

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

1549  
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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House

other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 881 Ponus Ridge Road  not for publication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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jennifer Aniskovich EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 12/14/04  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Jennifer Aniskovich, Executive, CT Commission on Culture and Tourism

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
  - determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
  - determined not eligible for the National Register.
  - removed from the National Register.
  - other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper [Signature] Date of Action 1-28-05

**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	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

**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)

International Style

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Glass

roof Other: built-up

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark an "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, structure
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1940-1960  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1951 - built  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Philip C. Johnson, architect  
Landis Gores, associate  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 Building Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House  
Name of Property

Farifield County, CT  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** approx. 5 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	623640	4555700	3		
		Zone Easting	Northing		Zone Easting	Northing
2				4		
					<input type="checkbox"/>	See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Bruce Clouette, Historian

organization Public Archaeology Survey Team, Inc. date December 3, 2004

street & number P.O. Box 209 telephone 860-429-1723

city or town Storrs state CT zip code 06268

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**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.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

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

name Geraldine Hodgson

street & number 881 Ponus Ridge Road telephone N/A

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. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

**Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House**  
**New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT**

### Description:

The Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House is located on Ponus Ridge Road in the northwest quadrant of New Canaan, Connecticut, an area of widely spaced houses along narrow country roads bordered by fieldstone walls. The house sits up on a slight knoll and occupies a large lot that slopes down to the corner of Ponus Ridge Road and Arrowhead Trail. The property is partly wooded and part open fields, with lawn areas immediately surrounding the house. The house is entered from Arrowhead Trail, where there is a short driveway and a crushed-stone walkway leading to the house (see Photograph 1).

The house is a one-story, flat-roofed, brick and glass-walled International Style building. The main part of the house is U-shaped in plan, measuring 50 feet by 68 feet overall; it surrounds an open garden court and was completed in 1951. A detached bedroom wing, 22 by 77 feet in plan and connected to the main house by a glass-walled corridor, was included in the original design but not built until five years later. The house's walls rise ten feet and terminate in a flush wood fascia. The glass portions are divided only by a horizontal wood band about two feet below the fascia; otherwise, the wide panes of glass are uninterrupted except for doorways or the steel H-columns that support the center part of the house. The non-glass portions of the walls are built of light-gray brick that has a glazed surface with dark-gray speckling; the brickwork pattern is Flemish bond. There is no overhang to the roof and no cornice treatment other than metal flashing. The house has a partial cellar, with a concrete slab for the remainder of the foundation.

The main entrance is on the north elevation (Photographs 2 and 3), which is approximately divided into thirds: a central glass portion containing the double-door entry, flanked by solid brick walls on either side. The west side elevation has a large glass expanse for the living area and a smaller glass wall near the north end, while the east elevation is about equally divided between brick and glass and includes the connector to the bedroom wing. On the south elevation (Photographs 4 and 5), the fascia defining the eave line is extended across the garden court opening; otherwise, the south elevation is solid brick. Nowhere in the house are there actual windows, simply glass walls that include doors that can be opened to the outside.

Three of the four walls of the bedroom wing are solid brick, while the east wall is entirely glass; sliding glass doors give access to a broad paved terrace along the east side (Photographs 5 and 6). The wing extends northward from the main part of the house, so that it forms a high garden wall for the front yard and partly hides the entrance from view from the driveway (Photographs 1 and 3).

The garden court (Photographs 7 and 8) at first included a paved sitting area, but later (probably at the time of the bedroom addition) the area was reworked so as to include the architect's signature water feature, a miniature canal crossed by rectangular stepping stones. All of the walls between the court and the interior living spaces are entirely glass. Several of the shrubs in the garden court are original plantings and have reached a mature size, filling the court with their greenery.

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**Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House**  
**New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT**

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The interior plan of the main part of the house is mostly open. The principal living area occupies nearly the entire west arm of the house, warmed by a large hearth and fireplace built into the south wall (Photograph 9). The north end of the house is made up of a small den or study in the northwest corner, a combined foyer and dining area just inside the main entrance (Photograph 10), and a small adjoining kitchen (Photograph 11). The east arm of the house includes a bedroom and an open room at the south end, facing the court. Interior finishes are simple, with the inside of the walls and the hearth built of the same brick as the outside (the fireplace is lined with a light gray soapstone). Ceilings are plaster and the floors, which include radiant heat, are finished with square charcoal-gray tiles. Arrays of built-in closets in the dining area are faced with natural-finished oak (Photograph 10), and similar built-ins in the southeast room are covered with fabric. The wing originally accommodated a master bedroom and four children's bedrooms, two of which have now been combined. All are served by a long corridor running along the west wall; the corridor is softly lighted by overhead skylights.

The only other building on the property is a small flat-roofed partly-enclosed building that combines a carport and small stable (Photograph 12). According to the New Canaan assessor records, it was built in 1960. It is counted as a contributing building, despite its age, because it is stylistically compatible with the main house, completed nine years earlier.

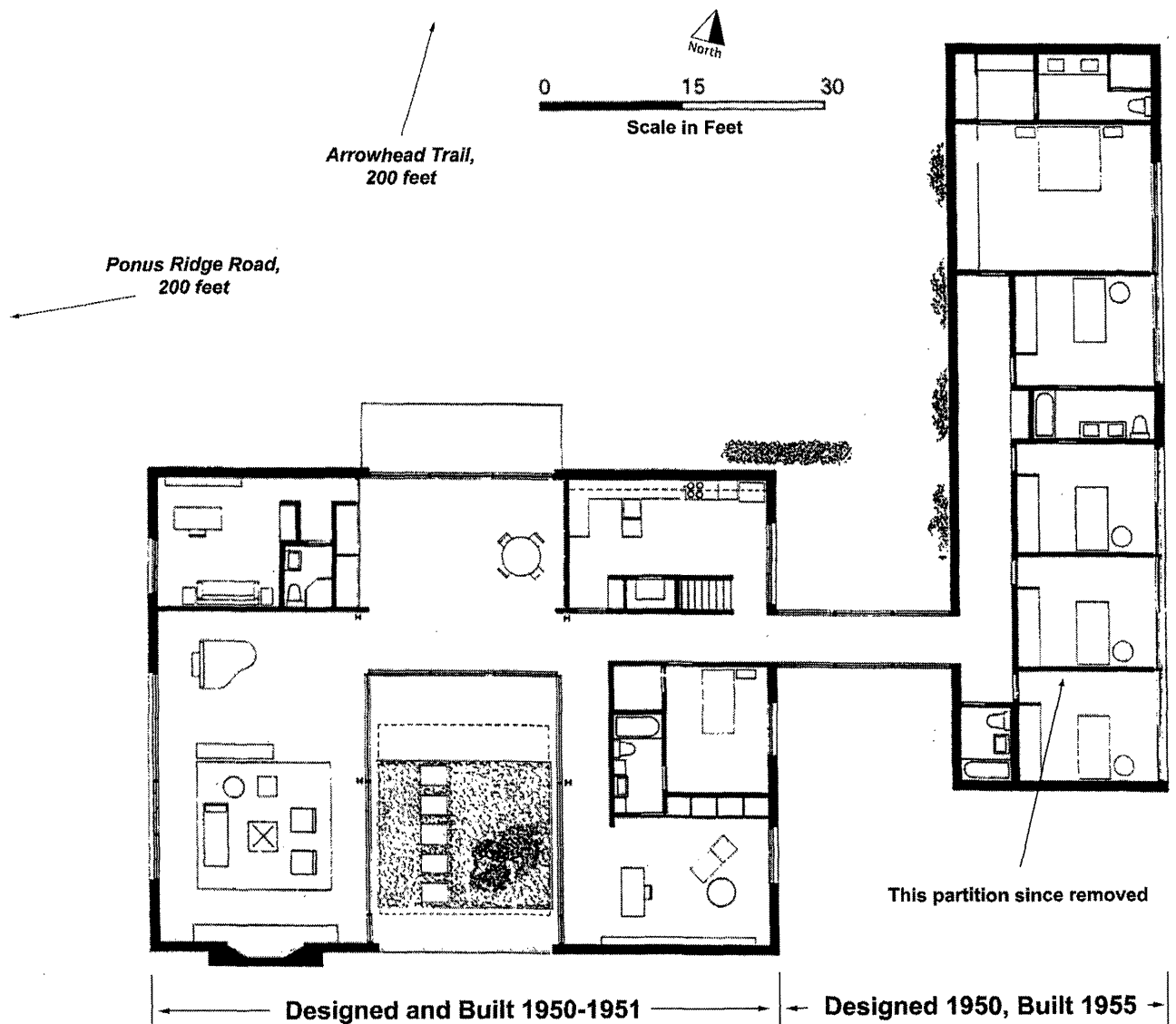
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Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House  
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Floor Plan, from Johnson, *Architecture, 1945-1965*:



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

**Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House**  
**New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT**

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### Statement of Significance:

#### Summary:

The Hodgson House is an exceptionally important resource for American architectural history because it embodies the defining characteristics of the “modern” architecture of post-World War II America and because of the prominence of its architect, Philip Johnson (National Register Criterion C). Like Johnson’s own Glass House and his other early “Miesian” projects, the award-winning Hodgson House helped to define the architectural avant-garde in this country: simple geometric forms, extensive use of glass, and a complete foreswearing of decorative embellishment or overt historical allusion. Although Johnson was one of the most fervent proponents of the minimalism of Mies van der Rohe (some referred to him somewhat disparagingly as “Mies van der Johnson”), his later architectural efforts, and his seminal critical writings, took him into new genres of Formalism, Post-Modernism, and Expressionism. Early works such as the Hodgson House add to one’s appreciation of the origins, the evolution, and the central themes of Johnson’s artistry.

#### The Hodgson House and Philip Johnson

Philip Cortelyou Johnson was born in 1906 into a well-to-do Midwestern family. He studied Classics at Harvard, where he met Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Alfred Barr, Lincoln Kirstein, A. Everett Austin, and others who would go on to gain prominence as Avant-Gardes in the arts in America in the the 1930s. A trip to Europe in 1930 brought Johnson face to face with the architecture of Le Corbusier, Oud, and the Bauhaus, and upon his return, he and Hitchcock arranged an exhibition of innovative architecture at the fledgling Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Their catalog to the exhibition coined the term “International Style” and defined the common principles underlying the diverse works on display.

At the age of 34, Johnson began graduate architectural studies at Harvard, where the émigrés Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer had relocated. Of all the Europeans, the one most admired by Johnson was Mies van der Rohe, who was teaching in Illinois, and many of his student projects, as well as the house he built on Ash Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts, show the lightness of Mies’s Barcelona Pavilion rather than the heavier, almost utilitarian modernism of the other Europeans. With his own residence, the Glass House of 1947, Johnson created an even more minimal building than Mies’s design for the all-glass Farnsworth House (which was designed earlier than the Glass House but completed a year later). The Glass House, which is just across Ponus Ridge Road from the Hodgson House, created a sensation. It was extensively discussed both in the popular press and in professional journals here and abroad, and people flocked to see it. It became an instant icon of modernism, even though Johnson’s own explanation of the house, tracing its roots to German Romanticism and the 18<sup>th</sup>-century work of Claude-Nicholas Ledoux, seemed to look backward as much as forward.



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Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House  
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

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Over the next few years Johnson consolidated his reputation as one of the foremost American practitioners of modern architecture with several more Miesian glass-walled houses, the sculpture garden for the Museum of Modern Art, and, in collaboration with Mies himself, the Seagram Building in New York City, one of the earliest International Style high-rise office towers. Later works, such as the New York State Theater in Lincoln Center and the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, explored the uses of columns and arches in a style sometimes termed the "New Formalism," and still later, Johnson fired one of the opening salvos of Post-Modernism with his pediment-topped A.T.&T. headquarters in Manhattan.

Johnson is also important because of his role as a critic and commentator on the state of architecture. He was curator of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City until 1954; among his major accomplishments there were a major retrospective exhibition on the works of Mies, for which he wrote a book-length catalog, and "Built in U.S.A.: Post-War Architecture," which featured the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles Eames, Paul Rudolph, and Max Abramovitch, among others. His residence in New Canaan was frequently the scene of meetings with other nationally prominent architects, and he gave lectures and seminars at the Yale School of Architecture and other leading academic settings. His numerous articles on the intellectual underpinnings of architecture, such as "Seven Crutches of Modern Architecture" (1954) and "Whence and Whither: The Processional Element in Architecture" (1965), were widely discussed. At least two architectural periodicals, *Architectural Forum* and *Progressive Architecture*, devoted entire issues to the work of Johnson, and, citing his "fifty years of imagination and vitality," the Hyatt Foundation awarded Johnson the first Pritzker Architectural Prize in 1979. Few would challenge the proposition that Philip Johnson was one of the most influential and accomplished figures in 20<sup>th</sup>-century American architecture.

The house that Johnson designed for the Hodgson family bears a superficial resemblance to his own Glass House in its flat roof, simple fascia, and broad expanses of glass, but the differences are equally important. In his own house, Johnson separated the transparent and solid walls into two buildings (all of the windows of the companion Guest House face away from the Glass House), but in the Hodgson House the two are brought together to help define the various interior and exterior spaces. The solid walls of the bedroom wing both screen the house from public view and provide a garden wall that defines the area adjacent to the main entrance.

Early on, critics noted that the Hodgson House's U-shaped plan was the source of much of its interest. Like many modern houses, its broad expanses of glass provide a view of the surrounding landscape from the interior living areas, but the house also accomplishes a sort of inverse of this effect with its interior court, which brings outdoor plantings into the heart of the house. (In an interview with a local paper, Johnson announced his intention that "the living area will be the great outdoors," a goal amply realized.) The plan allows for maintaining a sense of openness in the interior (another modern-architecture principle), while at the same time providing a substantial degree of functional separation in the three arms of the U. Finally, the plan recalls architecture's long tradition of villa-type houses built around courtyards, antecedents that Johnson would have known well and appreciated. The Hodgson House, along with his other early works of the period, suggests that Johnson was not so much a Miesian (Mies himself had great reservations about

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**Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House**  
**New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT**

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his early work), but rather an architect who valued modernism for its freedom from the past and who used its distinctive forms and materials to explore larger architectural themes of symmetry, simplicity, inside and outside, substance and void, and dialog with the past. The Hodgson House deserves to be appreciated not just for its Miesian modernism, but also for what Johnson accomplished using that vocabulary.

The Hodgson House is simple without being stark or cold, and it achieves balance without being slavishly symmetrical. The mottled brick, natural-finish cabinets, and dark floor tiles attest to an attention to detail without showiness or extravagance. The house is especially notable because it embodies the principle that Johnson later articulated as the “processional element.” The house can be appreciated from photographs or by viewing it from one particular vantage point, but its full potential as an aesthetic object can only be perceived through movement. Thus, the approach to the house is such that it only gradually comes into view, hidden at first by the blank wall of the bedroom wing (Photographs 1 and 2). The glass entry allows one to see into the interior before actually opening the door, and once inside, one’s eyes are drawn immediately to the court, that is, outside again. Walking around the principal interior spaces, the glass-walled court makes the whole inside of the house seem visible, albeit partly screened by the court’s vegetation. The architect Richard Meier remembered the impression the Hodgson House made upon him when he first saw it as a student, recalling it as “beautifully detailed and serene.” Many others in the profession agreed, and a committee headed by Eero Saarinen awarded the house the American Institute of Architects Honor Award in 1956.

The program addressed (and achieved) by the Hodgson House is noteworthy as well. Many if not most post-war modern houses were designed as weekend or seasonal dwellings for the well-to-do, as the architect’s own residence, or as aesthetic acquisitions for modern-art aficionados. In contrast, the Hodgson House was designed for a young professional couple with children. Richard Hodgson (1917-2000), armed with degrees in engineering (Stanford) and business administration (Harvard), participated in the development of some of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s key technologies, including microwaves at M.I.T and nuclear-power instrumentation at the Brookhaven National Laboratory. In 1947 Hodgson started his own laboratory to research color-television technology, which developed a picture tube later licensed to the Sony Corporation. With a new business and a family (and reportedly mortgage lenders who were uneasy about such a modern design), Hodgson needed a house that would require only a modest initial investment but could be subsequently expanded; by allowing for the bedroom wing to be constructed later, Johnson gave him a house that was as expandable as any Levittown cape. Hodgson became one of the leading figures in America’s high-tech sector; he founded Fairchild Semiconductor, the pioneering manufacturer of integrated circuits, he was an original investor in Intel, and he was one of the top executives with ITT Corporation.

Through all these years, the house on Ponus Ridge Road continued to satisfy the needs of the Hodgson family, and at the time of this writing, Mrs. Hodgson still resides there. The house was well-built and practical—the partial cellar allowed for mechanicals and storage and probably ameliorated the dampness that plagued its slab-built contemporaries, the flat roof has maintained its integrity, and the radiant-heated floor has made winter mornings cozy for more than a half-century. Credit for its success is due the specialists

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Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House  
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Johnson hired—lighting designer Richard Kelley and the Eipel Engineering Company—and also to the contractor, John C. Smith of New Canaan (when asked to name some unique features of the house, which he was erecting underneath a protective plywood and paper cocoon in the winter of 1950-1951, Smith is said to have exclaimed “the whole dangd thing is unique!”).

**Local Significance**

New Canaan was well known in the 1950s as Connecticut’s foremost showplace of post-war modernism, a distinction it retains today even though several notable examples have fallen to development pressures. New Canaan is within easy commuting distance to New York City, and in the post-war period its rural ambiance attracted both leading modern architects and business and professional people who would appreciate and could afford their designs. Contemporaries acknowledged Eliot Noyes, Landis Gores\*, John M. Johanson, Marcel Breuer, and Philip Johnson, known as the “Harvard Five,” for their collective role in making New Canaan a “symbol of creativeness in modern American Architecture.” (*House and Home*, January 1953, p. 132). The owners of houses by these and other modern architects cooperated in an annual Modern House Day in New Canaan, in which public tours raised money for good causes and gave added exposure to the modern idiom. One New Canaan resident presciently predicted in 1953 that in the future “we’ll be pointing proudly to these houses and telling the world that here, in this little town, we helped create a new architectural tradition.” The Hodgson House stands as a pristine reminder of the moment in history when New Canaan was at the forefront of modern residential architecture.

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\* Landis Gores was Johnson’s partner at the time the house was designed, and he is credited as a collaborator in contemporary accounts of the house. However, Johnson and Gores ended their professional relationship (though not their personal friendship) soon thereafter, in large part (according to Schultze’s biography) because Johnson was not interested in Gores’s ideas for the house.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House  
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

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### Bibliography:

- “A Connecticut House for a Television Executive,” *Architectural Record*, March 1953, 156-61. Reprinted in *A Treasury of Contemporary Houses* (New York: F. W. Dodge, 1954).
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- Hodgson, Richard. Obituary. *New York Times*, March 18, 2000.
- “The Institute’s 1956 Honor Awards,” *American Institute of Architects Journal*, June 1956, 240-42.
- Jacobus, John M., Jr. *Philip Johnson*. New York: George Braziller, 1962.
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- The Pritzker Architecture Prize, 1979: Presented to Philip Johnson*. Hyatt Foundation, 1980.
- Schulze, Franz. *Philip Johnson: Life and Work*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- “What’s Going On in New Canaan?” *House and Home*, January 1953, 132-39.

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## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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**Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House**  
**New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT**

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### **Verbal Boundary Description:**

The nominated property includes the entire property known as 881 Ponus Ridge Road and recorded in the New Canaan Land Records in Volume 559, page 432.

### **Boundary Justification:**

The boundary reflects the historical extent of the property and thus includes the lawn, trees, and field that were intended as its original setting.

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**Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House  
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT**

Section number Photographs Page 1

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**All Photographs:**

1. Richard and Geraldine Hodgson House
2. New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT
3. PAST, Inc. Photo
4. June 2003
5. Negative filed with PAST, Inc.

**Captions:**

- 1: View of north elevation of house as approached from driveway, bedroom wing on left, camera facing southwest.
- 2: North elevation of house, camera facing southwest.
- 3: North elevation of house, looking toward bedroom wing, which is treated as a garden wall, camera facing east.
- 4: South elevation of house, camera facing north
- 5: South elevation of house, showing glass corridor to bedroom wing, camera facing northwest.
- 6: East elevation of bedroom wing, camera facing northwest.
- 7: View of garden court from outside, camera facing northeast.
- 8: View of garden court from inside living room, camera facing southeast.
- 9: Living room, looking toward fireplace, camera facing south.
- 10: Entrance foyer, with dining area, camera facing east.
- 11: Kitchen, camera facing west.
- 12: Carport to northeast of house, camera facing north.