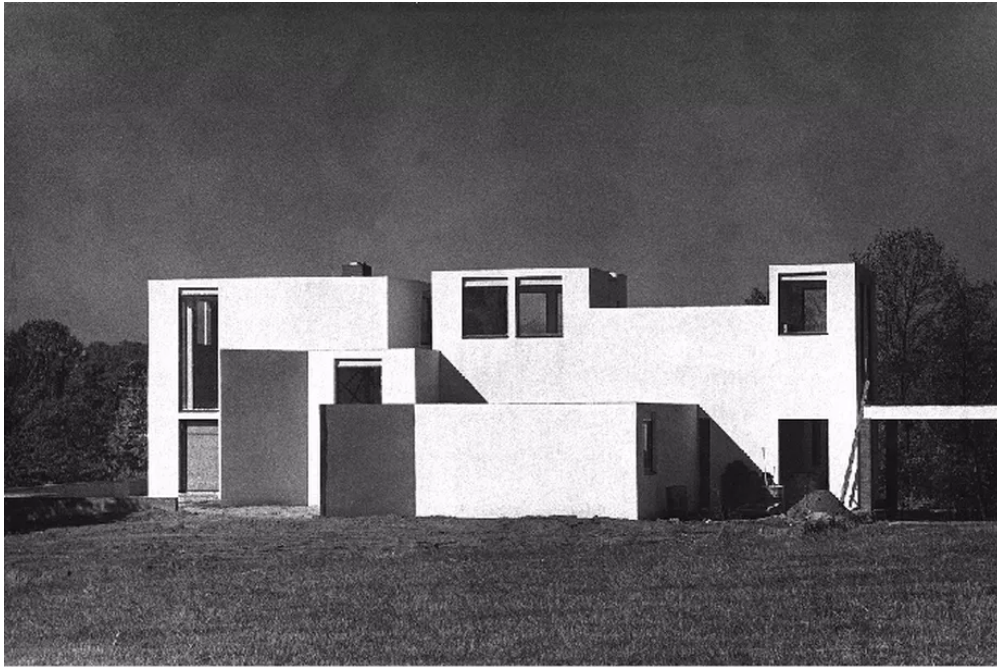


Mitchell/Giurgola's Dorothy Shipley White House earns historic designation

The midcentury modern home in Chestnut Hill is one of the firm's earlier works

By **Melissa Romero** | Oct 17, 2017, 9:00am EDT



The Shipley White House while under construction. | Courtesy of Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

One of the earliest works of the noted local architecture firm Mitchell/Giurgola Associates just earned its place in history.

The Mrs. Thomas Raeburn (Dorothy Shipley) White House at 717 Glengarry Road in Chestnut Hill was **designated historic** at the Historical Commission's meeting last week, adding yet another midcentury modern masterpiece in the neighborhood to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

The Shipley White House was designed by Mitchell/Giurgola in 1962 and built a year later for widow Dorothy Shipley. Today, it sits heavily shrouded by a wall of foliage, but it's considered one of the most distinct examples of post-war architecture in the neighborhood and city in general.

The architects designed a boxy, concrete block home with a profile that changes when viewed at different angles. Inside, there's a T-shaped floor plan with a central core that includes a studio and a two-story living area. Shipley had wanted a home designed for art and entertaining.

The home cemented Mitchell/Giurgola's place in the unofficial [Philadelphia School of Architecture](#), but it was clearly influenced by the other modern homes built in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood during that time. For example, the fireplace harkens back to the hearth designed by Louis Kahn at the [Esherick House](#). And coincidentally, Chestnut Hill's Shipley White House, the Margaret Esherick House, and Robert Venturi's [Vanna Venturi House](#) were all designed within two years of each other for single women.

All three homes are now listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. But Paul Steinke, whose Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia nominated the Shipley White house with the Chestnut Hill Conservancy and Docomomo of Greater Philadelphia, said even though it is now designated historic, it's not completely saved from demolition.

"It only means that significant alterations must first be approved by the commission. It doesn't spare them from demolition in perpetuity," Steinke said in a statement. "Neighborhood vigilance will always be necessary to maintain the culture, character and quality of our historic buildings."

- [717 Glengarry Road Nomination](#) [Philadelphia Register of Historic Places]

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