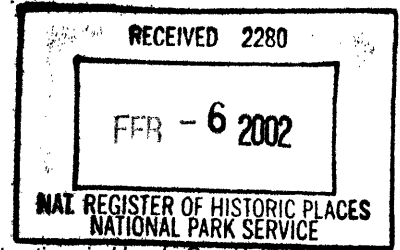


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



189 OK

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name LANDIS GORES HOUSE
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 192 Cross Ridge Road not for publication
city or town New Canaan vicinity
state Connecticut code CT county Fairfield code 001 zip code 06840

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

John W. Shanahan February 4, 2002
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
John W. Shanahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
John A. Savage 3/21/02

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		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

International Style

Wrightian

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls GLASS

STONE

WOOD

roof ASPHALT

other N/A

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark an "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, structure
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1948

Significant Dates

1948

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Landis Gores, architect
John C. Smith, Inc. contractor

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Connecticut Historical Commission,
59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, CT 06106

Landis Gores House _____ Name
of Property

Fairfield County, CT _____
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 626 070 4561 640
Zone Easting Northing

3

Zone Easting Northing

2

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 Bruce Clouette, Historian

organization Public Archaeology Survey Team, Inc. date June 30, 2001

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

city or town Storrs state CT zip code 06268

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

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

Additional Items

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

Property Owner

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

name Pamela Gores

street & number 192 Cross Ridge Road telephone N/A

city or town New Canaan state CT zip code 06840

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Landis Gores House
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION

The Landis Gores House in New Canaan, Connecticut, is a large single-story flat-roofed frame house, built in 1948, that is stylistically related both to the International style and to the American rectilinear “organic” architecture often termed “Wrightian” (Photographs 1 and 2). It occupies a large wooded lot in a residential neighborhood of widely spaced homes and is oriented with its long axis in a north-south direction, parallel to the ridge top along which Cross Ridge Road runs. It is set well back from the road, with the intervening space populated by tall deciduous trees. The house is situated on a platform defined by mortared fieldstone walls, low in front but quite high at the rear where the ground slopes downward. Inside the fieldstone walls, the center part of the house, in the area of the entrance foyer, kitchen, and living/dining area, is surrounded front and rear by a pavement of bluestone flagging (see floor plan, Figure 1).

The house is 130 feet in length, exclusive of the added garage (Photograph 3). There are three main divisions. At the south end is a low bedroom wing, with only a single row of small openings on the west elevation, placed high on the wall so as to light an access corridor within. The bedrooms themselves have projecting floor-to-ceiling glass walls on the rear (east) elevation facing the terrace (Photograph 5). Near the center of the house is a large block with a raised roof to accommodate the 11-foot ceiling of the living/dining area within; it has glass walls on both the front and rear elevations (Photographs 2 and 6). At the north end is a kitchen and a utility closet alongside the north entrance to the house. In 1970, the open space north of the kitchen, formerly used as a carport, was made part of the main structure and turned into an additional room. A clerestory-roofed garage, connected to the house by a sheltered walkway, was built to assume its functions. Adding to the complex massing of the house is the entrance, situated between the bedroom wing and the living/dining area (Photograph 4). The entry of three wide glass doors is sheltered by a cantilevered roof with large skylights, creating a pergola effect. The broad low steps leading up from the driveway are flanked by returns of the fieldstone wall that form planters for shrubbery. A similar shelter is found at the rear of the house leading from the entrance foyer to the terrace. Each of the three major divisions has a massive low chimney of fieldstone masonry similar to that of the walls that surround the house. The portions of the exterior that are not glass or stone are covered with a grey-stained vertical siding of narrow tongue-and-groove cypress boards.

Despite the house’s size, there is no sense of overwhelming mass because of the advancing and receding vertical planes created by the three main divisions and by the glass projecting walls. Also, although the roofs are all flat and have wide projecting eaves and broad fascias, the roof line is broken up by numerous horizontal levels: the cantilevered entrance roofs, the roofs over the bedroom and kitchen wings, the higher roof over the living/dining area, a low roof across the front of the kitchen and former carport (Photograph 2), and a low roof for the former playroom (now a bedroom) that runs at right angles to the main axis of the house at the north rear corner of the house (Photograph 7).

In 1985, the terrace at the rear of the house was extended with two circular seating areas and an oval swimming pool (Photograph 8). Although their curved shapes reflect Gores’s (and American architecture’s) movement away from rectilinear forms, the low wall around these features continues the masonry of the original stone walls and thus makes the additions appear seamless with the rear terrace. The seating areas and pool were both designed by Gores.

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Landis Gores House

New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section number 7 Page 2

The entrance foyer (Photograph 9) provides a gradual transition to the interior. Its floor continues the flagstones found outside, and its skylighted ceiling and glass doors front and rear provide abundant natural light. The living/dining area's chimney continues into the foyer, where it forms an L-shaped wall, at the base of which is a small planter that originally was a goldfish pool. One enters the bedroom wing on the right or the main part of the house on the left by going up a low step and turning a corner.

The large living/dining area at the center of the house is a single large room, 32 feet by 37 feet, divided into separate activity areas by the furniture and shelving. At the south end of the room is a seating area facing a massive 13-foot-wide fieldstone chimney; an alcove on the left is fitted with shelves and serves as a library (Photograph 10). The north side of the room accommodates a dining area (Photograph 11), demarcated in part by a low cabinet and shelf unit (Photograph 12). The cabinet also has a planter. In addition to the tall windows that make up most of the east and west walls, the room is illuminated by clerestory windows on the north and south sides.

Interior finishes include plaster ceilings and walls throughout the house, with vertical cypress boards paneling the walls in the living/dining area. The plaster wall sections are set off by a recessed wood-strip margin. The floors, which contain a radiant heating system, are parqueted oak. Doors in the bedroom area rise 9 feet from floor to ceiling. In the living/dining area and in all the bedrooms, the corners of the projecting glass walls are fitted with narrow glass doors (Photograph 5).

For the purposes of enumerating contributing and noncontributing resources, the property is construed as one contributing building. Because it is connected to the house by a narrow roof over a walkway and because it continues the form and materials of the house, the garage was not counted separately.

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Landis Gores House
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section number 8 Page 1

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Landis Gores House is significant because it epitomizes the “modern” architecture of post-World War II America (Criterion C). Among the distinguishing characteristics of the type embodied in the Gores House are its flat-roofed single-story form, emphasis on horizontal planes, extensive use of full-height glass walls, informal open plan, the absence of any reference to historical precedence, and a close relationship between the house and its environment. Leavening the International style’s glass-walled austerity with natural wood and stone in the manner of Frank Lloyd Wright, the house was considered avant-garde and perhaps even a little shocking when built. In the following decades, however, the aesthetics pioneered by houses such as this influenced millions of American homes, including standard-plan Ranch and Raised-Ranch houses in suburban tracts, high-end prefabricated designs, and custom-built homes commonly termed “Contemporary.”

Built by the architect Landis Gores (1919-1991) for his own family, the house is one of the first of several dozen modern houses designed by distinguished architects in the late 1940s and 1950s in New Canaan, Connecticut, which was then still rural, despite being within easy commuting distance of New York City. Today, as the market turns toward ever-larger homes, New Canaan’s modern houses are threatened, and several notable examples have been demolished in order to exploit their scenic locations.

Landis Gores

Landis Gores was educated at Princeton University (Class of 1939, *Summa Cum Laude*) and the Harvard Graduate School of Design, which at that time included among its faculty the Bauhaus emigrés Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer. He graduated in 1942, winning a gold medal award from the American Institute of Architects. Joining the U.S. Army, he served in top-secret code-breaking activities during World War II, for which he was honored by both his own and Allied governments. Following the war he became associated with his classmate, Philip Johnson, participating in many of Johnson’s early projects until setting out on his own in 1951. Johnson remembered Landis Gores as “the most brilliant student in my class, a brilliant writer and wonderful draftsman. He was a figure of veneration to me.”¹

Gores was one of a group of Harvard-related architects who built houses for themselves in New Canaan; the others were Johnson, Breuer, Eliot Noyes, and John Johansen. Known as the “Harvard Five,” together they promoted a fresh approach to architecture, both through their work and by opening their New Canaan houses to the public for what they called “Modern House Days.”

Gores was struck down with polio in the 1954, permanently affecting his breathing and mobility but not his ability to draw. With assistance from his wife, Pamela Whitmarsh Gores, he was able to design and supervise the construction of several dozen projects in the 1960s and 1970s, including private residences, apartment buildings,

¹*Oculus* (American Institute of Architects, New York City Chapter), May, 1991. p. 7.

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Landis Gores House
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

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suburban office and commercial structures, a hospital, and schools. Some of his designs, such as the 70-unit Strathmoor-on-the-Park garden apartments in Fairfield, Connecticut (1967), attracted wide attention, and Gores was honored as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. He died in 1991.

Architectural Significance

Landis Gores's house was immediately perceived as a creative and successful synthesis of the International-style influences brought to America by Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and Marcel Breuer, and the natural, organic architecture envisioned by Frank Lloyd Wright. Though he studied with the European modernists at Harvard, Gores readily acknowledged his admiration for, and the influence of, Wright's house designs of the 1930s. *House & Home*, in its feature on the Gores house in 1952, praised it as "a powerful shot in the arm, a thing to lift your spirit," and analyzed its two chief aspects as follows:

It is modern because its plan is open and its spaces dynamic and bold; because its details are clean and simple; because it is intimately related to the landscape surrounding it; and because its many flat roofs and its large sheets of glass are of the technology of our time.

It is traditional . . . because it is a deliberate attempt to emphasize the permanence of "home" rather than the temporariness of "industrialized shelter."

As it turned out, this was the combination of elements that was to find the greatest acceptance in postwar American domestic architecture. Although numerous purist examples were built in Connecticut and elsewhere, overall the country was cool to Bauhaus severity, preferring for its modern look natural wood and rough stone. Gropius himself used painted wood siding in the house he designed for himself in Lincoln, Massachusetts, and Breuer made fieldstone the primary exterior material in his 1951 New Canaan house. At the same time, the slab foundation, flat roofs, open plan, and free-form rectilinear massing of these houses allowed a tremendous flexibility and variety, both inside and out, that must have seemed like a breath of fresh air when contrasted to the "Colonial" houses that continued to dominate American homebuilding. The synthesis pioneered by the Gores house and other early modern houses never entirely supplanted traditional forms. Nevertheless, their influence is apparent in the horizontality, low-pitched if not flat roofs, open plan, and generous use of glass in innumerable custom-built homes, Ranch and Raised-Ranch houses in suburban developments, and expensive pre-fabricated dwellings--such as the "Tech-Built" and "Lindholm Cedar" homes--of the 1950s and 1960s.

In his memoirs, Gores recounted the heady, self-conscious spirit of starting anew, of being given freedom in terms of style and materials to do whatever would serve the building's purpose, that energized the architects of the period:

The mood was in a way almost Sullivanian; no more schoolmasters to defer to on one hand, but no literal copying of any more distant if brighter luminary either. Influences, of course; eclecticism also, in the raw stages at least, but to be blended, refined, fused into completely individual new work before leaving the office. All the world of building was open to us; all history, all geography also; no holds were barred.

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Landis Gores House

New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

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Although Philip Johnson's "Glass House" was and remains the most widely known, all the New Canaan houses of the Harvard Five were influential, visited by architects and cultural tastemakers from New York City and written about in both popular and professional magazines. Although his career was curtailed by illness, Gores's creative genius and his right to stand with the others is amply demonstrated by this house. The complexities of the massing and the roof lines give the house a fresh aspect when viewed from different points and reduce the large volume (resting on a footprint of almost 4,000 square feet) to a manageable, human scale. Numerous elements, such as the cypress strips that enframe the plaster wall panels, the natural beauty and fine workmanship of the cypress paneling and fieldstone fireplaces, and the replication of the house in miniature by the living/dining area cabinet (Photograph 12) show an outstanding attention to detail and craftsmanship. Finally, the design achieves a remarkable unity between the house and its environment, both in the way the long, low form hugs the wooded ridge and in the numerous deftly executed interconnections between the outside and inside.

Communing with nature was part of the suburban dream, and the beauty of the house's wooded lot was intended not only to complement the exterior of the house but also to be brought inside at every opportunity. The extensive use of glass walls, clerestory windows, and skylights brings in abundant natural light and allows one a wide view of the outside from nearly every part of the interior. The narrow corner doors on the projecting glass walls (an original detail original to Gores?) provide multiple physical access to the outside from the bedrooms and main living/dining area and, because they are screened, ample facilities to bring in fresh air and create cross-ventilation. Although only a small part of the total floor area, the entrance foyer is perhaps the most notable part of the inside-outside connection because it was cleverly designed as a transition between the two: its skylighted ceiling continues the overhead view established by the entry's cantilevered roof, its floor appears as an extension of the flagstone paving in the front and rear yards, and its stone side walls recall the exterior's perimeter wall and chimneys. Turning left or right, one enters the living or bedroom areas of the house, but proceeding straight ahead returns one to the outside again, on the rear terrace. Then as now, the foyer was filled with house plants, and although the goldfish pool has been turned into a planter as well, the foyer's dual outside-inside character remains intact.

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Landis Gores House
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Integrity

The house retains its historic appearance on both the inside and outside with few exceptions. Most non-original material is in the form of in-kind replacement for worn-out elements, such as the living/dining area floor, which had to be removed and re-laid in order to repair the radiant heat. The added garage and swimming pool are entirely in character with the original house and were both designed by Gores himself. The enclosure of the carport, while removing one of the typical features of postwar modern houses, may have been anticipated in the original design, since *House & Home* reported that this part of the house could be converted into an apartment for a family member that would be separate but share a kitchen with the main house.

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Landis Gores House

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New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Bibliography:

"A Traditional House in the Modern Idiom," *House & Home*, January 1952.

LeMenager, Jack, and Carina Eagleston Milligan. "Blending Classical Traditions," *New Canaan Advertiser*, December 19, 1974.

Gores, Landis. Unpublished memoir, 1986, typescript in possession of Pamela Gores, New Canaan, Connecticut.

_____. Obituary. *New York Times*, March 20, 1991.

_____. Obituary. *Oculus* (American Institute of Architects, New York City Chapter), May, 1991.

Randall, Kathleen. "The 'Moderns' of New Canaan," *DOCOMOMO Journal* 24 (February 2001): 24-25.

Schultze, Franz. *Philip Johnson, Life and Work*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.

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Landis Gores House
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

Section number 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property includes the entire 4-acre parcel at 192 Cross Ridge Road, recorded in the New Canaan Land Records, Vol. 543, page 1042, and shown as Map 41, Block 103, Lot 2 in the New Canaan assessor's records.

Boundary Justification:

The wooded acreage surrounding the house provides a setting for the house that is an intrinsic part of the architectural intent (see Item 8).

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Landis Gores House
New Canaan, Fairfield County, CT

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All photographs:

1. Landis Gores House
2. New Canaan, Fairfield County, Connecticut
3. James Clay Photograph
4. September 2001
5. Negative filed with photographer

Captions:

1. Overview of front of house (west elevation), camera facing northeast
2. West elevation, north end, showing windows for raised living/dining area, now-enclosed carport on left, camera facing southeast
3. Detail of added garage, north end of house, facing northeast
4. Detail of main entrance, west elevation, camera facing east
5. Overview of rear (east) elevation, camera facing north
6. Detail of windows for living/dining area, camera facing west
7. North end of east elevation, looking across covered pool built into terrace, toward former playroom, camera facing northwest
8. Detail of fieldstone walls forming rear terrace, with added pool (now covered), camera facing northeast
9. Interior, entrance foyer, showing planter (formerly a pool) built into chimney structure, camera facing northeast
10. Interior, living/dining area, looking toward fireplace on south wall, camera facing south
11. Interior, living/dining area, looking toward north wall, camera facing northwest; corridor on right leads to kitchen
12. Detail of cabinet/table/planter unit, living/dining area, camera facing northeast