DECD
State of Connecticut
Department of Economic and Community Development

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY – BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Please send completed form to: National Register and State Register Coordinator,
State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development,
450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 5, Hartford CT 06103
* Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) 136 Ridgefield Road

Building Name (Historic) Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Glen B. Fitzgerald

Street Address or Location 136 Ridgefield Road

Town/City Wilton Village _____ County Fairfield

Owner(s) Wander, Steven and Judy ○ Public ◉ Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: residence

Historic Use: residence

Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? ○ Yes ◉ No

Interior accessible? ○ Yes ◉ No If yes, explain _____

Style of building Modern (Miesian) Date of Construction 1955

Material(s) *(Indicate use or location when appropriate):*

☐ Clapboard ☐ Asbestos Siding ☑ Brick ☐ Wood Shingle ☐ Asphalt Siding
☐ Fieldstone ☐ Board & Batten ☐ Stucco ☐ Cobblestone ☐ Aluminum Siding
☑ Concrete (Type Block) ☐ Cut Stone (Type _____) ☑ Other wood on sheath

Structural System

☑ Wood Frame ☐ Post & Beam ☐ Balloon ☐ Load bearing masonry ☑ Structural iron or steel
☐ Other _____

Roof *(Type)*

☐ Gable ☑ Flat ☐ Mansard ☐ Monitor ☐ Sawtooth
☐ Gambrel ☐ Shed ☐ Hip ☐ Round ☐ Other _____

(Material)

☐ Wood Shingle ☑ Roll Asphalt ☐ Tin ☐ Slate ☑ Asphalt Shingle
☐ Built up ☐ Tile ☐ Other _____

Number of Stories: 1 Approximate Dimensions 20'x56', 20'x22', 20'x20'1

Structural Condition: ☑ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated

Exterior Condition: ☑ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated

Location Integrity: ◉ On original site ○ Moved When? _____

Alterations? ○ Yes ◉ No If yes, explain: _____

FOR OFFICE USE: Town #_____ Site # _____ UTM _____

District: ☐ S ☐ NR If NR, Specify: ☐ Actual ☐ Potential

PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT'D)

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

☐ Barn ☐ Shed ☐ Garage ☐ Carriage House ☐ Shop ☐ Garden

☐ Other landscape features or buildings: _____

Surrounding Environment:

☐ Open land ☐ Woodland ☑ Residential ☐ Commercial ☐ Industrial ☐ Rural

☐ High building density ☑ Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

See continuation sheet.

• Other notable features of building or site *(Interior and/or Exterior)*

See continuation sheet.

Architect Pedersen and Tilney Builder N/A

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources:

See continuation sheet.

Photographer Vision Appraisal Date September 2017

View Southwest Negative on File CTSHPO

Name Stacey Vairo & Lucas Karmazinas Date December 2017

Organization Scheller Preservation Associates & FuturePast Preservation

Address 17 Hard Hill Rd., Woodbury, CT 06798 & 940 West Blvd., Hartford, CT 06105

• Subsequent field evaluations:

MBLU# 75/1 PID# 3992

Threats to the building or site:

☑ None known ☐ Highways ☐ Vandalism ☐ Developers ☐ Renewal ☐ Private

☐ Deterioration ☐ Zoning ☐ Other _____ ☐ Explanation _____

Photograph of 136 Ridgefield Road, view facing southwest. (Photograph Vision Appraisal).

Interrelationship of Building and Surroundings:

This house is located on an interior lot on the east side of Ridgefield Road (Route 33) and is not visible from the street. The land surrounding the property is wooded and a private driveway connects several houses to Ridgefield Road (Route 33). Comstock Brook is located west of the house. The house and carport are situated near the north edge of the lot.

Other Notable Features of Buildings or Site:

Note: the following description and significance statement were taken from the State Register of Historic Places application completed by Dr. Steven Wander in November 2016. The house at 136 Ridgefield Road is

CONTINUATION SHEET: 136 Ridgefield Road, Wilton, CT

a single-story mid-century Modern house, designed in June 1955 and completed the next year, 1956. It is built over a central concrete block cellar, entered by an exterior poured-concrete staircase, adjacent to the backdoor off the kitchen. The ground plan of the residence is a simple rectangle, 100' long x 20' wide, divided approximately in the middle into two wings. The one to the west contains a dining room, adjacent kitchen with powder room, and living room with fireplace brick wall. The second wing to the east is accessed by a longitudinal corridor at the north side of the house, off of which springs two bedrooms, one full bath, and the master suite with private bath. A foyer by the front entrance, defined by two other interpenetrating brick walls, one extending to the south and the other to the north, marks the division of the house into two. On the west end of the house, a deck overlooks Comstock Brook. In the east wing of the Glenn B. Fitzgerald residence the southern exterior wall is continuous floor-to-ceiling glass panels, generally 6 ½ feet wide, divided by a horizontal transom. The one exception is the outside wall of the private bathroom which was originally sheeted in plywood painted black. This panel was recovered in 2007 with clear red cedar, sized and stained to match the exterior siding, since Tidewater Red Cypress was no longer available. The timber used throughout the house is Tidewater Red Cypress, a rare and exotic wood initially harvested from the tidal swamps of Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina and Northern Florida, which is no longer readily available from commercial lumber yards. The carport for two vehicles, built on a poured concrete slab, connects to the house by a covered walkway. The two side walls are constructed of the same materials as the residence. Its simple vertical and horizontal planes continue the rectangular profile of the design of the house.

Historical and Architectural Importance:

In the late 1940s and 1950s, architects and patrons together sponsored a movement introducing a new style of building for residential construction in Fairfield County. A group of New Canaan architects, comprising Marcel Breuer, Landis Gores, John Johansen, Philip Johnson, and Eliot Noyes, were dubbed 'the Harvard Five' because of their connections to the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where Walter Gropius (1883-1969), famed for his work at the *Bauhaus* in Dessau, Germany came to teach in 1937. Responding to the post-war life-style of America, they introduced the simplified longitudinal ground plan with its open flow, often on a single level, so different in design from homes of the past, where multiple stories, staircases, and fixed partitions separated rooms and isolated individual spaces.

Inside, the mid-century modern house interiors now offered a new sense of continuous, flowing space with unimpeded vistas, especially to the exterior where broad expanses of glass opened the building to the outdoors. The ribbon window was a favorite design feature where large glass panes extended uninterrupted along a continuous horizontal expanse. The new materials, which included reinforced concrete, along with steel and sheet glass, allowed for extended cantilevers with their dramatic gravity-defying appearance. To cap these buildings, this group of architects insisted on a flat plane of roof, despite its problems with drainage. They rejected the jagged silhouette of separate roof pavilions, turrets, dormer windows and multiple chimneys, so common in previous home construction. The total effect is sleek and geometric where simplicity of form with a strict adherence to regular shapes prevails over a multiplication of separate elements and a profusion of detail. This allows for structures to blend with their surroundings. Unlike so many of its fellow mid-century moderns, the Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Glenn B. Fitzgerald is well-built, beautifully preserved and for the most part 'unaltered'.

CONTINUATION SHEET: 136 Ridgefield Road, Wilton, CT

The residence of Mr. and Mrs. Glenn B. Fitzgerald was designed 20 June 1955 by the firm of Pedersen and Tilney with the plans signed with the initials of William Pedersen, 'WP', the principal architect. With contemporary mid-century modern houses, it shares the longitudinal, open ground plan where there is an unimpeded flow through the shared common rooms in the western wing of the house. Like many of Philip Johnson's early residential constructions, it employs an entire glass wall, in this case 100' long along the southeastern exposure for morning light and the passive solar heating of winter sun. Like many of Modern structures it adopts a perfectly flat roof, punctuated only by a single brick chimney, and incorporates 4'-foot wide overhangs to shield the windows from midday sunlight and to suggest the dynamic of cantilevered construction.

The house, a perfect example of this trend in contemporary American architecture, exists in much the same condition as it was built over a half century ago. The Hollywood movie, "What Just Happened," directed by Barry Levinson and starring Robert di Niro, filmed on location at the residence in 2007. William F. Pedersen (18 April 1908 - 29 December 1990), was born in Stamford, CT and educated at Harvard where he received both his Bachelors degree in 1931 and his degree in architecture from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design in 1934. Fellow alumnus of the University along with the Harvard Five, he automatically shared a connection with this innovating group of architects who had taken up residence in New Canaan. For a complete description of the architectural significance, refer to the original State Register Form on file with the CT State Historic Preservation Office.

Sources:

State Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Fitzgerald, completed by Steven Wander, PhD, November 2016. Wilton Assessor's Records on Vision Appraisal; U.S. Federal Census Records, 1900-1940; "Map of the Town of Wilton, Conn., 1909," C.C. Wood, C.E.; "Map of the Town of Wilton, Conn., 1922," Robt. F. Thorley; "Map of the Town of Wilton, Conn., 1929," W.E. Godfrey, Surveyor; "Atlas of Fairfield County, Conn., 1931," Dolph & Stewart, Publishers, New York: NY; "Residents of Wilton, Conn. (As of July 1, 1937), 1937," Town of Wilton, CT; "Atlas of Fairfield County, Conn., 1942," Dolph & Stewart, Publishers, New York: NY; "Wilton, Connecticut, Directory Map, 1950," Town Planning Committee, Wilton: CT; Westport, Saugatuck, Greens, Weston, Wilton Directory, The Price & Lee Co., New Haven, CT, 1933-1963.