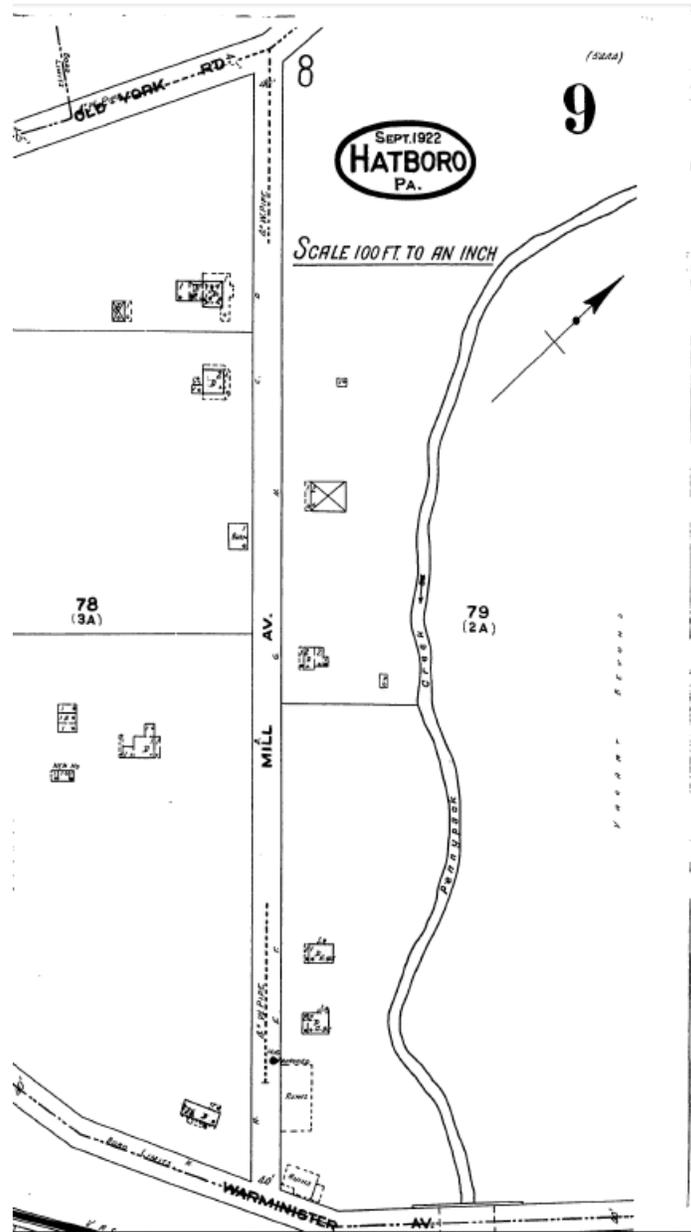


Figure 12. Portion of 1922 Sanborn Map showing site of former Eastern Milling Co. on Mill Road labeled “Ruins.”

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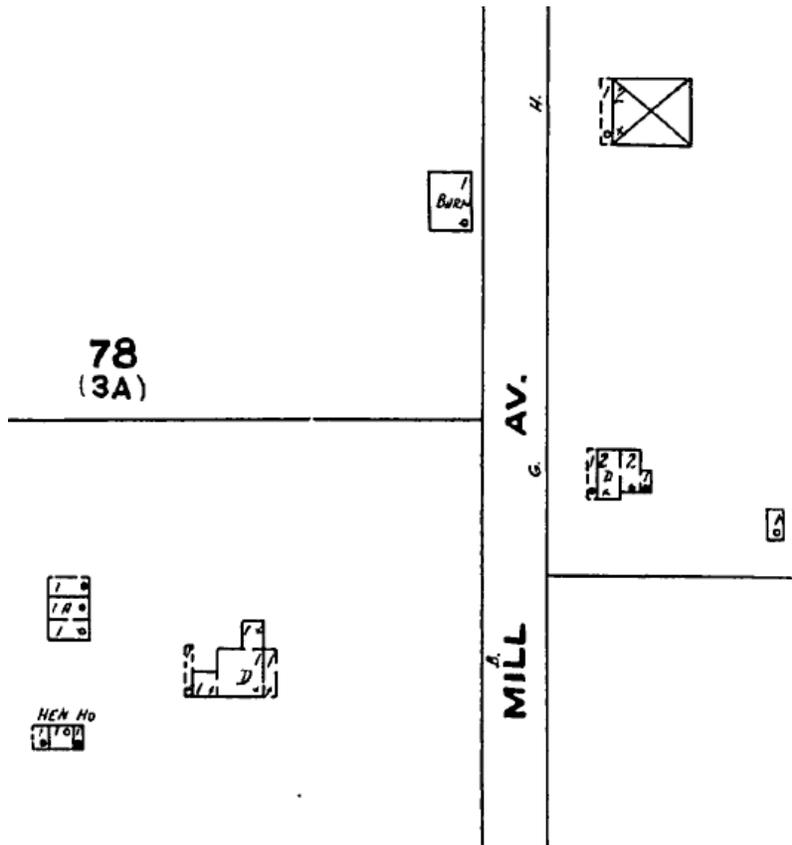


Figure 13. Portion of 1922 Sanborn Map showing location of Barn and “Hen Ho” on Mill Avenue

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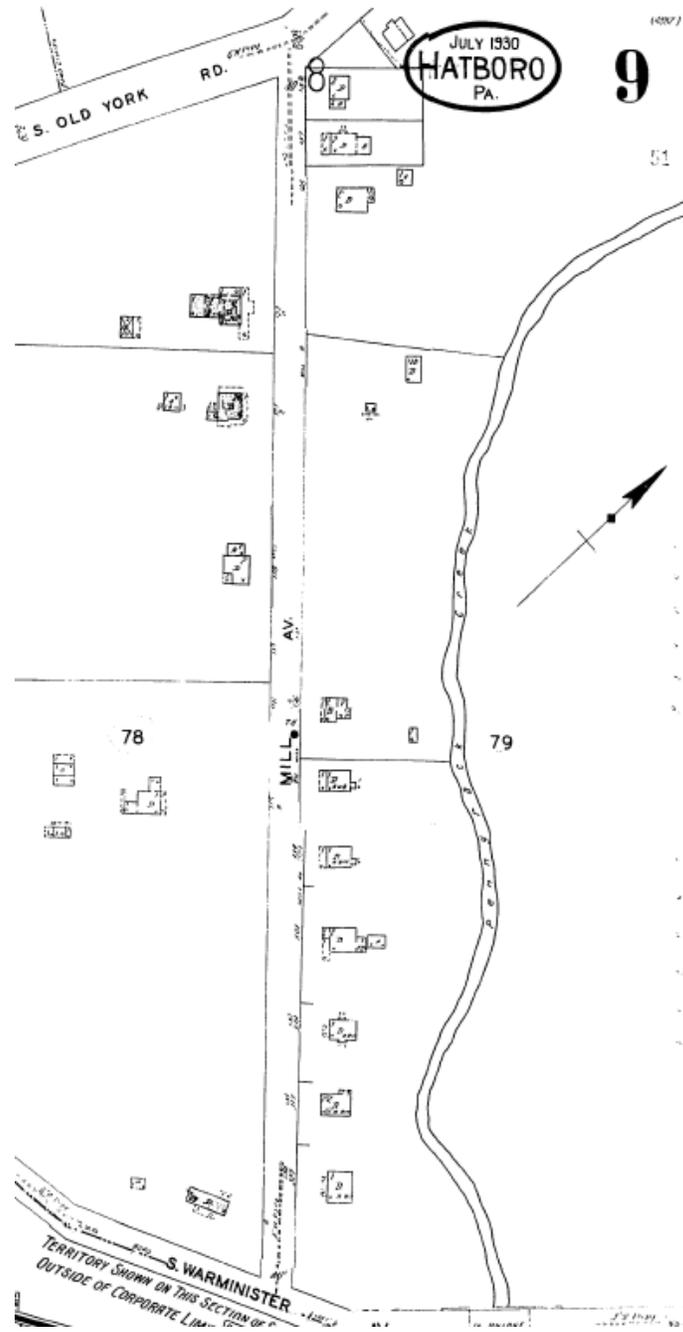


Figure 14. Portion of 1930 Sanborn Map showing early development on Mill Avenue

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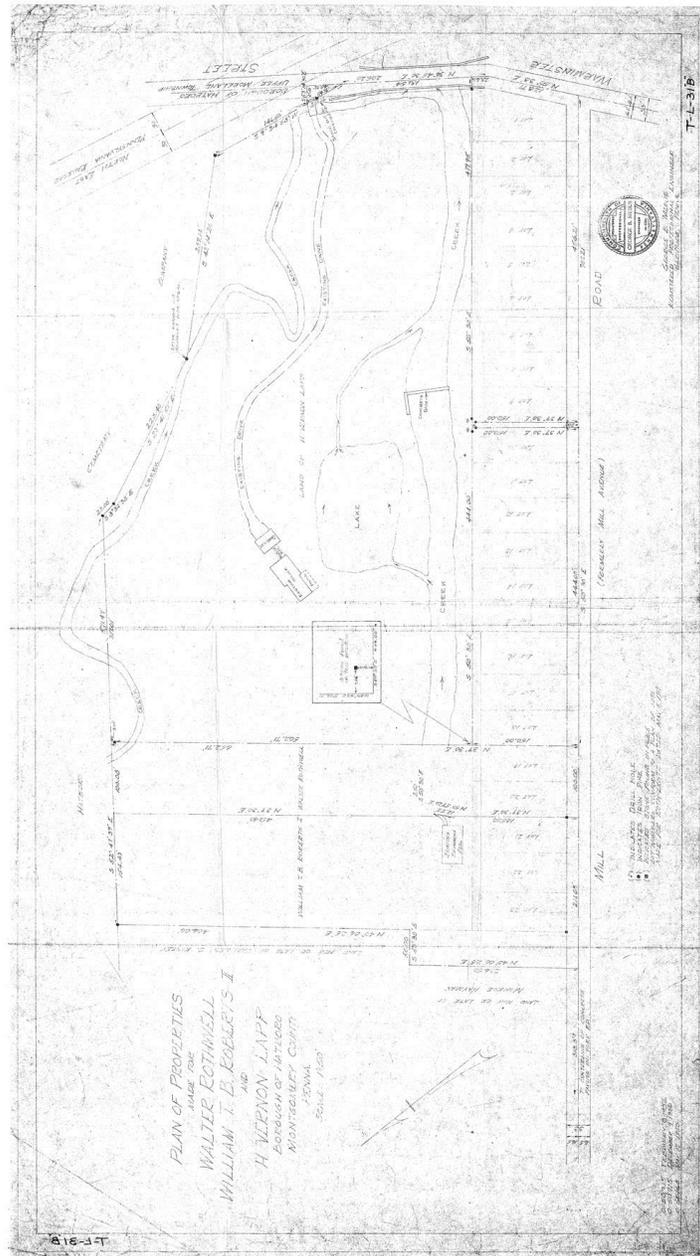


Figure 15. February 1952 property survey of Mill Avenue conducted by George B. Mebus

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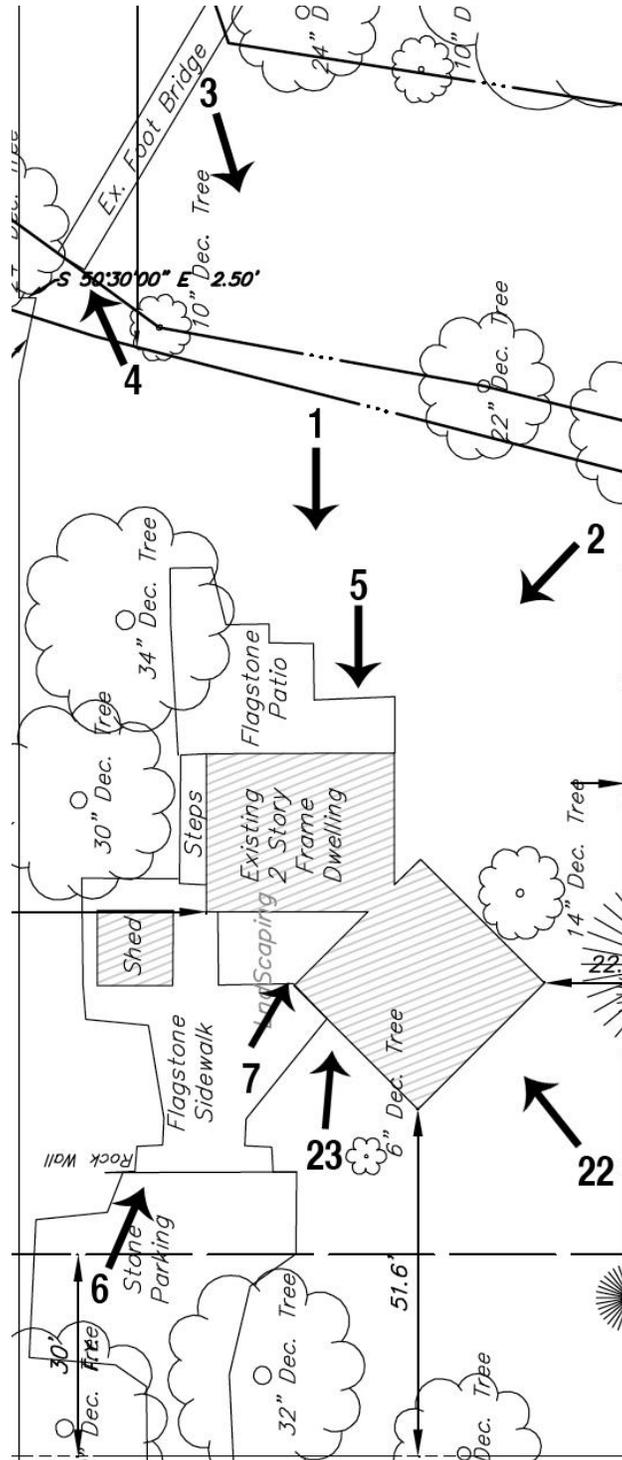
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Exterior Photo Key



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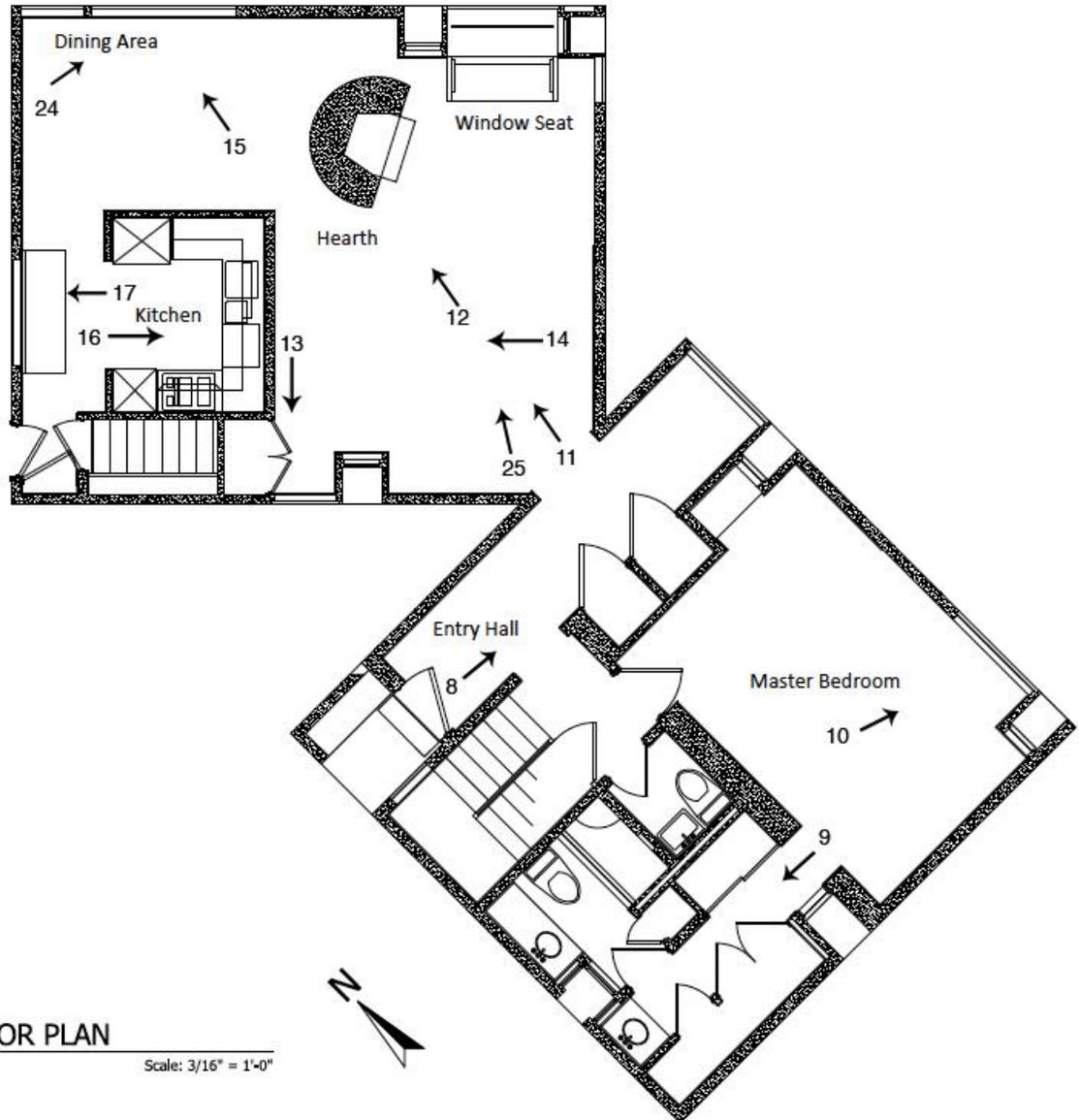
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Interior Photo Key—Ground/Main Floor



B-3 GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Scale: 3/16" = 1'-0"

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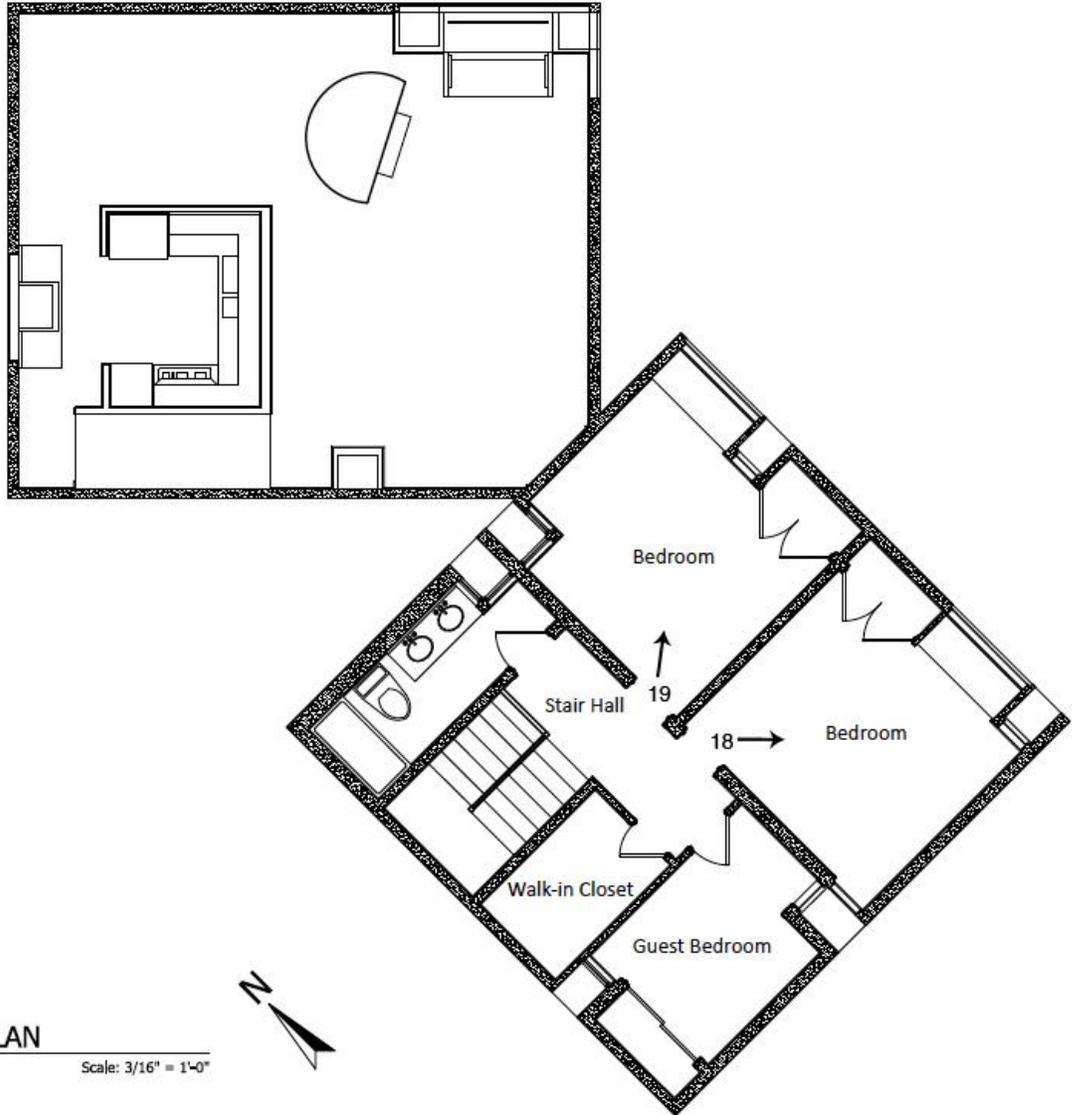
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Interior Photo Key—Second Floor Sleeping Cube (Living Cube open to Ground Floor)



**B-4** SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
Scale: 3/16" = 1'-0"

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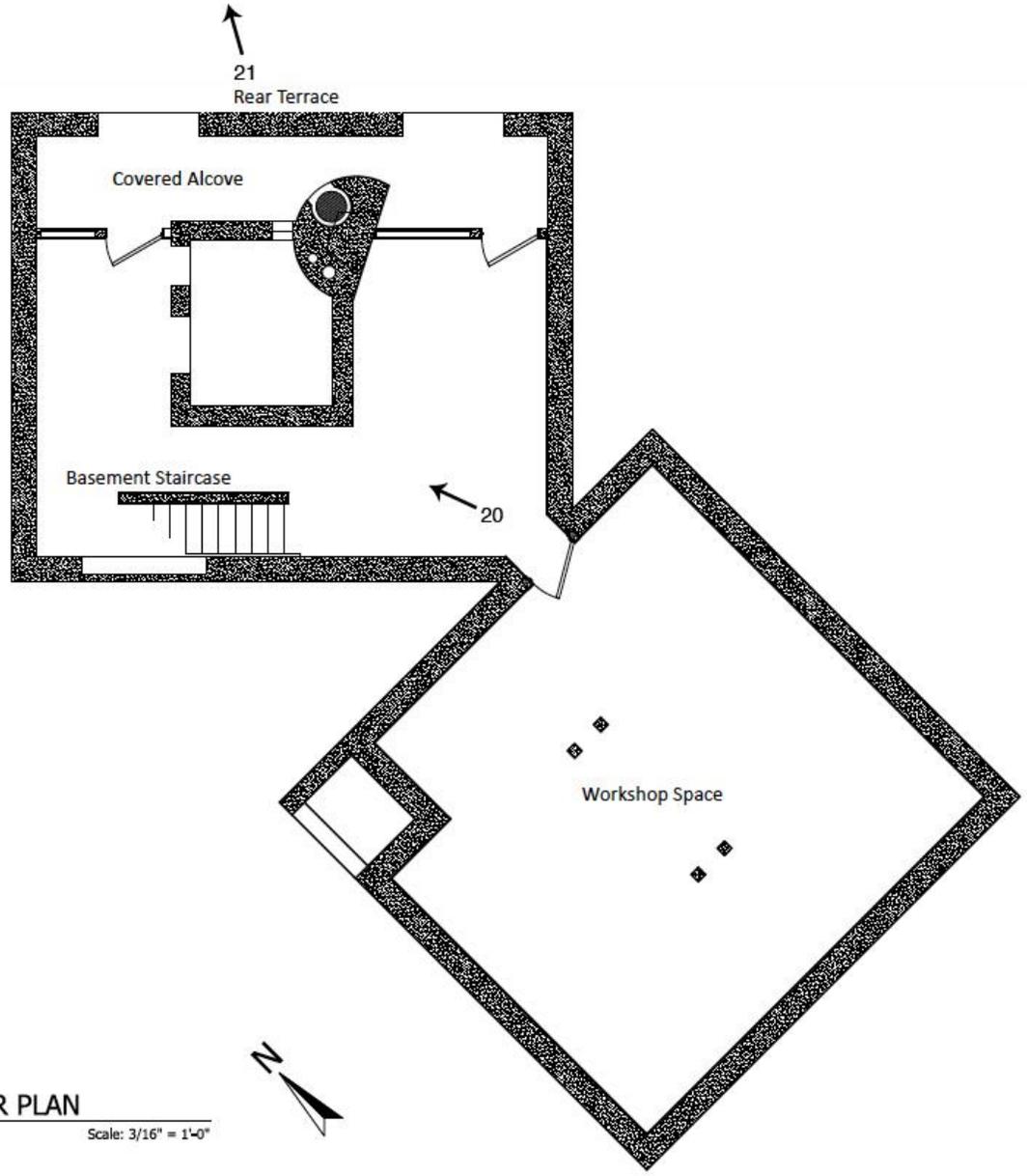
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Interior Photo Key—Basement Level



**B-2** BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN  
Scale: 3/16" = 1'-0"

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Photographs



Photo 1 - Northeast elevation of the Fisher House showing the large windows of the living cube that look out onto the rear yard, which slopes towards Pennypack Creek. The rear terrace is prominently featured in the foreground. (National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 2 - The east elevation of the sleeping cube is seen in the background and the southeast and northeast elevations of the living cube in the foreground. The rear terrace and benches extend from the northeastern edge of the living cube. The aforementioned, as well as the sloping terraced garden and landscaping on the eastern edge of the sleeping cube were designed by landscape architect Rodney Robinson in 1983. (National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 3 – The picturesque rear yard of the Fisher House slopes down to the Pennypack Creek.  
(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 4 – Built in the spring of 1969, this Kahn-designed wooden bridge spans Pennypack Creek and connects the Fishers' backyard to the meadow on the opposite side of the creek.  
(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 5 – Detail view of northeast elevation, showing the bottom of a deeply-inset window unit lined with a lead-coated copper drip pan. Below, an opening in the Montgomeryville stone foundation leads to the ground-level basement area.

(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 6 – The west elevation of the sleeping cube is in the foreground and the north elevation of the living cube is in the background. The flagstone walkway is original. The stone edging around the northern edge of the driveway was added by Rodney Robinson in 1983. The utility shed is to the northwest of the house.

(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 7 – The main entrance is inset into the west elevation of the sleeping cube and features a small, elevated porch with a slate floor and a low built-in bench. (National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 8 – The entry hall runs along an east-west axis that spans the length of the sleeping cube. Along the south wall are two closets and the hall terminates in a floor-to-ceiling window that reveals a view of the woods and creek at the rear of the house.  
(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 9 – The hallway leading off of the master bedroom is lined with closets on both sides and terminates in a powder area with a sink and a mirror. (National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 10 – A deeply-inset window unit on the southeast corner of the master bedroom. There are three of these window units in the master bedroom. (National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 11 – The semi-cylindrical chimney made of random rubble “Montgomeryville” limestone serves as the centerpiece of the living cube. The built-in window seat complements the hearth and creates a space where people can gather in the natural light from the surrounding windows.

(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 12 – Detail of the semi-cylindrical hearth and window seat in the living cube.  
(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 13 – A window unit located on the southwest wall of the living cube. At the west end of the partition wall is a wet bar with a sink and shelving hidden behind mill-worked doors.  
(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 14 – View of the living cube looking northwest. The partition wall surrounds and conceals the kitchen.  
(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 15 – The dining area features an eight-by-ten foot window that looks out onto the sloping yard and the creek beyond. To the west of this window is a large, shuttered window opening, containing no glass, which opens inside of the house to the outside.  
(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 16 – Two eight-foot partition walls extending from the living cube's southwest wall conceal the kitchen.

(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 17 – Opposite the kitchen, on the northwest wall of the living cube is a rectilinear “breakfast table” with pullout drawers and a distinctive deeply-inset window above.  
(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 18 – The bedroom in the southeast corner of the second floor of the sleeping cube features a closet, built-in desk, and deeply-inset window unit. (National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 19 – The bedroom in the northeast corner of the second floor of the sleeping cube features a built-in desk, and a deeply-inset window unit abutting a closet.  
(National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 20 - Composed of several simple, open spaces enclosed by the stone foundation walls, the basement's primary functions are to house mechanical functions, the laundry, storage, and a workshop space. (National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 21 – The view from the terrace at the northeast edge of the house looking across the sloping yard towards Pennypack Creek. The L-shaped benches to the southeast form a border between the terrace and the sloping garden beyond. (National Trust/Tom Crane, Photographer)

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Photo 22 – This image from 1965 shows the one-story stone foundation during construction. Kahn had a vision for the monumental foundation and made at least five trips to the site to inspect and ensure its proper execution. (Norman Fisher, Photographer, courtesy of The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania by the gift of Norman and Doris Fisher)

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Photo 23 – This image from 1966 shows architect Louis I. Kahn leaning against the northeast elevation of the Fisher House. The distinctive honey color of the tidewater cypress siding is showcased here. (Norman Fisher, Photographer, courtesy of The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania by the gift of Norman and Doris Fisher)

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Photo 24 – This image from 1970 shows the intimate connection between inside and outside created by the large window in the dining area of the living cube. (Norman Fisher, Photographer, courtesy of The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania by the gift of Norman and Doris Fisher)

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Photo 25 – This photograph from 1977 shows the living cube outfitted with furniture and actively utilized by the Fisher family. (Leco, Photographer, courtesy of The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania by the gift of Norman and Doris Fisher)









































