

GEORGE NAKASHIMA WOODWORKER, RECEPTION HOUSE
1847 Aquetong Road
New Hope
Bucks County
Pennsylvania

HABS PA-6783-F
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

ADDENDUM TO:
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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GEORGE NAKASHIMA WOODWORKER, RECEPTION HOUSE

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- Location: 1847 Aquetong Road, Solebury Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, 18938.
- Owner: The property is owned by Mira Nakashima Yarnall, and Kevin Nakashima the daughter and son of the original owners, George and Marion Nakashima.
- Present Use: The reception house is used for meetings and for special guest accommodation.
- Significance: Built from 1975 to 1977, this jewel-box structure is the last of those on site designed and built under the direction of George Nakashima and in many ways is the crowning achievement in terms of the modern interpretation of traditional Japanese elements. In addition to its demure scale and simplicity, it includes many other defining characteristics of Japanese domestic architecture including its open space, exposed structural elements, three “nakabashira,” internal posts or parent posts “oyabashira,” sliding glass doors and windows, one tatami mat covered floor, shoji and fusuma screens. The most distinguishing features are perhaps the attached Japanese tearoom, entered through an expanded “nijuri guchi” or a small doorway through which guests must enter on their hands and knees, and the “horiburo”, a sunken tiled tub, heated by convection from a Japanese wood-burning boiler. The Reception House is furnished with many of Nakashima’s signature pieces to complete the integrity of its design and jewel-box-like perfection. Like the other residential structures, the Reception House has sliding glass doors and a deck that looks out over the hillside from its terraced site. It reflects Nakashima’s whole environment approach; the integration of architecture, furnishings, and landscape.
- Description: The Reception House is a single story structure that is basically of a one-room, multi-functional plan to which is appended a modern interpretation of a traditional Japanese-style tea house with a Tatami floor to one side and a tiled bath to the other. In addition to the tea room, and a Japanese-style sunken bath, the interior features a living & sleeping area, a dining area with a kitchen cleverly hidden behind sliding rice paper screens. The support system for the roof is a unique scissor truss design. The exterior wall materials include stone, stucco and cement block. The roof of the house is covered with cedar shake shingles. The large, amoeba shaped, sunken Japanese bath is heated by a Japanese wood-burning boiler.
- History: The reception house was built from 1975 to 1977 to serve as a guesthouse featuring a tea room and Japanese-style sunken bath; it continues to be used as a guest house and as a location for meetings.

Sources: James A. Michener Art Museum, *George Nakashima and the Modernist Movement* (essays by Steven Beyer and Matilda McQuaid). Doylestown, Pennsylvania: James A. Michener Art Museum, 2001.

Mira Nakashima. *Nature, Form & Spirit: the Life and Legacy of George Nakashima*. New York: Abrams, 2003.

Historian: Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS, 2012