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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 Durisol House / Risom, Jens House

other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number 43 Marshall 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not for publication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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title

7-8-10
Date

CC / 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]
Signature of the Keeper

9/16/10
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	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	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
walls: BRICK;
OTHER - Durisol
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 Durisol/Risom House is a model single-family residence designed by the local architectural firm of Sherwood, Mills & Smith to showcase a new mid-twentieth-century construction material, manufactured under the name Durisol. Durisol was produced in lightweight, precast concrete panels, blocks, and tiles initially developed in Switzerland to provide enhanced fireproofing and soundproofing. Robert Jahn commissioned the construction of the house which was completed in 1949 and purchased the following year by the renowned Modernist furniture designer and manufacturer, Jens Risom (b. 1916), who lived in it for nine years with his family and used it to display his work. The house exhibits a subtle version of the Modern style. It consists of a simple, one-story, horizontally emphasized rectangular form covered by a low-pitched side gable roof. Privacy is achieved through a modest glazing on the façade, but a glazed rear elevation provides communication between the interior living spaces and the surrounding landscape. The interior is designed to maximize space and functionality, while providing efficient programming for family living. New Canaan architect Laurent DuPont, completed two additions in 1972, including a carport attached to the facade and a small extension at the south end of the house that contained an office. The property is located approximately one-half mile from the town center in a residential neighborhood developed primarily with late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century houses. The town of New Canaan contains more than 90 mid-twentieth-century Modern style houses, located primarily on secluded, scenic residential lots throughout its boundaries.

Narrative Description

Setting

The house is set back approximately 75 feet from the road near the center of a flat, rectangular, suburban lot. A linear, asphalt driveway extends west from the road to the attached carport and an open grass lawn surrounds the house. The front lawn is ornamented by a large Chinese maple tree and mature pine trees line the edges of the property. Tall shrubs planted near the house form a screen of privacy. A slate walkway that connects to the driveway continues around the house, connecting its multiple entrances. Neighboring single-family residences are clearly visible on three sides of the property. No outbuildings accompany the house.

Exterior

The Durisol/Risom House is a compact, one-story, L-shaped building that faces east and is oriented with its long side parallel to the road. The house is composed of two adjacent, side-gabled rectangular sections, and an attached former garage, which projects from the north end of the facade. The north section of the house is taller and wider than the south section, which was extended to encompass a former porch in 1954. The original 12 ft by 22 ft garage, was converted into living space in 1959. The carport is attached to the east wall of the former garage.

The house is constructed of a steel frame with Durisol walls, set on a concrete slab foundation. Durisol is a "light-weight pre-cast [type of] concrete employing chemically mineralized wood shavings for its 'aggregate,' and formed in modular slabs, blocks and tiles, over which various surfaces can be applied if desired" (*New York Times*, 6 November 1949). Staggered rows of concrete blocks laid without mortar interlock at the ends. The hollow spaces between the blocks are filled with concrete to form load-bearing walls that are reinforced at the corners with steel bars. Stucco, painted white, covers the exterior of the concrete block walls. The roof is comprised of Durisol planks covered with tar and gravel. Exposed rafter tails support deep overhanging open eaves on the north section of the house. A rectangular, interior brick chimney is located near the center of the north section of the house and rises several feet past the roof ridge. The red brick of the chimney is complemented by matching red brick that covers the south wall of the original garage. The remainder of the garage is finished with painted stucco over Durisol, like the house.

The main entrance is located on the facade (east elevation) at the junction of the house and garage. A single wood door flanked by fixed tripartite plate glass windows is recessed under the roof. The slate walkway leads from the driveway to a slate patio in front of the door. A secondary entrance on the north elevation is sheltered by an extension of the gable roof that is supported by boxed wood columns and an outdoor storage cabinet. A full-height, six-part, fixed plate glass window is adjacent to the door. Two single wood doors on the west (rear) elevation open to the walkway and lawn. An additional entrance is located off-center on the south elevation, under a projecting gabled hood, and a single wood door on the east wall of the original garage opens into a storage space. Fenestration consists of asymmetrical arrangements of fixed plate glass and horizontally oriented wood sliding and casement sash. The west elevation of the north section of the house is a glazed wall with floor-to-ceiling plate glass.

The attached carport, built in 1972, has a wood-framed gable roof supported by painted boxed steel columns. The carport was designed to seamlessly connect with the original garage. The ceiling consists of exposed roof framing that is painted white.

Interior

Sherwood, Mills, & Smith designed the Durisol/Risom House for "maximum livability for an active family with three children" (Morrison 1958:7). The interior program is zoned with the primary living spaces located in the north half of the house and the more private spaces linearly arranged in the south half. The house contains a kitchen, open-plan living/dining area, four bedrooms, and three bathrooms within 2,050 square ft. The majority of the interior finishes remain intact throughout the house, including the Durisol acoustical tiled ceilings and exposed Durisol roof planks. Most of the interior walls are finished with drywall, painted white. The house also retains original wood built-in cabinets and closets. The original radiant heating system under the floors is extant, but no longer functional.

The main entrance opens to short entrance hall finished with a slate floor that extends to an open living/dining space spanning across the north half of the house. The entrance hall has a wall of closets with sliding wood doors. The living room is the focal point of the house and features steel roof beams and support posts, both boxed with naturally finished oak. The massive brick chimney forms one wall of the room, near the entrance hall. An original, thin floating wood mantel shelf and an original, fabric fronted walnut shelf is attached to the brick. A floating, wood cabinet hangs on the north wall of the dining area. The ceiling plane in most of the living room follows the slope of the roof, but the ceiling in the entrance hall and east side of the living area is a lower dropped ceiling. The transition in heights is accented by a cantilevered ceiling plane finished with Durisol tiles that extends along the east wall of the room adjacent to the central chimney. The cantilevered ceiling includes recessed lighting and the wall below is covered with wood paneling. A gravel strip extends along the floor in the west side of the room adjacent to the glazed wall, designating an indoor planting area. The indoor planting strip was a popular Scandinavian design element. The original asphalt-tiled floor has been replaced with slate tile. A galley kitchen with a linoleum floor is tucked into the northeast corner of the house. The kitchen is accessed from the living room and entrance hall. A full-height grid of fixed awning windows on the north wall is aligned with the entrance hall. The converted garage space east of the kitchen is occupied by a bedroom.

The south half of the house contains a narrow double-loaded corridor that provides access to three bedrooms to the west, and two bathrooms, two closets, and a compact fourth bedroom to the east. The hall terminates at a master bedroom suite. Each bedroom features floor-to-ceiling banks of smooth-surfaced, wood built-in drawers and shelves that are painted white to match the walls. The master bedroom suite retains a full-width built-in closet and includes a bathroom and access to the rear yard. A doorway in the south wall of the master bedroom opens into an office in the 1972 addition.

Alterations

Alterations to the Durisol/Risom House are primarily limited to modest expansions of the living space. These changes represent historic alterations that are typical of mid-twentieth-century Modern houses. The original enclosed garage was converted into a bedroom, bathroom, and storage area in 1959, but the remainder of the original interior program is intact. A carport was attached to the former garage in 1972 and an approximately eight foot wide addition was constructed across the south end of the house the same year. This addition, which contains an office, blends seamlessly with the rest

of the house. One slide-out bed installed by Jens Risom has been removed from the house, but the majority of the built-ins remain. The original asphalt-tiled floor in the living/dining room was replaced with slate tile.

Integrity

The Durisol/Risom House remains on its original site within a quiet suburban setting surrounded by natural vegetation and mature trees. The addition of an attached carport and south extension do not detract from the integrity of the house, which retains its original form, massing, and overall plan. The majority of original interior and exterior materials remain unaltered, including the Durisol structural components and interior ceiling finishes, and built-in storage systems.

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

1949-1979

Significant Dates

1949: House constructed

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Sherwood, Mills & Smith (architects)

Tudisco & Diehl (builders)

DuPont, Laurent (architect, carport /office)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance of the Durisol/Risom House begins in 1949 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).

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 Durisol/Risom House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C for its associations with the post-war development of new construction materials and building technologies, progressive mid-twentieth-century domestic lifestyle trends, and the dissemination of Modern design to popular culture. The building possesses significance under Criterion A at the state level in the category of Social History for its association with the development of highly efficient but affordable homes that employed inexpensive mass-produced materials and technologies to implement new ideas about privacy, simplistic aesthetics, and an emphasis on open interior and outdoor space. Under Criterion C, the building possesses significance at the national level in the area of Architecture as a unique and intact example of a model house designed to showcase Durisol, a newly developed construction material. The Durisol house in Connecticut is one of five known Durisol homes in the country, and represents a pioneering structural technology developed during a period when increased housing demands motivated research in new building possibilities. The Connecticut Durisol house completed in 1949 demonstrates the exhibition use of load-bearing Durisol block walls in contrast to the steel frame and Durisol panel walls system used in the first two Durisol houses in the county, completed in New York just one year earlier. The Durisol/Risom House possesses significance under Criterion C at the state level as an example of the early work of Sherwood, Mills & Smith, a prolific regional architectural firm that designed several Modern style buildings in Connecticut. The Durisol/Risom House meets 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 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

The Durisol/Risom House was constructed in 1949 for Robert Jahn as a model house intended to demonstrate the versatility of the Durisol product in the field of house building. The post-World War II demand for housing and improvements in the production and distribution of affordable standardized building materials contributed to a boom in the residential construction industry. Federal funding of materials research programs, initiated during the war continued afterward, which meant that new synthetic products constantly became available to builders (Jester 1995:42). Companies selling new building materials often employed creative methods of advertising their products to convince the public of their value. The sponsorship of speculative model houses in a booming real estate market offered one technique for highlighting a particular product.

Robert Jahn owned the house for less than a year and built it as a speculative venture (Risom 2010b). The reason why Jahn chose to construct this model home in New Canaan is unknown, but it would have been highly visible to the emerging enclave of influential master architects working in the area during the mid-twentieth century. By 1949, Bauhaus architect Marcel Breuer and his former students Eliot Noyes, Phillip Johnson, John Johansen, and Landis Gores, later known as the “Harvard Five,” had already relocated to New Canaan and built seven high Modern style houses. The “Harvard Five” established the community as an epicenter for residential Modern design and used their own houses as conduits to experiment with new construction methods or architectural elements. The town of New Canaan was also conveniently located on the commuter rail line connecting to New York City, where many prominent industrial and architectural design firms based their practices.

Jahn sold the house in 1950 to Jens Risom (b. 1916), an internationally renowned Danish Modernist furniture designer and manufacturer then living and working in New York City. Risom’s company, Jens Risom Design, Inc. (JRD), opened in May 1946 and rapidly filled a niche in the growing market for high-quality contemporary furniture designed specifically for Modern buildings. By 1954, Risom expanded the company’s manufacturing facilities to a larger plant located in Connecticut (Risom 2010a). Risom and his wife had two children when they purchased the Durisol House in

New Canaan. The Risoms chose the house because of its Modern style design, location to good schools, and family-friendly qualities (Risom 2010b).

Risom became a highly influential designer in the European Modernist immigrant tradition that had begun with Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and Alvar Aalto among others, and he continued to cultivate the Modernist aesthetic in American design arts after World War II. He was born in Copenhagen in 1916, where his father, Sven, an award-winning architect, encouraged him to pursue his interests in design and business. Risom studied business and worked briefly for the Danish architect Ernst Kuhn and also for a small design studio/shop in Stockholm that specialized in residential furniture. Risom pursued furniture design because it allowed him greater creative freedom than the architectural profession, in which he observed that clients and building constraints influenced final results (Risom 2009). While in Sweden, he was exposed to the work of Bruno Mathsson and others including the Finnish architect, Alvar Aalto. From 1935 to 1938, Risom studied furniture design at the School for Arts and Crafts in Copenhagen. He immigrated to New York City in 1939 and initially found employment in a fabric studio operated by Daniel Cooper, after finding that no furniture design jobs existed at large organizations such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM) (Risom 2009). Risom settled in New York and began networking with other young design professionals such as architect Edward Durell Stone and architect/furniture designer George Nelson. Risom created a successful showroom of his furniture and subsequently left to establish his own company. Risom quickly grew his business in New York City and moved offices as his company expanded. His first studio was located in the back room of an upholstery shop on 52nd Street and he later relocated his showroom to 53rd Street and Fifth Avenue; Park Avenue near the Modern style Lever House; and Second Avenue (Risom 2010b). Risom's clients were primarily Modernist architects who could not find appropriately styled furnishings to place in the buildings they designed (Risom 2010b).

Risom's introduction to American Modern architecture included a project designing furniture for the Collier's House of Ideas, a model house designed by Connecticut architect Edward Durell Stone. In 1941, Risom and an entrepreneur friend Hans Knoll who he met in New York, embarked on a cross-country tour visiting Modern architects and exploring the potential for a modern furniture business. The two started the Hans Knoll Furniture Company in 1942, but their work was interrupted by World War II. Risom served in the United States army during the war, where he "learned the importance of new and recently designed and manufactured products" intended to address contemporary lifestyle requirements (Risom 2009). He noted that army veterans returned home with an appreciation for simple, high-functioning contemporary products (Risom 2009). Before the war, Knoll won a commission for the company to design the tables and chairs for numerous USO clubs, which increased the visibility of Risom's designs (Risom 2009). Following the war, Risom decided to start his own company JRD, which he advertised intensively using photographs taken by Richard Avedon of his designs set against stark white backgrounds (Risom 2010a).

Risom marketed his products through their use and display in his own home from 1950 to 1959. Several mid-twentieth-century national periodicals, including *House & Garden* (1955), the *New York Times* (1949, 1954) and the *Herald Tribune* (1958) featured articles about the Durisol House and Risom. Risom constructed his minimalist furniture with natural woods like walnut, cherry, and birch and often combined several functions in one piece, such as a dining table that doubled as a desk. "Slide-under" and folding built-in beds provided ways to more efficiently use the space. The Durisol house was highlighted as an example of an ideal well-thought-out, family-friendly, thoroughly modern residence. Post-war American domestic culture developed out of an unprecedented emphasis on family life, individuality, and the ideal that 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 through architectural features like those on the Durisol/Risom House (Mock 1945:12-21). Risom's designs offered a solution to American families attempting to furnish their new compact, open-plan Modern houses.

Risom sold the Durisol House in 1959 because he needed more space for his growing family. He moved to a larger house on Chichester Road in New Canaan. Although his second home was not of the Modern style, Risom designed several

Modern style additions and hired New Canaan architect John Black Lee to design a carport (Risom 2010b).ⁱ By the late 1950s, Risom expanded his business to include institutional work, particularly upscale executive office furniture. He established a furniture factory in a former, 600,000 square foot textile mill on Route 12 in Putnam, Connecticut, which he operated for about 30 years. Risom hired local textile machinists and trained them to manufacture furniture. Risom's paternal treatment of his employees included hiring local school teachers to tutor the employees in an effort to help them receive high school equivalency degrees. Risom's sales manager, Beaven Mills, had served in the military with him and their wives lived together during the war. Mills began working for Risom after 1956, when he commissioned the design of his Modern style New Canaan residence. The Dictaphone Corporation purchased Risom's company in the early 1970s, marking the first in a series of sales that eventually resulted in the closing of JRD. Following the sale of Risom's first company, JRD, he established a freelance design business, Design Control, in New Canaan in 1973. At the age of 94, Risom is still (2010) receiving individual commissions for furniture from local architects and owners of Modern style homes and is creating new lines of contemporary furniture. He remains actively involved in the preservation of mid-twentieth-century Modern style houses in New Canaan.

The Durisol/Risom House has only had two owners besides Robert Jahn. The Risoms sold the Durisol House to professional writers, Lester and Patricia Brooks for \$36,000 in 1959 (Town of New Canaan 2010). At the time, the Brooks's lived nearby in Norwalk and were seeking to purchase a Modern style home. They focused their home search in Westport and considered erecting a Techbuilt prefabricated home before they discovered the Durisol/Risom house in New Canaan. Like the Risom's, the Brooks's raised three children in the house. The Brooks's children were aged six months, two, and three-and-one-half when they moved in and Patricia Brooks noted that the house had a family friendly layout with multiple bedrooms was one feature that attracted them to the home. The Brooks's initially used the smallest bedroom near the master bedroom as a nursery (Brooks 2010). In 1972, Patricia and Lester Brooks hired architect Laurent DuPont to design the attached carport and office additions. Dupont received a bachelor degree from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1961 and his master's degree in architecture from Columbia University. After serving in the Navy and working in the office of Victor Christ-Janer in New Canaan, he opened an office in town in 1973 (LeMenager 1974).

Areas of Significance: Criterion C Architecture

The Durisol/Risom House is a rare example of a model home built in Connecticut to showcase a new mid-twentieth-century building material, and is an early representation of the Modern style design work of the architectural firm of Sherwood, Mills & Smith.ⁱⁱ The house appears to be the first use of the block form of Durisol for a residence in the country and is therefore significant under Criterion C at the national level. The number of Durisol model homes built in the United States is unknown. Two Durisol houses constructed in 1948 are located in Garrison, New York, but these employ an earlier version of the company's building system based on panels set within a steel frame. The Durisol/Risom House is a physical demonstration of the progression of a new building material from invention to application using pioneering structural technologies. Two additional Durisol houses in Garrison, New York were completed near the 1948 houses at a later date.

The rapidly escalating demand for affordable single-family housing after World War II fueled efforts to design and mass-produce prefabricated houses and manufacturing units in the 1940s and 1950s. Celotex, from sugar fibers, and Cemesto panels, formed with asbestos cement, were earlier pre-World War II examples of manufactured units using organic fiber compounds. Durisol is the trade name for a cement-bonded wood fiber that can be used as factory-produced building components for various applications. Cemesto and Durisol both provided self-supporting strength, eliminating the need for framing members between the panels (Prudon 2008:310). The product is still used as a construction material today, particularly in "green" construction because of its recyclability.

ⁱ The addition to his second New Canaan residence is the only architectural design completed by Risom.

ⁱⁱ The Alcoa House constructed in New Canaan in 1958 also served as a model home to showcase a new material. The house was commissioned by the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa) and designed by architect Charles Goodman to demonstrate the use of aluminum in a dwelling (BCA 2008:135).

The Durisol technology was developed in Switzerland in the early 1930s and named for the French words for “durable” and “insulation”. The Swiss company registered the American patent for the material in 1946, the same year that a group of American and European investors formed the Durisol Corporation, headquartered in New York with a small pilot plant in Aberdeen, Maryland (Heron 2006:156-157). In 1947, the Durisol Corporation purchased property for a larger manufacturing facility at Denning’s Point in Beacon, New York (58 miles north of New York City on the Hudson River), which was in operation by 1949. The company manufactured wall forms, floor forms, roof planks, wall panels, and insulation boards out of Durisol, producing 35,000 square feet per week by 1950 (Heron 2006:157). The short-lived United States operation was never profitable (the Beacon plant closed in 1954), but it set the stage for the opening of a Canadian facility in Mitchell, Ontario, in 1953, financed by different investors (Acharya 2010). Durisol Inc. is now a division of the Armtac Infrastructure Income Fund and focuses primarily on highway noise barriers, retaining walls, and other acoustic applications of the Durisol material. Other Durisol products, including insulated concrete forms, are sold through subsidiary companies (Durisol Inc. 2010).

Durisol marketed their lightweight precast concrete panels, blocks, and tiles as extremely fireproof as well as possessing superior acoustical soundproofing qualities. The company used the material to retrofit its own factory buildings at Denning’s Point, as well as the IBM country club in Poughkeepsie, the Bishop Dunn Memorial Hall in Newburgh, the roofs of restaurant chains along the New Jersey Turnpike and sound barrier walls along the New York State Thruway (Heron 2006:157-158). They also actively tried to insert their product in the mass-produced housing industry by constructing model homes using Durisol structural systems. Durisol hired architect Edward Durell Stone to design two experimental panel houses, built in 1948 in Garrison, New York, near their Beacon plant. Robert Jahn, the original owner of the Durisol/Risom House, also owned the properties in New York (Heron 2006:159). The following year, contractors Tudisco & Diehl completed the model Durisol house in New Canaan. A *New York Times* article from 1949 stated that the house in New Canaan was the first use of Durisol building materials as the primary structural components of a residence and was erected as a “pioneering, experimental job” (*New York Times* 1949). The house’s panelized roofing system is similar to that in the Garrison houses, but the load-bearing walls are composed of Durisol blocks filled with concrete. The block technique became the primary building system manufactured by the Canadian incorporation of the company (Acharya 2010).ⁱⁱⁱ

Thorne Sherwood (1910–1994), Willis N. Mills, Sr. (1907–1995), and Lester W. Smith (1909–1993) opened the architectural firm of Sherwood, Mills & Smith, in Stamford, Connecticut in 1946. Mills lived in New Canaan, where he had designed and built one of the earliest Modernist houses in the town for himself in 1941 (the Mills House I). Unlike most of the mid-twentieth-century Modern architects with studios in the area, Sherwood, Mills & Smith employed a staff of more than 50 people that included interior and furniture designers. They received commissions for several large commercial and institutional buildings in the region, including the South School in New Canaan (1950), the Mutual Insurance Company of Hartford (1959), and St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in New Canaan (1962). Other mid-twentieth-century residences in the area designed by the firm are Willis Mills’ second house in New Canaan (the Mills House 2, 1956), the Taylor House in Greenwich (ca. 1968), the Mills House in Wilton (ca. 1973), and the Steinmetz House in Wilton (ca. 1973) (SMS ca. 1979). Sherwood, Mills & Smith also worked on a “Development House” for General Electric built in Dobbs Ferry, New York, in 1954.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

N/A

ⁱⁱⁱ Two later Durisol houses were constructed in Garrison, New York, one in 1957 and one in 1979.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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- 2010a "The Answer is Risom." Retrieved March 2010 from the world wide web: <http://risom.org/about.html>.
- 2010b Personal communication with Virginia H. Adams and Jenny Fields Scofield, May 18, 2010.

Sherwood Mills and Smith Architects [SMS]

- ca. 1979 SMS Architects [brochure], New Canaan, CT.

Durisol / Risom House
Name of Property

Fairfield County, CT
County and State

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

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.60 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	0625800	4555139	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	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 K, shown on Map G14, containing 0.60 acres.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include the house and the full extent of the associated landscape features that contribute to the setting and appearance of the property as it was originally developed.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura J. Kline, Architectural Historian; Jenny Fields Scofield, AICP/Architectural Historian; and Virginia H. Adams, Senior Architectural Historian

organization PAL date May 2010

street & number 210 Lonsdale Avenue telephone 401.728.8780

city or town Pawtucket state RI zip code 02860

e-mail lkline@palinc.com; 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: Durisol / Risom House

City or Vicinity: New Canaan

County: Fairfield **State:** Connecticut

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

Date Photographed: December 2009 – February 2010

1 of 4. View looking west from road at facade.

2 of 4. View looking east from rear yard at west elevation.

3 of 4. View looking west at main entrance.

4 of 4. View looking north in living/dining area showing plate glass window wall at left, flagstone plant border on floor, and Durisol acoustical tile ceiling.

Property Owner:

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

name Patricia K. Brooks
street & number 43 Marshall Ridge Road telephone _____
city or town New Canaan state CT zip code 06480

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

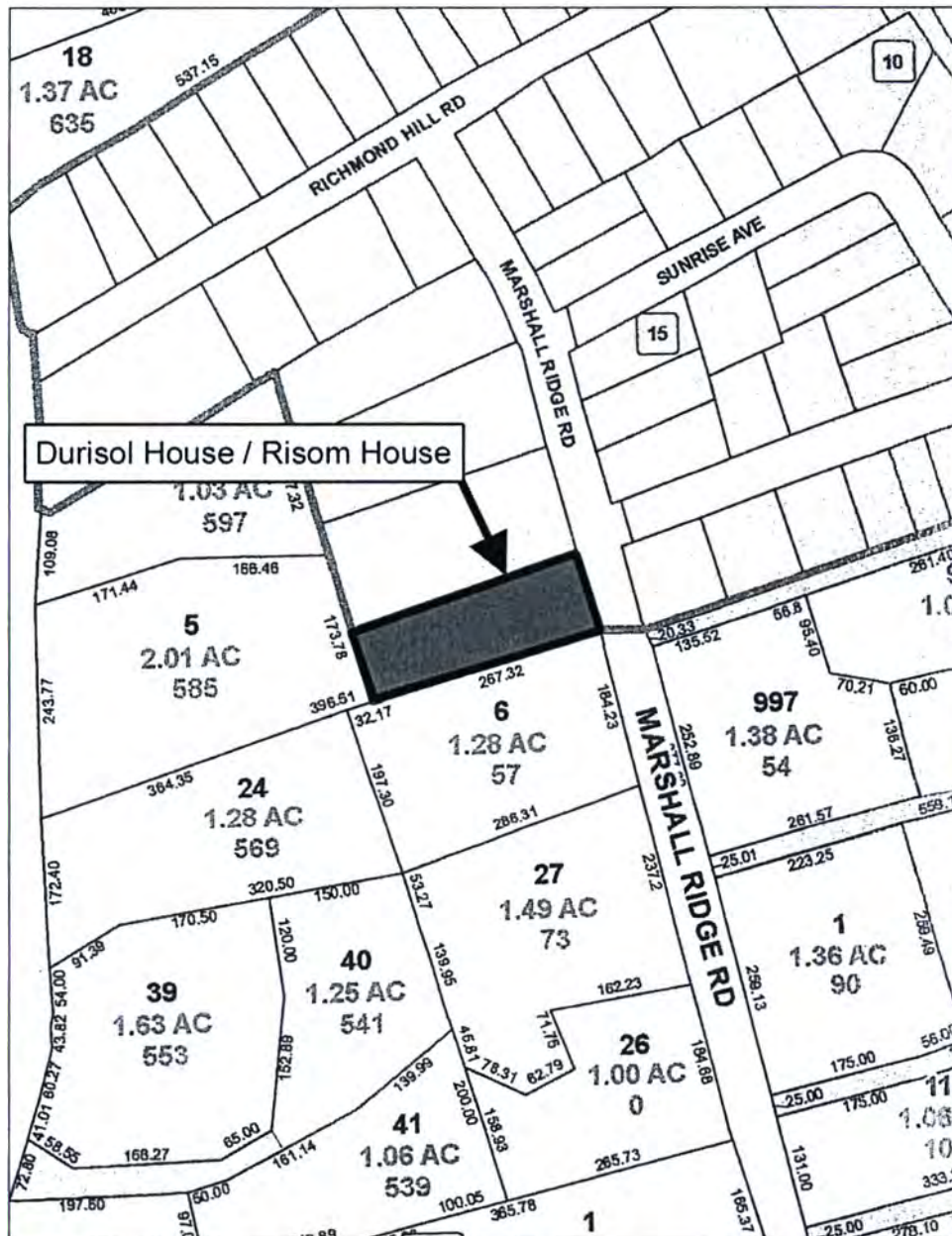
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Durisol / Risom House

Fairfield County, Connecticut

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

Town of New Canaan Assessor's Map Number K.



(Assessors Map source: New Canaan Tax Assessor, 2010).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

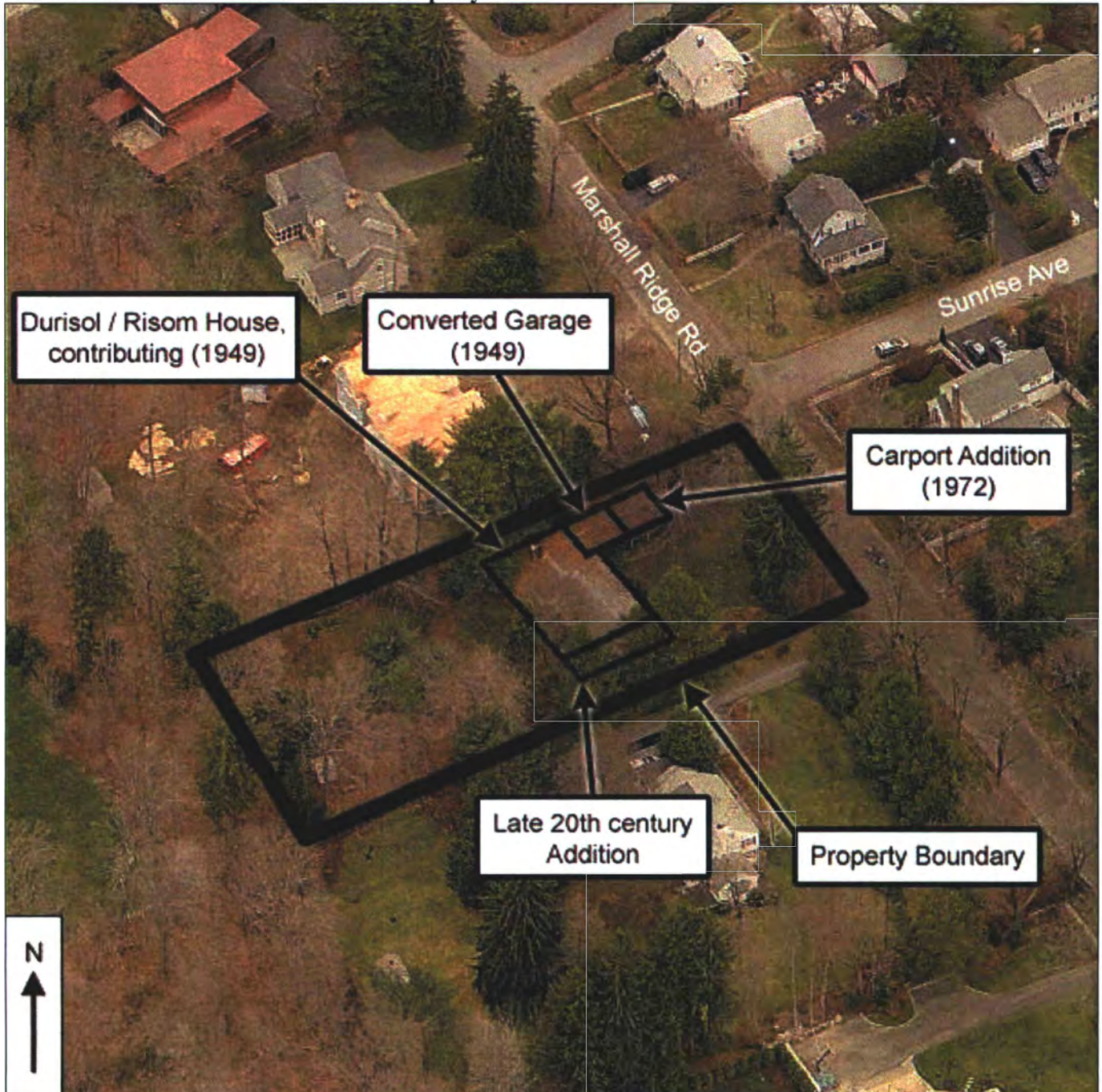
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Durisol / Risom House

Fairfield County, Connecticut

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

Site Plan of the Durisol / Risom House II Property



(Base Map source: www.bing.com. Accessed March 19, 2010).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

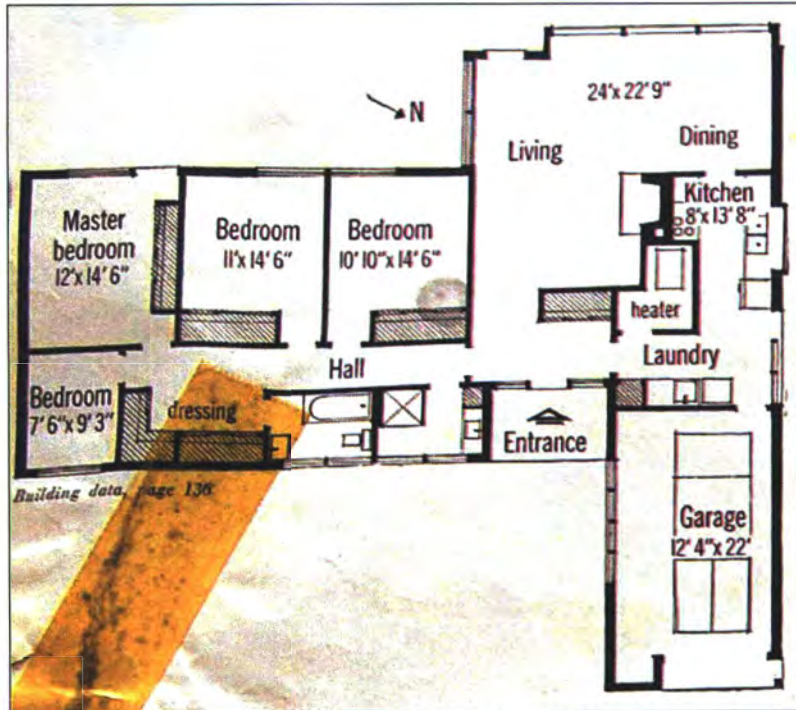
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Durisol / Risom House

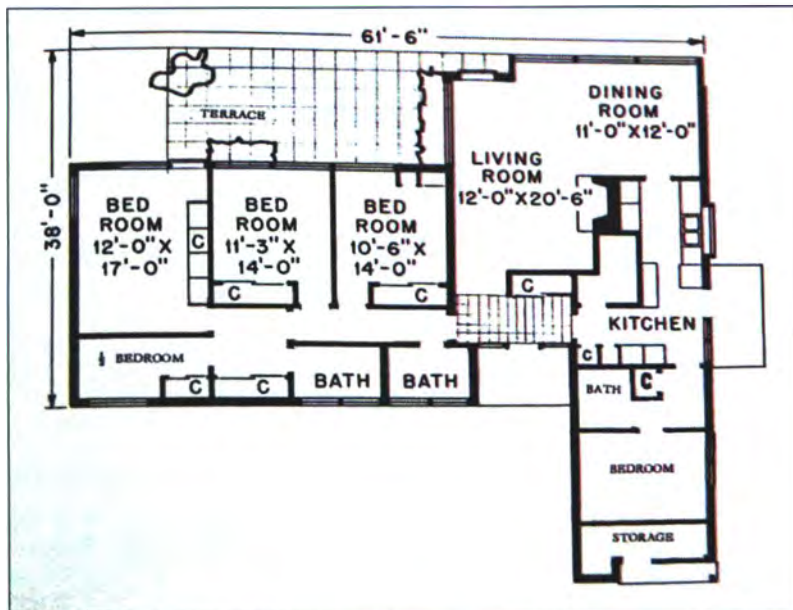
Fairfield County, Connecticut

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

Historic Graphics



Floor Plan circa 1955 (source: *House & Garden* 1955).



Floor Plan circa 1959 (source: Anonymous 1959).

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Durisol / Risom House

Fairfield County, Connecticut

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



Exterior Photograph circa 1950, courtesy of Jens Risom.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Durisol / Risom House

Fairfield County, Connecticut

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



Photograph of living room circa 1950, courtesy of Jens Risom.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Durisol / Risom House

Fairfield County, Connecticut

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



Photograph of living/dining room circa 1950, courtesy of Jens Risom.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Durisol / Risom House

Fairfield County, Connecticut

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



Exterior Photograph circa 1958 (source: *Today's Living: The Herald Tribune Magazine* 1958).



Interior Photograph circa 1958 (source: *Today's Living: The Herald Tribune Magazine* 1958).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Durisol House

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: 10000566

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

See attached sheet

RECOM./CRITERIA

REVIEWER *[Signature]* DISCIPLINE *Historic*
TELEPHONE *203-354-2278* DATE *Sept 25, 2010*

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N 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
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Durisol House

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: 10000566

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Additional information was submitted for the statement of significance. Summary paragraph supporting national significance as an early use of the "Durisol" construction material - one of the first two such model homes in the country (1949).

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER DON

DISCIPLINE Historic

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 9/16/10

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





43



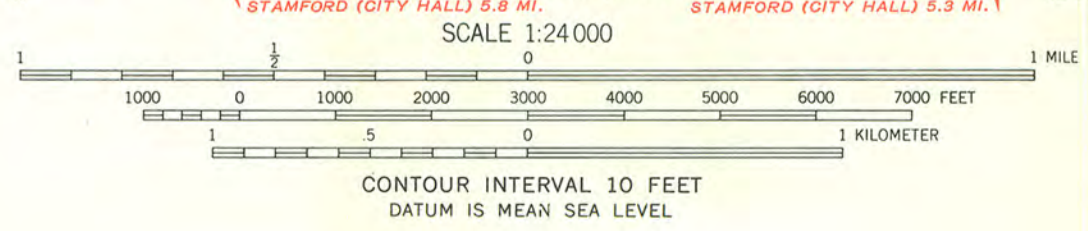
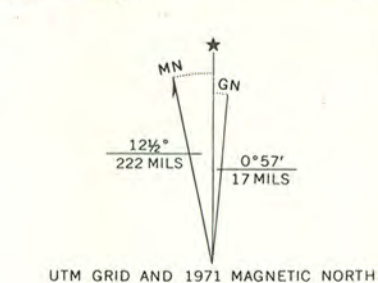




Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey Control by USGS, US&GS, USCE, and Connecticut Geodetic Survey Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods Aerial photographs taken 1949. Field check 1951. Revised 1960 Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum 10,000-foot 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 uncheckd

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with Connecticut Highway Department from aerial photographs taken 1971. This information not field checked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

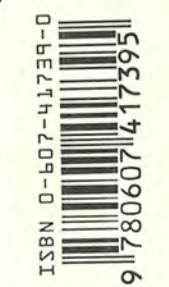
Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt

State Route
Interstate Route

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

Durisol/Risom House
New Canaan Fairfield County, CT
UTM Coordinates:
18, 0625806E, 4555139N





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 **Durisol House/Risom, Jens, 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: _____



Film Division

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Second Floor
Hartford, Connecticut
06103

860.256.2800
860.256.2811 (f)

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