1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: GROPIUS HOUSE

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 68 Baker Bridge Road Not for publication: __

City/Town: Lincoln Vicinity: __

State: MA County: Middlesex Code: 017 Zip Code: 01773

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	X
Public-Local:	___	District:	__
Public-State:	___	Site:	__
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
2	___ buildings
1	___ sites
___	___ structures
___	___ objects
3	___ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 2

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

4. 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.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

Current: Recreation, education and culture Sub: Museum

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Modern Movement; International Style

MATERIALS:
Foundation: Stone
Walls: Vertical redwood siding
Roof: Tar and gravel
Other: Brick chimney

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Gropius House property consists of three contributing components: the house built in 1938 as the home of Walter Gropius, a founder of the modern movement in architecture and leader of the Bauhaus, and his family; a garage now remodeled to serve as a visitor's center; and a landscape incorporating significant designed features reflective of modern landscape design in its early phase. The Gropius House sits at the crest of a gentle hill that slopes up from Baker Bridge Road behind a low fieldstone wall which is set back 100 feet from the road. The house occupies the middle of its 5.51-acre site. The planned landscape immediately around the house transitions gradually to the preserved natural and agricultural landscapes of the property and its surroundings. To the southeast are views of a wetland; directly to the rear of the house are woods. To the west distant views of Mt. Wachusett and Mt. Monadnock are now obscured by trees, but were a feature of the landscape when the house was originally built. Walter Gropius (1883-1969) resided here until his death. His wife, Ise Frank Gropius, continued to live in the house until shortly before her death in 1983, having deeded the property to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) in 1980. Now operated as a house museum, the Gropius property is open to the public year round.

Located in the town of Lincoln, Massachusetts, an affluent suburb 17 miles northwest of Boston, the house is situated in a sparsely built-up portion of Baker Bridge Road, a winding road providing access from central Lincoln to outlying rural and natural areas, including Walden Pond, 1 1/2 miles away just over the border in Concord. The combination of large holdings of privately-owned land and the 25% of land area of the town that is held for conservation purposes (some of it in agricultural use) contributes to the rural character of this bedroom community of 8000. Eighteenth and nineteenth century wood frame houses are intermingled with more recent dwellings, including other examples of Modern Architecture. Notable among the latter are the four houses on Woods End Road bordering the Gropius property to the west built in 1938 and 1939 with which the Gropius House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988 as the Woods End Road Historic District. Three were designed by Gropius and his partner, Marcel Breuer, and one by their associate at Harvard, Walter Bogner.[1]

The firm of Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, Associate Architects, are listed as designers of the Gropius House, but the design was in reality the result of a collaborative effort that included Ise Gropius and even their twelve-year-old daughter, Ati. The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, the property's present owners, have designated the house simply the Gropius House in recognition of that collaboration. The landscape design was the result of a similar collaborative effort. The contractor selected to build the house was Casper J. Jenney of Concord.

The house's structural system combines modern balloon frame construction with certain larger structural components such as 4" X 6" corner posts and 4" X 8" sills that hark back to the timber frame construction that prevailed in New England until the mid-nineteenth century. The house is constructed with "diagonally braced wood frame floors, walls, ceilings, and roof . . , 2" by 4" wall studs, 2" by 10"

[1]A fifth house, a replica of a Federal style house, built in 1938 completes the district. All of these houses were funded by Mrs. Storrow under conditions similar to those that she provided for the Gropiuses (see further information in Section 8).

roof and floor joists."[2] Steel I beams span the plate glass windows in the living area, and steel lally columns support the marquee, the porch roof and the roof overhang in the southwest corner.[3]

All components used to construct the house and the fittings for it were stock building materials or standard items available from catalogs: glass bricks, steel sash, doors and door hardware, lighting and plumbing fixtures. There were only two exceptions. Walter Gropius had the tubular metal handrail of the staircase molded and welded in situ to meet his specifications for function and aesthetic appeal. Exterior spot lights were also custom designed.[4] Stock items were selected for reasons of economy, but also because Gropius wanted to demonstrate that readily available American industrial products could be used to create elegant solutions to modern building design.[5]

The Gropius House is a two story, flat roofed, wood frame structure 2300 square feet in floor area, with white painted vertical redwood siding, a tar and gravel roof, and a stone foundation. A gray-painted exterior chimney on the west side is of brick laid in Flemish bond. Fenestration, arranged in horizontal bands or ribbons, is composed of fixed panes of glass alternating with casement sash, both with gray-painted steel frames. Windows are narrower on the principal elevation on the north for privacy and weather protection and wider on the other elevations where they provide access to views, passive solar heat and sunlight, a condition that reiterates the southern orientation of many Colonial houses in the region. Windows are largest in the living and dining areas, where three windows 6' high by 10'-11.5' wide act to minimize the barriers to the outdoors and create ever-changing patterns of shadows on the interior walls. The large windows on the south elevation are sheltered from the sun by an extension of the roof that functions as a brise-soleil in the summer. Open joists next to the house support the brise-soleil while, as Ise Gropius explained, keeping moisture from being trapped next to the house under the roof line.[6] The tongue-in-groove redwood siding gives the house's exterior a subtle texture, while the central roof drain that extends down through the house eliminates the need for exterior gutters and down spouts. A partial cellar extends under the kitchen and hallway. Elsewhere there is crawl space.

The house, as viewed from the street appears to be a rectangular box, set off by several contrasting elements appended to the exterior. Most notable is the flat roofed marquee at the main entrance, partly cantilevered and partly supported by two steel posts and a glass brick wall, that angles out at about 30 degrees toward the northeast. A gray-painted metal spiral staircase set against the solid wall of siding on the western part of the north side provides access to the upper deck and acts as sculptural relief to wall of plain siding behind it. Two white-painted trellises composed of vertical slats that extend from the sides of the building emphasizing the house's connection to the landscape while further softening the overall composition.

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[2]Ise Gropius, *History of the Gropius House* (SPNEA, 1977), 14.

[3]See the architects' specifications for the Gropius House in the Gropius manuscript collection in the SPNEA Library and Archives.

[4]Peter Gittleman, "The Gropius House: Conception, Construction and Commentary" (Master's thesis, Boston University, 1996), 43.

[5]Ise Gropius, *History of the Gropius House* (SPNEA, 1977), 5.

[6]Ise Gropius, *History of the Gropius House* (SPNEA, 1977), 8.

In reality, the building's mass is more complicated than a simple rectangle. The first floor foot-print is 21' 9" by 54' 8' in overall dimensions (a typical ground plan for the Colonial buildings that served as one inspiration for the structure). The second floor living space is in part deeper than 21' 9", its eastern two bedrooms being extended to the rear over the entrance to the kitchen and the porch below by 7 feet, while the west end is given over to a 21' by 14' deck. The void of the deck is concealed on the facade by a solid wall of siding interrupted only by the access opening for the spiral stairs. An 11' 6" by 23' screened porch extends out at right angles from the rear of the house.

The east elevation of the house, is a quasi-public side where the driveway and service access to the house are located. This facade is a simple rectangle with its features, ribbon windows and a covered entrance to the kitchen, arranged in an asymmetrical composition. The windows on the first floor on this elevation are an example of an instance where the women in the family prevailed in their wish to have larger windows in the kitchen and maid's room than had been planned originally.[7] The south and west elevations, adjacent to the garden and outdoor living areas, are the most complex in terms of contrasting textures and solids and voids. On the south elevation, the wall plane projects outward on the second story for the wider mass of the eastern bedrooms, and recedes where the deck is open. The strong rectangular eave line of the brise-soleil above helps to unify the design. The flat roofed, screened porch positioned to catch the summer breezes and leave the large windows unshaded extends out into the garden landscape. More than half of the west elevation is taken up by the large living room window and the open deck above. Metal pipe railings extend across the open parts of the deck. The roof of the deck is defined by open joists. The broad rectangular chimney extends upward and encloses part of the west side of the deck. The north wall of the deck was painted a salmon pink in 1949 that Bauhaus artists had selected to use as a background when exhibiting their paintings. While the color is an effective touch that offsets the shifting shadows on the wall and sunset views visible from the deck, the pink was chosen to reduce the glare from the wall, which had previously been white.[8]

The compact interior plan is arranged to provide ease of circulation, economy of space, orientation toward the south for all living spaces and bedrooms, and stacked plumbing for the house's 3 1/2 bathrooms.[9] The first floor within its modest footage incorporates a central hall, an efficient study, an ample L shaped living room and dining room, one-and-one-half baths, and a service area of pantry, kitchen and maid's room completely separated from the family portion of the house.

The house is organized around a two-story central hall eliminating the need for corridors. A curved staircase with chrome pipe balusters and a black metal pipe handrail ascends to the upper hall and is one of several curvilinear elements that act in elegant counterpoint to the rectilinear components of the house. The hall, lighted by the glass brick wall adjacent to the entry is sheathed in white painted clapboards installed vertically. Coats of varying textures and colors hanging in the open coat closet become, as the Gropiuses intended, a decorative element in the hall. The floor of the hall is of 12" by 12" pressed cork tile. Deterioration of the original tiles prompted SPNEA to replace the floor with new

[7]Ati Gropius Johansen, Recorded interview, March 26, 1995.

[8]Unsigned note on Walter Gropius's stationery explaining that the wall was painted in 1949 and that Lyonel Feininger, who was visiting at the time, supervised the painting. SPNEA Gropius file.

[9]The description of materials and fittings in this section is taken from Ise Gropius's *History of the Gropius House* (SPNEA, 1977).

tiles in 1988. This is the only instance where interior finish materials have had to be replaced. Elsewhere in the house finish materials are original.

From the hall, one enters the study. The double Bauhaus-designed desk on the north wall provided work space for the Gropiuses while the north window above gave a constant light. The south wall of the room is a slightly angled glass brick partition. The wall, which divides this space from the dining room, does not block light in either direction, but enhances the feeling of spaciousness of these small rooms. The living room, 14' 5" by 21' spans the west end of the first floor and forms one continuous space with the 11' by 13' 5" dining room. The two areas can, however, be separated by curtains. The large areas of glass on the west and south side open the rooms to the views outside, while the glass door provides ready access to outdoor living space. The fireplace with plain plastered chimney breast was put in, as Walter Gropius said, for its psychological appeal and as a backup in case of emergencies.[10] Book shelves filled with the Gropiuses collection of Bauhaus imprints line the north wall of the room above the day bed where Gropius frequently sat while reading. The walls and ceilings of the living room, dining room, study and the ceiling of the halls are covered with a sound-absorbing textured plaster made by the California Stucco Company.

The kitchen and pantry are minimal in size, but efficiently arranged. Standard 1938 kitchen equipment of white-glazed metal cabinets remains in place today. A large window of ribbed glass on the upper portion of the south wall fills the pantry with light. The dishwasher presented to the Gropiuses in 1938 by the General Electric Company was replaced in the 1960s. The stove and refrigerator were replaced slightly later. The pantry can be screened visually from the dining room when the table is being cleared by gray plastic curtains cut down from standard shower curtains. The maid's room and bath off the kitchen to the northeast became a second guest room after 1941 when many domestic workers took factory jobs and the Gropiuses were no longer able to hire a maid

The second floor contains the master bedroom suite on the southeast lit by windows along the east wall and part of the south wall. The small master bedroom is divided from the dressing room by a plate glass partition, with mirror attached to it, over the dressing table. The partition enabled the dressing room to be heated separately from the bedroom, which the Gropiuses preferred cold for sleeping. The bathrooms were on separate heating controls so that they could be kept warm even at night.

The guest bedroom, the south central room, is just large enough to accommodate two beds head to foot and a desk. This and daughter Ati's room to the west have three foot high ribbon windows spanning their south walls and looking out on the garden. In Ati's room, a sleeping alcove on the north side can be curtained off from the rest of the room, this being both her bedroom and sitting room where she could entertain friends. The upstairs deck at the west end of the house is accessed through a glass door. The exterior spiral stairs leading from the ground to the deck were put in at Ati's request. She wanted to be able to have her friends visit without meeting or interrupting her parents.[11] An alcove off the second floor hall provides storage for linens and space for a sewing machine, that was originally closed off by a curtain. Throughout the house closets contain shelves as well as hanging space to eliminate the need for dressers.

[10]Ise Gropius, *History of the Gropius House* (SPNEA, 1977), 8.

[11]Ise Gropius, *History of the Gropius House* (SPNEA, 1977), 11.

The orientation of the house, the location of windows to catch views and light, the siting on the crest of the hill and the landscaping of the exterior were the result of long, careful planning, and attention to economy. The house reflects the Gropiuses' philosophy that aesthetic, psychological and spiritual appeal result from careful proportioning and honest use of materials and forms. The house was designed to accommodate much of the furniture built at the Bauhaus in 1925 for the Gropius's Dessau house, which they were able to persuade the German government, by then proud of the seminal influence of the Bauhaus, to let them export.

Color schemes for painted surfaces, upholstery curtains, and carpets are neutral beige's, grays, browns and off whites. These provide an effective foil to the wooden, chrome and plastic elements of the furniture, as well as to the shifting patterns of sunlight and shadow and changing qualities of light in the house that are one of its most appealing characteristics. Throughout the house are occasional touches of red and orange. Furnishings, works of art, lighting fixtures, dishes and natural objects were carefully selected by the Gropiuses for their aesthetic qualities and to reflect the design philosophy of the modern movement. These elements were an integral part of their conception for the house. The Gropiuses continued to alter and refine the installation of these elements through the course of their residence. The house is currently interpreted to the period from 1965 to 1969 to reflect the period in Gropius's later life when he had accumulated significant gifts from former students and colleagues in recognition of the important role he played in their lives, which he and Ise displayed in their house.

Furnishings in the house include pieces from the Gropiuses' Dessau house and from Gropius's office at the Bauhaus that were made in the Bauhaus workshops. Among these are the double desk in the study, the furniture in the master bed room and guest room, and the desk from Gropius' Bauhaus office that is in their daughter's room. Other pieces were designed at the Bauhaus by faculty and students. These include the dining room chairs made by Marcel Breuer in the carpentry workshop in 1925 and the round dining table designed by another Bauhaus student, Gustav Hussenpflug. The collection of Bauhaus furniture in the house is the largest assemblage of furniture from the school outside of Germany. There are, in addition, several pieces that were designed especially for the house, such as the built-in buffet in the dining room and the dressing table in the dressing room of the master bedroom. Both of these were made of a resin material known as Caffelite supported on chrome legs.

The Gropiuses continued to add or receive as gifts other examples of contemporary furniture by leading designers. Notable among these are the Isokon Long Chair in the living room, a lounge chair of molded plywood blond in color designed by Marcel Breuer and produced by the British firm of Isokon, and acquired by the Gropiuses in the late 1930s; the "Penguin Donkey" magazine rack in the study, also an Isokon piece; the molded plastic upholstered lounge chair designed by Eero Saarinen, known popularly as the "womb chair," which was a birthday gift from friends to Gropius in 1953; and the two stools in front of the fireplace designed by Sori Yanagi of Tokyo in 1956.

The use of light is one of the most distinguished aspects of the Gropius House. As their daughter, Ati, said, "They were gluttons for light."[12] This included not only the manipulation of natural light through the use of a glass brick partition between the dining room and study, light filtering curtains, and an exterior aluminum Venetian blind on the west window in the living room, but carefully selected fixtures. Notable among these are the Bauhaus designed adjustable lamps over the desk in the study, and the Kliegl spot light over the dining room table described by Walter and Ise Gropius thus:

[12]Ati Gropius Johansen, Recorded interview, April 21, 1989.

> The Kliegl light in the ceiling above the dining room table is most successful. Simple glassware and pottery looks glamorous in the brilliant pinpoint illumination. Attention is centered on the table and food, while eyes remain protected from the glare.[13]

Throughout the house exquisite artworks from the Gropiuses' collection were displayed. Like the furniture, the works on display evolved over time as the Gropiuses acquired new works or as they refined or shifted their presentation. The art falls into several categories. There are works by Bauhaus artists Alexander Schawinsky, Herbert Bayer, Ladislaus Moholy-Nagy, and Joseph Albers made either during their residence at the Bauhaus, or later in their careers. The Plexiglas painting over the fireplace was made by Moholy in 1938 during his tenure as director of the New Bauhaus in Chicago (later the Institute of Design). The incised plastic work in the upper hall made in 1949 was given by the artist Joseph Albers to Gropius for his 70th birthday.[14] Works by well known artists of the modern movement include the Henry Moore drawing, *Underground Shelter with Figures,* that the artist, who became acquainted with the Gropiuses during their stay in England, gave to them in 1941.

Another group of works are by colleagues at The Architects Collaborative (TAC), by Gropius's students, or relate Gropius's architectural projects. There are a number of paintings by TAC colleague Louis McMillen. The tetrahedral kite in the living room was made by a student. The Joan Miro silkscreens in the guest room were of murals made for the Harvard Graduate Center and the UNESCO Building in Paris. A small bronze in the living room is a copy of Dimitri Hadzi's *Thermopylae* that was installed in the TAC-designed Kennedy Building in Government Center in Boston.

Other objects of cultural significance or natural appeal contribute to the decoration of the house while reflecting the Gropiuses' interests. These include photographs of sculptures, such as that of the archaic Greek Kouros in the hall, small ethnographic figures, and an extensive art history library. There is a collection of Japanese objects--fans, parasols and drawings--that illustrates the couple's appreciation of Japanese culture. "Walter and Ise Gropius's aesthetic regard for natural objects is demonstrated in the stones, seashells and dried flower arrangements used to decorate the house. . . . House plants formed an important part of the interior decor."[15] Plants, some of them surviving from the Gropius occupancy, are still featured in the house.

The two-car garage has a shallow shed roof, vertical redwood siding painted white, and small band of windows on the side and in the overhead doors. On the advice of Mrs. Storrow, the garage was built close to the road at the bottom of the gravel driveway that curves up to the east side of the house in order to minimize the amount of snow shoveling necessary. The garage was remodelled on the inside by SPNEA in 1997 to serve as a visitors' center, according to plans by architect Jeffrey Pond with advice from Ati Gropius Johansen and her architect husband, John Johansen. When the overhead doors are closed the original appearance of the garage is maintained. When the doors are opened, the space for

[13]Walter and Ise Gropius, "Time mellows this modern house," *House and Garden* (January 1949), 75.

[14]Information about the works of art in the Gropius House comes from Elizabeth Redmond, "Gropius House Furnishing Plan," SPNEA, 1988, 18-19, and Ise Gropius, *History of the Gropius House* (SPNEA, 1977), 16-18.

[15]Elizabeth Redmond, "Gropius House Furnishing Plan," SPNEA, 1988, 18-19.

ticket sales, gift shop and exhibits is revealed through large glass window recesses behind the overhead doors.

The landscape that the Gropiuses planned reiterated the economy, simplicity and careful planning that characterized their approach to the house. The property when they began to plan their residence had an orchard of 90 apple trees on the slope in front of the house site. Early on, they determined to introduce a few trees to the house site for shade and visual definition of the building. According to their daughter, Ati, they went looking for appropriate trees on surrounding land belonging to the Storrows.[16] Before construction began, five trees were transplanted to the site.

The grade at the top of the hill was leveled before construction. The area immediately around the house was fashioned into a flat grassy plinth bordered on the south and west by retaining walls. This area became outdoor living space with areas designated for sitting defined by flag stones set into the grass and other areas given over to grass or plantings. While the retaining walls suggested the stone walls remaining elsewhere on the property that are remnants of its past use as farm land, the new retaining walls were topped with flat flag stones, a solution intended to make mowing easier. South of the screened porch two lally columns supporting a wooden beam were set into the landscape 20' south of the porch to act as a frame for distant views. Outside of the grassy plinth on the private sides of the house are areas that were less actively maintained where brush was kept down and natural features such as boulders were enhanced with plantings. On the south, this outer area was bordered by the remains of a farm stone wall. The Gropiuses, thus, fashioned the landscape into a series of spaces that progressed from the planned landscape immediately around the house to a less cultivated intermediate space further out and finally to the natural and agricultural landscape beyond that was present when they came. Never were planned features intended to create barriers between portions of the landscape. Borders were suggested by various means, but were always permeable, and the gradient between the house, its immediate surroundings and the less worked and natural landscapes beyond was always discernable. The retaining walls do not form a rigid rectangle. A vestige of a retaining wall on the east extends a short distance from the south retaining wall at right angles and terminates in a raised seating bench. The retaining wall along the south side extends beyond this return. Elements such as these were intended to suggest permeable spatial boundaries and informal closure between the house and its surroundings.

Landscape historians now recognize that the landscape reflects modernist spatial philosophy as much as the house does. Walter Gropius had, in fact, articulated in writing that spatial philosophy as early as 1933 (see Section 8), and his ideas surely guided the layout of the Gropius landscape. The distinction is that Walter and Ise Gropius were amateur gardeners not landscape architects. They came to their treatment of the landscape not through formal training but through the intuitive use of their spacial and aesthetic senses to shape and cultivate the landscape for their own enjoyment. As Ise Gropius remembered, "We did the landscaping ourselves over a long period of time."[17]

Plantings were as carefully chosen as any elements of the design for their aesthetic appeal and to enhance built or opportunistic features of the landscape. Day lilies and yukka were planted by the entrance, with the aluminum sculpture by R. E. Filipowski itself looking like a stylized shrub adjacent. Pink roses climbed the trellis, while bittersweet climbed lally columns and Concord grapes climbed the

[16]Ati Gropius Johansen, Recorded interview, March 26, 1995.

[17] Ise Gropius, *History of the Gropius House* (SPNEA, 1977), 18.

deck elements. A perennial border was planted in the garden bed south of the porch near the informal flag stone terrace outside the living room. Outdoor floodlighting maintained the continuity between the house and the landscape even after dark. The orchard was retained and pruned. The grass in the orchard was allowed to grow tall, except for a 12' wide strip adjacent to the driveway that was kept short.

A significant change to the landscape occurred after the Gropiuses took a trip to Japan in 1957. Thereafter, they replaced the perennial border beyond the porch with a Japanese inspired garden. A gravel bed was put in, azaleas and other plants were placed in an asymmetrical arrangement and a red-leafed Japanese maple tree was planted at the end of the bed.

Elements of the landscape have evolved and grown over time, and the apple orchard has all but disappeared. In recognition of its national significance, the Gropius property was selected in May of 1999 to receive a grant from the Save America's Treasures program. The funding will be used to replant the orchard in 2000, to restore other planted elements of the landscape to an appearance consistent with the Gropius period, and to continue repairs to the building's windows and roof. In 2000-2001 the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities completed most of the work on the building itself. This entailed repainting the exterior and interior, repairing the steel sash windows, and putting on a new roof. In 2001 they will begin working on the landscape which will include restoring the orchard and the Japanese garden.

The house has remained virtually unaltered over the years. Only the cork floors in the hall have required replacement. The house, given to SPNEA in 1980 and opened as a house museum in 1984 retains its furnishings, the most important collection of Bauhaus-designed furniture outside of Germany; works of art, many by leading members of the Modern Movement; its decorative treatments and finish materials virtually intact. The occasional repairs and refurbishing completed under SPNEA's direction have been carefully planne to preserve the appearance of the house as it was in the later years of Gropius's life (1965-1969), a period of interpretation chosen as most representative of the totality of the Gropiuses' lives in the house. Intrusions into the building fabric have been held to the minimum consistent with the overall conservation of the building and its finish materials. The landscape, recently identified as a distinguished and early example of modern landscape design, retains all key elements, with the exception of the apple orchard.[18] All of these considerations give the property integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

[18] See Eric Kramer, "Walter Gropius: Modernist in a New England Landscape," December 17, 1997, Typescript, SPNEA Library and Archives.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:__ Locally:__

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A__ B X C X D__
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G X
NHL Criteria:	2, 4
NHL Criteria Exception:	8
NHL Theme(s):	III. Expressing Cultural Values 1. Education 2. Visual Arts 5. Architecture, Landscape Architecture
Areas of Significance:	Architecture: Modern Architecture Landscape Architecture: Modern Landscape Design
Period(s) of Significance:	1938-1969
Significant Dates:	1938
Significant Person(s):	Walter Gropius
Cultural Affiliation:	N/A
Architects:	Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer,Associate Architects
Builder:	Casper J. Jenney

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Gropius House is nationally significant as the house of Walter Gropius and his family. Gropius was one of the founders of the Modern Movement in architecture, who designed several early masterpieces of the movement. He is perhaps most revered as a teacher and articulator of the modernist philosophy of architecture, design, urban planning and the social responsibility of architecture. His conception and direction of the Bauhaus from 1919 to 1928 garnered an international and long-enduring reputation for the school for its teaching methods and for its integration of design, crafts and industrial arts into one all-encompassing modernist vision.

In his role as Chairman of the Department of Architecture at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard from 1938 to 1952, he trained many leaders in the field of modern architecture including I. M. Pei and Paul Rudolph. As a partner in The Architects Collaborative from 1945 to 1969, he participated in the creation of many distinguished examples of Modern architecture. The Modern Movement, though now somewhat in eclipse, was broadly influential and shaped contemporary building design and the appearance of the built environment throughout the world in civic, commercial and industrial architecture and in residential design. The house that he and his wife conceived in 1937 was an expression of their personal interpretation of the Modernist philosophy, and it was, as I. M. Pei said, Gropius's "definitive statement of domestic architecture."[19] As such, the Gropius property is significant for its association with Walter Gropius and as an outstanding and influential example of Modern architectural and landscape design. Walter Gropius (1883-1969), his wife, Ise Frank Gropius (d. 1983), arrived in the United States in the spring of 1937 where Gropius was to take up duties as Chairman of the Department of Architecture at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. The Gropiuses' daughter, Ati (b. 1925), joined them in the summer. Gropius, born in Berlin and trained as an architect in Germany before World War I, secured his place as a founder of the Modern Movement in architecture by designing the Fagus factory in 1911 with Adolph Meyer. The Fagus factory was the first building where a steel frame and glass curtain walls were substituted for appearance of supporting exterior walls. The result was an elegant lightness and architectural economy unknown previously. As Sigfried Giedion said, "For the first time the trend toward transparency and absence of weight found undeniable architectural expression."[20] Gropius's temporary model factory for the "Werkbund" exhibition in Cologne in 1914 elaborated on these new potentialities.

Gropius, trained as a cavalry officer in his youth, served in World War I and was wounded. Even before he left the army, he conceived of the Bauhaus as a way of reconciling fine arts, and crafts in the service of modern industrial design. Disillusioned, like many intellectuals about Germany's prospects at the close of the war, he sought new solutions to the problems of architecture and design that would better serve society. He was appointed head of the Academy of Art and the School of Arts and Crafts in Weimar and transformed them into the Bauhaus school. As Mies Van de Rohe, teacher under Gropius and subsequent director of the Bauhaus said:

[19]I. M. Pei, as quoted in Stephen Games, "Crystal Visions," A documentary of the work of the architect, Walter Gropius (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1983), 30. Transcript, SPNEA Library and Archives.

[20]Sigfried Giedion, *Walter Gropius* (1954. Reprint, New York: Dover Publication 1992), 23-24.

> The Bauhaus was not an institution with a clear program, it was an idea and Gropius formulated this idea with great precision. He said, "Art and technology -- the new unity." He wanted to have painting, sculpture, theater and even ballet on the one hand, and on the other weaving, photography, furniture -- everything from the coffee cup up to city planning [included].[21]

The Bauhaus, fraught always with financial problems and scepticism from the outside and from within, nevertheless brought together leading artists and craftsmen as teachers, and trained students who influenced design and teaching throughout the civilized world, an influence that continues today. Gropius led the Bauhaus from 1919 until 1928 through the institution's move in 1925 to the more welcoming city of Dessau. The move enabled Gropius to mastermind the construction of the acclaimed Bauhaus buildings of 1925-26 and to design his own house in a complex of faculty housing. The Gropiuses' house in Dessau would presage their Lincoln house in its simplicity, careful planning, and large areas of fenestration that admitted natural light and connected the house with its natural surroundings. Gropius resigned as director of the Bauhaus in 1928 in hopes that his departure would quell political controversy surrounding the school. He entered private architectural practice in Berlin and immersed himself for the first time in urban planning and large scale housing design, but many of his projects remained unbuilt.

In 1934, Gropius and his wife, finding the German government increasingly inhospitable, moved to England, where Gropius entered partnership with Maxwell Fry. In 1937, Dean Joseph Hudnut of the School of Architecture and President James Conant of Harvard University persuaded Gropius to come to Harvard, revitalize the Graduate School of Design, implement his teaching methods shaped by the Bauhaus years, and free the school from the Beaux-Arts methods and philosophy that had dominated it previously.

Gropius, his wife and daughter, now Ati Gropius Johansen, rented a house in Lincoln, Massachusetts shortly after their arrival and began to explore the traditional architecture of New England of which their rental house was an example. They were enchanted with Lincoln and eager to build a house of their own there. Financial considerations would have made it impossible for them to build had not Helen Osborne Storrow, the wealthy and civic minded widow of James Storrow, a prominent Boston banker, offered to provide the site and pay for the construction of their house. A mutual acquaintance, architect, Henry Shepley of the Boston firm of Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott approached Mrs. Storrow about the idea. She readily agreed because, as Ise Gropius remembered:

> One of her principles was that a newly arrived immigrant should always be given a chance to show what he could do best. If it was good, it would take root, if it wasn't it would disappear. But it had to be tried out.[22]

The conditions were that the Gropiuses would pay 6% of the total construction cost of the house a year as rent and would have an opportunity to purchase the property in the future. In fact, they did buy the house in 1945 after Mrs. Storrow's death. Rental costs provided and incentive to keep overall costs

[21]Ibid., 17. For further description of the principles that guided the Bauhaus, see Walter Gropius, Ise Gropius and Herbert Bayer, *Bauhaus 1919-1928* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1938), 6.

[22]Ise Gropius, History of the Gropius House (SPNEA, 1977), 2.

down and the structure was built for about $20,000.[23] Mrs. Storrow would later provide the same conditions for the four families that settled on Woods End Road just west of the Gropius property between 1938 and 1939.

The design of the Gropius House was the result of intense study and planning by Walter Gropius, his wife, Ise and even their twelve-year-old daughter, Ati. According to Ati Gropius Johansen, "I think it was being discussed at every meal. I mean, the endless discussion about . . . orientation. . . . Whether the windows should be here, and the east and the sun. . . and all that."[24]
In keeping with their established philosophical approach, the Gropiuses studied local architecture, wanting to respect indigenous methods and materials. They acknowledged that New England wood frame buildings won their admiration and were a source of inspiration in the design of their house. Gropius wrote to Maxwell Fry in 1937, "the landscape around Cambridge and Boston is fine and attractive and surprisingly unspoiled. The old white-painted colonial houses, unpretentious and genuine in plan and appearance, won my affection."[25] They found such buildings had much in common with Modern architecture. The Gropius house is also clearly inspired by the principles of the Modern Movement in architecture that Gropius was instrumental in defining. These principles were identified and described for American audiences in 1932 by Henry Russell Hitchcock, Jr., and Philip Johnson in the catalog for the exhibit on the "International Style" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, a name originally suggested by Alfred Barr of the museum. The aesthetic principles of the International Style, they said, were:

> A sense of volume as opposed to solidity, regularity as opposed to symmetry, and detail achieved through the intrinsic elegance of materials, technical perfection, and fine proportions as opposed to applied ornament.[26]

Many since, including Walter Gropius and Hitchcock, have repudiated the style name, though it is still broadly used. Gropius said in 1943:

> I want to rip off at least one of the misleading labels that I and others have been decorated with. There is no such thing as an "International Style" unless you want to speak of certain universal technical achievements of our period which belong to the intellectual equipment of every civilized nation, or unless you want to speak of those pale examples of what I call "applied archaeology," which you find among the public buildings from Moscow to Madrid to Washington. Steel or concrete skeletons, ribbon windows, slabs cantilevered or wings hovering on stilts are but impersonal contemporary means--the raw stuff, so to speak—of which regionally different manifestations are created.[27]

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[23]Ati Gropius Johansen, Recorded interview, March 26, 1995.

[24]Ati Gropius Johansen, Recorded interview, March 26, 1995.

[25]Walter Gropius, Letter to E. Maxwell Fry, Cambridge, Mass., April 8, 1937, as quoted in Reginald Isaacs, *Walter Gropius*: *an Illustrated Biography of the Creator of the Bauhaus* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1991), 232.

[26]Henry Russell Hitchcock, Jr., and Philip Johnson, *The International Style*, 1932, 13.

[27]Walter Gropius, *Scope of Total Architecture* (New York: Harper and Bros. Publishers, 1955*), xxi.*

As early as 1931, Walter Gropius had articulated his vision for the modern house in an American architectural journal. This vision encompasses the philosophical approach that guided his teaching at the Bauhaus and later at Harvard and found ultimate expression in his Lincoln house:

> According to the new view about a dwelling to come up to present day requirements, the dwelling house should no longer resemble something like a fortress. . . . Instead it should be of light construction, full of bright daylight and sunshine, alterable, time-saving, economical and useful in the last degree to its occupants whose functions it is intended to serve. . . .
>
> The ground plan of a dwelling house is a geometrical projection of its spatial idea--the organizing plan for moving within the house. The elevation, facade, is the result of that plan and not the starting point of the house design. Hence no artificial symmetry, but a free functional arrangement of the succession of rooms, short, time-saving passages of communication, moving space for the children, clear separation between the living, sleeping, and the housekeeping parts of the house, and finally proper utilization of the ground and especially the sunny aspect. The bedrooms need morning-sun (facing east), the living rooms should have southern or western light, and the north side is left to storerooms, kitchens staircases and bathrooms.[28]

The subtle influence of regional architecture on the design of the Gropius House reflected Gropius's respect for indigenous, tried and true practices:

> I tried to solve the problem in much the same way as early builders of the region had faced it when, with the best technical means at their disposal, they built unostentatious, clearly defined buildings that were able to withstand the rigors of the climate and that expressed the social attitude of their inhabitants.[29]

This was not to say that the house was nothing more than a rational solution to the program. Gropius recognized that spiritual and psychological needs must be met by architecture. These were achieved:

> Through proportion upon which the "beautiful" effect depends. Proportion is a matter of the realm of the spirit: construction and materials are its bearers, with the aid of which it reveals the genius of its creator. It is determined by the particular function of a given house, and through it the latter is imbued with the "tension" a spiritual life of its own, as it were, beyond the utility value of the house.[30]

Later evaluations of Gropius suggest that he kept his emotional reaction to aesthetic form in check in order to better serve the greater needs of the Modernist vision. However, one has only to look at his

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[28]Walter Gropius, "The Small House of Today," *Architectural Forum* 54 (1931), 269; 274.

[29] Walter Gropius, *Scope of Total Architecture* (New York: Harper and Bros. Publishers, 1955), xxii, as quoted in Peter Gittleman, "The Gropius House: Conception, Construction and Commentary," (Master's thesis, Boston University, 1996), 10.

[30]Walter Gropius, "The Small House of Today," *Architectural Forum* 54 (1931), 271.

house to understand that he responded to the aesthetic appeal of even utilitarian objects. For example, in writing to the Briggs Manufacturing Company in 1957, he said:

> Before the war, I used in my own new house in Lincoln, Massachusetts, a new form of toilets which you had just brought out . . . . They were of an entirely rounded out, soft form of toilet, in fact the best form of toilet I have ever seen.[31]

Soon after he arrived at Harvard, Gropius negotiated to bring Marcel Breuer to the Harvard faculty. Breuer, a talented designer of furniture as well as architecture born in Hungary, was trained at the Bauhaus. He left Germany for England in 1933. By the fall of 1937, Gropius and Breuer had formed an architectural partnership. Breuer was the first of many refugees and intellectuals from Europe whom the Gropiuses would help to resettle in the United States, promoting them for jobs, offering emotional support or even on occasion a temporary place to stay.

By November 1937 plans of the Gropius House were prepared, which list the firm of Gropius and Breuer as architects. Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Storrow funded construction of a house for Breuer on adjacent Woods End Road. There has always been speculation as to the extent to which Breuer was involved in the design of the Gropius House. According to Joachim Driller, German scholar, the initial plans were prepared by a young draftsman while Breuer was away in England in the winter of 1937-1938. The plans were close to the structure as built, but lacked the brise-soleil. Driller believes that Breuer suggested the sun-blocking roof overhang, which was a feature that the architect had employed previously in his buildings.[32] Another scholar, Leslie Cormier, suggests that Breuer, particularly interested in the interplay of light and shade, was responsible for the shadow-creating roof joists over the upstairs porch.[33] In any case, it is clear that Gropius and Breuer wanted to use their respective houses to promote their architectural partnership. They would, therefore, have been likely to make suggestions for improvements to each other's designs, which might or might not have been accepted..

The contractor for the Gropius House was Casper J. Jenney. Jenney, reminiscing in later years described the experience of working with Gropius and Gropius's wish to involve his students at Harvard in the project as part of the hands-on experience that he considered essential in training and that he had first put into practice at the Bauhaus:

> We found everything we needed for the house in stock [catalogs]. His ideas were most unusual. Although he used stock items, he used them in ways different from anything I had done before . . . . Many afternoons we sat for a couple of hours on a sawhorse talking over the house changes as I did not always agree with his ideas. Many times he was right and I was wrong. Almost every afternoon several boys from Harvard came out to Lincoln to look at the progress of the house. Dr. Gropius spent much time with them,

[31]Walter Gropius, letter to Briggs Manufacturing Company, Warren, Michigan, February 7, 1957 (Gropius Collection, SPNEA Library and Archives).

[32]Jaochim Driller, "Bauhaus Architecture New England Style? Remarks on the Gropius House in Lincoln, Mass," p.2, as quoted in Peter Gittleman, "The Gropius House: Conception, Construction, and Commentary," (Master's thesis, Boston University, 1996), 33.

[33]Leslie Humm Cormier, "The Woods End Colony: an Architects' Refuge in America," (Master's thesis, Brown University, 1983), 26.

> giving his reasons for using the materials that were inexpensive without cutting down on quality. We both thought it would be a good idea at Harvard to require pupils to have at least two years experience in practical building before they designed houses and buildings. I agreed to take on at least three pupils each summer from Harvard and he agreed to give them credit for their work.[34]

Throughout Gropius's tenure at Harvard until his retirement in 1952, students continued to experience the Gropius house. At least two student gatherings were held at the house every year. Ise Gropius always said that their objective was for people to "see a modern house in operation."[35]

Landscape

The landscape at the Gropius property has not until recently received the scholarly attention that has been devoted to the house. Recently scholars have examined the landscape in the context of other designed landscapes of the 1930s and the subsequent refining of the Modernist landscape architecture, and have found that the landscape is a potent statement of the key principles of modern landscape design.[36] While Walter Gropius is not associated with landscape design to the extent that he is with the architecture of the modern movement, he nevertheless did articulate early on a philosophy of landscape design that is now recognized as embodying the design ideals of Modernist movement in landscape architecture. Writing in 1933 in an article entitled, "The House of New Lines," Gropius said:

> Of similar importance to the harmonic formulation of the building structure itself is the correct integration of the home into the landscape into the garden. The garden is simultaneously an extended living space on the outside. The arrangement of the plant environment, the diversion of green masses, the trees and shrubs in their relationship to the house and to its living functions require just as careful treatment as the grouping of the building mass itself. The interspersion of tree and plant growth between the building forms, which opens and closes the view, guarantees appropriate contrast, relaxes and enlivens the scheme, mediates between building and person, and creates tension and scale; for architecture does not exhaust itself in the fulfillment of its goals unless we observe as the purpose of a higher order the psychic needs according to harmonic space, according to the mass of the parts, which make the space truly living.[37]

Here is how one landscape historian analyzes the components of the Gropius landscape as a reflection of modernist philosophy:

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[34]Ise Gropius, *History of the Gropius House* (SPNEA, 1977), 5.

[35]Ise Gropius, "Walter Gropius: His New World Home," Film, 1970.

[36]Eric Kramer, "Modernist in a New England Landscape," December 17, 1997, Typescript, SPNEA Library and Archives.

[37]Walter Gropius, "The House of New Lines," a published article dated 1933 but without further attribution in the Busch-Reisinger Gropius Archive, as quoted in Eric Kramer, "Modernist in a New England Landscape," December 17, 1997, p. 7, Typescript, SPNEA Library and Archives.

> What we call the "garden" of the Gropius House, the highly cultivated space just adjacent to the house, then is essentially a carefully arranged series of diverse spaces and experiences at once defined *and* interconnected by permeable boundaries—colonnades of trees, screens of rose trellises and subtle changes of grade—that build a series of dissolving gradients between indoor and out. The house does not end at its thermal boundary. Instead it dissolved subtly into the space around it. Neither does the garden end at the exterior walls. It clings to the architectural elements and penetrates its spaces—the screened porch sits recessed into the mass of the building, the roof terrace dominates the second floor and large panes of glass bring the constantly shifting light and shade of the landscape into the living quarters. These outdoor rooms resonate strongly with the spacial arrangement of the interiors of the house. . . . Outside, the open plan of the house rather literally extended into the garden as rooms are formed and synthesized into a rationally and practically ordered sequence of spaces and experiences. At the same time the garden serves to build connections outside itself linking spaces reshaped for the needs of residential life to those slowly created over the long history of the larger agricultural landscape.[38]

Gropius's ideas for the landscape surrounding the Gropius House resonate with the larger issues of spatial planning and urban design with which he and his colleagues were grappling during his years at Harvard. The many people who visited or read about the Gropius House in the early years must have absorbed and been influenced by the landscape's design

As soon as the house was completed, coverage of its unique design in newspapers and magazines was widespread, something that the Gropiuses supported in order to promote the Gropius/Breuer architectural practice and spread the Modernist philosophy that they espoused. Though not the first Modern house in America, it was, in many ways, the most influential due in part to this publicity. Ati Gropius Johansen remembers a constant stream of visitors.[39] Gropius and Breuer began to receive commissions for the design of Modern houses. When Gropius's and Breuer's partnership was dissolved in 1941 and he joined the Architects Collaborative in 1945, the firm would design more houses, including two neighborhoods in Lexington, Massachusetts: Six Moon Hill, where most of the TAC partners lived, and Five Fields. Deeply involved in teaching until 1952 and in the TAC architectural practice until his death in 1969, Gropius became the grand old man of the Modern Movement, who could take pride in the extent of his influence. Over 250 of Gropius's former students held professorships in schools around the world.[40] Many others held important positions as architects and planners. Gropius continued to attend social functions and to inspire friends and associates. He received significant recognition for his role in advancing Modern Architecture. He received an honorary Doctor of Art from Harvard University in 1953 and was awarded the "Grand Prix d'Architecture" of the Matarazzo Foundation of San Paulo, Brazil as the "architect whose work may be considered to have played a highly important role in the development of contemporary architecture."

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[38]Eric Kramer, "Walter Gropius: Modernist in a New England Landscape," December 17, 1997, pp. 5-6, Typescript, SPNEA Library and Archives.

[39]Ati Gropius Johansen, Recorded interview, March 26, 1995.

[40]Hans M. Wingler, *Bauhaus Archive, Berlin*, p. 118, as quoted in Peter Gittleman, "The Gropius House: Conception, Construction, and Commentary," (Master's thesis, Boston University, 1996), 59.

In 1983, a group of architects, former colleagues, students and others gathered to reevaluate his career in the light of the growing disenchantment with the Modern Movement. Gropius's vision and integrity as a teacher were praised, while his own buildings and those he spawned through his students were seen as often not living up to their initial promise.[41] I. M. Pei, however, offered this evaluation of Gropius's architecture:

> I would say that his architecture in America is best represented by his domestic buildings. . . . And I think his own house is the best of the lot, because it's him, it's so much him and it's probably one of the best examples of experimenting with latching on new ideas and modern ideas on to a vernacular which already existed for some time in America and yet the house, the . . . openness of the house, the . . . manipulation of space and so on and the detailing in the house are all very, very first rate. I think that the house is now a landmark, and rightly so.[42]

[41]Stephen Games, "Crystal Visions," A documentary of the work of the architect, Walter Gropius (British Broadcasting Company, 1983). Transcript, SPNEA Library and Archives.

[42]I. M. Pei, as quoted in Stephen Games, "Crystal Visions," A documentary of the work of the architect, Walter Gropius (British Broadcasting Company, 1983). Transcript, SPNEA Library and Archives.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ 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
_X_ University: Harvard University, Houghton Library and Busch-Reisinger Museum
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, Germany
_X_ Other: SPNEA Library and Archives

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 5.51 acres

UTM References:	**Zone**	**Easting**	**Northing**
	19	308570	4699580

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property is bounded northeasterly by Baker Bridge Road, easterly by a Right of Way, southerly and westerly by privately owned land and westerly by Woods End Road. The property boundaries are indicated on the accompanying Town of Lincoln Map No. 56.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries selected constitute the boundaries of the property sold to the Walter and Ise Gropius by the estate of Helen Osborne Storrow in 1945. These boundaries include the 1938 house historically associated with Walter and Ise Gropius which maintains integrity. These were still the boundaries when the property was sold by Ise Gropius to SPNEA in 1980.

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