

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only 10-1-87

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received DEC 8 1987

date entered DEC 18 1987

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Music Mountain

and or common Music Mountain

2. Location

street & number Music Mountain Road not for publication

city, town Canaan X vicinity of Falls Village

state CT code 09 county Litchfield code 005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Music Mountain, Inc., c/o Mr. Nicholas Gordon

street & number Keystone Broadcasting System, 250 West 57th Street

city, town New York NA vicinity of state New York 10107

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Canaan Land Records, Town Clerk's Office

street & number Main Street

city, town Falls Village state CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no

date 1987 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town 59 South Prospect Street Hartford state CT

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Music Mountain, Inc., is a summer music institution devoted to the string quartet. It is located in a group of buildings constructed in 1930 at a rural site in the hills of northwestern Connecticut, four miles southeast of Falls Village in the Town of Canaan. The founder of Music Mountain, the first violinist in the quartet until his death in 1948, was Jacques Gordon, former concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The five Colonial Revival-style frame buildings were manufactured by Sears, Roebuck and Company.

Music Mountain, the topographic feature, with elevation of 1100 feet, and Music Mountain Road were so re-named upon purchase of the 124-acre site. The acreage runs south from the road to the boundary between the towns of Canaan and Cornwall. (See site plan.) The land had been a farm, and the farmhouse, c. 1880 (Photograph 1), still stands, now used as the year-round residence of the property superintendent. The five buildings constructed in 1930 are a concert hall (Photographs 2, 3), residence for the first violinist (Photographs 4, 5), and identical cottages for the other three members of the quartet (Photographs 6, 7, 8). They are laid out roughly in an arc around the farmhouse. (See site plan.) The overall effect is that of a campus. Entrance to the site is by a driveway centrally located near the farmhouse. The drive curves to the left past a broad open green to the hall, and continues to the large house. The three cottages are positioned among the trees straight ahead from the farmhouse and to the right.

Gordon Hall is a 1-story gable-roofed 32 x 140' structure, facing west. The chief features of its long front elevation are two pedimented pavilions supported by tall paired square attached columns. Each pavilion is entered by French doors and there are four French doors between them. The doors open into the auditorium seating about 400 people, which is finished in dark pine and has a rounded stage at the north under exposed roof framing. (Photograph 9) The north end of the building, behind the stage, is occupied by the Green Room (Photograph 10), from which musicians enter upon the stage. The south end of the building is given over to offices and practice rooms.

The first violinist's house is a 2-story twin-chimney 5-bay structure with ell and attached garage. The entrance, off center in the second bay from the right, is flanked by twin fluted pilasters that support plain architrave and frieze, dentil course, and shallow projecting pediment with cyma cornice and raking cornices. A stylized band of triglyphs runs under the eaves of the house and of the garage. Windows are 6-over-6.

The front door opens to a vestibule. A living room with beamed ceiling runs from the vestibule east to a fireplace. (Photograph 11) The dining room lies behind the vestibule to the right, opening to the kitchen in the ell,

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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which has breakfast area and door to the grounds at the rear. There is a bedroom off the kitchen. A stairway lighted by two windows rises in a double dogleg to the second floor behind the living room. The master bedroom is in the northeast corner (Photograph 12) with two additional bedrooms on the front of the house and another in the ell, for a total of five bedrooms.

The three identical cottages for second violinist, violist, and cellist are 1-story 36 x 36' squares in plan, with the ridge line of the front section parallel to the front elevation, and in the rear an ell at the right and a terrace at the left. On the front elevation a central doorway with shallow pilasters is flanked by paired 6-over-6 windows, while the second floor is lighted by three gable-roofed dormers. One chimney rises on the left side elevation and a second at the beginning of the ell. On the interior, living room and dining room are to the left (Photograph 13), kitchen is in the center, and two bedrooms occupy the right side of the house. There are two more bedrooms on the second floor and an attic space. The roof framing may be observed in the attic space. (Photograph 14)

All the 1930 buildings have foundations of cast masonry units. The houses have partial basements in which are located coal-fired furnaces with steam heat distribution systems, now inoperable. In one cottage the furnace has been converted to oil-fired hot air. Floors are hardwood. Interior doors have single panels. Trim is flat with band moldings. On the first floor, spaces are connected by flat-arched or round-arched openings. Fireplaces have wooden mantels and are flanked by built-in shelves. Kitchens, closets, and bathrooms are all carefully planned both for function and attractive details. The breakfast area in the first violinist's house is nicely detailed and pleasant. The platform in front of each front door is concrete colored red and scored to resemble pavers, and terraces are the same. All structures are covered with clapboards. Original cedar-shingle roofing has been covered with asphalt.

The complex consists of the six contributing buildings and three non-contributing buildings less than 50 years old: garage, kiosk, and stand.

1. Because of the fine acoustics, the hall has been called "the fifth instrument of a string quartet." See David M. Schwartz, "When Home Sweet Home Was Just a Mailbox Away," Smithsonian 16 (November 1985): 98.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1930

Builder/Architect John Carley/David S. Bectone

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Music Mountain is significant architecturally because it is a unique example of a well-designed community in the Colonial-Revival style produced by Sears, Roebuck & Company's pre-fabricated housing division. The institution was conceived and managed by Jacques Gordon, one of the great violinists of the 20th century. It is significant in the history of music because it is and has been since its inception the only summer educational and concert institution devoted primarily to the string quartet.

Criterion C, Architecture

The architectural solution for the new summer musical institution in the Berkshire hills in 1930 was provided by the pre-fab capability of Sears, Roebuck & Company. The planning, design, and financial resources of the mail order concern were brought to bear on the innovative proposal of Jacques Gordon with the result that five Colonial Revival-style buildings were produced to serve and strengthen his dedication to chamber music. The design and production of pre-fabricated Colonial Revival buildings for such a function was both without precedent and highly successful.

The concert hall, large house, and three cottages of Music Mountain are a compatible group of structures that relate well to one another in their rural setting. The white clapboards, gable roofs, 6-over-6 windows, and classical details of the buildings, which are characteristic of the Colonial Revival style, appear among the grass and trees of the landscape in the archtypical New England fashion. The modest mass and proportions of the structures bespeak an earlier era of small scale homes and public buildings.

The concert hall, as befits the largest building in the group, has the most impressive features, which are the two entrance pavilions with tall paired attached columns. The six French doors are not only an attractive architectural detail but also are a practical feature of merit in that they make exit and re-entry at intermission time during a concert a simple matter.

The first violinist's house has the traditional configuration of twin chimneys and five bays, but is unconventional because the doorway is off center to the right. The doorway itself, however, is a companion piece to the concert hall pavilions with its flanking pilasters, dentil course, and pediment. The proportions of the roof-line frieze are atypical because the triglyphs are stylized and the "metope" distance between them is wider than found in classical models. The floor plan of the house also is atypical. Instead of the traditional central hall and stairway with rooms symmetrically disposed on either side, there is no central hall and over half of the width of the house is given over to a large living room.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 124
Quadrangle name South Canaan

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

11-15-87

A

18	639700	4642240
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

18	639740	4642200
Zone	Easting	Northing

C

18	640000	4641800
Zone	Easting	Northing

D

18	638640	4641800
Zone	Easting	Northing

E

18	638640	4642240
Zone	Easting	Northing

F

18	638880	4642700
Zone	Easting	Northing

G

Zone	Easting	Northing

H

Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is described at Canaan Land Records, volume 33, page 24. This is the former Dean farm on the former Barrack Mountain as purchased in 1930.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code NA county NA code NA

state NA code NA county NA code NA

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization _____ date April 30, 1987

street & number 33 Sunrise Hill Drive telephone 203 521-2518

city or town West Hartford state CT

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

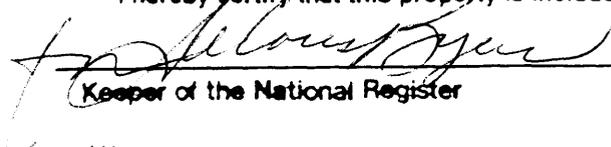
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date December 2, 1987

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register


Keeper of the National Register

date 12-18-87

Attest:

date _____

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The three cottages do have the traditional central entrance with two windows on either side, but the windows are close together in a manner never found in colonial houses. The absence of a traditional central chimney also is noteworthy. The cottages have plain corner pilasters whose capitals are brief returns of the front cornice in the same arrangement as found in the concert hall and the large house.

David S. Bectone is credited with designing the Music Mountain buildings.² He was Chief Architect of the Sears operation by 1929 and continued with Sears until at least 1935. The initials on the drawings are BTL, presumably those of B. T. Lourim, an architect mentioned in 1931 Sears promotional material.³ The relative importance of the design input of the Chief Architect and the draftsman is impossible to assess. It is also likely that Jacques Gordon contributed to the planning process. The buildings as constructed do not exactly conform to⁴ the drawings (in the possession of Music Mountain) for reasons unknown.

The five buildings, prefabricated at Sears, Roebuck and Company's factory in Newark, New Jersey, were shipped to Falls Village on railroad cars, brought to the site, and erected by a local contractor, John Carley. Each piece was numbered. Assembly proceeded according to instructions that came with the shipment. Photographs of construction in progress are in the possession of Music Mountain.

For the person who wished to build his own house, the fact that the lumber was pre-cut was important in an era when power tools were almost unknown. It was said that a small house that required 583 carpenter hours if constructed conventionally could be erected in 352 hours if the same house was a Sears product, a substantial saving.⁵ Another factor important to many buyers was the general character and appearance of the models. Sears was not an innovator, but rather supplied houses that reflected general American tastes. The styles and designs they offered already were widely accepted.

The generous financing eventually contributed to the demise of the enterprise. With a one-quarter down payment, Sears would make a 15-year mortgage loan at 6% for the lot and house. In 1929, the year of greatest activity, sales reached \$12,050,000, but one half of that amount was

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represented by mortgages. The Great Depression followed. Payments became delinquent. Foreclosure was the order of the day. By the mid-1930s mortgage losses exceeded profits on the program from 1908 to that time. Of equal concern was the bad public relations image created for Sears by the foreclosures. The operation declined and was abandoned after the last catalog in 1940.⁶

In addition to selling standard models from its catalogs, Sears did a limited amount of custom work, such as a replica of Mount Vernon for the 1931 Paris World's Fair. The Music Mountain concert hall and first violinist's house were custom work. The three cottages were a custom design for Music Mountain in the first instance, but the design was adopted for regular selling and appeared in the catalogs for 1931, 1932, and 1933 under the name of "The Gordon." (See copy of catalog page attached.) Music Mountain was the only cultural institution designed and built by Sears, Roebuck and Company.

According to tradition,⁷ Sears designers toured New England in search of inspiration for architecture suitable to the region before drawing plans for Music Mountain. The structures at Music Mountain reflect their observations. Prior to that time, most designs in the Sears catalogs were in the Queen Anne, Bungalow, American Four-Square, Tudor Revival, and vernacular styles, with an occasional Dutch Colonial Revival house. After 1930 several Colonial Revival designs in addition to "The Gordon" regularly appeared in the catalog, in confirmation that the Music Mountain commission introduced a new influence that had a permanent place in the Sears line.

Music History

Chamber music dates from the post-Baroque period in the history of music. Hayden was the first composer to write specifically for a small group, usually the string quartet. From its first concert in 1929, attended by three United States senators, Ethyl Barrymore, Zoe Akins, and Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, Music Mountain has continued a program of performing and teaching chamber music written by Hayden and his successors with three distinguished quartets-in-residence and renowned artists as guests, including Harold Bauer, Georges Barrère, Helen Stanley, Olin Downes, Isidor Phillip, Alex Templetown, Benny Goodman, and Ruggiero Ricci, leading to the 59th season in 1988. Music Mountain surely is unique in New England and perhaps is the only institution in the United States devoted primarily to performance and instruction of chamber music, to the standards established by Jacques Gordon.

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Jacques Gordon (1899 - 1948), a child prodigy violinist, came to America in 1914 from Odessa, Russia, where he had studied at the Imperial Conservatory. He continued his studies under Franz Kneisel at the Institute of Musical Art, New York City, and at Blue Hill, Maine. Kneisel was concertmaster of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and an ardent advocate of the string quartet. Gordon played with the Russian Symphony Orchestra, became second violinist with the Berkshire String Quartet, and played at Roxy's Capitol Theater in New York before moving to the Midwest to become, at age 21, concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In the same year, he organized the Gordon String Quartet. Gordon continued with the Chicago orchestra for eight years and during these years headed the violin department of the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. In 1930 he resigned from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to make the string quartet his prime concern.

In his advocacy of the string quartet Gordon had the backing of a group of six prominent citizens of Chicago and other cities, one of whom was Julius Rosenwald, chairman of Sears, Roebuck and Company. Because of this relationship, Music Mountain got planned and built. The first concert of the Gordon String Quartet at Music Mountain was held in Gordon Hall on August 22, 1930, featuring a program of works by Ravel, Beethoven, and Schumann. Other members of the quartet were Edwin Ideler, second violinist, Joseph Vieland, Violist, and Nahoum Benditzky, cellist.

As with so many of the houses they sold, Sears held the mortgage on property of the Gordon Musical Association at Music Mountain and, as with so many of their mortgages, payments in the early 1930s were in default. In 1932 Sears foreclosed the mortgage but continued to rent the premises for \$2000 yearly. In 1937 champions of the music group raised modest capital and persuaded Sears to sell the land and buildings to the Music Mountain Corporation for \$20,000. Initial investment had been on the order of \$200,000.⁸

During the 1930s and 1940s the members of the quartet taught each summer at Music Mountain, in addition to playing concerts. Guest performers and groups were invited from time to time. Gordon also became the first conductor of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra and headed the violin department at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. He received the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Medal for Distinguished Service in Music in the United States.

Toward the end of the 1940s Gordon's health began to fail, leading him to resign the leadership of the Gordon String Quartet. On the evening of September 15, 1948 he visited the home of Albert Spaulding in Great

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Barrington, Massachusetts, where Fritz Kreisler and William Primrose also were guests. After an evening of informal music by the four great musicians, Gordon returned home, suffered another stroke, and died.

At this time Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, who had established the Berkshire String Quartet in 1916, suggested that the Gordon group continue as the Berkshire Quartet. Mrs. Coolidge was an early founder of a summer music program. Perhaps the earliest summer music event in New England was the choral program sponsored by the Worcester County Musical Association starting in 1858 that was held in Mechanics Hall, Worcester, Massachusetts, from 1864 to its final year in 1933. The Bethlehem (Pennsylvania) Bach Choir, started in 1900, was another choral program. From the beginning it was open to one and all on a ticket-purchase basis. The Stockel summer music festival at Norfolk, Connecticut, combined both choral and orchestral events, but attendance was by invitation. The series concluded in 1922. The Norfolk facilities have resumed activity under the aegis of the Yale Summer School of Music.⁹ Another college-affiliated summer music festival, founded in 1951 and primarily devoted to chamber music, is the Marlboro Music School at Marlboro College, Marlboro, Vermont, Rudolph Serkin, director.

In 1918 the Berkshire String Quartet began performances in a white frame structure provided by Mrs. Coolidge called the Temple of Music at South Mountain, Massachusetts, near Pittsfield. The event, known as the Berkshire Festival of Chamber Music, was not held every summer and the members of the quartet changed from time to time. Nearby a more ambitious permanent summer music series took shape in 1938 with the building of the Music Shed in Tanglewood as the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The summer seasons at Tanglewood have continued successfully over the years. Other summer-music events, as distinguished from full seasons, in New England have included the Rockport Festival in Maine and the Monadnock Music Festival in New Hampshire.

At the time "The Fairy Godmother of Chamber Music," as Mrs. Coolidge was fondly called, suggested transfer of the Berkshire name to Music Mountain, the other members of the Gordon group were Urico Rossi, second violinist, David Dawson, violist, and Fritz Magg, cellist. The quartet played together at Music Mountain and at the Indiana University School of Music where they were quartet-in-residence. From 1965 Rossi and Magg appeared each season with several different partners through 1980, including the 50th continuous concert series in 1979. In 1981 the Manhattan String Quartet, taking its name from the Manhattan School of Music with which it is affiliated, became the third string-quartet-in-residence at Music Mounta

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¹The Norfolk Music Shed (1904, Erick C. Rossiter) uses a similar scheme for easy exit and re-entry.

²Katherine Cole Stevenson and H. Ward Jandl, Houses by Mail (Washington: The Preservation Press, 1986), p. 35.

³A Connecticut architect also was associated with the Sears work. He was Merrill Clement, Jr., of South Norwalk.

⁴Sears, Roebuck & Company's first catalog of houses was issued in 1908 and the last in 1940. About 100,000 houses, ranging from mansions to bungalows, were produced during that interval. The great popularity of the product was due to a number of factors, including good quality, reasonable price (usually in the range of \$650/%2500, a wide variety of styles, shapes, and materials (450 different models were offered over the years), and attractive financing. The price included all materials and supplies, except plumbing, heating, wiring, and the kitchen sink. These were extra. No masonry was included.

⁵Stevenson, op cit., p. 30.

⁶Sears was the largest but not the only firm in the business. Alladin Homes of Bay City, Michigan, was the first, starting in 1906, and continued the longest, to 1983. Alladin Homes are found in northwestern Connecticut. For example, the seven houses that line Marne Park Road in Bantam, Town of Litchfield, are Alladin houses.

⁷Interview with Nicholas Gordon, son of Jacques Gordon and president of Music Mountain, Inc., April 14, 1987.

⁸"Jacques Gordon Establishes Music Center at Falls Village," The Lure of the Litchfield Hills 2 (September 1930): 32.

⁹Carl Stoeckel's father taught music at Yale, where he met Ellen Battell of Norfolk. Her family gave the Battell Chapel to Yale. Ellen Battell Stoeckel survived her husband. It is under the terms of her will that the Yale Summer School occupies the Battell/Stoeckel estate in Norfolk, including the Rossiter Music Shed. Current performances are open to the public on a ticket-purchase basis.

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Massachusetts: Berkshire Traveller Press, 1979.

THE GORDON

The simple dignity and beauty of colonial architecture found many expressions, one of the most interesting being the Cape Cod colonial, exemplified in the Gordon. Many of these sturdy houses still standing in New England are objects of pilgrimage to those who appreciate and love beautiful homes. Although face brick is often used for the chimney, good effect is obtained by using common brick whitewashed.

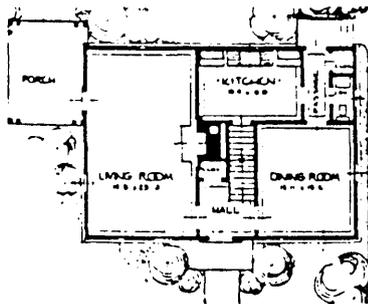


Details and features: Five or seven rooms and two baths. Side brick chimney; pilasters flanking front door; three gabled dormers. Optional second floor; fireplace in living room.

Years and catalog numbers: 1931 (3356); 1932 (3356); 1933 (3356)

Price: No price given

THE ATTLEBORO

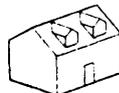


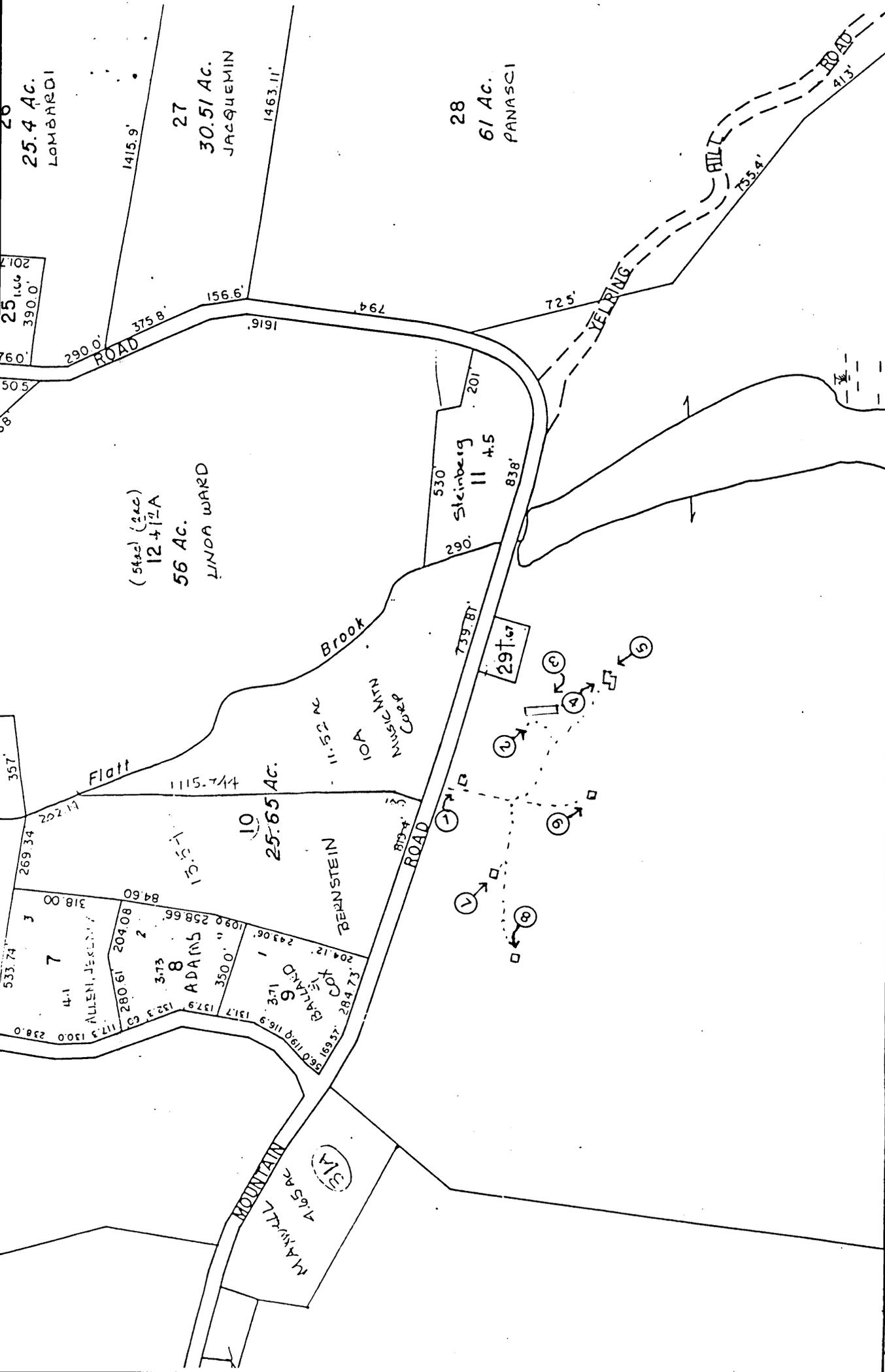
This type of Cape Cod home is one of the first designs built by the early New England settlers. Homes built over a hundred years ago grow old gracefully and still retain a certain warmth and beauty. It seems to have many friends in both urban and suburban areas. The Attleboro achieves distinction with its fine doorway, dormers, shuttered windows and correct architectural details. No "gingerbread" to get out of date. Outside walls are shown of cedar shingles but will look equally attractive with siding.

Details and features: Six rooms and one and a half baths. Side porch with paired columns; six-panel front door with transoms. Fireplace in living room; semiopen stairs.

Years and catalog numbers: 1933 (3384); 1934 (3384); 1935 (3384); 1937 (3384); 1939 (3384)

Price: \$1,810 to \$2,197





C O R N W A L L

Music Mountain
 Canaan, CT
 Scale: 1" = 450'
 Photo key - ○➔

