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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Breuer, Marcel House II
other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number 122 Sunset Hill Road not for publication
city or town New Canaan vicinity
state Connecticut code CT county Fairfield code 001 zip code 06840

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Signature of certifying official/Title [Signature] SHPO Date 7-8-10
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government CT / SHPO

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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper [Signature] Date of Action 9/16/10

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
1	0	structure
0	0	object
3	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut, 1930 – 1979

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC – single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC – single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE; STONE
walls: WOOD - Weatherboard
roof: OTHER - Built-up Tar and Gravel
other: _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Marcel Breuer House II is a key example of progressive Modern residential architecture designed by prolific European émigré architect Marcel Breuer in 1947 as his first family home in New Canaan, Connecticut. Breuer's original expression of the house as a dramatically cantilevered wood-frame box floating above the pastoral landscape is clearly discernable, despite the installation of a discreet rear wing and structural support walls completed by his protégé Herbert Beckhard in the mid-1980s. The house consists of a narrow, elongated rectangular form balanced atop a muted, stone-clad concrete block base that backs into a natural hillside. Ten-foot deep cantilevers at either end currently rest on minimal stone-faced concrete walls. The facade is defined by an expansive porch that is accessed by a seemingly floating steel stairway, and a continuous ribbon of plate-glass windows. The purist form of the house is completed by a slightly pitched shed roof and natural cypress sheathing, installed in a textural pattern for aesthetic and structural purposes. The property is located near several other mid-twentieth-century Modern style houses and is approximately one mile from the commuter train station that connects the town center to New York City. It encompasses a wood-frame garage, built in 1969, and in-ground pool constructed in 1971, during the property's period of significance.

The nomenclature used for the property is intended to apply to the national context of Breuer's work. Although the Marcel Breuer House II is known locally as Breuer House I, it is the second of four residences in the United States that Breuer constructed for himself. A list of these houses is included below.

- Marcel Breuer House I, 5 Woods End Road, Lincoln, Massachusetts (1939)
- Marcel Breuer House II, 122 Sunset Hill Road, New Canaan, Connecticut (1947)
- Marcel Breuer House III, 634 Black Pond Road, Wellfleet, Massachusetts (1948)
- Marcel Breuer House IV, West Road, New Canaan, Connecticut (1951)

Narrative Description

Setting

The house is set back more than 200 feet from the road in the west end of a roughly rectangular, gradually sloping lot. A linear gravel driveway extends through the north side of the property and terminates in a loop between the house and a garage. The house faces east toward an expansive, partially open meadow lined with mature trees along the edges. A row of hemlocks along the road create a privacy screen blocking direct views of the lawn and house. Additional trees line the driveway, which is accented with a Japanese maple at its upper terminus. The west half of the yard in front of the house is bounded by a split-rail fence, which encloses. A large sycamore tree extant on the property when Breuer purchased it in 1947 is located east of the house. Views from the house look out over the quiet natural landscape.

Exterior

The Breuer House II is a self-contained volume that employs a traditional American wood-frame structural system modified with steel cables, sheathing installed in opposing directions, and lateral posts and trusses to compensate for the additional tensile load of the cantilevers. Local builder Irving Wood erected the house in the summer of 1947 according to Breuer's specifications and Breuer's protégé Herbert Beckhard completed an addition in the mid-1980s. The original portion of the house measures 74 feet long by 20 feet wide on the main floor. The narrow cypress board sheathing is laid diagonally over the east and west elevations of cantilevered sections, and vertically over the rest of the building. It is currently painted a soft grey, but originally remained unfinished. The grey color blends with the fieldstone facing and dry-laid, rough-cut support walls, installed primarily between 1985 and 1988 to address sagging of the cantilevers. The walls match original retaining walls and stone steps that extend perpendicularly from the north elevation and accommodate a terraced level change. The walls are simple, vertical planes set back from the edges of the house to

minimize any visually grounding effect to the raised main floor. Breuer himself erected one wall under the porch at the north corner of the facade (east elevation), shortly after the building was completed. Breuer had originally designed the porch as a suspended structure hung from thin steel cables, but added the support wall by 1950 because of sagging issues. Two additional short sections of walls running in opposite directions are located under either end of the building.

The original, horizontally emphasized appearance of the facade is intact with a band of fixed and casement glazing extending across the elevation and accented by an original brise soleil hung from steel cables. The wood slats comprising the brise soleil cast a shadow of lines onto the wall to form a visually interesting pattern in contrast to the vertical and diagonal sheathing. A short section of the brise soleil that originally shaded the floating porch has been replaced with a retractable awning. The house is oriented to maximize year-round morning light and sun exposure during winter months. The primary living space is located in the north end of the house and the bedrooms are located to the south. Narrow vertical casement windows light the cantilevered south end, while a more expansive picture window on the north elevation lights the living room. The basement level of the facade contains an original vertical casement window in the center and two larger fixed windows flanked by casements, installed in the late twentieth century. The north-most window is located in an original opening that was widened in the late twentieth century and the south window is located within a new opening. A signature feature of the house is the original, slender, suspended exterior stair that hangs from the cantilevered porch and descends to a basement level door at grade. The stair consists of a minimal, steel frame with open stringers and risers. Thin bluestone slabs set atop delicate lateral steel members appear as if they are hovering in the air. The stairs and a square steel gate at the top are painted a bright, "Breuer" (cobalt) blue color.

A 54 foot by 20 foot one-story addition with a raised basement currently comprises the west (rear) half of the house. The addition was sensitively designed by Breuer's protégé and business partner Herbert Beckhard in 1985 to accommodate changing late-twentieth-century demands for space. Beckhard and his clients made a considerate effort to continue the spirit and not disrupt the original house. This west wing was completed in 1988 with identical exterior and interior materials and similar general construction techniques. The wing is discretely set back from the north and south ends of the original house. The extant north elevation stairs, which historically lead to the terraced portion of the lawn and a secondary entrance on the west elevation, now provide access to a stone patio and new main entrance. The north elevation of the addition features a single glazed door defined by a boxy, flat cantilevered hood, flanked on one side by an expansive double-glazed window with two horizontal awning windows below. The slightly pitched shed roof covering the addition opens to the west—the only exposed long elevation, and matches the height of the original house. A recessed, open deck cut into the center of the west elevation provides visual sculptural interest and serves the utilitarian purpose of an ancillary egress. A picture window paired with two casement windows lights the north end of the addition, while a horizontal band of compact awning windows lights the more private south end. The basement level is exposed for only a few feet on the west wing. The addition is carefully blended so as not to detract from the original house and is tucked behind it so that it is not visible from most points of view.

Interior

The interior of the house is planned to allow for the separation of social and private space, efficient circulation and functional relationships between various zones, and integration of indoor spaces with the exterior landscape. Simple, built-in furniture and finishes continue the Modern style aesthetics inside the house. The current main entrance opens to a split, bluestone stairway that ascends to the main floor of the house and descends to the basement level. The main level of the entryway appears as a lofted study and is complete with a smooth-faced vertical closet and cantilevered horizontal bank of low cabinets. The entryway opens to a linear hallway along the west side of the original house, which now serves as a double-loaded corridor between the two sections. Both halves of the house are finished with cypress plank ceilings whitewashed in the late 1990s, recessed lights, drywall covering the original painted plywood, and oak floors. The oak floors replaced the original plywood covered with mid-century sisal carpeting. The majority of the basement floors are covered with recent carpeting.

The plan of the original house is intact, with the exception of alteration to the layout of the kitchen and the adjacent wall to the dining room. The main floor includes a central kitchen and dining area, with an open living area to the north and two bedrooms to the south. The living room opens to the cantilevered porch and retains the original strip of bluestone flooring extending from the porch door, which previously served as a primary entrance. The floor plane of the living

room continues to the exterior as the deck, and the ceiling plane along the east side of the house is repeated by the brise soleil, which is visible through the continuous glazed wall. The original rectangular brick chimney complete with sculptural niches, serves as a mild separation between the living and dining areas. A floor-to-ceiling partition wall separates the kitchen from the dining room, but does not continue to the exterior walls, to allow for light and traffic to circulate around it. The kitchen contains historically appropriate, plain white cabinetry and a glazed white tile backsplash. Linoleum over the original plywood floor replaced the original mid-century sisal carpeting. The two bedrooms at the south end of the house retain their original layout.

The kitchen and bedrooms are located across from a private, laundry, master bath, and dressing area in the west addition, finished with rectangular skylights and simple built-in storage. The basement contains two bedrooms under the south end of both halves of the house as well as storage under the current entryway. An open study and sitting area, designed to double as a child's playroom, occupies the remainder of the original house. The sitting room retains recessed spot lighting and two wood-frame daybeds cantilevered over a solid wood base. All of the interior walls are painted white, which emphasizes the theme of simplicity and the rectangular form of the building shell.

Alterations

The only major alteration during the period of significance was Breuer's addition of a stone support wall under the porch in 1950 because the extreme cantilever was failing. Between 1985 and 1988, Breuer's business partner Herbert Beckhard expanded, stabilized, and renovated the house. These alterations were undertaken with respect for Breuer's original design. Beckhard's improvements consisted of the construction of the discreet west (rear) wing, construction of the stone support walls along the north and south elevations, and the enlargement of the kitchen. Beckhard doubled the size of the kitchen by expanding it into a former bathroom and laundry area. The wall between the kitchen and dining room originally incorporated a pass-through with sliding doors to enable communication between the two spaces. The pass-through was enclosed in the late 1990s to create more cabinet space.

Outbuildings

Garage, contributing (1969)

A one-story, three-bay, wood-framed garage is situated on the north side of the driveway, near the house. The garage is a simple building constructed in 1969 and designed to blend with the surrounding environment. It has a rectangular form covered with a slightly pitched shed roof, vertically laid plank sheathing painted gray, and rests on a concrete slab. The garage is oriented south toward the driveway and incorporates two roll doors and one closed bay on the facade. Bands of horizontal awning windows near the top of the walls light the interior. A screened room constructed with wood trellis walls over a concrete block base extends from the north elevation of the garage.

Pool, contributing (1971)

An oblong, in-ground pool is located to the east of the house. The pool was installed in 1971.

Integrity

The Marcel Breuer House II remains on its original site within a quiet, suburban setting defined by a naturally sloping lot with mature trees and scenic views. The house visually displays its original design intent, and overall volume and plan, despite the construction of a compatibly designed addition in the 1980s. Its feeling as a mid-twentieth-century Modern style "floating box" is intact from the exterior and interior. The majority of the original materials remain or have been appropriately replaced in-kind.

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.)

Property is:

- 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.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1947 - 1979

Significant Dates

1947: House constructed

1951: Marcel Breuer sold the property

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Breuer, Marcel (architect)

Wood, Irving (builder)

Beckhard, Herbert (architect-addition)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance of the Marcel Breuer House II begins in 1947 when the house was erected, and extends to 1979, the end of the mid-twentieth-century Modern architectural period as defined in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). This timeframe includes the period during which the house was designed and constructed, and was occupied by the Breuer family.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The end date of the period of significance meets Criteria Consideration G as part of the exceptional significance of the development of mid-twentieth-century Modern style residential architecture in Connecticut as discussed in the MPDF. Herbert Beckhard's addition to the property completed between 1985 and 1988, *does not* meet Criteria Consideration G, for exceptional significance of a property less than 50 years old.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Marcel Breuer House II is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C at the national level for its associations with progressive mid-twentieth-century domestic lifestyle trends, architectural social milieu, and demonstration of Modern style residential architecture during the mid-twentieth century.¹ The building possesses significance under Criterion A in the category of Social History for its association with the development of highly efficient and affordable homes that implemented new ideas about privacy, modern aesthetics, and an emphasis on open interior and outdoor space. The house is the first residence Breuer constructed for his family after arriving in Connecticut and is additionally significant under Criterion A for its associations with the emerging colony of Modern style architects who were networking and realizing their experimental designs in New Canaan. Under Criterion C, the building possesses significance in the area of Architecture as an expressive residential work of internationally renowned architect Marcel Breuer that exhibits his "long house" plan first developed in 1945, and displays innovative structural elements that pushed the envelope of engineering at the time. The house demonstrates Breuer's early use of fully cantilevered components, achieved through adjustments to the traditional American wood frame and originally supported through the integration of contemporary steel cables and laterally braced sheathing. Upon completion, the house was featured as a model work in architectural periodicals and included as an integral part of the initial Modern house tour in New Canaan in 1949. The Marcel Breuer House II meets the requirements for listing under property type Number F.1 Box, as defined in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) and considerably contributes to the Modern Architecture Movement in United States, 1920–1979 and Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residential Architecture in Connecticut, 1930–1979 historical context themes described in the MPDF.

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

Areas of Significance: Criterion A
Social History

Former Bauhaus architect Marcel Breuer (1902–1981) arrived in the United States to teach at Harvard's Graduate School of Design in 1937 and erected his first house and personal residence in the country in nearby Lincoln, Massachusetts by 1939. Breuer remained in the northeast region for the rest of his life and effectively sought and helped form enclaves of architects practicing Modern design. These communities were comprised of Breuer's European colleagues, their American counterparts, and a growing number of former students. Breuer served as one of the foremost mid-twentieth-century designers who explored ways to manifest post-war ideals of American home life and disseminated the Modern aesthetic.

Post-war American domestic culture developed out of an unprecedented emphasis on family life, individuality, and the ideal that the average citizens, especially returning veterans, could strive for their own private utopia in the form of an affordable single-family suburban house with a comfortable amount of interior and exterior space for enjoyment (Wright 1989:253). This renewed interest in an enhanced quality of life, paired with the development of innovative construction materials and mechanized conveniences, revolutionized preferences for residential design and provided opportunities for

¹ Although this property is directly associated with Marcel Breuer, National Register Criterion B is intentionally not used to substantiate its historical significance. The Marcel Breuer House III (1948) in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, which Breuer continually used for more than 30 years has stronger, long-term associations with his life. Breuer is buried on that property.

emerging Modern style architects to introduce strikingly new concepts that would be assimilated into popular culture in the following decades (Mock 1945:12–21).

Marcel Breuer relocated from Lincoln, Massachusetts to New York City in 1946, where he opened his own architectural firm. Breuer previously had an architectural partnership with Walter Gropius, with whom he practiced and taught with in Massachusetts. Breuer immediately sought a location for a weekend suburban home to retreat to and enjoy family life with his wife and young son. His former student, Eliot Noyes, who had already discovered the quiet, scenic town of New Canaan recommended the area to him. Breuer set off to find an ideal location for his young family at the same time that his former student Philip Johnson purchased land in the town. Despite the dependence of his architectural practice on corporate commissions, Breuer retained a preferential interest in small-scale residential design, which he believed allowed greater opportunities for experimentation (*Architectural Record* 1966). He also infused his residential designs with the new mainstream concerns for informality, privacy, and functional use of the home. Herbert Beckhard explained that “although Breuer was preoccupied with the visual flow of space, he was also very sensitive to human needs—the way families interact with each other . . . he understood the American lifestyle (Beckhard quote in Mayer 1988).”

Breuer purchased the property for his first New Canaan house from John Ewen *et ux* on May 16, 1947. The property was historically part of a 120-acre Colonial farm (Breuer 1950; Town of New Canaan 2010). The Breuers chose the site for its location “close to New York, within reach of good public schools, and [in a town] overrun with other children” and for its natural features (Breuer 1950). Breuer’s wife Constance described the property’s scenic qualities in 1950.

The land we found is open meadow, with a hill at the back, and a strip of woods at one side. There is a grotesque old sycamore tree, which perhaps won us to this site, and which we look out upon from almost every window. . . [Marcel Breuer] took advantage of the hill at the back of our site by building the foundation walls against it, thereby securing a first floor substantially above ground on three sides (Breuer 1950).

Breuer completed his experimental New Canaan home within one year of the construction of progressive Modern houses in town that architects Eliot Noyes, Landis Gores, Philip Johnson, and John Johansen built for themselves. The strengthening Modern movement and professional network in New Canaan is illustrated by Eliot Noyes’s supervision of the construction of Breuer’s house while Breuer was away in South America during the summer of 1947. Australian modern architect Harry Seidler assisted Noyes (Cobbers 2007:47). The house was completed in October 1947 for a “surprisingly economical” sum of \$17,300 (*Architectural Record* 1948).

Breuer addressed his family’s contemporary living needs through the careful arrangement of spaces into distinct zones with fluid circulation, and multi-purpose features. A spread about the new house that appeared in the *Architectural Record* a year after its completion celebrated its accommodations for “active living,” “including considerable entertaining, without servants. Visitors help in the kitchen. Connection from kitchen to other rooms is without doors, sliding cupboard doors connect dining table to kitchen. And from the centrally placed kitchen everything in the house and outdoors can be supervised—children, deliveries, also guests (*Architectural Record* 1948).”

Architectural features in mid-twentieth-century periodicals were published contemporaneously with guidance on the proper methods of child-rearing, roles in a marriage, and new methods for completing household chores. Constance Breuer described the design of her house as “flexible enough to conform easily to our changing demands of it (small child, obviously bigger later on, studio possibilities, frequent guests and not just one or two), and at the same time to be as simple as possible to maintain (Breuer 1950).” She noted that the long shape allowed for the separation of entertainment and private space, and the lower floor was equipped with a playroom that effectively contained the messiness and noise of children, away from the more adult space upstairs. The centrally located kitchen provided her with views of the yard for child-watching and easy access to the laundry room. The Breuers saved money by using “simple” kitchen finishes, which afforded them the ability to furnish the kitchen with “excellent” and “time-saving” equipment (Breuer 1950). By 1945, most average households contained refrigerators, electric mixers, electric toasters, coffee percolators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, electric ovens, and televisions (Ierley 1999:229–249). The interior of the house was originally finished with unpainted cypress ceilings and white walls “with various smaller surfaces in clear

blue, Chinese red, lemon yellow, and shades of grey,” which emphasized the open and sculptural indoor spaces. The feeling of space was continued through the “suspended porch which [swung] out over the landscape (Breuer 1950).”

Marcel and Constance Breuer lived in the house with their two children from 1947 to 1951, when Breuer designed a larger, second house in New Canaan. The Breuers lived in their second local house until 1980 when they relocated full time to their New York apartment.

Areas of Significance: Criterion C Architecture

The Marcel Breuer House II is an experimental representation of master architect Marcel Breuer’s residential work designed within his first decade in the United States. The house demonstrates Breuer’s “long house” prototype initially developed while he was teaching at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design. The long house prototype is Breuer’s first use of the floating box volume for residential design and followed the onset of his prevailing use of extreme architectural cantilevers around 1940.

Breuer’s individual interpretations of the Modern style resulted in the consistent expression of specific design characteristics. He possessed an avid interest in the aesthetic opportunities inherent in structural systems, and often tested the capacity to rearrange the structure into various sculptural forms. This trait is visible in his fondness of cantilevers and the absorption of the building frame within self-contained, simple, and elegant volumes. Breuer favored non-organic geometric (often rectangular) forms and naturally derived materials such as concrete, stone, and wood. His awareness of structure paralleled an interest in the visual qualities of materials, which he manipulated to achieve striped or geometric surface treatments and patterns of light and shadow, as demonstrated in the diagonal sheathing and brise soleil of the Breuer House II. Breuer’s residential designs demonstrate his preferences for privacy and informality in the home. He explored methods of distinctly separating the main living spaces from sleeping quarters and integrated familiar materials and traditional features such as open fireplaces into his holistic designs. Although Breuer acknowledged the importance of siting and oriented his houses to incorporate scenic views or natural lighting, he perceived his buildings as intercepting, rather than blending with the landscape. Breuer’s residential work has been categorized in four types by architectural historians, known as the Multi-level, Binuclear, Villa, and Long House types. The multi-level house is typically a two-story box with a central open living room and an annex. The Binuclear plan is a visual expression of the separation of public and private space, arranged in two separate rectangular sections linked by a hyphen or arranged in a slightly overlapping stack. Breuer used the Villa type for large homes with complex systems of rooms. The Long House type consists of a horizontally-oriented box with a linear plan (Von Vegesack and Remmele, 2003:17–39, 172, 204–235).

During the beginning of his involvement with the developing Modernist architectural summer enclave on Outer Cape Cod in 1944, Breuer started planning a small community of cottages in Wellfleet, based on a shed-roofed prototype of his Long House plan. The community was never built, but Breuer used the prototype as the design for his weekend house in New Canaan, Connecticut (1947) as well as his first summer home in Wellfleet, Massachusetts in 1948 and three other subsequent seasonal Wellfleet residences. *Architectural Record* referred to these simple and informal houses as an “economical adaptation of typical New England frame construction” (*Architectural Record* 1966). Breuer believed that traditional frame construction could be adapted “to achieve very large cantilevers without heavy framing members, or steel, or concrete,” while still remaining easy for any carpenter to construct (*Architectural Record* 1948).

The Marcel Breuer House II expresses Breuer’s vision regarding the invisibility of the structure and assimilation of all of the construction materials into a purist volume. The *Architectural Record* described the effect of this concept in 1948.

The sense of suspension which characterizes the design . . . is not merely a feeling; the balcony porch is suspended on steel cables [not extant], as are also the sunshades. The stairs too, actually hang from the hanging porch. Probably, nevertheless, the sense of suspension comes rather from the cantilever than from the actual suspension. The irresistible appeal of the cantilever is here developed to the ultimate degree (*Architectural Record* 1948).

Breuer retrofitted the structure of the house with additional diagonal supports, laterally supportive sheathing, and by applying the contemporary use of steel cables, attached with hardware and turnbuckles “used for the rigging of boats,” and purchased from a Provincetown, Massachusetts hardware store for \$22.00 (*Architectural Record* 1948). Breuer’s cantilevered house was so experimental that it required significant adjustments by Eliot Noyes and Harry Seidler during the construction phase, and began to sag and crack by 1951 (Driller 2000:170–171; Town of New Canaan 2010).

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Ownership history

Marcel and Constance Breuer sold their first New Canaan house to Russell Roberts on April 16, 1951 for \$40,000 after constructing a larger home for their growing family (Marcel Breuer House IV) (Town of New Canaan 2010). Roberts worked as a singer for the Vienna Opera in Austria, and he rented the house out for several years, during which time maintenance and structural issues arose (Mayer 1988). Peter M. and Gertrude (Trudy) Robeck saw the house in a real estate brochure in 1962 and rented it from Roberts while converting a nearby barn into a residence. The Robecks’ initial reaction to the seemingly stark and non-traditional Modern exterior of the house was not favorable, but they quickly grew to appreciate the open and efficient qualities of the space (Mayer 1988).

Roberts hired real estate broker Cecilia B. Baldwin to list the house for sale on July 19, 1963 and the Robecks purchased it on September 24, 1964 for \$54,000 (Mayer 1988; NCHS n.d; Town of New Canaan 2010). The Robecks remained in the house for nearly 30 years and made few changes to the property until the 1980s, except for the planting of \$70,000 of mature trees in the 1960s, construction of the garage in 1969 and installation of the pool in 1971 (BCA 2008; Town of New Canaan n.d.).

After Marcel Breuer died in 1981, the Robecks hired his former business partner, Herbert Beckhard to stabilize the structure and enlarge the house in 1985. Beckhard’s sensitive alterations to the building included a restoration of any damaged interior finishes, such as the repainting of the walls with the original “combination of mostly white. . . and occasional accent colors, as Breuer liked them—blue, red and yellow” (*Interior Design* 1991). Beckhard originally designed the addition with cut-outs in the deck and roof of the west elevation surrounding an apple tree that the Robecks wished to preserve (Horgan 2010). The tree was removed in the 1990s and the cut-outs were filled in after falling apples caused roof maintenance issues. The current owner of the property, John P. Horgan purchased it on January 1, 1993 and has made almost no changes to its exterior and interior design (Town of New Canaan 2010).

Herbert Beckhard

Herbert Beckhard (1926–2003) became a protégé of Marcel Breuer, with whom he collaborated on approximately 30 Modern houses from 1951 to 1979 as an employee, associate, and eventual partner in Breuer’s New York City firm. Born in Lawrence, Long Island, to German immigrant parents, Beckhard studied first aeronautical engineering at Pennsylvania State University. Beckhard changed his career path to architecture after observing Breuer’s Gellar House (1945), constructed in Beckhard’s hometown. The Gellar House served as Breuer’s first U.S. commission independent of Walter Gropius. Beckhard graduated from Pennsylvania State University in 1949 and obtained an MFA from Princeton the following year. Although Jose Sert offered Beckhard a job after graduation, he turned it down to volunteer at Breuer’s architectural practice, which “he figured was part of his education process” (Beckhard 2001). Breuer officially hired Beckhard in 1951 and he initially worked under the chief draftsman, William Landsberg on a design for the Levy House in Princeton, New Jersey (Beckhard 2001). Despite Beckhard’s limited experience at the time, Breuer liked his work and selected him to collaborate directly on the design of the Gagarin I House in Litchfield, Connecticut. Breuer gave Beckhard substantial responsibility on the project, which began in 1951 and resulted in valuable design experience (Beckhard 2001). Beckhard also collaborated with William Landsberg on the design of the Perry House in New Milford, Connecticut (1952) and with Breuer on the Stillman II House (1965), in Litchfield. Breuer elevated Beckhard to a partner position in the firm within five years (Beckhard 2001).

Breuer and Beckhard's work exemplified and guided the ideals of Modern residential architecture, emphasizing the relationships between transparent and solid, interior and exterior, public and private space. Characteristic features of their designs include elevations that are either entirely glazed or entirely solid, downplayed facades, fin walls, and deliberate asymmetry (Masello 1993:14-15). Beckhard's own projects during this time included the Stern House (1953) and Reed House (1968), both in Danbury, Connecticut. Following Breuer's retirement in 1979, Beckhard continued working with Breuer's other partners until 1982, when he and a Breuer senior associate, Frank Richlan, formed their own firm in New York, Herbert Beckhard Frank Richlan & Associates. He continued to design Modern houses in Connecticut, including the 1984 Schwartz House ("Green Farms") in Westport (with associate Robert Kupiec). Besides the addition to the Breuer House II, Beckhard completed renovations to the Breuer House IV in New Canaan.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Architectural Record

- 1948 "Marcel Breuer Builds for Himself." *Architectural Record* 104(10):92-99.
- 1966 "Houses by Breuer: Laboratory for Design." *Architectural Record* 140(5):125-136.

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- 1949 "Marcel Breuer's Own House." *Architectural Review*, January 1949:10-14.

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n.d. Property files, 122 Sunset Hill Road. On file New Canaan Historical Society, New Canaan, CT.

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Wright, Gwendolyn
1983 *Building the Dream A Social History of Housing in America*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

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: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.76 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>0625162</u> Easting	<u>4556895</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

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

The property boundaries encompass the legally recorded lines of Lot 5, shown on Map 32, containing 2.76 acres.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include the house and full extent of the associated landscape features that contribute to the setting and appearance of the property as conceived and occupied by Marcel Breuer.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jenny Fields Scofield, AICP/Architectural Historian and Virginia H. Adams/Sr. Architectural Historian
organization PAL, Inc. date May 2010
street & number 210 Lonsdale Avenue telephone 401.728.8780
city or town Pawtucket state RI zip code 02860
e-mail jscofield@palinc.com; vadams@palinc.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Marcel Breuer House II

City or Vicinity: New Canaan

County: Fairfield **State:** Connecticut

Photographer: Jenny Fields Scofield, PAL, 210 Lonsdale Ave, Pawtucket, RI 02860.

Date Photographed: January 12, 2010

1 of 5. View looking west from lawn at facade.

2 of 5. View looking south at north elevation, showing original house with cantilevered porch to left and addition with new entrance to right.

3 of 5. View looking east from interior of house at top of suspended stair.

4 of 5. View looking southeast at west elevation of addition.

5 of 5. View looking south from living room in original section of house.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name John P. and Lois Horgan
street & number 122 Sunset Hill Road telephone _____
city or town New Canaan state CT zip code 06840

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 18 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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

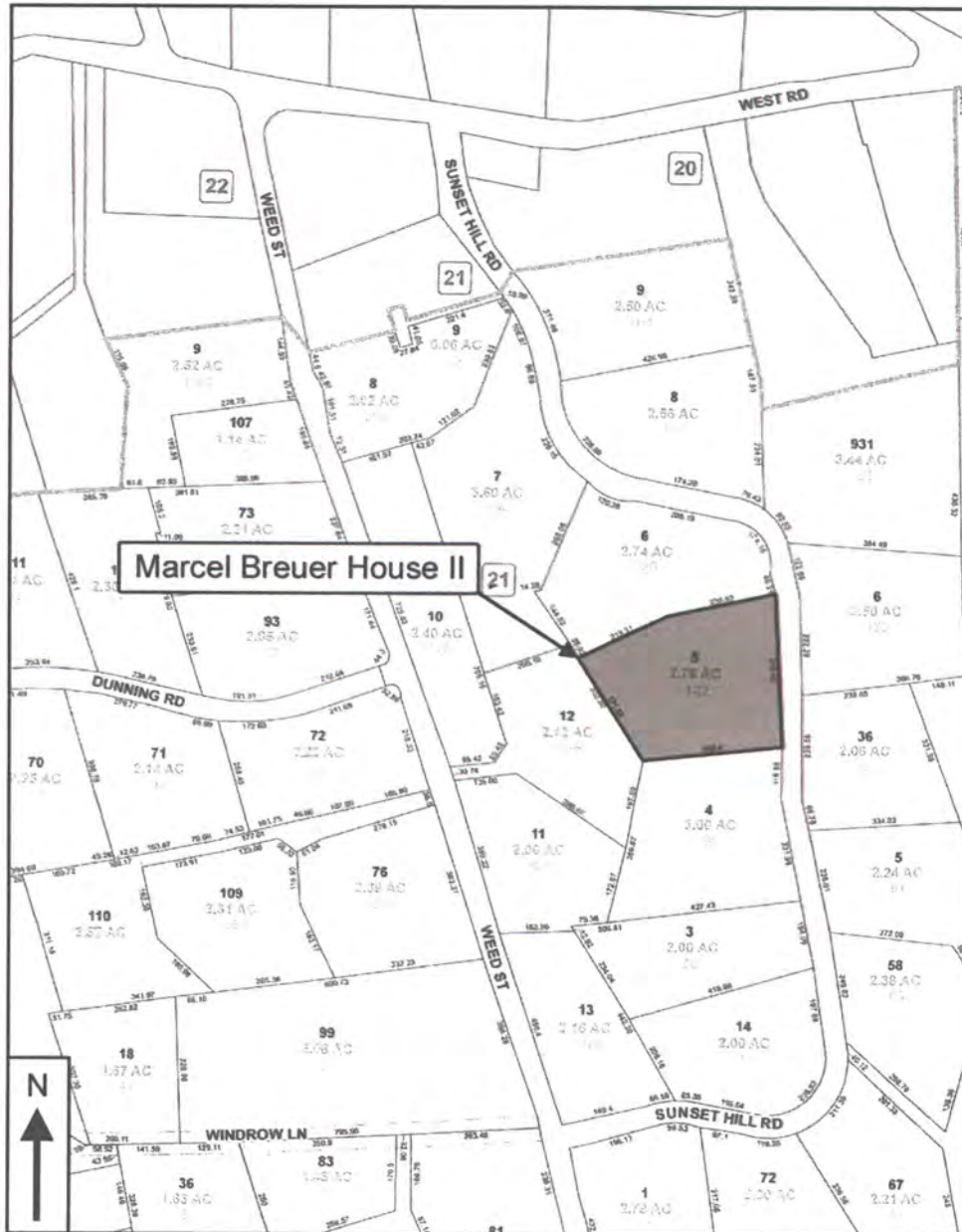
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Breuer, Marcel House II

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in
Connecticut, 1930 – 1979

Town of New Canaan Assessor's Map Number 32.



(Assessor's Map source: New Canaan Tax Assessor 2010).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

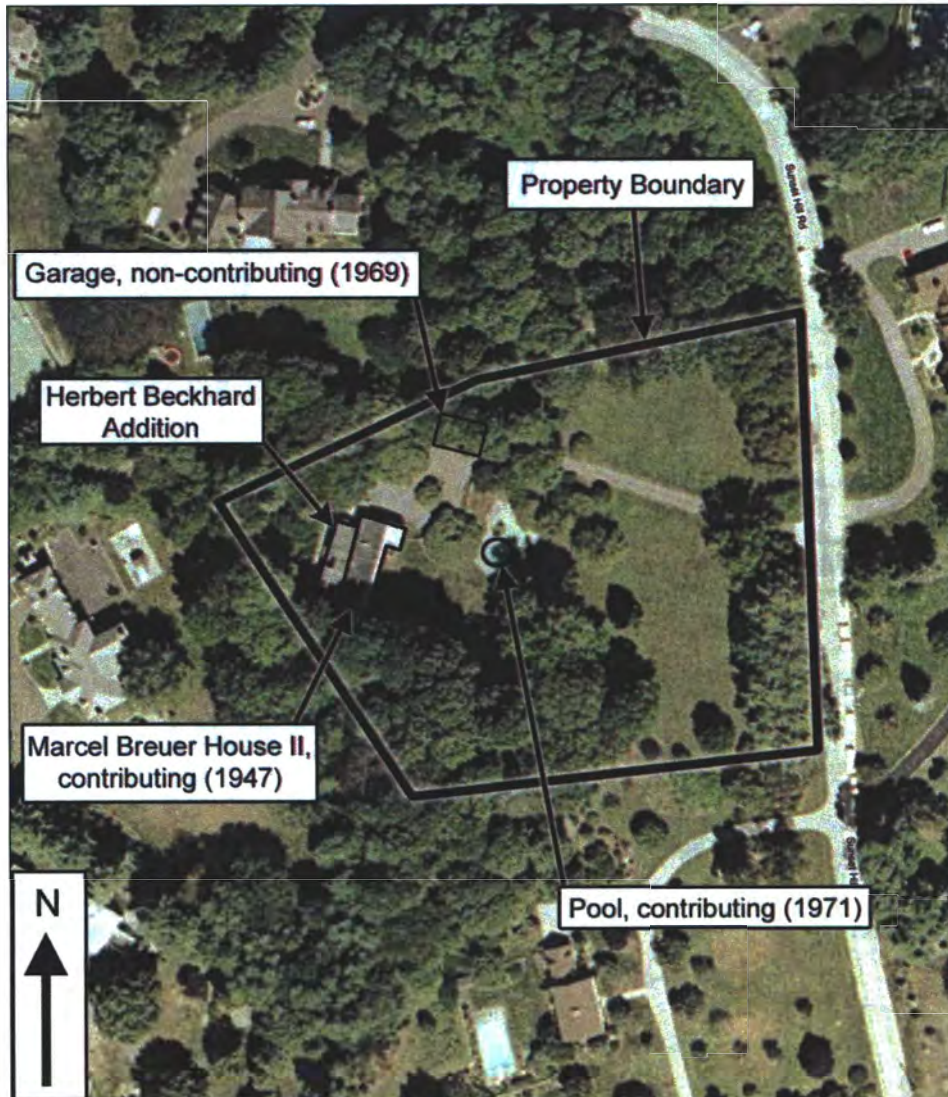
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Breuer, Marcel House II

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in
Connecticut, 1930 – 1979

Site Plan of the Marcel Breuer House II Property



(Base map source: www.bing.com. Accessed March 12, 2010).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

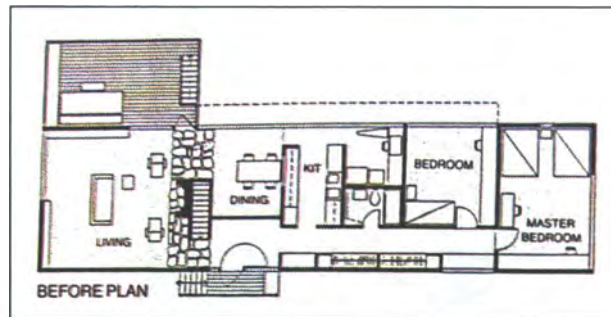
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Breuer, Marcel House II

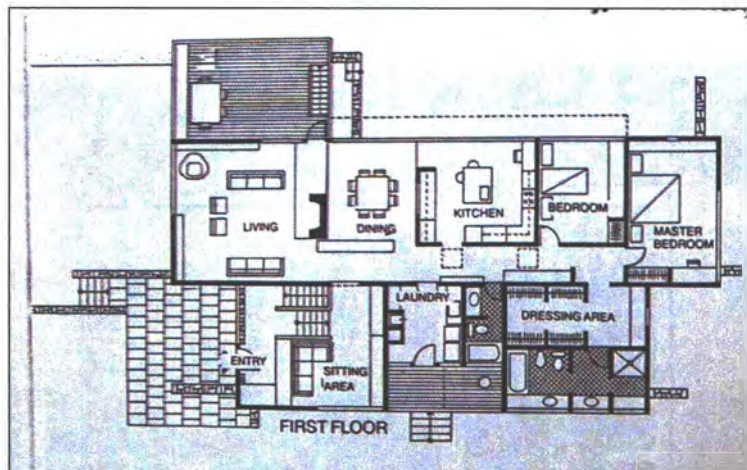
Fairfield County, Connecticut

Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in
Connecticut, 1930 – 1979

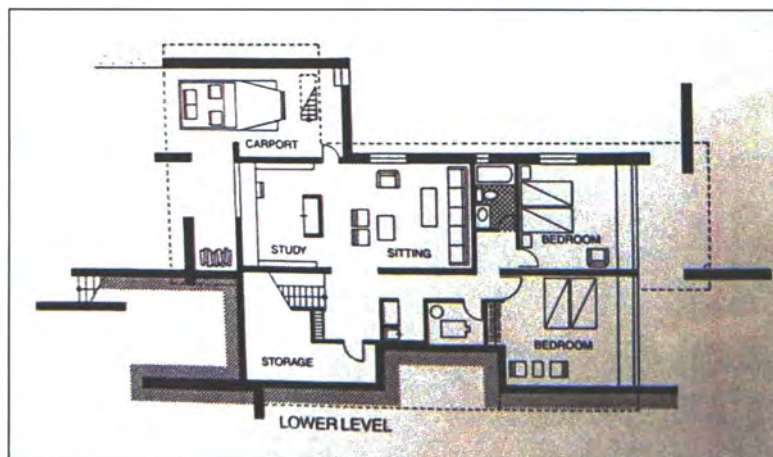
Historic Building Plans



Marcel Breuer House II Original Plan (source: *Interior Design* 1991).



Marcel Breuer House II Plan after Alteration, First Floor (source: *Interior Design* 1991).



Marcel Breuer House II Plan after Alteration, Lower Level (source: *Interior Design* 1991).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

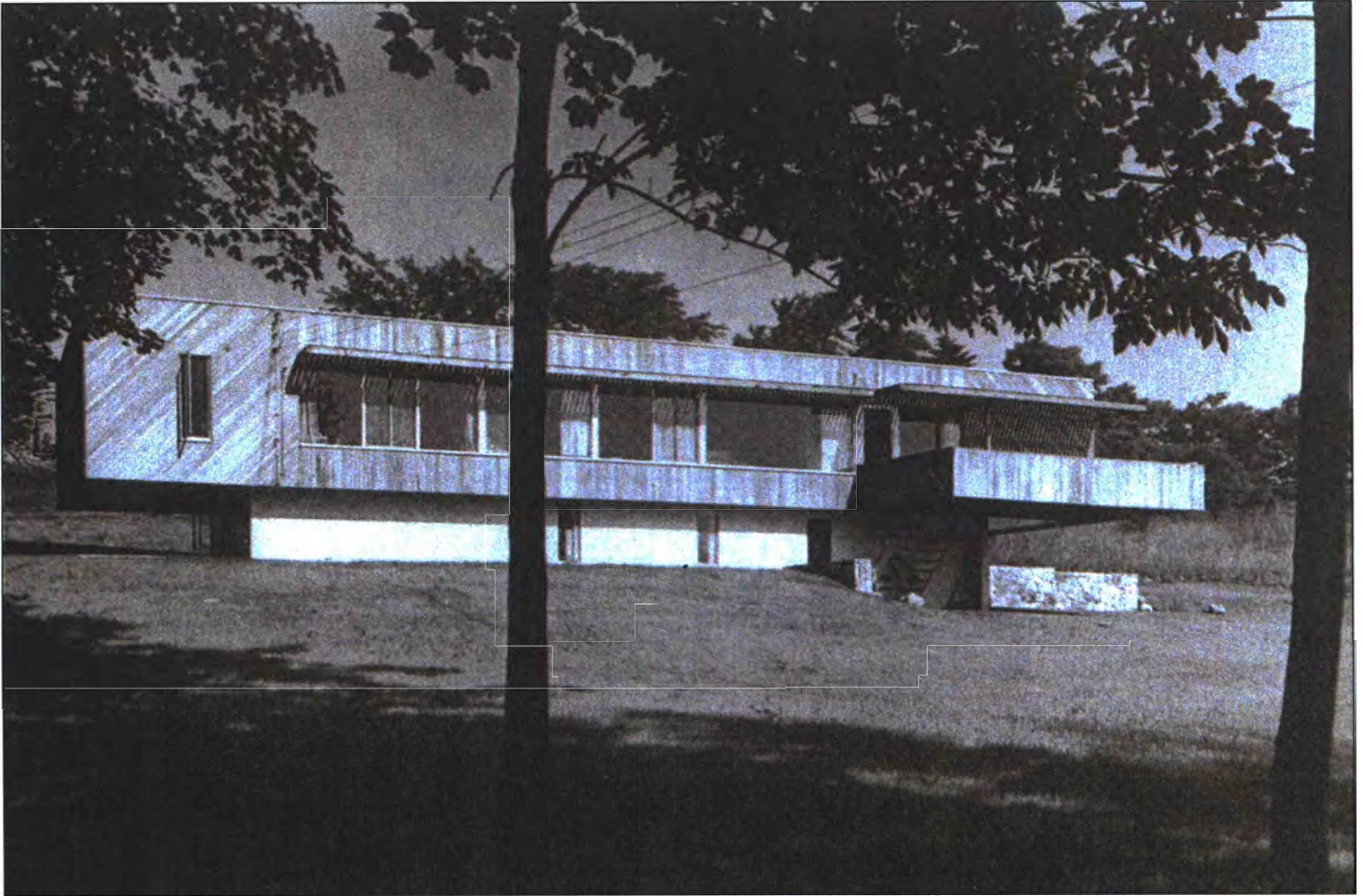
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Breuer, Marcel House II

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in
Connecticut, 1930 – 1979

Historic Photographs



View of facade, ca. 1947 (source: Driller 2000).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Breuer, Marcel House II

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in
Connecticut, 1930 – 1979



View of north elevation, ca. 1950 (source: Von Vegesack 2003).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

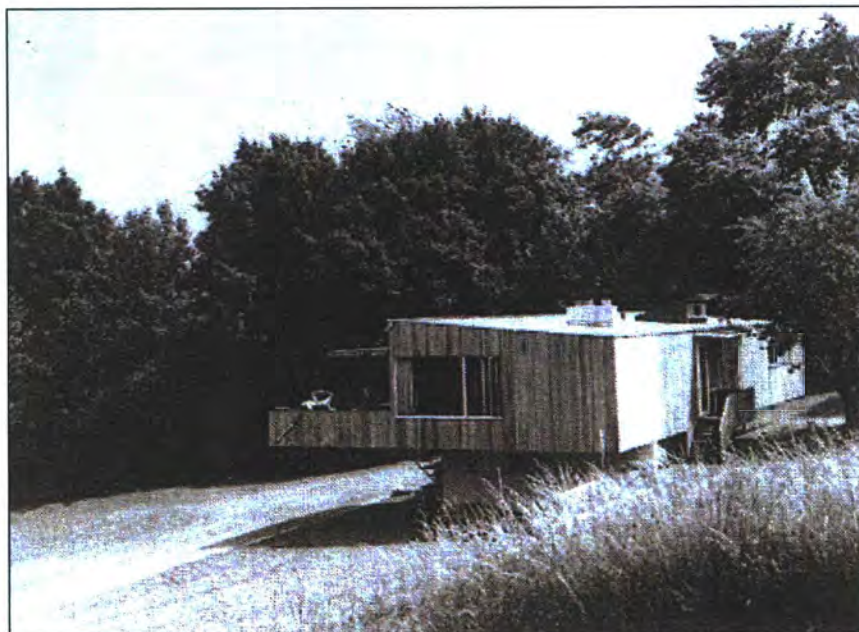
Breuer, Marcel House II

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in
Connecticut, 1930 – 1979



View of west elevation, ca. 1950 (source: Von Vegesack 2003).



View looking southeast at north and west elevations, ca. 1947 (source: Driller 2000).

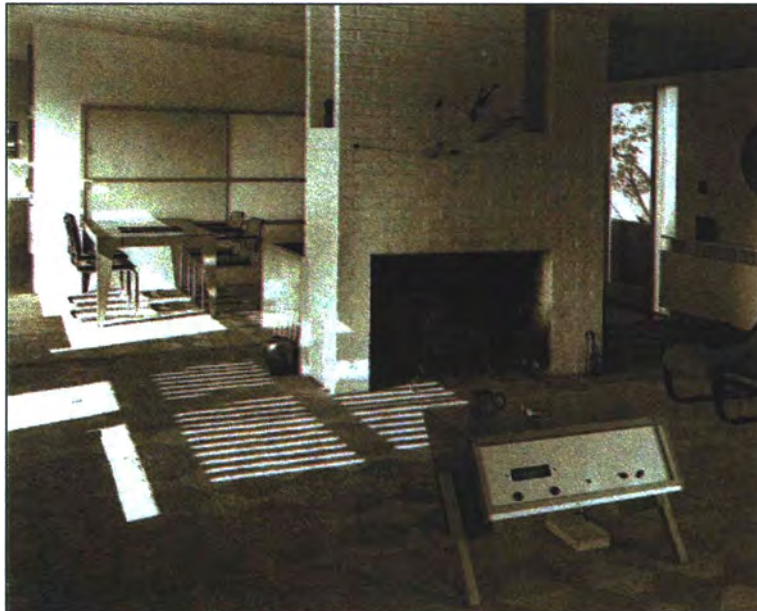
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Breuer, Marcel House II

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in
Connecticut, 1930 – 1979



View from living room into dining area, ca. 1950 (source: Von Vegesack 2003).



View of dining area looking south, ca. 1950 (source: Von Vegesack 2003).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Breuer, Marcel House II

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in
Connecticut, 1930 – 1979



View of living room looking northwest, ca. 1950 (source: Von Vegesack 2003).



View looking northeast from kitchen at living room and seamless transition to exterior porch, 2007 (courtesy of John Horgan).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: ^e Bruer, Marcel, House II

MULTIPLE NAME: Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut 1930-1979, MPS

STATE & COUNTY: CONNECTICUT, Fairfield

DATE RECEIVED: 7/12/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/18/10
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/02/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/26/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000572

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: Y
OTHER: Y PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

 ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

See attached sheet.

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER *D. J. [Signature]*

DISCIPLINE *Historian*

TELEPHONE *202-354-2278*

DATE *Aug 25, 2010*

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments *Y* see attached SLR *Y*/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Breuer, Marcel, House II

Name of Property

Fairfield County, CT

County and State

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 10000572

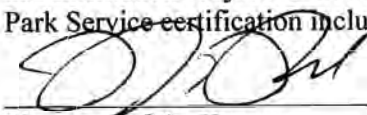
Property Name: Breuer, Marcel, House II

County: Fairfield County

State: CT

Multiple Name: Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut 1930-1979

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

9/15/10

Date of Action

Amended Item in Nomination

This SLR is issued to make the following substantive correction:

Section 3

The property is marked with a national level of significance. This should be state level of significance.

Section 8

The nomination does not provide sufficient information to justify a national level of significance. Architect Marcel Breuer designed four houses for himself, all still standing. In terms of Criterion A, the second house in New Canaan is potentially more significant as he lived in that house for most of his life in the country. He owned this nominated property for only three years. In terms of Criterion C, (which is the only criterion claimed in the nomination for national significance), the importance of the design must stand on its own apart from it having served as Breuer's own residence. In this regard, sufficient comparison has not been made documenting the importance of this design in terms of Breuer's residential work generally, or more specifically as an early example of a "long house" plan, which is claimed as part of the national significance. The impact of the 1980s addition should also be considered in any comparison with other extant examples.

The Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

Distribution

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Bruer, Marcel, House II^e

MULTIPLE NAME: Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut 1930-1979, MPS

STATE & COUNTY: CONNECTICUT, Fairfield

DATE RECEIVED: 9/14/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/29/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000572

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 9/16/10

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N





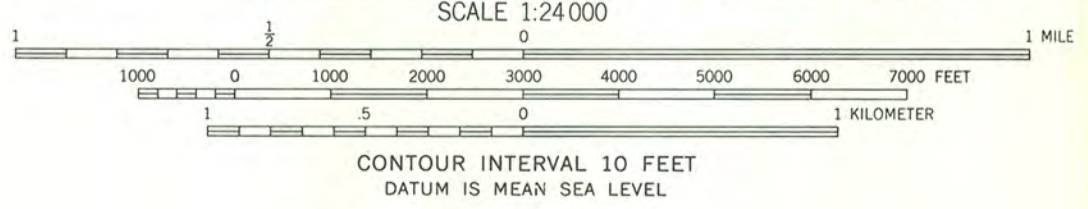
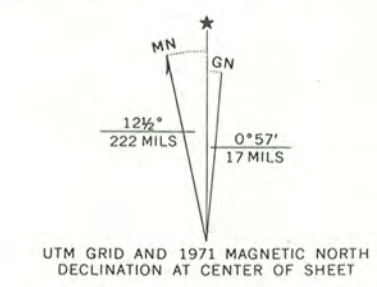








Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and Connecticut Geodetic Survey
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods
Aerial photographs taken 1949. Field check 1951. Revised 1960
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grids based on New York coordinate system, east zone
and Connecticut coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 18, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with
Connecticut Highway Department from aerial photographs
taken 1971. This information not field checked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt

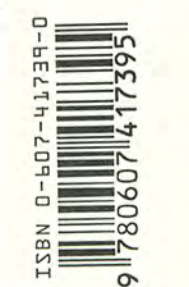
State Route (red circle)
Interstate Route (red circle with 'I')

POUND RIDGE, N. Y.-CONN.

N4107.5-W7330/7.5
1960
PHOTOREVISED 1971
AMS 6266 II NE-SERIES V821

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Marcel Brewer House II
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT
NTM Reference:
8 0625162E 4656895N





Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism

Arts
Tourism
Film
History

One Constitution Plaza
Second Floor
Hartford, Connecticut
06103

860.256.2800
860.256.2811 (f)

MEMORANDUM



TO: Roger Reed
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Stacey Vairo, National Register Coordinator

DATE: July 9, 2010

SUBJECT: Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in CT, 1930-1979

The following materials are submitted for nomination of the **Breuer, Marcel House II, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT** to the National Register of Historic Places:

- National Register of Historic Places nomination form
- Multiple Property Nomination form
- Photographs
- Original USGS maps
- Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)
- Pieces of correspondence
- Other _____

COMMENTS:

- Please review
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objections do _____ do not _____ constitute a majority of property owners.
- Other: _____

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Film Division

One Constitution Plaza
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Hartford, Connecticut
06103

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Breuer House II

National Significance
1947 Marcel Breuer

1950 Breuer adds stone support under failing cantilever.

1985-88 his partner Herbert Beckhard expanded and renovated the house. Included rear wing, stone support walls along north and south elevations, enlarged kitchen.

Garage, 1969 listed as contributing

Pool, 1971 contributing

Acknowledges that the 1980s additions do not meet G.

Criterion A: Social history as part of NC milieu, also as first house Breuer built for family upon arrival in Connecticut.

Criterion C: Significant as one of Breuer's "long house" designs and for innovative cantilevered construction.

Listed as F,1 Box type.

Comments: House is important as one of the early modern house in NC, and also as work of Breuer. But house was experimental in that cantilevered engineering failed almost immediately. Also, significant additions, although sensitive, preclude national significance.

SLR - not nationally significant

Garage not C
Pool Not C

Breuer House - Lynch - 1938-39 w/ Gropius