



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

574

# 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 Ford, Elinor and Sherman House  
other names/site number n/a

### 2. Location

street & number 55 Talmadge Hill Road  not for publication  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] SHPO 7-8-10  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
CCF / SHPO  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:)

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

**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	
4	0	buildings
0	0	district
1	0	site
1	0	structure
0	0	object
6	0	<b>Total</b>

**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: STONE  
 walls: STONE;  
           WOOD - Weatherboard  
 roof: ASPHALT - Shingle  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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### **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 Elinor and Sherman Ford House is a minimalist, horizontally emphasized local expression of the Modern style designed by the firm, Gates and Ford Architectural and Planning Associates from 1952 to 1954 for partner Russell Ford's parents. The house is a geometric composition of three attached, one-story rectangular volumes finished with regional natural materials and blended with the surrounding landscape. Each volume is covered by a separate, flat overhanging roof and employs floor-to-ceiling glazing placed across or at the corners of the elevations, eliminating the appearance of a wall in the landscape. The house is constructed of a wood frame set on a fieldstone foundation and is sheathed with vertically laid tongue-and-groove wood boards painted dark brown. A portion of the foundation is the remnant of a previous house on the property and one wing of the building was constructed as an addition to the former house in 1952. Select sections of the exterior walls are clad in fieldstone that continuously extends into the foundation and surrounding stone walls in the yard. The Ford property occupies an irregularly shaped, 5.24-acre lot near the south boundary of the Modern architecture-rich town of New Canaan, Connecticut. The house is a short distance south of the historic Merritt Parkway, which crosses the south side of New Canaan en route to New York. The Ford property contains five resources that contribute to its historical and architectural significance, including the Ford house (1954), a guesthouse/garage (1956), a poolhouse (ca. 1954), a barn (early twentieth century) and a designed landscape created by twentieth-century landscape architect Friede Stege (ca. 1963). The buildings are concentrated in the center of the property and are surrounded by garden plantings, grass lawns, and mature trees. A dense buffer of vegetation lines the edges of the property.

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### **Narrative Description**

#### **Setting**

The Ford property is accessed by a linear driveway that extends almost 200 feet north from Talmadge Hill Road past the main house to a spacious parking area near the centrally clustered group of buildings. The house is oriented lengthwise and faces east toward the driveway. The garage/guest house is located northeast of the house and faces south to the parking area. The buildings are visually connected through the use of identical design and materials and networks of low fieldstone walls and narrow walkways. Shrubs line the stone walls and building elevations and the surrounding lawns are divided into multiple intimate spaces by a mixture of mature natural vegetation and plantings. A massive ash tree located east of the parking area is more than 200 years old. A buffer of trees separates an in-ground pool and poolhouse from the garage/guesthouse to the north of the main house. The west-facing poolhouse and west rear elevation of the main house designate the private side of the property. The barn that predates the house is nestled in a grove of trees in the north end of the property and faces an informal grass lawn to the east. Views from each building seamlessly frame the multiple sheltered garden spaces and evoke the feeling of living within the landscape. Neighboring single-family houses are not visible from the property. Specific features of the lot are further elaborated in the landscape section of the description below.

#### **Exterior**

The Ford House is defined by its low, earth-tone colored rectangular forms that appear as if they are extensions of the stone walls crossing the landscape. The house is comprised of three primary rectangular sections, including a 72 foot by 22 foot main block with a 38 foot by 26 foot wing centered along the facade (east elevation) and a 42 foot by 18 foot wing attached perpendicularly to the west (rear) elevation. Gates and Ford initially designed the current rear wing as a living room addition to the former house on the property and completed construction in 1952. A portion of the main block of the house occupies the site and foundation of the earlier residence. Construction of the main block and east wing was completed in 1954. The roof of the main block is layered approximately one foot higher than the wings. Gates and Ford visually deconstructed the edges of the house by continuing overlapping wall and roof planes past its box-shaped frame.

The visual presence of the walls is minimized through materials, color, and expanses of glazing formed by sliding doors, plate glass and fixed transom windows set within a slender steel grid. The steel is painted the same dark brown color as the exterior sheathing. All of the windows are in-kind insulated glass-replacements installed around 1975. The seamless convergence of the house with the landscape is further achieved through the integration of fieldstone elements, derived from the same Bedford, New York quarry as the stone walls throughout the property.

The facade of the house incorporates portions of solid walls that contribute to the privacy of the interior. Dark wood sheathing on the exterior of the east wing is echoed by matching brown flashing on the flat roof above, which is slightly visible above a line of shrubs along the driveway. The facade wall is recessed beneath a deep roof overhang that is supported by the side walls of the wing. Three equally spaced bays contain plate glass and glazed doors with original iron safety railings along the bottom. A layered aesthetic of overlapping planes is achieved through the extension of the roof covering the main block of the house a few feet east over the roof of the wing. The exposed wall of the main block is covered with fieldstone and extends one foot past the north edge of the roof. Two slender posts support the overhanging roof, which shelters a linear stone entrance porch. An equal-length stepped terrace ascends from the parking area to the porch, identifying the otherwise discrete main entrance. The entrance is located on the north elevation of the wing at its juncture with the main block, and consists of a six-panel solid wood door set within a glazed surround. A stone wall extends out from the adjacent north elevation of the house and forms an open gate leading to the back yard. The north elevation contains asymmetrical glazing and is screened by dense plantings.

The west (rear) side of the house serves as a second primary elevation, designed to engage the private landscape behind it. Floor-to-ceiling glazing spans the majority of the main block, which is set back slightly beneath the overhanging roof and extended north wall. The grid of glazing is asymmetrical and contains three pairs of sliding doors and a band of sliding windows in the top half of the wall. The west wing, which predates the main block by two years, has an identical aesthetic with a glazed wall that wraps its northwest corner and continues across its west elevation. The horizontality and overlapping planes of the wing are juxtaposed with a massive, partially interior stone chimney that pierces through the flat roof and extends past the curtain wall near the south end of the elevation. A linear stone garden wall terminates at the chimney, linking the house with the landscape. A single glazed door within the frame of the wing opens to the yard on its north elevation.

The boundary between the house and exterior is further diminished by a 25 foot long greenhouse erected in 1969 that extends from the west elevation of the wing along the wall of the main block at the south end of the house. A transparent wall in the wing formed by glazed sliding doors opens into the greenhouse, which provides views of vegetation from multiple vantage points inside and outside the house. The greenhouse sits three feet above grade atop a fieldstone wall and is accessed by wide stone steps leading to a utilitarian exterior door. The greenhouse aesthetic continues along the south end of the house through a narrow atrium that extends along the south elevation and a sunroom (1986) located at the end of the facade (east elevation). The atrium is inserted beneath the overhanging flat roof of the house and sits atop an extension of the same stone foundation of the greenhouse. The greenhouse, atrium, and sunroom are transitional spaces that each contains an interior and exterior door. No circulation exists between these separate transitional rooms and the extended, solid walls of the house flank the atrium. Stone steps lead from the yard to the exterior entrance on the east wall of the atrium and slate patio along the front of the sunroom. The sunroom was constructed in 1986.

## **Interior**

Gates and Ford continued the theme of private, open spaces that fluidly transition to and from the landscape, throughout the interior of the house. It contains 3,704 square feet on one level including several multipurpose living areas and three bedrooms. The walls and ceilings consist of drywall painted white to reflect light and draw the eye to the exterior. Skylights, tall doorways, and open walls enhance the spacious feeling of the house. The private interior spaces are located within the front (east) wing and the south end of the main block, while the more public living/dining rooms are oriented in the west half of the house, closer to the rear garden. Most of the floors are covered with slate tile or carpet and are set on the same plane as exterior patios or gardens. The house is finished with recessed lighting, central air conditioning, forced hot air, and an original call button system, which no longer functions.

The main entrance provides access to a linear hallway that extends through the west side of the east wing. The hall is approximately 10 feet wide and features slate floors, painted black and a continuous span of 16 original, gridded rectangular skylights that allow moon and sun light into the space. Doors at either end of the solid, east wall of the hallway lead into the facade wing, which is occupied by two bedrooms accessed from a parallel hall with built-in closets on the opposite side. An expansive, approximately 40 foot long living room is located west of the main hall and is only separated from it by an ornamental wood screen at one end. Views west from the main hall illustrate the porous nature of the space. The garden is visible through the glazed living room wall and the interior and exterior of the west wing and adjacent greenhouse are visible as well. A portion of the living room is finished with wood paneling that matches a built-in shelving unit on the west wall. An adjacent doorway that rises to the same height as the glazed wall frame opens into a 12 foot wide section of the west wing that serves as a hall and sitting area. This space is finished with slate tile painted black and features an open wall to the attached greenhouse. The remainder of the wing is occupied by an office/living area oriented to celebrate the stone fireplace and seamless views of the yard.

The south end of the main block of the house contains the master bedroom suite. A bathroom and closet on the west wall feature reveals of the greenhouse, while the south and east walls of the bedroom are open to the atrium and sunroom. The opposite, north end of the house is occupied by a large kitchen off the main living room. The kitchen is finished with an octagonal terra cotta tile floor and black African granite countertops. It is open to an additional dining space in the northwest corner of the house and pantry in the northeast corner. Approximately 2,570 square feet of the house is set over an unfinished basement and the remainder sits atop a crawl space.

### **Alterations**

Alterations to the Ford House as completed in 1954 are minor. The exterior is completely intact as originally designed, with the exception of window replacement in 1975 and the small greenhouse, atrium, and sunroom additions constructed at the house end of the house between 1969 and 1986. The historic interior layout and finishes are intact.

### **Outbuildings**

#### ***Guesthouse/Garage, contributing (1956)***

A one-story guesthouse/garage located northeast of the house is completed with an aesthetic and materials that match the house. Gates and Ford designed the building in 1956 as housing for a chauffeur and cook. It is constructed with a combination of fieldstone walls and a tongue-and-groove plank-sheathed wood-frame, flat roof, and a nearly rectangular L-shaped plan. The facade (south elevation) is defined by extended stone walls flanking an off center void that contains a deeply recessed entrance with a paneled wood door. The entrance is accessed from wide stone steps located beneath open rectangular cut-outs in the roof. A two-car garage with extra-wide bays fills the east elevation and is concealed from view by the extended stone wall. The north (rear) elevation incorporates a glazed wall along a patio defined by an open section of the flat roof above. This area may have been constructed during alterations to the guest house/garage in 1978. The west wall of the building is primarily blank and contains a wood access door painted dark brown. Fenestration is asymmetrical and openings contain glazed sliding doors and fixed or casement sash.

The interior of the guesthouse/garage emulates the open spaces of the main house. The entrance opens to a rectangular living/dining room with one stone and one glazed wall. A master bedroom with oak floors and wood paneling is located in the north end of the house adjacent to the garage along the east side. A skylit, ceramic tiled bathroom is accessed from the bedroom. The west end of the guesthouse contains a remodeled kitchen and a study/second bedroom.

#### ***Poolhouse, contributing (ca. 1954)***

A one-story poolhouse designed by Gates and Ford around 1954 is located a short distance west of the guest house/garage and faces west toward the pool. The poolhouse has a flat roof and right-angled, C-shaped plan. It is constructed primarily of fieldstone, but incorporates wood-framed, clapboard covered, single bay units at either end. The facade consists of a recessed central stone patio that is not covered by the roof and sliding doors in the wood sections to either side.

***Pool, contributing (ca. 1954)***

A rectangular, in-ground pool is located east of the poolhouse in a private section of the yard, sheltered by walls of shrubs. The axial shape of the pool is accented by the presence of the poolhouse and a large arbor at either end. The pool appears to have been installed in about 1954.

***Barn, contributing (early-twentieth century)***

A one-story, wood-frame barn is located in the north end of the property and dates from the early twentieth century, before the current house was constructed. It is separated from the view of the other buildings by a buffer of tall trees and faces east. The barn has an asphalt-clad side gable roof and is covered with wood shingles. It is currently used for the storage of books and small items. The barn is associated with the previous house on the property that was extant when the 1952 (west wing) portion of the Ford house was constructed and it has continually served as storage space for the primary residence on the property through the twentieth century. The barn is therefore contributes to the historical significance of the property.

***Landscape, contributing (ca. 1963)***

The majority of the Ford House property is a designed landscape created by Friede Stege about 1963. The landscape is informal and is subtly divided into several zones or outdoor rooms. The circulation function of the driveway and parking area is continued by a gravel path leading west to a yard behind the house and slate paths leading to the guest and pool houses. A line of spruce, juniper, and pine shrubs and a willow tree screens the house from the driveway. The guesthouse is sheltered by tall spruce and pine trees, mixed with yew, holly, and azalea shrubs.

Two outdoor rooms are located north of the main house, but are visually separated from the house and guest house. One room is a rectangular space with the poolhouse at the west end and a patio to the east, which is flanked by a stone wall and covered by a flat arbor with a curved front. Holly, juniper, and azalea bushes define the edges of an intimate grassy space north of the pool area. A stone-lined stream passes through a densely vegetated portion of the property west and south of the pool.

The yard west of the main house is almost completely enclosed by jogged, terraced stone walls. An opening in a wall at the terminus of the driveway path provides access to the yard, which can be discretely entered from the north. A circular planting bed is sited across from kitchen/dining area of the house and an ornamental tree set against a linear stone wall is visible from both the kitchen and spaces inside the rear wing of the house. The edges of the property contain dense tree cover. All of the spaces are fluid and create unique experiences as one traverses the property.

**Integrity**

The Ford property contains all of its historic Modern style buildings on their original sites within the more than 5-acre, private residential lot. The buildings exhibit Gates and Ford Architectural and Planning Associates' typical low, glazed horizontal rectangular forms, and retain their original natural materials and fluid layout. The feeling of the house as a minimalist, Modern style space with its layered structural planes and continuous communication between interior and exterior living areas is intact. The surrounding designed landscape created in the 1960s did not substantially change the preexisting, densely vegetated quality of the property or views to and from the primary buildings. The intimate nature of multiple garden rooms and retention of the original stone walls on the property enhances the association of the house with design oriented to embrace the surrounding natural environment.

**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

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1952-1979

**Significant Dates**

1952-1954: House and pool house constructed

1956: Guesthouse/garage constructed

Ca. 1963: Landscape completed

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Gates, Frederick Taylor and

Ford, Russell

Gates & Ford Architectural and Planning Assoc.

Steger, Fride (landscape architect)

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance for the Elinor and Sherman Ford House property begins in 1952 when the first portion of the house was completed and extends to 1979, the end of the mid-twentieth-century Modern style architectural period as defined in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). It encompasses the timeframe during which the Fords occupied the house and the period during which all of the contributing resources on the property were developed or incorporated as part of this Modern style residential complex.

**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.

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

The Elinor and Sherman Ford House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C at the state level for its associations with the progressive architectural social milieu, domestic lifestyle trends, and development of Modern style architecture during the mid-twentieth century. The building possesses significance under Criterion A in the category of Social History for its association with the established colony of Modernist architects who were living, networking, and realizing their experimental designs in New Canaan and for its association with the development of highly efficient homes that implemented new ideas about privacy, simplistic aesthetics, and an emphasis on open interior and outdoor space. Under Criterion C, the building possesses significance in the area of Architecture as a local example of a minimalist Modern style residence that is characteristic of the firm, Gates and Ford Architectural and Planning Associates. The house is the second of five residences designed by the firm in New Canaan and was completed for Russell Ford's parents. It demonstrates their signature, low rectangular volumes that are closely integrated with their surrounding landscapes. The Elinor and Sherman Ford House and its matching guesthouse/garage meet the requirements for listing under property type Number F.2 Geometric I, as defined in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), and contributes to the Modern Architecture Movement in the United States, 1920–1979 and Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residential Architecture in Connecticut, 1930–1979 historical context themes described in the MPDF. The property also meets Criterion C at the local level as an example of the designs of female landscape architect Friede Stege.

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

**Areas of Significance: Criterion A**

**Social History**

The presence of the Modernist architectural culture centered in New Canaan in Fairfield County and surrounding Yale University in New Haven County during the mid-twentieth century provided substantial opportunities for emerging designers to establish businesses and develop their own expressions of the Modern style. Russell Ford and Frederick Taylor Gates befriended each other while attending high school at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire and college at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Gates received a Bachelor of Arts in 1945 and a Bachelor of Architecture (BArch) in 1949, the same year that prominent architectural historian and early advocate of Modernism, Vincent Scully received his Ph.D from Yale. Russell Ford earned a BArch from Yale in 1951, under the first Modernist Dean of the School of Architecture, George Howe (Kaplan 2010). Ford pursued an interest in urban planning and design by subsequently enrolling in Yale's graduate planning program. As students and alumni, Gates and Ford may have made associations with the internationally renowned Modern architects who served as faculty or guest lecturers in Yale's architectural school after the late 1940s.

Gates and Ford opened their architectural and planning practice in 1950 at 105 Main Street in New Canaan, in close proximity to the downtown offices of Eliot Noyes and Associates (96 Main Street), Philip Johnson, Victor Christ-Janer (Elm Street) and John Black Lee Associates (36 Grove Street, opened 1954) among others. Gates had previously served as an apprentice in Eliot Noyes's office (Strassmann 2008:223). By 1950, at least seven Modern style residences were completed by master architects in town, including the Eliot Noyes 1 (1947), Landis Gores (1948), Marcel Breuer II (1949), Philip Johnson (1949), Kniffen (1949), John Johansen (1949), and Mills (1949) houses. Like their renowned architectural predecessors, both designers eventually built their own showpiece houses in town, Gates in 1952 and Ford in 1960–1961. The partners designed five houses together before separating to pursue their individual interests in 1957. The town of New Canaan attracted both designers and clients seeking Modern style buildings. This artistically inclined



community generated an enhanced potential for Modern design commissions and sources of expert mentorship or inspiration through the exemplary houses completed by the influential national and international architects working and living in the region.

Elinor and Sherman Ford purchased their 5.24-acre property in 1940, which was already developed with a nineteenth-century farmhouse and outbuildings. They hired their son, Russell Ford and Frederick Gates to design a Modern style addition to the preexisting farmhouse in 1952. After discovering that they preferred spending time in open, functional space of the addition, the Fords decided to demolish the older farmhouse and rebuilt a Modern style home atop its foundation to minimize cost (Strassman 2008:225). The Ford's preference for the Modern addition demonstrates the shifting domestic patterns of the mid-twentieth century. 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, each deserved 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 new construction materials and mechanized conveniences, revolutionized preferences for residential design and provided opportunities for emerging Modern style architects to introduce strikingly new concepts that would be assimilated into popular culture in the following decades (Mock 1945:12-21).

### **Area of Significance: Criterion C**

#### **Architecture**

The Elinor and Sherman Ford House is a representative example of the local design firm Gates and Ford Architectural and Planning Associates' experimentation with the integration of outdoor space and attached horizontally emphasized rectangular forms. The house is the second of five residences designed by Gates and Ford in New Canaan, which all employ low, elongated sections completed with natural materials and floor to ceiling glazing as a means of engaging and blending with the surrounding landscape. The rectangular volumes often incorporate right angled intersections, deep overhanging eaves, and wall or roof planes subtly extended past the edges of the building. The resultant forms are expanded, slightly more complex versions of the early Modern minimalist box prevalent in New Canaan during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The Ford House also demonstrates the application of the Modern style to a larger, more luxurious house than a small-scale efficiency dwelling. Besides the Ford House (1954), the firm's residential work in New Canaan included the Gates House (1952) designed by Gates for himself; Askew House (1955, no longer extant); Attwood House (1958) for magazine publisher William Attwood; and the Melville House (1958) for David Melville. The Melville House was included in New Canaan's 1959 Modern House Tour. The Gates, Ford, and Attwood houses exhibit flat roofs with supported overhangs or recessed wall sections and their later Melville house employs a butterfly roof. Most of the houses were accompanied by carports or small guest cottages.

Gates's and Ford's partnership seems to have combined Gates's architectural training with Ford's background in architecture and planning. The pair established their practice after serving military duty during World War II and graduating from Yale. Gates designed his own house in town in 1952, two years after opening the firm. During this time, Ford also worked an associate planner for the City of New Haven and was a graduate student in Yale's planning program (*The Free Lance-Star* 1952). As part of his coursework, Ford participated in a model city project titled "The Plan for Planning" which envisioned a future for Fredericksburg, Virginia, which he visited in 1952 (*The Free Lance-Star* 1952). In 1957, the town of Newtown, Connecticut commissioned the firm to complete its first comprehensive zoning plan (BCA 2008:G10). Shortly after the project, Gates moved from New Canaan to Nassau, Bahamas to form a new partnership with architect Robertson Ward. Ward designed New Canaan's first Modern residence, the Kirkbride House, in 1937, before establishing himself as a designer of resorts and private homes in the Caribbean.

Ford continued working in the New Canaan area after his partnership with Gates ended in 1957. Gates and Ford designed the Attwood and Melville houses (constructed in 1958) before Gates's move. After acquiring land on West Street in town, Ford worked with another former Yale classmate, Edward W. Winter (b. 1905) to assist him in the design of his own house, completed in 1961. The current owners of the house report that Ford and Winter knew each other as room

mates at Yale. Winter worked as a draftsman and resided on Point-O-Woods Road in the neighboring town of Darien. By the mid-1960s, Ford was listed in the 1967 Stamford directory as a city planning consultant with offices on the second floor of 123 High Ridge Road in that city (Ancestry.com 2010 (Ancestry.com 2010; AIA 1970).

### **Area of Significance: Criterion C**

#### **Landscape Design**

The Ford property is an intact representation of the work of local landscape architect Friede Stege (b.1896), who operated her own design practice in New Canaan, Connecticut from the 1930s through the 1980s. Stege is one of few females who successfully entered the design professions during the mid-twentieth century. Originally a New Yorker, Stege began traveling to New Canaan in 1920 with her husband, textile merchant George Henry Stege. The Steges moved to the town shortly after and Friede Stege continued her independent career in New Canaan after her husband died in 1937. Stege established herself through study at the Columbia Extension Service and an apprenticeship with Vera Breed, a female landscape architect based in the nearby town of Wilton. She complemented this training by becoming involved with civic beautification projects and serving on the advisory committee for the design of the Merritt Parkway (Williams 2000).

Stege focused primarily on residential work located within Fairfield County and the New York City area. Her designs reflect similarities with the favored paradigms of Modernist architects, such as the creation of highly functional plans achieved through detailed analysis of its intended use, integration of the landscape with buildings, informality, and sensitivity to existing site conditions. These characteristics are demonstrated at the Ford property, where she incorporated the original stone walls as a key element of her design and created multiple, private outdoor spaces that provide striking views from the glazed walls of the house. The more private interior spaces are sheltered by screens of hedges and the planes of the house are extended or echoed by the stone walls and placement of shrubs near the edges of the buildings. Grade changes and the networks of walls and pathways both define and connect the separate gardens and the buildings. Stege frequently incorporated a variety of plant species, colors, and paving patterns to create layers of texture and interest in her designs (Williams 2000). Stege may have designed the original landscape for Russell Ford's own Modern style house in New Canaan (BCA 2008). The total number of her extant landscapes created around Modern houses is unknown.

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#### **Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)**

#### **Ford Family**

Russell Ford is the grandson of Lewis P. Lapham, who amassed wealth in the leather industry before founding the Texaco Oil Company with other partners. Lapham lived in New York City and developed a 300-acre property named the Waveny estate on South Avenue in New Canaan with a Tudor style mansion in 1912. The family used the estate as a summer residence. Ford's mother, Elinor Lapham married Sherman Ford at Waveny on June 17, 1915 (BCA 2008:105). In 1967, the Lapham family donated most of the land comprising the estate and sold the house on the estate to the town of New Canaan. The property is now known as Waveny Park. Lewis P. Lapham's great grandson, Lewis H. Lapham continued the family's legacy of status as the editor of *Harper's Magazine* from 1976 to 1981 and 1983 to 2006. Like Ford, Lewis H. Lapham received his education from Yale. Russell Ford and his wife, Hope reportedly received their New Canaan property as a wedding gift in 1959. They resided in the house Russell Ford designed with Edward Winter for 15 years, before selling it in 1976 to move to Orleans, Massachusetts.

#### **Property Ownership History**

When the Ford house was completed in 1954, the property also contained a garage/cottage, a storage building for lawn equipment, a well house, pool, and poolhouse. The Fords sold the property to entrepreneur Ely R. Callaway, Jr. in 1963.

Callaway became an established business man while serving as the president of a textile company beginning in 1963 and forming the Callaway Golf Company in the early 1980s. He commissioned the design of the extant landscape during his residency (ca. 1963), before he sold the property to Paul A. and Mona J. Strassmann in 1975 (BCA 2008:107; Town of New Canaan 2010). The Strassmans purchased the property specifically because of its Modern style architecture and abundance of gardens. They had been searching for a residence in Connecticut since 1972 because the state's income and property taxes were more affordable than those in New York (Strassmann 2008:224). The Strassmans continue to reside in the house.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

American Institute of Architects (AIA)

1956 *American Architects Directory*. R.R. Bowker, LLC, New York, NY.

1962 *American Architects Directory*. R.R. Bowker, LLC, New York, NY.

1970 *American Architects Directory*. Third Edition. R.R. Bowker, LLC, New York, NY.

Building Conservation Associates [BCA]

2008 *New Canaan Mid-Century Modern Houses*. Prepared for the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, Hartford, CT.

Earls, William D., AIA

2006 *The Harvard Five in New Canaan*. W.W. Norton & Company, New York, NY.

Kaplan, Diane E. (Yale University Library)

2010 Personal communication with Virginia H. Adams, April 9, 2010.

Mock, Elizabeth (editor)

1945 *Built in the USA Since 1932*. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

New Canaan Historical Society (NCHS).

2010 Property and architect files. New Canaan Historical Society, New Canaan, CT.

The Free Lance Star

1952 "Plan for planning" arrives here for public showing, community center exhibit is set up. *The Free Lance-Star*. Fredericksburg, VA. Retrieved March 2010 from the world wide web: news.google.com.

The Price and Lee Co.

Multiple Stamford City Directory, 1958, 1967. Retrieved March 2010 from the world wide web: Ancestry.com.

Multiple Darien City Directory, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1962. Retrieved March 2010 from the world wide web: Ancestry.com.

Town of New Canaan

2010 Assessor's Records. On file, Town Hall, New Canaan, CT.

Strassmann, Paul A.

2008 *Paul's Odyssey: America, 1945-1985*. Information Economics Press, New Canaan, CT.

Ford, Elinor and Sherman House  
Name of Property

Fairfield County, CT  
County and State

Williams, Norma E., ASLA  
2000 Friede Stege: Designer of Residential Landscapes. *The Connecticut Landscape Architect* Winter 2000:8-9.

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): \_\_\_\_\_

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### 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 5.24

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u>	<u>0626882</u>	<u>4552371</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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

The property boundaries encompass the legally recorded lines of Lot 22, shown on Map30, containing 5.24 acres.

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

The boundaries include the house and full extent of the associated outbuildings and landscape features that contribute to the setting and appearance of the property.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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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

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### Additional Documentation

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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:** Ford House

**City or Vicinity:** New Canaan

**County:** Fairfield **State:** Connecticut

**Photographer:** Jenny Fields Scofield

**Date Photographed:** February 3, 2010

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

1 of 8. View looking west at house facade from parking area/driveway.

2 of 8. View looking northeast from yard at west elevation of house and south elevation of guest house/garage in distance.

3 of 8. View looking southeast from yard at west elevation of house.

4 of 8. View looking north in main hall of house, toward entrance.

5 of 8. View looking southwest in house from main hall at living room and atrium beyond.

6 of 8. View looking northwest in house from study through glazed wall to garden.

7 of 8. View looking northeast from main entrance of house to facade and west elevation of guest house/garage.

8 of 8. View looking east at pool and poolhouse.

---

**Property Owner:**

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

name Paul and Mona Strassmann  
street & number 55 Talmadge 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

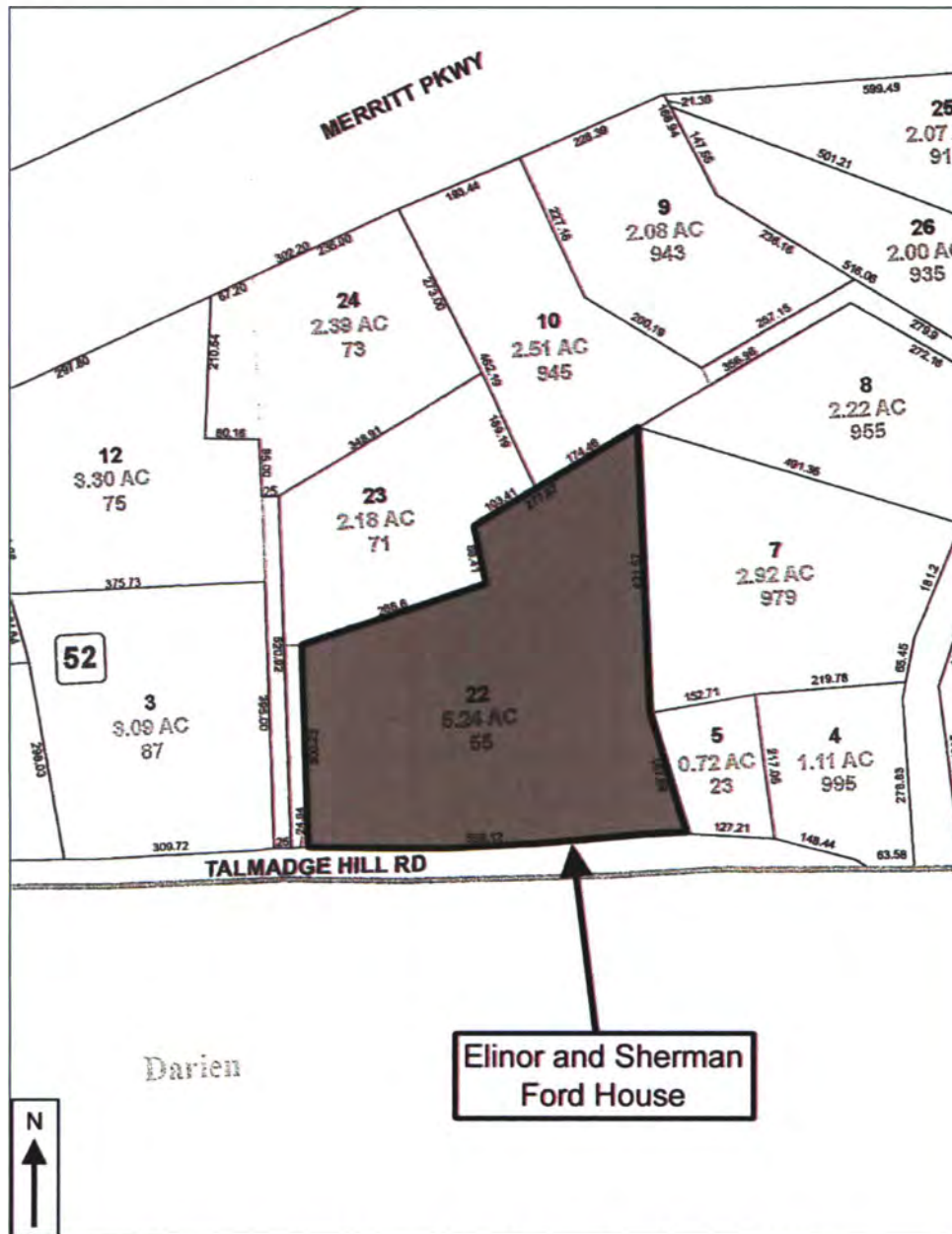
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Ford, Elinor and Sherman House

Fairfield County, Connecticut

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

Town of New Canaan Assessor's Map Number 34.



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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

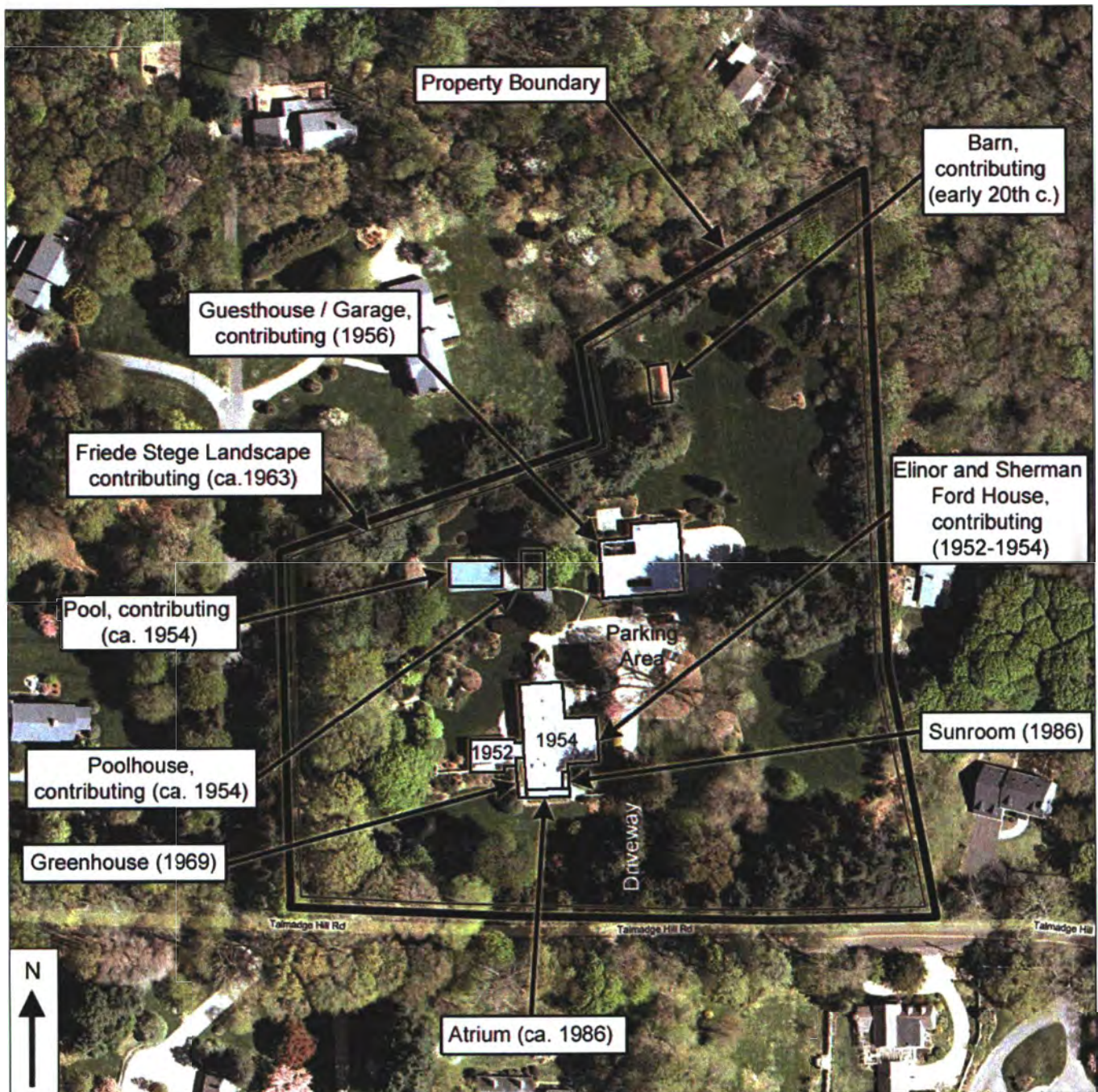
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Ford, Elinor and Sherman House

Fairfield County, Connecticut

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

Site Plan of the Elinor and Sherman Ford House Property



(Base map source: [www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com). Accessed March 2010).





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY Ford, Elinor and Sherman, House  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut 1930-  
NAME: 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: 10000574

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Architects Gates and Ford were among the first modernists  
to establish an office in New Haven. However, they were Yale-trained  
and their contribution balances the traditional attention given to the  
"Harvard Five" in New Canaan.

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER DDM

DISCIPLINE Historic

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 9/16/10

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















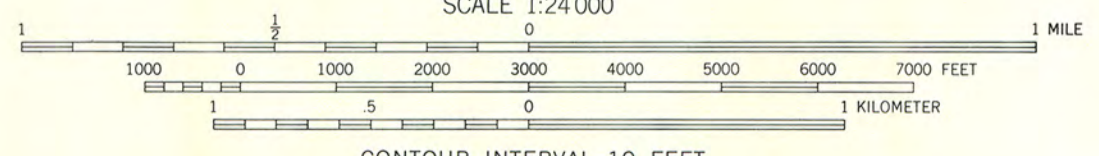




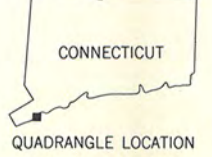
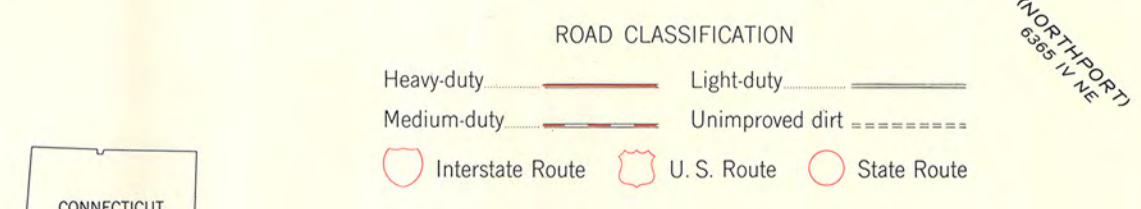
Ford House  
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT  
UTM Reference:  
18 0626882E  
4552371N



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Connecticut Geodetic Survey  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
taken 1949. Field checked 1951. Revised 1960  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS chart 221 (1959)  
This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
Polyconic projection. 10,000-foot grid ticks based on  
Connecticut coordinate system  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 18, shown in blue  
1927 North American Datum  
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983  
move the projection lines 6 meters south and  
36 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE  
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 7.2 FEET  
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



NORWALK SOUTH, CONN.  
41073-A4-TF-024

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation  
with State of Connecticut agencies from aerial photographs  
taken 1982 and other sources. This information not  
field checked. Map edited 1984  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

1960  
PHOTOREVISED 1984  
DMA 6366 III SW—SERIES V816



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 **Ford, Elinor and Sherman House, 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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## Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism

### Film Division

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