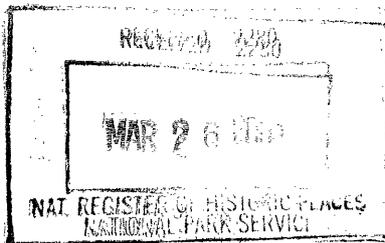


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Perkins, Maxwell E., House

other names/site _____

2. Location

street & number 63 Park Street N/A not for publication

city or town New Canaan vicinity N/A

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 of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally . (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____
J. Paul Loether, Acting Director and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

Maxwell Perkins House
Name of Property

Fairfield County, CT
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

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

Signature of the Keeper
Robert Beall

Date of Action
5/6/04

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
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
—	— sites
—	— structures
—	— objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/single/multiple dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling/
secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation stone
walls weatherboard
roof fiberglass shingle
other brick

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

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Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section 7 Page 1

Description

The Maxwell Perkins House is located at the corner of Park and Seminary streets, one block west of New Canaan's Main Street. Since 1963 the property has been part of the Church Hill Historic District, the second oldest local district in Connecticut, which was certified by the National Park Service in 1979 (Exhibit A). The house, which consists of an 1836 Greek Revival-style main block and several later nineteenth-century additions, overlooks Park Street to the east (Photograph #s 1, 2). Behind the house to the southwest is a non-contributing outbuilding, a former c. 1950 garage that was raised to become the upper story of a carriagehouse in 1985 (Photograph #3). Until 1965, the southern boundary of the sloping lot, now defined by a stone retaining wall, extended another 150 feet down to Elm Street (once the site of a commercial garage, now a bookstore). Farther south and across the street is the New Canaan Railroad Station. Across Seminary Street to the north is the 1954 First Church of Christ Scientist, one of three churches in the district.

The ordered landscape plan, which incorporates historic pines and hemlocks dating from the Perkins era (1924-1947), integrates several geometric elements. A parterre garden in front of house is bordered on the north by a folly of clipped and shaped yews. Terraces edged with Belgian block to the south of the house, slope down from a crab apple bosque to a woodland garden at the southeast corner of the lot, bordered on the south and east by a stone wall. A circle garden, also defined by Belgian block, is found at the southwest corner. The design by Richard Bergmann FAIA (one of the present owners) is included in the Archives of American Gardens at the Smithsonian Institution (Exhibit B).

The main block of the Perkins House displays a formal pedimented three-bay façade sheathed with flush weather board. (Photograph #s 4, 5). The prostyle Doric-order portico has four, slightly tapered fluted columns that rise directly from the porch floor. The absence of bases or pedestals and the narrow incised band near the top of the columns are typical features of this order. Behind the colonnade flat pilasters at the corners of the facade and between the bays return to the columns, creating a coffered ceiling. The Palladian window in the flush board pediment consists of a centered six-over-six sash surmounted by a carved shell under a round, molded arch with keystone. The entablature over the narrow, flanking three-pane windows are detailed with oval incised paterae in the frieze and projecting molded cornices. Windows on the façade and throughout the house have louvered blinds and contain original six-over-six sash with the typical narrow muntins of the period.

The Greek Revival door surround consists of a twin-pilastered enframingent with applied square-edge moldings; a similar edge molding borders the plain corner blocks (Photograph #6). Thin, narrow wooden strips were used for the geometric design of the single-pane transom and sidelights. The door itself has a single recessed molded panel and applied molding defines a center section with curved corners.

Changes to the house over time include a two-stage addition at the west end of the main block in the mid-nineteenth century when it became a boardinghouse (Photograph #s 7, 8). The first c. 1850 section at the southwest corner is depicted on the 1868 New Canaan map and in a 1869 historic view of the house (Photograph #9). The photograph also shows a narrow open veranda extending to the rear addition. The open terrace below was accessed from the basement at grade. According to the map of 1878, by then, the rest of the existing rear additions were completed to the northwest and a one-story leanto was added at the southwest corner. A fanlight in the rear gable was later replaced by the existing c. 1870 Gothic Revival window there, which matches one in the dormer on the south slope of the main roof.

Among the later changes to the house were the large circular bay window with imbricated shingles on the rear elevation, and the relocation of the twin interior chimneys on the north elevation, which were rebuilt as exterior stacks (Photograph #10). In the late 1920s, a roof supported by square posts and a Neo-Classical Revival balustrade was added to the south

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section 7 Page 2

porch by the Perkins family. The existing casement windows between the posts date from the 1950s (Exhibit C). The sleeping porch on the roof at the second story, added in 1956, was removed by the present owner. There were many changes to the original interior plan over time, including the remodeling during the Perkins tenure, but more extensive alterations occurred after Perkins' death when the house was divided into apartments for his widow Louise and daughter, Bertha Perkins Frothingham, and her physician husband. A third apartment was added after 1965 when the house became a commercial rental property.

Now returned to its largely original configuration, the interior plan accommodates architect's offices on the ground and first floors and living quarters on the second and third floors (Exhibits D - G). The award-winning historic rehabilitation¹ included major structural repairs, removal of modern partitions, and the replacement of missing or damaged architectural features. The exceptionally wide front hall was opened up to its original two-story height by removing a second-floor room previously added for a kitchen above the entrance (Photograph #s 11, 12). Missing balusters were replaced as was the damaged mahogany railing that terminates in a volute at the newel post. A special feature of the staircase is the elaboration of the box string and the second-floor apron with a repeating foliated design of wood. Some of the curved sections of the applied design, originally executed in leather, remain in place. Those at the mezzanine level were replicated in laminated wood.

Interior window and door frames in the hall and other rooms in the main block generally match the basic design of the exterior door surround, but moldings are more detailed. Some moldings were replicated to restore the frame for the double doorway from the hall to the front parlor, an opening enclosed in the 1920s. Double-leaf, single panel doors for this replacement doorway match the original doors that separate the twin parlors on the north side of the main block (now reception and gallery), which feature matching fireplace surrounds with engaged columns and paneled friezes (Photograph #13). The original herringbone brick hearths were reinstalled after the fireplace stacks were moved. The nineteenth-century dining room (now the library) in the northwest corner addition features paneled wainscot and a series of student desks from the classroom era under the bay window, now serving as bookcases (Photograph #14). Floor to ceiling bookcases built for Maxwell Perkins that once closed off the northeast parlor from the front hall have been relocated to the south wall of the dining room.

A partition was removed on the second floor to make one large living room out of the two former chambers (Photograph #15). Matching fireplace surrounds there have flat pilasters with paneled capitals and a single-panel frieze. The only other real structural change to the main block was the removal of a floor at the southwest corner to provide a two-story space for the architect's atelier at grade (Photograph #16). A brick firebox for the original summer kitchen fireplace there was uncovered and restored.

¹ Connecticut Society of Architects CSA AIA Honor Award, 1977. The house was featured in "Recycled Buildings," an exhibit at the Wesleyan University Art Gallery in 1977, sponsored by CSA, AIA, the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Maxwell Perkins House

Name of Property

Fairfield County, CT

County and State

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

LITERATURE

Period of Significance

1924 - 1947

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Maxwell E. Perkins (1884 - 1947)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hiram Crissy (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing

(36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: New Canaan Historical Society

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Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance

Now renovated and restored to its former elegance, this Greek Revival house is highly significant for its association with Maxwell Evarts Perkins, considered to be the foremost literary editor of his day. During his stellar career at Charles Scribner's Sons in New York City, Perkins discovered, mentored, and nurtured the literary careers of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Thomas E. Wolfe. Legends in their own time, their distinctive voices still reverberate in the American consciousness. Because of Perkins' unswerving loyalty and tireless editorial efforts, these authors and countless others brought renewed prestige to American literature and the house of Scribner's. In recognition of these achievements, Friends of Libraries U.S.A. designated the house as Connecticut's first Literary Landmark in 2002.

Historical Background and Significance

The Maxwell Perkins House is located in 'God's Acre,' the institutional center of the Parish of New Canaan that was carved out of Norwalk and Stamford in the 1731. The first Congregational meetinghouse was built there the following year. Although a few people built houses near the meetinghouse prior to the Revolution and the parish became an incorporated town in 1801, it was not until the 1830s that any further residential development took place. Soon after a village coalesced around four new shoe factories on Main Street, however, well-to-do businessmen began to build substantial new houses on Church Hill. One of the first was the nominated house, which was designed and built by Hiram Crissy, a skilled local master carpenter and deacon of the Congregational Church. The First District school, which stood on the lot until late 1835, was razed to make way for the house, which was erected in the spring of 1836 for Theophilus Fitch, his blind brother, Philo, and their widowed mother, Hannah Fitch. By 1841 the Fitch household also included a widowed sister, Clarinda Fitch Ayres, and her two daughters.

The Fitch property often changed hands and was adapted for various uses during its history. Clarinda Ayres ran a boardinghouse here for almost 20 years. When Clarinda died intestate in 1881, her daughters sold the house lot to Eleazer Fancher, along with a quarter-acre strip along Railroad Avenue (formerly Elm Street) to Fancher & Co., shoe manufacturers. Fancher built a three-story shoe factory there, which operated intermittently until 1902. After Fancher's death in 1900, his wife, the administrator of his heavily mortgaged estate, leased the house to Marshall Stearns, a New York lawyer. Presumably the house was fitted out with indoor plumbing around this time, as water mains were hooked up to Park Street in 1895. Edna Rogers, who lived across Park Street, bought the house, but it remained a rental property, with Stearns still listed as the tenant. When a private grammar school, the forerunner of New Canaan Country School, purchased the house in 1914, the then one-acre lot was bounded on the south by Railroad Avenue. After the school moved to new quarters, 63 Park Street was again rented out until September 1924 when the property was sold to Maxwell Perkins.

Maxwell Evarts Perkins (1884-1947)

Born in Manhattan to Edward and Elizabeth (Evarts) Perkins, and raised in Plainfield, New Jersey, Maxwell Perkins came from old Yankee stock. The son of Edward Clifford Perkins, a Plainfield attorney, and Elizabeth (Evarts) Perkins, he could trace his ancestry back to seventeenth-century settlers of New England: Edmund Perkins, a member of the East India Company; and John Evarts, a Welshman who came to this country as an indentured servant. Named for William Maxwell Evarts, his maternal grandfather, who was secretary of state under President Rutherford B. Hayes and a New York senator, he had more in common with his grandfather Charles Perkins, America's first art critic, a close friend of the

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Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section 8 Page 2

Browning family and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Although young Perkins studied economics at Harvard, he developed a love for writing and an understanding of the editorial role while serving as editor of the *Harvard Advocate*, the college literary magazine. Graduating in 1907, Perkins became a reporter for the *New York Times*. Although happy to be working in any profession that dealt with words, in his view, “the most powerful commodities of all,” in 1909 Perkins applied for a job at Charles Scribner’s Sons. Hired as advertising manager in the spring of 1910, that December he married Louise Saunders, the belle of Plainfield.¹ When the editorial department had an opening in 1914, Perkins moved up the fifth floor to begin his editorial career, rising to editor-in-chief in 1930.

Maxwell Perkins moved to New Canaan with his wife and their four daughters in December 1924. A fifth daughter was born in New Canaan the following year. That previous October, Perkins wrote to F. Scott Fitzgerald about the purchase, “I told you we bought a house in New Canaan. It has the face of a Greek temple and the body of a spacious New England farmhouse....an ideal place to bring up children in the way they should go, girls anyway.”² In a letter to Elizabeth Lemmon in 1924, Perkins facetiously commented that with four columns, there was “one for each daughter to lean against when the young men drive up in their buggies.”³ Complaining that the house was just recovering from a devastating raid of plumbers, carpenters, painters, [and] roofers,” referring to renovation work his wife had ordered, in December he wrote Scott again, “...here we are in our house since a week ago and last night the new kitchen ceiling fell....But the house suits us anyway.”⁴

For Perkins New Canaan had all “the charm of a New England village at the end of a single track railroad with almost wild country in three direction, i.e., wild to an easterner.”⁵ It may have reminded him of Windsor, Vermont, the site of the Evarts family compound where Perkins spent many summers as a child and an adult. The New Canaan railroad had been bringing seasonal residents to town since it opened in 1868. One of the first was sculptor John Rogers, who first rented, then built a home here by 1870.⁶ By the 1920s, when many of the town’s seasonal estates like Waveny became year-round homes, literary figures and New York businessmen and attorneys had made their home here. Architects in residence in this period included Alfred Lord Taylor and Austin Lord, the first director of the American Academy in Rome, predecessors of Philip Johnson and Marcel Breuer, the Modernists who designed and built homes in New Canaan in the 1950s.

Although Louise was more interested in New Canaan’s social life, Perkins recognized that “in a town like this it’s regarded as an act of patriotism to join everything possible.”⁷ They did have a membership at the New Canaan Country Club and entertained frequently. As Perkins wrote to author Thomas Boyd, “People here are the right sort, at least to one of New England descent.”⁸ Among Perkins’ neighbors and frequent guests were the poet Padraic Colum, his wife Molly, an author in her own right⁹ (friends of James Joyce), Bliss Carman, poet laureate of Canada, author/professor John Erskine, William Rose Benet, and his wife, poet Eleanor Wylie. Author and literary critic Van Wyck Brooks, a dear friend since kindergarten days in Plainfield and a classmate at Harvard, often came over from Westport.

¹ Their house there was a wedding gift from her father, William L. Saunders, an inventor and mayor of the town, who later headed Ingersoll Rand.

² Perkins to Fitzgerald, October 18, 1924, reproduced in *Dear Scott/Dear Max* (New York; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), p. 79.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 80. Perkins and Lemmon corresponded for more 25 years, an intimate friendship presumed to be a purely Platonic love affair.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* Due to Berg’s unusual citation system, the addressee for this remark is not clear.

⁶ His 1877 studio, moved to the New Canaan Historical Society’s museum complex in the historic district, is now a National Historic Landmark

⁷ Perkins to Fitzgerald, March 7, 1921, Berg, p. 81.

⁸ In fact, so many of the newcomers were Harvard alumni, in 1926 the New Canaan Harvard Club had 38 members, presumably including Perkins (class of 1907).

⁹ Literary evenings at the Perkins home in New Canaan were described in Colum’s book, *Life and the Dream*.

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Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section 8 Page 3

Except for five or so years in the 1930s when the family also had a townhouse in New York City at 246 East 49th Street, Perkins commuted from New Canaan. It was just a few steps to the railroad station just across from the sideyard (south) of his house; where he caught the 8:08 commuter train to Stamford and Grand Central, just a few blocks from his office at Scribner's. Perkins always lunched at Cherio's, a nearby restaurant where he had a reserved table. At the end of the business day there was time for "tea" with a new author at the Waldorf or Ritz bars, before catching the 6:02 for the return trip with a briefcase laden down with manuscripts and galleys.

The Editor

Scribner's Sons had just moved into their new ten-story, Neo Classical building on Fifth Avenue when Maxwell Perkins became an editor.¹⁰ A venerable family-run publishing house since 1846, still steeped in nineteenth-century traditions despite the new quarters, it was described as having a genteel atmosphere like "Queen Victoria's parlor."¹¹ Then under the control of Charles Scribner II, a gentleman of the old school and a notorious Anglophile, who firmly believed that the new crop of young American writers had little to offer, it was the firm's policy to publish authors schooled in the English literary tradition, such as John Galsworthy and Edith Wharton, and Henry James, the expatriate American.

Maxwell Perkins was a breath of fresh air. Even as a junior editor, he was a risk taker, shaking up this ultra-conservative publishing house by actively recruiting unknown, often raw American talent. Though criticized for becoming too personally involved with his authors, he literally redefined and enlarged the editorial role, heretofore limited largely to routine copyediting. Always supportive of a new writer's unique vision, he also encouraged established authors to even greater achievement. In staking his career on Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Wolfe, a literary trifecta unprecedented in the annals of publishing, Perkins revitalized the house of Scribner's and became a major force in the development of American literature in the twentieth century.

Except for an admiring *New Yorker* profile by Malcolm Cowley in the 1940s, the extent of Maxwell Perkins' legendary editorial role was known only to the publishing trade. Notably self-effacing, Perkins was always more than content to remain in the background as handmaiden to genius during his lifetime. It was not until 30 years after his death that he came to the attention of the general public through Scott Berg's major biography, *Max Perkins: Editor of Genius*, thus becoming one the very few editors ever to be immortalized in print.¹² Even more remarkable is how much twentieth-century literary criticism contains references to Perkins and his relationships with his authors. Biographers and critics have relied heavily on the Perkins correspondence to illuminate and document their subjects and their works. Literally thousands of letters have survived as the editor kept in touch with his most important authors as they traveled the globe, Fitzgerald and Wolfe in Europe, and Hemingway, the most peripatetic of all, whose novels were inspired by his adventures in Spain, Africa, Key West, and Cuba. His correspondence is archived in the Scribner's Collection at Princeton, and in collected works of individual authors at Harvard and other institutions. Published collections include *Editor to Author* (1950), *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe* (1956), *Dear Scott/ Dear Max* (1971), and *The Only Thing That Counts* (Hemingway-Perkins correspondence; 1996).¹³

¹⁰ It was designed by Ernest Flagg, brother-in-law of Charles Scribner II.

¹¹ Malcolm Cowley, cited in Berg, p. 86.

¹² The winner of the National Book Award, it launched Berg's career, which has included a Pulitzer-prize winning biography of Charles Lindbergh. More recently he wrote *Kathryn Remembered*, the official biography of Kathryn Hepburn, which, at the actress's request, was not released until after her death in June 2003.

¹³ A new potential source of Hemingway-Perkins correspondence has come to light. According to the *New York Times*, September 21, 2002, largely due the efforts of Jenny Phillips, granddaughter of Maxwell Perkins, Scott Berg, and Congressman James McGovern of Massachusetts, the Cuban government recently reversed its policy and is allowing access to the Hemingway papers at *Finca Vigia*, his home outside Havana for 21 years, now a Cuban museum. Conservation efforts are underway and

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Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section 8 Page 4

The Perkins correspondence also reveals his exceptional editorial range, which included writers of “popular” fiction, the mainstay of any publishing house. Among them were Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, the author of *The Yearling*, winner of a Pulitzer in 1938,¹⁴ or Taylor Caldwell (Janet Reback), one of first to write fictionalized biography, Erskine Caldwell, whose stories first appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*, Sherwood Anderson, and Hamilton Basso, best known as the author of *the View from Pompey's Head*. Editing and publishing Ring Lardner, the humorist, Washington socialite Alice Roosevelt Longworth, and S. S. Van Dine, (a pseudonym for Willard H. Wright), the author of the popular Philo Vance detective series, was leavened by serious non-fiction, such as *The Founding of New England* by James Truslow Adams. After World War II, Perkins also had the privilege of editing manuscripts of two new promising young writers, James Jones, the author of *From Here to Eternity*, and Alan Paton, *Cry the Beloved Country*, but he did not live to see them in print.

To truly understand Maxwell Perkins, the man and the editor, requires a closer look at his extraordinary level of commitment to Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Wolfe. Relationships both tragic and rewarding, they reveal as much about the character of the editor as the writers themselves. As much surrogate father as editor, Perkins often treated them like the sons he never had. To be sure their ready acceptance of their filial role was a function of their youth, all three men were still in their twenties when they first met Perkins. Perhaps more importantly, all had unresolved conflicts with their fathers.¹⁵ As these authors became friends as well as literary rivals; Perkins, like any parent, often was called upon to mediate their “sibling” squabbles as they competed for his attention, not to mention managing their financial affairs, or dealing with their abandoned or disturbed wives and mistresses.¹⁶ In the belief that some of the greatest literature was written by “rascals,” like an indulgent father, he was tolerant of their misdeeds, infinitely patient and understanding with their illnesses, bouts of depression and alcoholism, and above all, the agonies of creation. As the following vignettes show, the authors’ well being and the cause of literature were not necessarily well served by such a mutually dependent relationship.

F(rancis) Scott (Key) Fitzgerald (1896-1940) was Perkins’ first major discovery. Having left Princeton, where he was a mediocre scholar, to join the army, Fitzgerald began to write while still a serving officer. The first manuscripts he submitted to Scribner’s in 1919 were not well received; only Perkins recognized Fitzgerald’s potential. Putting his career on the line to defend his belief that “a publishers’ first allegiance is to talent ...” Perkins had told the editorial board, “If we aren’t going to publish a talent like this...if we’re going to turn down the likes of Fitzgerald, I will lose all interest in publishing books.”¹⁷ After several rewrites, a new work, *This Side of Paradise* came out in 1920 and sold very well (35,000 copies in the first seven months), making Fitzgerald famous and at 24, the youngest author Scribner’s ever published. Given that Scribner Senior had judged it lacking in literary merit, and others on the board found it frivolous, the book’s success was a vindication of Perkins’ faith in the author’s natural talent for romantic satire. While the novel’s depiction of the manners and mores of undergraduates at Princeton may have shocked their elders, for the young, it was a thrilling, even revolutionary document. John O’Hara, who read *Paradise* as an adolescent, would later write in his introduction to *The Portable Fitzgerald*, “half a million men and women between fifteen and thirty fell in love with the

the microfilmed material will be made available to scholars at the John F. Kennedy Library, which already has a collection donated by Mary Hemingway, his fourth wife.

¹⁴ The more than 600 letters detailing their lifelong personal and professional relationship are the basis for *Max & Marjorie* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1999).

¹⁵ Hemingway’s father was a suicide, which haunted him all his life. Wolfe’s father and older brother both died young; and Fitzgerald’s, a business failure, became an alcoholic.

¹⁶ Even to the extent of publishing Zelda Fitzgerald and Martha Gelhorn, Hemingway’s third wife.

¹⁷ Quoted in Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur* (New York: Chelsea House Press Publishers, 1985), p. 99.

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Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

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book.” Although by today’s standards *Paradise* was only mildly racy, the conservative house of Scribner’s would never be the same.

Unfortunately Scott and his new wife Zelda could not handle the celebrity of his early success. Notorious for their alcoholic high jinks in New York, Paris, and on the Riviera, they became the icons of the “Lost Generation.” Their lives soon resembled those of the fictional characters betrayed by the American myth in Fitzgerald’s next book, *The Beautiful and Damned: Tales of the Jazz Age*, published in 1922, or *The Great Gatsby* of 1925. The latter work, which critics commended for its structure, for Perkins, was the most perfect thing he had ever had a share in publishing. But since serious fiction could not support such an extravagant life style and the added burden of Zelda’s eventual institutional care, the author was forced to abandon artistic integrity in favor of commercial success. Much to Perkins’ dismay, Fitzgerald turned to churning out stories about playboys and flappers for magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post* or *The Smart Set*, H.L. Mencken’s avant garde publication. Short story work (more than 100 in all) and screenwriting in Hollywood paid well,¹⁸ but critics and friends like Ernest Hemingway, whom he had met in Paris in 1925, felt that he was wasting his literary capital. Despite Perkins’ personal financial support, only one more book was published in Fitzgerald’s lifetime, *Tender Is The Night* in 1934. In the last year of his life, Fitzgerald sobered up long enough to partially complete the manuscript for *The Last Tycoon*, published by Scribner’s after his death from heart failure in Hollywood in 1940.

Ernest Hemingway (1898-1961) was the first of many authors that Fitzgerald recommended to Perkins. After reading *our time*, a story collection published by Ezra Pound in Paris, Perkins was anxious to have this highly original author for Scribner’s. With his great economy of style and forceful staccato rhythms, unlike anything he had ever read, Hemingway more than met the Perkins’ test for greatness. Hemingway, who was on the verge of signing with a French publisher, was persuaded to bring the draft manuscript of *The Sun Also Rises* to Perkins in February 1926. Since it was considerably more shocking than anything of Fitzgerald’s, Charles Scribner II feared that the book would be suppressed. Once again Perkins had to fight for his author. Even though he persuaded him to tone down some of the more offensive language, shortly after publication in the fall of 1926, as predicted by the senior editor, the book was banned in Boston.

After Perkins’ death in 1947, critics, including James R. Mellow, the Hemingway biographer, observed that in the absence of his firm editorial hand, *Across the River and into the Trees*, verged on self parody. In truth, Hemingway, a disciplined and organized writer, needed little editing. Although often calling a halt when Hemingway’s perfectionist penchant for rewriting threatened the immediacy of his prose, Perkins really served as a confidant and sounding board for his ideas.¹⁹ The professional and mutually respectful relationship that developed between Perkins and the self-proclaimed “tough guy of American letters” ripened into true friendship. Although hard to imagine, the staid buttoned-up editor was a guest of author’s on several of Hemingway’s famous Key West fishing expeditions aboard the *Pilar*.²⁰

Following the outstanding success of his Spanish Civil War novel in 1938, *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, by the early 1940s, Hemingway had one of his rare fallow periods. Unable to write and depressed about being out of the war in Europe, he

¹⁸ Even in 1920 screen options and commercial writing more than doubled the \$6000 he had earned from *Paradise*. By the 1930s the magazines were paying Fitzgerald as much as \$4000 for one story.

¹⁹ What editing that did take place was usually over the use of especially libelous or obscene material. It became a game for Hemingway to see how much he could slip by his editor by using the equivalent Spanish vernacular.

²⁰ Photographs taken at the time of Perkins and Hemingway with trophy fish show the editor formally dressed in suit and tie. See Berg, *Maxwell Perkins...*, photograph inserts between pp. 246 and 247.

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Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

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had alienated many of his friends.²¹ But even as he groused about Scribner's' supposed failures at promotion and some disputed royalties, he remained loyal to Perkins, who, in Hemingway's inimitable prose, was his "most trusted friend as well as [his] God damned publisher."²² In fact, Scribner's went on to publish all of Hemingway's major works. Among them was *The Old Man and the Sea*, the masterpiece (dedicated to Perkins) that received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.

Thomas Wolfe (1900-1938), surely the most needy and conflicted of Perkins' young authors, was the greatest challenge of his career. Prophetically "O Lost," was the working title for his first manuscript, which was published by Scribner's in 1929 as *Look Homeward Angel*. Contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic responded to his vision of America and identified with Eugene Gant, the autobiographical protagonist. Although the novel was rejected by Wolfe's hometown of Asheville, North Carolina, as a libelous betrayal of the South, less provincial Southerners such as James Dickey and William Styron recognized his particular genius. Calling Wolfe "...the first prose writer to bring a sense of America as a glorious abstraction, a vast brooding continent whose untold bounties were waiting every young man's discovery,"²³ Styron was just one of several authors who credited Wolfe's vivid prose with their decision to become a writer. In England Pamela Hansford Johnson, critic and author, declared, "...in spite of its sprawlings, its bawlings, its youthful yellings...that book spoke to us... Wolfe had too much to say... but he said it with our voices."²⁴

With Wolfe's second book, *Of Time and The River*, it became clear that no editor could really contain this notoriously prolix author, and attempts to impose conventional form or structure were well nigh doomed. To bring some structure to the manuscript and reduce it to a publishable length, which Perkins himself called "a kind of life and death struggle,"²⁵ there were daily and evening editing sessions. Friends observed that it took a toll on the editor; William Styron commented that only a masochist [like Perkins] could put up with "the pure fact of daily committed involvement with Wolfe's tyrannically dependent personality."²⁶

Even after *Of Time and The River* ran to five printings, Wolfe could not fully enjoy his success. Stung by the critics who continued to fault his autobiographical approach to fiction, and the rumors that Perkins was responsible for much of the rewriting of the book,²⁷ Wolfe finally resolved to split with Scribner's. Fully understanding that Wolfe must establish some degree of independence to mature as a man and a writer, Perkins formally released Wolfe from his contract in 1936. In a follow-up hand-written note, the editor assured Wolfe that his work was the foremost interest in his life and expressed the hope that their friendship would continue. Critics have made much of Wolfe's rejection of Perkins, but little seemed to change in their personal relationship. Even after signing with Edward Aswell at Harper's, the prodigal son was still welcome in the New Canaan house, the only one of Perkins' authors ever invited to stay overnight. Wolfe even came to Christmas dinner a month after the breakup and later attended the wedding of one of Perkins' daughters in New Canaan.²⁸

²¹ Hemingway eventually became a war correspondent for *Collier's* in time for D-Day and the invasion of Europe.

²² Hemingway to Perkins, n.d. from *The Only Thing That Counts: The Ernest Hemingway/ Maxwell Perkins Correspondence* (New York: Scribner's. 1996)

²³ Louis D. Rubin, Jr., ed., "Introduction: The Sense of Being Young," in *Thomas Wolfe: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 7.

²⁴ "Thomas Wolfe and the Kicking Season," in *Critical Essays*, p. 109.

²⁵ His reason for not coming to Key West that year. Perkins to Hemingway, January 12, 1934; cited in Berg, *Max Perkins...*, p. 239.

²⁶ William Styron, "The Shade of Thomas Wolfe" in *Thomas Wolfe: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p.102.

²⁷ A false assumption, but one fueled by Wolfe's extravagant dedication of the book to Perkins and his later *Story of a Novel*.

²⁸ Alcoholism had become an increasing problem for Wolfe, making him a difficult and unpredictable guest, so on the latter occasion, Louise Perkins arranged to have a friend deliver him to the ceremony "clean, sober, and on time."

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National Park Service

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Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

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It is somewhat ironic that Wolfe's familiarity with the Perkins' household in New Canaan is demonstrated in *You Can't Go Home Again*, the book ultimately edited and published by Harper's in 1940. Though still autobiographical, now Eugene Gant is the writer George Weber, and his editor is Foxhall Edwards, a fully realized characterization of the eccentric side of Perkins and his obsession with daily routine.²⁹ In case anyone missed the resemblance, like Perkins, the "Fox" was deaf in one ear and always wore a gray hat, indoors and out, only taking it off when he slept. Although Louise Perkins was hurt at what she saw as a caricature of her husband and family, Perkins supposedly found it amusing. Upon later reflection, the editor in Perkins decided these passages showed how Wolfe worked by creating "something new and meaningful through transmutation of what he saw, heard and realized,"³⁰ the transcendent quality that he searched for in all his authors.

In the breakfast scene developed over several pages, which makes fun of Perkins' odd tastes in food and his wife's constant redecorating, there is an interchange between Edwards and his daughter (a character drawn from two of Perkins own daughters) that steps back from caricature to become Wolfe's loving tribute to his friend and mentor:

You see darling, Fox says gently, his face cocked sideways, his good ear pointing towards the girl, his language simple as a shoe, his face keen, shrewd, thoughtful, and absorbed, and radiant as a blade of light, as it always was when interest and reflection hold the wise serpent of his brain...³¹

The book ends with this poignant passage, "Dear Fox, old friend, thus we have come to the end of the road that we were to go together. My fate is finished—and so farewell. Something has spoken to me in the night, and told me I shall die."³² Wolfe expressed the same premonition of death in a letter to Perkins some two months before he died in September 1938 from pneumonia and tuberculosis of the brain.

As Wolfe's literary executor, Perkins devoted himself to keeping the Wolfe manuscripts and records intact and arranging for them to be donated to Harvard University. The last thing he did for Wolfe's memory was an introduction to the collection, later used to introduce a new edition of *Look Homeward Angel* in 1950. Both a reprise of the Wolfian legend and an attempt to come to some understanding of their complex professional and personal relationship, the essay was still on his desk unfinished when Perkins died from heart failure in a Stamford hospital in 1947.³³ An editor to the very end, as he left his New Canaan home for the last time, Maxwell Perkins gave instructions for the disposition of the manuscripts on his bedside table of *From Here to Eternity* and *Cry The Beloved Country*, his final legacies.

²⁹ Budding authors planning on submitting manuscripts to Scribner's read the book for clues on the best way to approach Perkins.

³⁰ Maxwell Perkins, "Thomas Wolfe," in *Thomas Wolfe: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p. 86.

³¹ Thomas Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940), p. 457.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 741-742. Cited in Fritz Heinrich Ryssel, *Thomas Wolfe* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1972), p. 90.

³³ Perkins and his wife, Louise, who lived in the house until her death in 1965, are both buried in the Lakeview Cemetery in New Canaan.

Maxwell Perkins House

Name of Property

Fairfield County, CT

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.33

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	18	626200	4655990	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2		626200	4655990	4			

____. See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By:

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant

organization Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC

date 6/10/03

street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (860) 347 4072

city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

Property Owner

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

name: Richard and Sandra Bergmann

street & number: 63 Park Street telephone: (203) 966 9505

city or town: New Canaan state CT zip code 06840

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

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National Park Service

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Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section 9/10 Page 1

9. Major Bibliographic References

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundaries of the nominated property are described in the New Canaan Land Records, Town Clerk's Office, volume 220, page 94, and delineated on Property Survey Map #3944.

Boundary Justification: The boundaries of the nominated property encompass the house and lot associated with the Maxwell Perkins period (1924-1947), less a 0.43-acre commercial parcel on the south set off in 1965.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Maxwell Perkins House, New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Photo page 1

List of Photographs

Photographer (unless otherwise noted): Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC

Date (unless otherwise noted): May, 2003

Negatives on file: Connecticut Historical Commission (except for #s 2, 9)

1. Maxwell Perkins House, façade, camera facing W
2. Maxwell Perkins House, aerial view, 1982, camera facing SW
(photograph by Richard Bergmann)
3. Maxwell Perkins House, carriage barn, camera facing SW
4. Maxwell Perkins House, façade, camera facing SW
5. Maxwell Perkins House, façade, camera facing NW
6. Maxwell Perkins House, front door, camera facing W
7. Maxwell Perkins House, south and rear elevations, camera facing NE
8. Maxwell Perkins House, rear elevation, camera facing SE
9. Maxwell Perkins House, facade and south elevation, c. 1869, camera facing NW
(courtesy New Canaan Historical Society)
10. Maxwell Perkins House, façade and north elevation, camera facing SW
11. Maxwell Perkins House, front hall with staircase, camera facing SE
12. Maxwell Perkins House, front hall with staircase, camera facing S
13. Maxwell Perkins House, parlors, now reception and gallery (first floor), camera facing NW
14. Maxwell Perkins House, dining room, now library (first floor), camera facing W
15. Maxwell Perkins House, bedrooms, now living room (second floor), camera facing NE
16. Maxwell Perkins House, kitchen fireplace, now in office library (ground floor), camera facing W

HISTORIC DISTRICT OF NEW CANAAN, CONN.

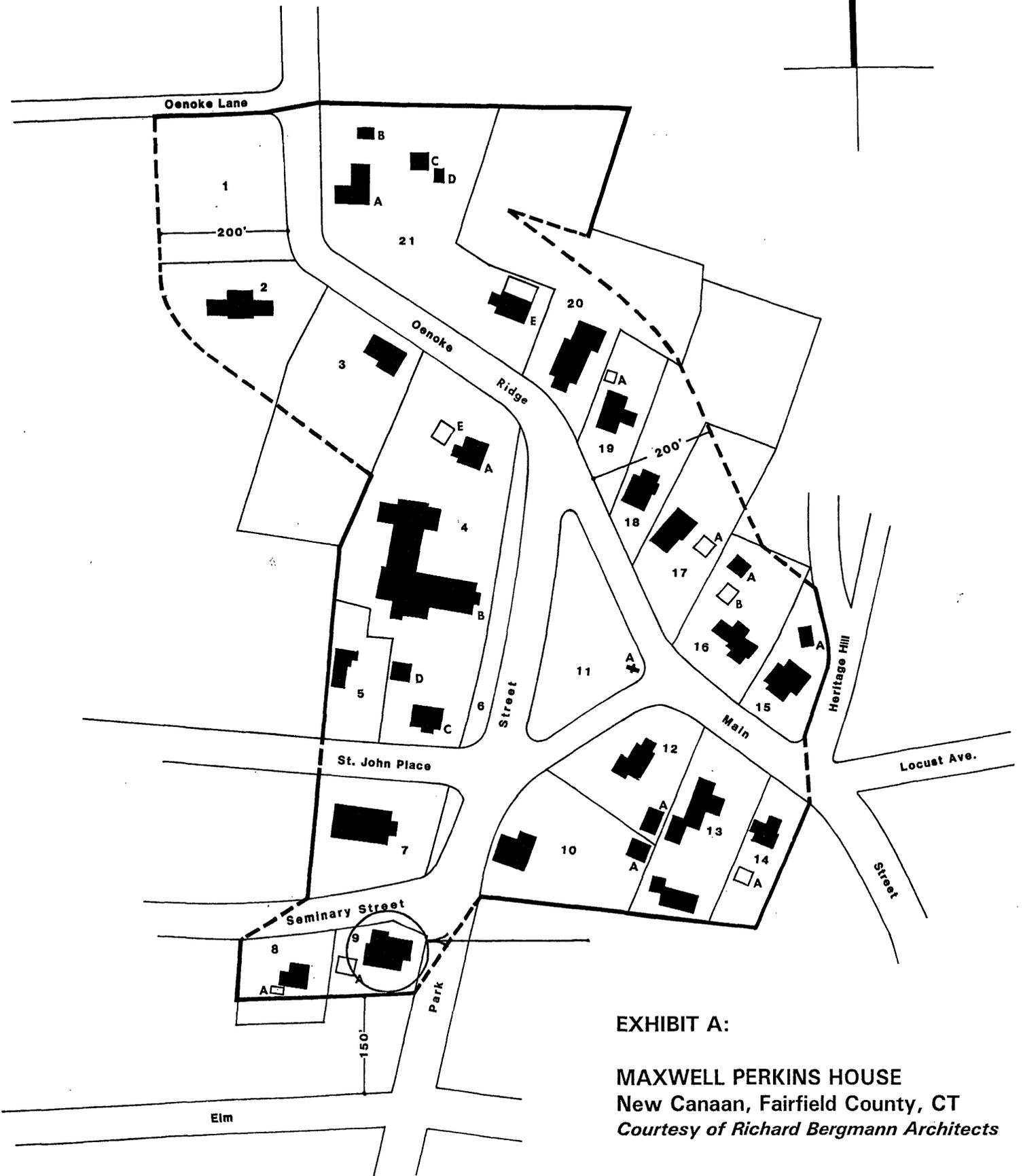
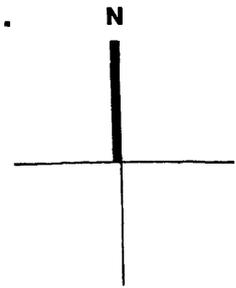
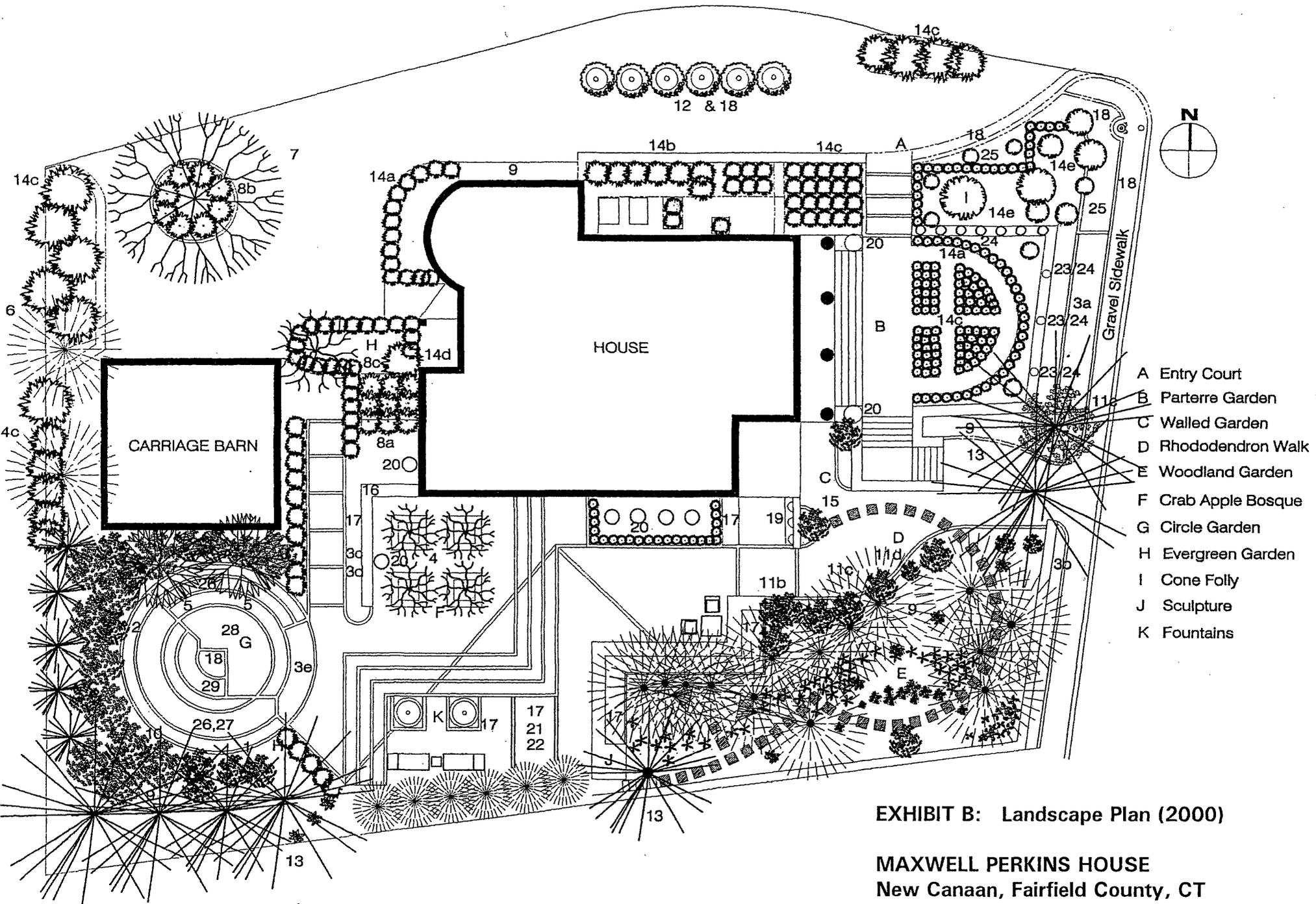


EXHIBIT A:

MAXWELL PERKINS HOUSE
 New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT
Courtesy of Richard Bergmann Architects

Non-Contributory Buildings
 Contributory Buildings





- A Entry Court
- B Parterre Garden
- C Walled Garden
- D Rhododendron Walk
- E Woodland Garden
- F Crab Apple Bosque
- G Circle Garden
- H Evergreen Garden
- I Cone Folly
- J Sculpture
- K Fountains

EXHIBIT B: Landscape Plan (2000)

MAXWELL PERKINS HOUSE
 New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT
Courtesy of Richard Bergmann Architects



EXHIBIT C:
South elevation with alterations dating from the Perkins' era.

MAXWELL PERKINS HOUSE
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT
Courtesy of Richard Bergmann Architects



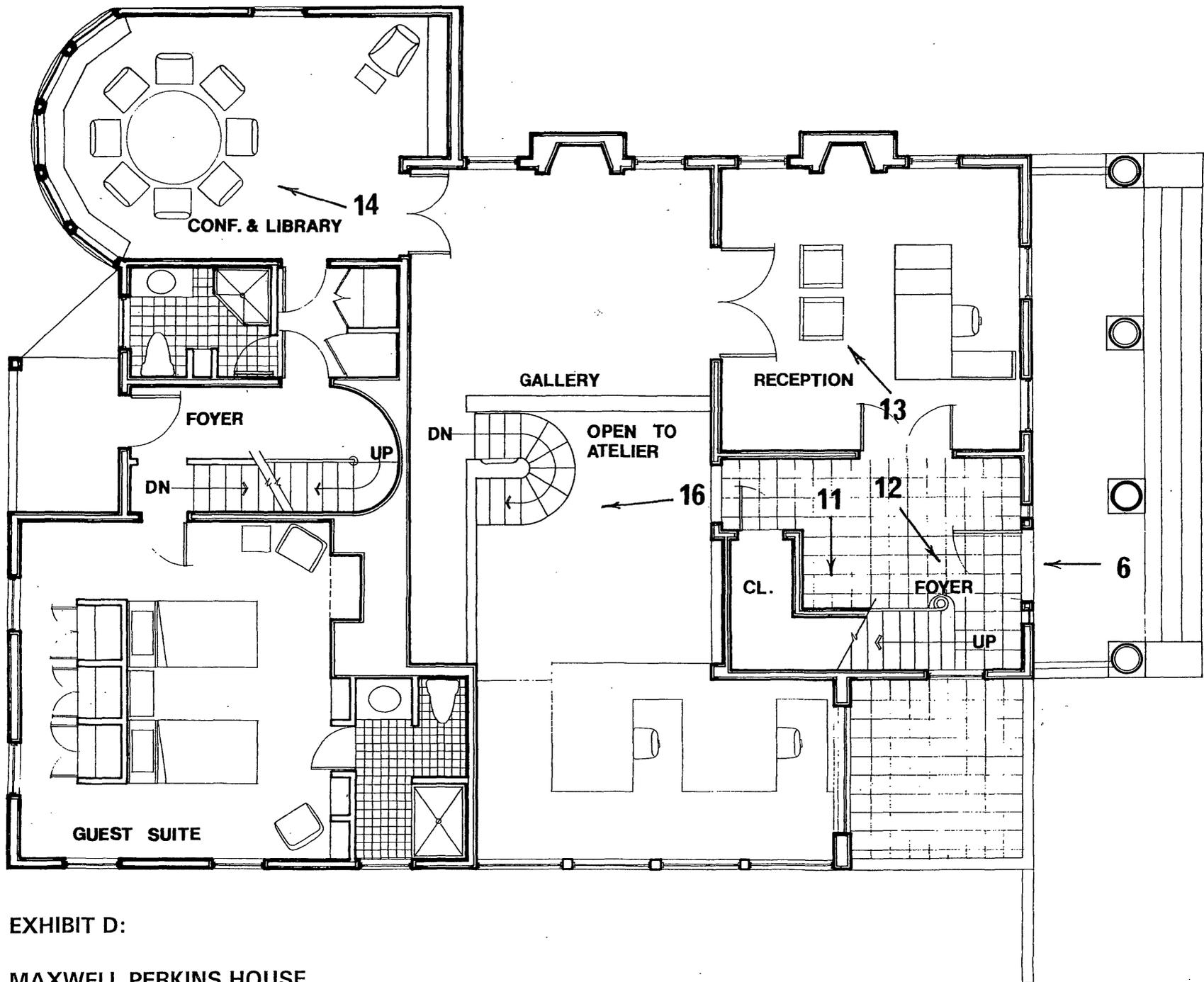
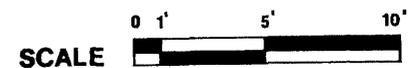


EXHIBIT D:

MAXWELL PERKINS HOUSE
 New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT
Courtesy of Richard Bergmann Architects

Numbered arrows: Photograph views

FIRST FLOOR



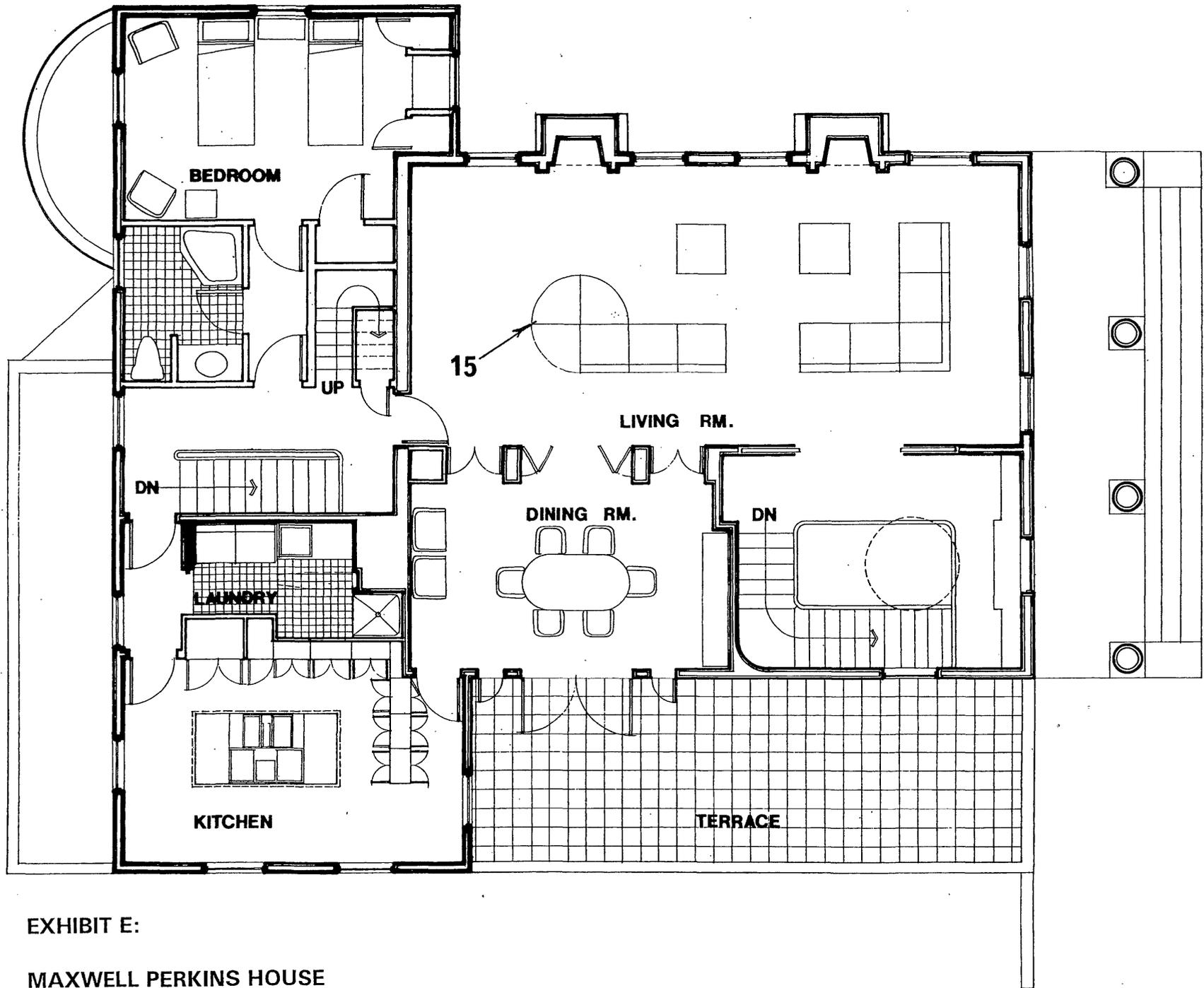
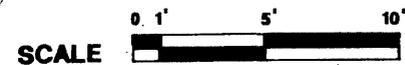


EXHIBIT E:

MAXWELL PERKINS HOUSE
 New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT
Courtesy of Richard Bergmann Architects

Numbered arrows: Photograph views

SECOND FLOOR



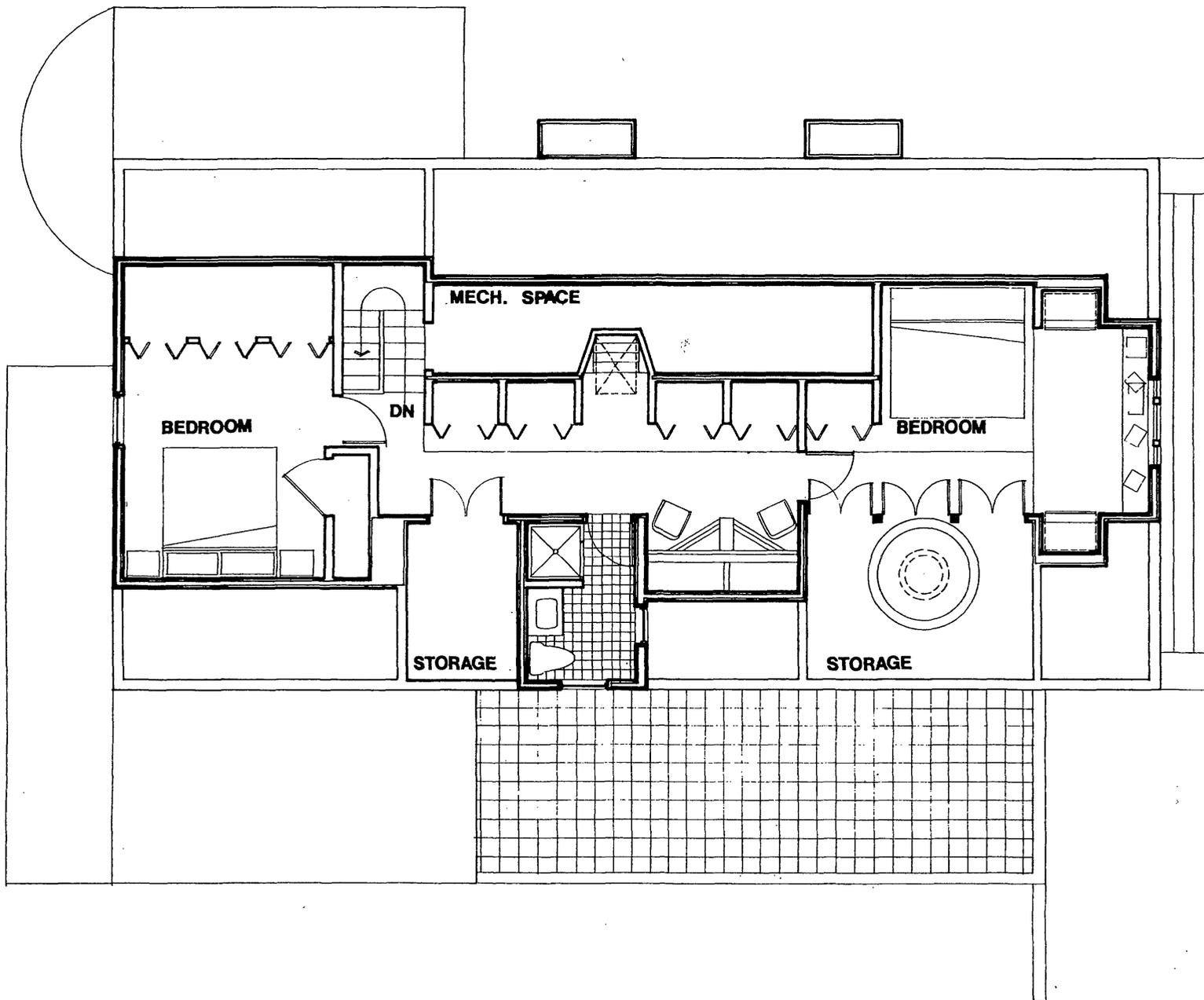


EXHIBIT F:

MAXWELL PERKINS HOUSE
 New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT
Courtesy of Richard Bergmann Architects

THIRD FLOOR

SCALE 0' 5' 10'

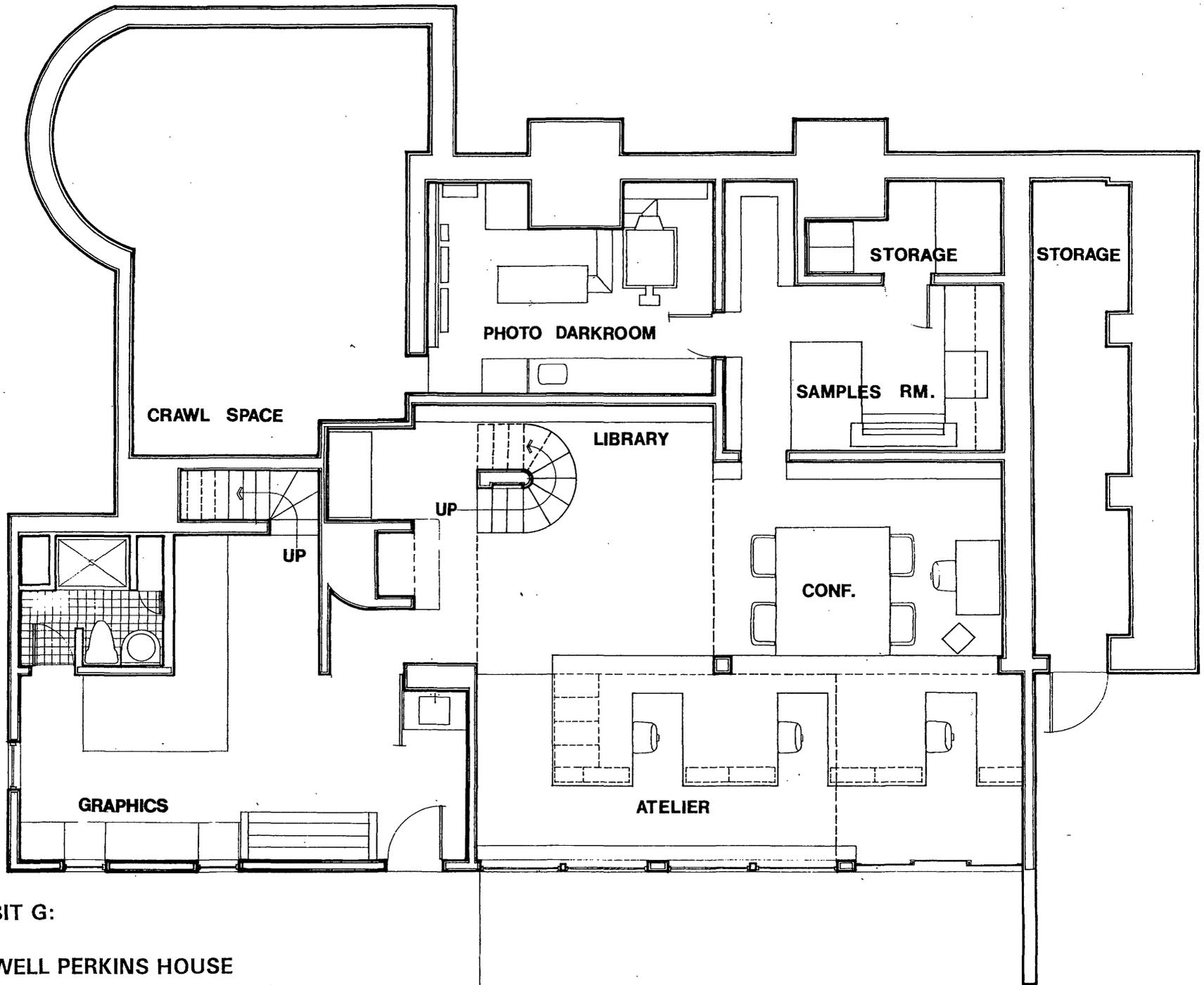


EXHIBIT G:

MAXWELL PERKINS HOUSE
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT
Courtesy of Richard Bergmann Architects

GROUND FLOOR

