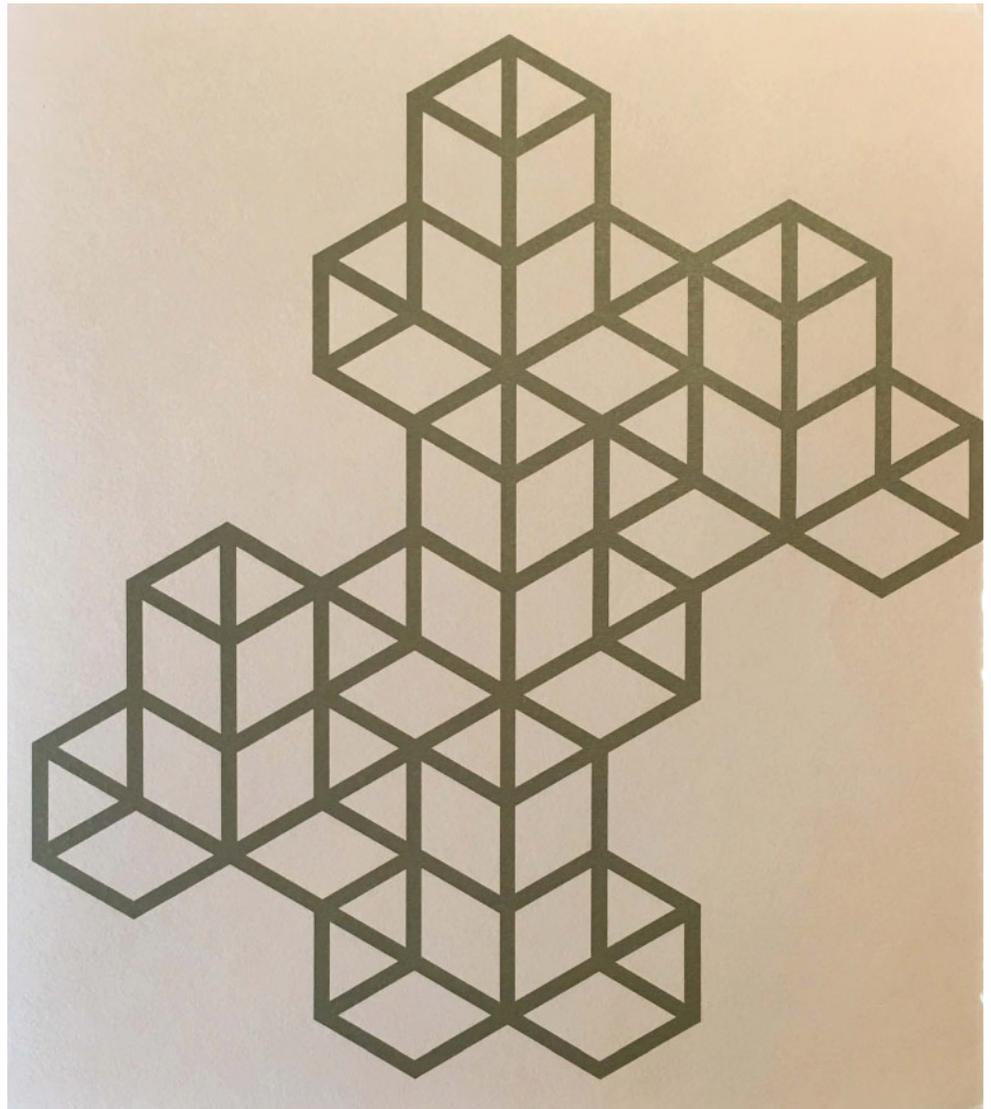


Jennie Dugan Acres
Concord, MA
Proposed Deck House
Historic District

July 18, 2020



Deck House Company Graphic from original marketing materials.

History and Significance

The Subdivision

Jennie Dugan Acres is a cul-de-sac subdivision with twenty lots created in 1960 by the J & E Company of Arlington, MA. The subdivision is located off Powder Mill Rd, south of Jennie Dugan's Brook, now a marsh, and north of White Pond. The former New Haven Railroad Framingham and Lowell line abutting the west side of the subdivision is now the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

The subdivision is situated in a place significant to two periods of history that are linked by common values and ideals - the mid-nineteenth century of the anti-slavery movement, Transcendentalism and Thoreau, and the iconoclastic mid-twentieth century modern architecture movement.

The street takes its name from Jennie Dugan's brook, commemorating the African immigrant who, in the early nineteenth century, married Thomas Dugan, an innovative and influential Concord farmer and self-emancipated African American. Thoreau wrote about the location in his diary and memorialized one of the Dugan sons in his poem "The Old Marlborough Road."

Seventeen of the lots front along Jennie Dugan Rd and three of the lots front on Powder Mill Rd. A twenty-first lot, containing a deck house, was not part of the original subdivision but is connected by an easement shown on the approved subdivision plan.

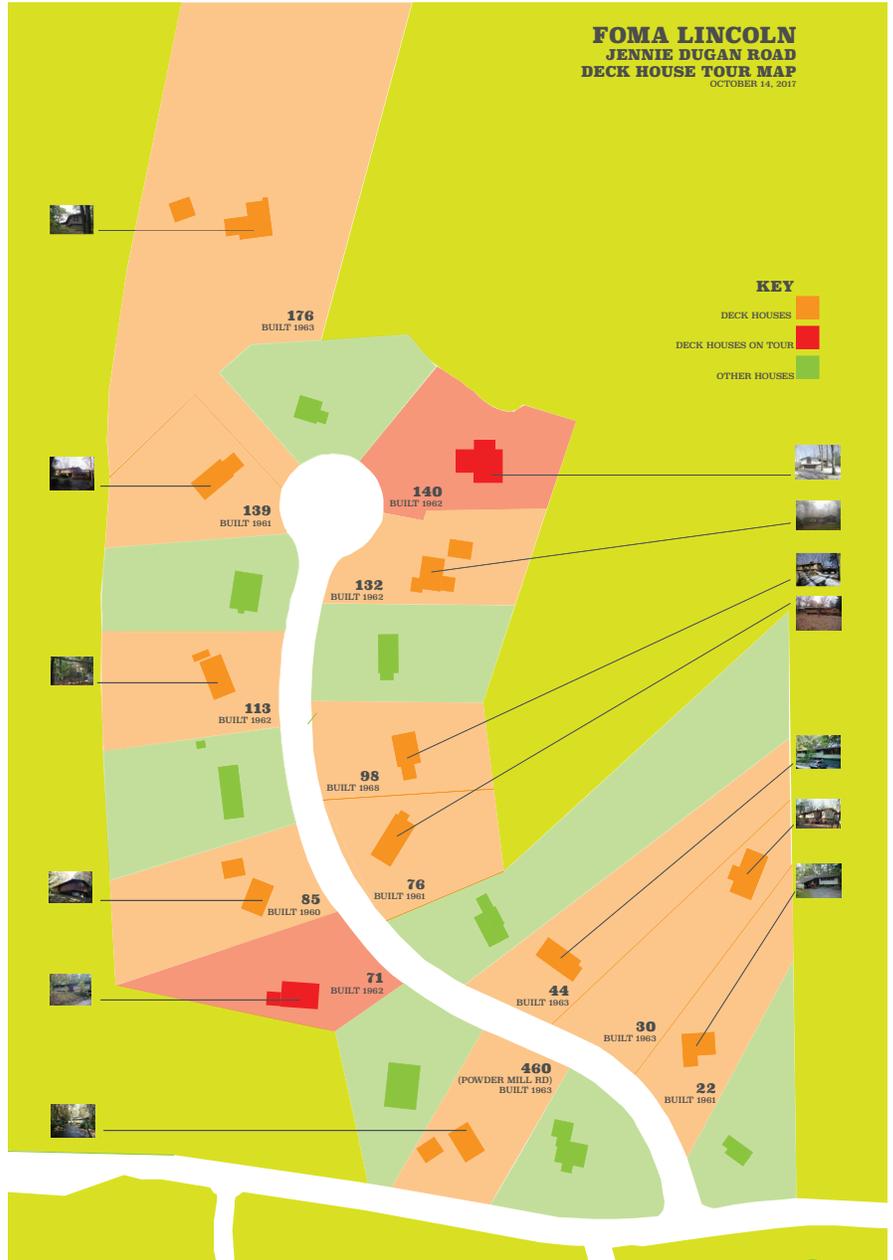
Sixteen of the twenty-one houses built on the lots are midcentury modern style. Thirteen are Deck House Company homes built between 1960-1968. Number 140 was the home of architect and Deck House co-founder William Berkes. Three of the remaining homes are contemporary or post-and-beam homes. One of them, number 58 was designed and built by Peter Goolkasian

Original Subdivision Map, Northern Portion, Courtesy of Town of Concord Archives



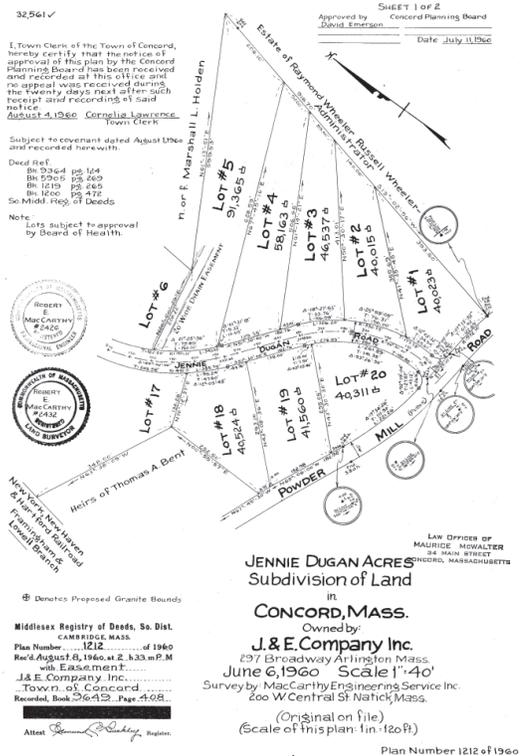
who reportedly was inspired by the Deck Company houses. Five of the houses are not Deck houses or mid-century modern style homes. They are from the same era, and are 1960's neo-Colonial style. Two are split-level and resemble the massing of the Deck homes. The houses all have the irregular siting and modest scale that contributes to the rustic character of the subdivision.

The houses are largely preserved in their original configuration and materials. This state, however, can easily be lost to renovation or demolition.



Map showing Jennie Dugan Acres houses with Deck houses shaded red and orange. Non-Deck houses are shaded green.

From the FoMa Lincoln Deck House Tour, October, 2017



Original Subdivision Map, Southern Portion, Courtesy of Town of Concord Archives

The Deck Company

The Acton-based Deck House company (now Acorn Deck House Company), was begun by architect William Berkes and Robert Brownwell in 1959. They had worked at the Cambridge, MA prefab house company, Techbuilt, founded by Carl Koch who went on to also start Acorn Structures. Techbuilt developed the Connantum neighborhood two miles to the east of Jennie Dugan Rd. Acorn merged with Deck in 1995. The Acorn Deck House Company continues to produce homes using many of the same methods and materials of the original houses.

The Deck name derives from the three inch thick pine “deck” boards used to form the floors and roof of the houses. The boards were tongue and grooved and nailed together to span the eight foot module favored by the company. Deck is not a style, it is the trade name of the company producing the houses. The style of the homes is post and beam, popular with modern architects and their clients throughout the country in the postwar years, up through the late 1960’s and early 1970’s.

The style is characterized by the use of exposed wood beams and posts, organized on a regular horizontal module, typically about eight feet on center. The thick pine deck boards span these modules. This construction method was a departure in America from the traditional balloon or western framed wood houses with load-bearing exterior walls punctured by windows and doors generally spaced apart in the walls. With post and beam construction, walls are free to be any configuration of solid vs. windows or doors and can be remodeled later without disrupting the structure. Windows often span the full width of the module and can extend from floor to ceiling. Use of the style was typically limited at that time to one-and-two-story homes and small commercial and community buildings such as libraries and schools.

Deck House in Wayland, Mass. Cabot's Weathering Stain on Exterior Siding. Designed by William Bohen, Wayland, Mass.

35% of the Award-Winning Architects
for the 1964 "RECORD HOUSES"
specified **Cabot's STAINS**

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The following architects specified Cabot's for 1964 "Record Houses":

WILLIAM BERKES Wayland, Mass.	HENRIK BULL San Francisco, Cal.	CLAUDE OAKLAND San Francisco, Cal.
CAMPBELL & WONG & ASSOCIATES San Francisco, Cal.	ULRICH FRANZEN New York, N.Y.	JAMES E. STAGEBERG New York, N.Y.
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Deck House in Wayland, MA - Cabot's Stains Advertisement, Architectural Record Houses of 1964, p. 144.

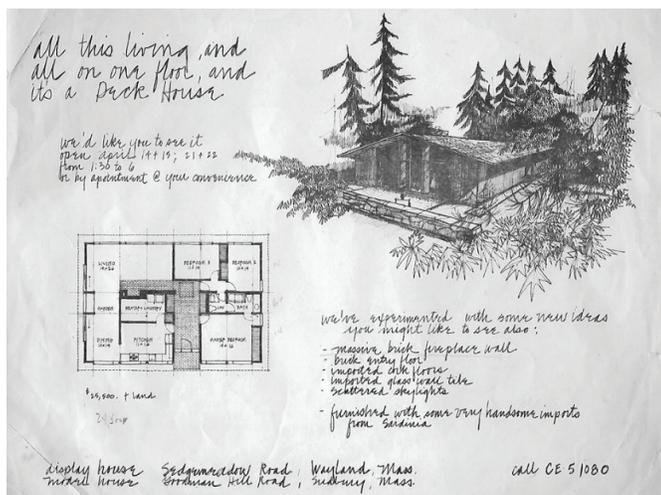
While new to the USA, the post and beam style had its origins in ancient Asian and European architecture. American architects had been borrowing from this regional architecture since the mid-nineteenth century, but an influential exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan in 1954-1955 re-exposed American architects and the public to a form of post-and-beam architecture by constructing a Japanese model home in their courtyard.



140 Jennie Dugan Rd, the family home of architect and Deck Company co-founder, William Berkes, uses the prefab components in a unique configuration not seen in other Deck houses of the period.

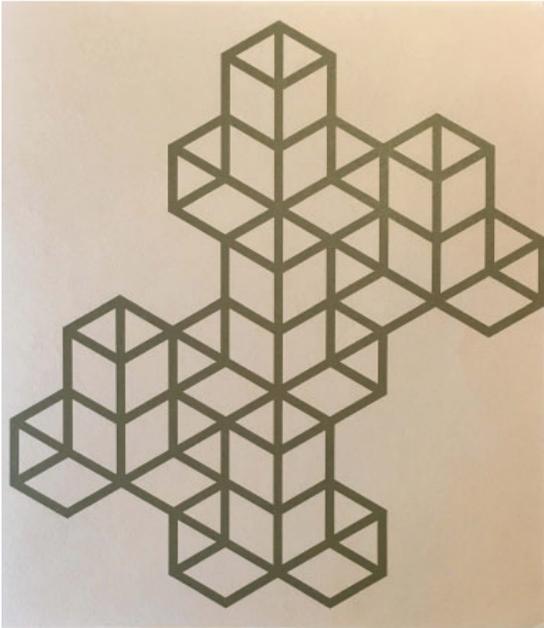
The Deck Company specialized in semi-prefab houses that were cut and partly assembled in the factory before being shipped to the site. This type of systematized home also has roots in early Japanese architecture and examples such as the Sears home kits in the early 20th Century. Interest in prefabricated and modular homes came to prominence in the post WWII years, partly driven by the effort to retool to a postwar economy and make use of the surplus manufacturing capacity that had been developed during the war. A shortage of housing inspired the drive to introduce factory-

and-mass-production into the construction industry, that had previously resisted it. The Deck Company was the premier company to pursue this on the East Coast. It's headquarters were only seven miles away in neighboring Acton. Only one other company, Eichler Homes - on the West Coast, had comparable success or influence.



A 1960 sketch of a Deck Company display house in Wayland MA closely resembles the layout and massing of 71 Jennie Dugan Rd.

The founders of the Deck Company had met while working at Techbuilt, the company founded by Carl Koch, the architect and



Deck House Company Graphic from original marketing materials.

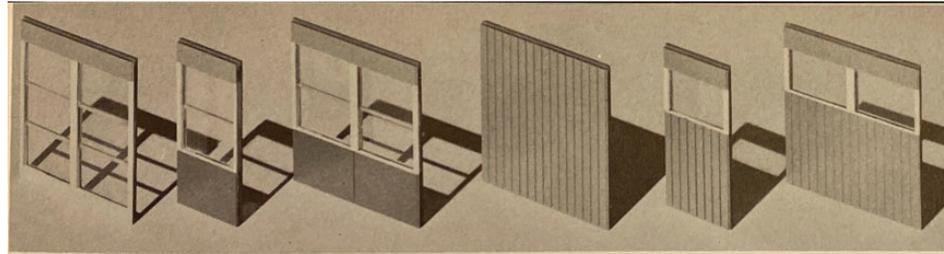


Diagram of Lustron model home wall panel options
P. 119, At Home With Tomorrow, Carl Koch, 1958

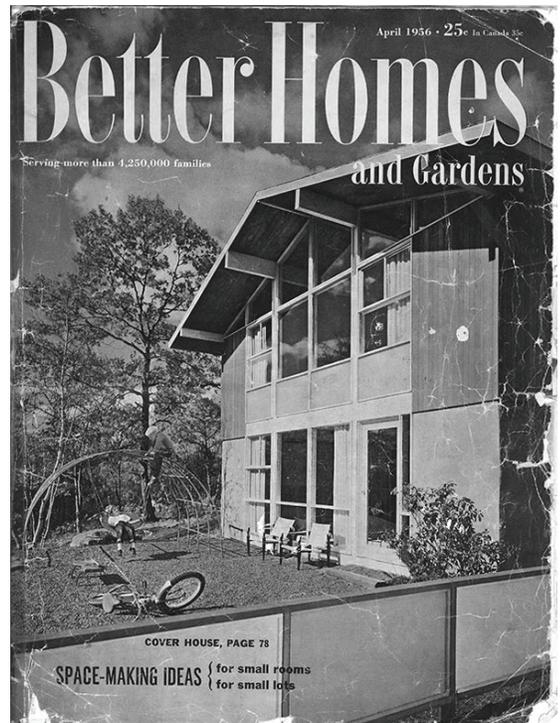
builder of Concord's Connantum neighborhood. Koch consulted for Deck and the system of housing they developed was partly based on his earlier work with the Lustron steel house company. He created a modular system, where the kit-of-parts approach to the design would allow for various configurations tailored to the site and the needs of the inhabitants.

The company marketed a series of prepared house layouts. A limited, but varied size range of windows could be deployed between the posts to provide the necessary privacy or openness depending on the interior plan. The windows were organized in bands spanning the posts, with the head or top of the window pushed as high as possible in the walls. The sill, or bottom, would vary depending on whether it was a living room, kitchen, bedroom or bathroom. Each window module contained a large fixed view panel and a smaller steel casement window for ventilation. The window frames were constructed

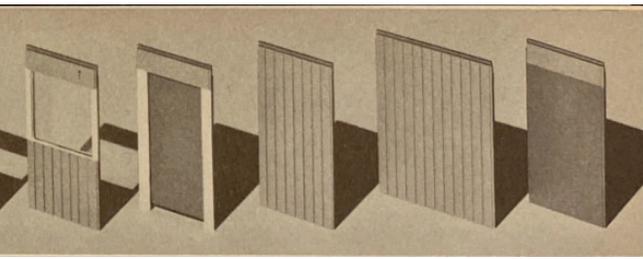
of durable mahogany that spanned the depth of the walls, overlapping slightly on both sides so that the wall board or siding could fit into a groove, eliminating the need for window trim.

Like much modern architecture of the time, there was a desire to take a fresh look at how to design houses to meet present needs and to apply rational thought to each element of them. Economy and aesthetics were closely matched. The decoration of the house came from exposing the wood ceilings, posts and beams. The structure served practical and decorative functions. Basements and attics were eliminated as unnecessary expenditures in favor of lofty pitched ceilings and partially submerged lower floors that took advantage of the space created by the excavation and foundation walls.

Exterior materials were consistent. 1x4 vertical cedar siding, mahogany windows, exposed pine beams and



Cover of April 1956 issue of Better Homes and Gardens featuring a Techbuilt home.



pine deck eaves, a low-pitched asphalt shingle roof with the center brick chimney poking above the peak are all typical of the Deck houses.

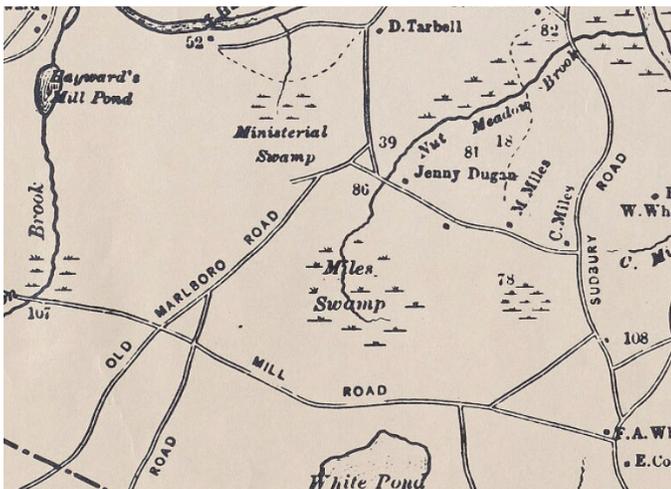
Carports were employed, rather than enclosed garages. Sometimes, the roof line was continued to create the carport roof. Exposed foundation walls were plastered with cement and left unpainted. The materials, windows and modular organization linked the houses but they were free to be organized to fit the site and inhabitants and allowed easy expansion.



Japanese Exhibition House, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York IN559.41B. Photograph by Ezra Stoller.

Jennie Dugan Acres has a special character and a unique collection of mid-century Deck homes, some of which are nearly sixty years old. There are Deck homes throughout Concord and nearby towns, but it is relatively rare to have a such a concentration of them on one street and for the houses to not have been much altered since they were built. Further significance is due to the street being an early development of the Deck company founders themselves and the location of the personal residence of co-founder William Berkes, the original architect for Deck houses. As they enter their seventh decade, the houses are increasingly in need of updating and the likelihood of them being renovated to beyond recognition or being demolished is very

high. At the same time, there has been a surge in popularity and desirability of mid-century homes that has brought a renewed appreciation of these houses and a realization that they need to be preserved. Jennie Dugan Acres presents a unique opportunity to preserve an enclave of houses that are nationally relevant to architecture history while being directly tied to the Concord community.



Detail from 1906 map showing the Dugan Farm from H. W. Gleason's 1906 map of localities mentioned by Thoreau in his journals.