

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey: PG#68-77 Building Date: Circa 1908

Building Name: Dorr House

Location: 4525 Buchanan Street, Hyattsville, Maryland

Private/Residence/Occupied/Good/Inaccessible

Description:

The Dorr House is constructed of a combination of brick and molded concrete block. It is two-and-one-half stories high with hip roof, three bays by two. Entrance is in the third bay of the principal north facade through a door which is surmounted by a double segmental arch of brick. The facade is sheltered by a one-story porch with a shallow hip roof, supported by four tapered wooden posts resting on a molded concrete block parapet. The cornice of the porch roof has a deep overhang, and crown molding. On all elevations of the house, including the north facade, the masonry is laid in a decorative pattern of brick and molded block. The predominant material of each elevation is whitewashed concrete block; the red brick is laid to form a quoin pattern around each opening. Windows are 2/2 or 6/6 with a double segmental arch in the brickwork above first-story windows, and single segmental arch in the brickwork above second-story windows. The windows of the main north facade are full-length on the first story; on both stories of this facade, the upper sashes have a shallow round arch. The hip roof of the house is covered with gray asbestos shingle; it is pierced by two hip-roof dormers, one in the north and one in the west plane of the roof. On the south rear elevation of the house is an enclosed one-story shed-roof porch.

Significance:

The Dorr House is an important landmark in the part of Hyattsville which lies east of Baltimore Boulevard. It stands in a small neighborhood on the east side of Hyattsville which was platted in 1887 as the Emmons-Swartzell subdivision. It was built, probably circa 1908, for the family of William A. Dorr, and is a good representative of the compact Foursquare house form. Constructed of a combination of brick and molded concrete block with quoin-like corner patterns, it has a distinctive and unusual appearance, and is a visible landmark in its neighborhood.

Acreage: 5200 square feet

Dorr House

PG#68-77

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Development Periods:

Industrial/Urban Dominance - AD 1870-1930

Historic Period Themes:

Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Community Planning

Resource Type:

Category: building

Historic Environment: Suburban

Historic Functions and Uses: Domestic/single dwelling

Design Source: unknown

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. PG#68-77

Magi No.

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Dorr House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 4525 Buchanan St. not for publication

city, town Hyattsville vicinity of congressional district 5

state Maryland county Prince George's

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name George & Debra Laurence

street & number 4525 Buchanan St. telephone no.:

city, town Hyattsville state and zip code MD 20781

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber 7150

street & number 14735 Main Street folio 617

city, town Upper Marlboro state MD 20772

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title None

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Dorr House is a two-and-one-half-story hip-roof dwelling of Foursquare form. Constructed of a combination of brick and molded concrete block, it has a distinctive and unusual appearance, and is a visible landmark in its neighborhood.

The Dorr House is two-and-one-half stories high with hip roof; it is three bays by two, and roughly square. Entrance is in the third bay of the principal north facade through a door which is surmounted by a double segmental arch of brick. The wooden door is a new replacement; it has a round leaded window with some colored lights over five molded panels. There is neither transom nor sidelights. This north facade is sheltered by a one-story facade-wide porch with a shallow hip roof, supported by four tapered square-in-section wooden posts resting on a molded concrete block parapet. This porch was apparently added some time after the house was constructed, judging from the brickwork above the door, and the reminiscences of family members. (The last members of the Dorr family to live in the house took with them a lead plaque in the shape of a sunrise; it had been mounted over the front door before the present porch was constructed, and, after that, stored in the basement of the house.) The cornice of the porch roof has a deep overhang, and crown molding.

On all elevations of the house, including the north facade, the masonry is laid in a decorative pattern of brick and molded block. The predominant material of each elevation is concrete block (whitewashed); the red brick is laid to form a quoin pattern around each opening. Windows are 2/2 (or 6/6) double hung sash, with a double segmental arch in the brickwork above first-story windows, and single segmental arch in the brickwork above second-story windows. The windows of the main north facade are full-length on the first story; on both stories of this facade, the upper sashes have a shallow round-arch. On the other three elevations, each window is standard rectangular double sash, with a shallow-arch lintel in the wood surround to fill the segmental arch above. It appears that all windows were originally 2/2, but several windows on the east and south elevations have been replaced by 6/6 sashes. The first-story northmost window on the west elevation is smaller and shorter than all of the other windows, and lights the interior stairway; it is now filled with new leaded stained-glass.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates circa 1908 **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or
Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Dorr House is an important landmark in the part of Hyattsville which lies east of Baltimore Boulevard. It was built, probably circa 1908, for the family of William A. Dorr. Constructed of a combination of brick and molded concrete block with quoin-like corner patterns, it has a distinctive and unusual appearance, and is a visible landmark in its neighborhood.

A small neighborhood on the east side of Hyattsville began to be developed at the end of the nineteenth century on land which had earlier been part of the Sibley family farm. In 1887 developers George E. Emmons and George W. Swartzell purchased a little more than seven acres of the Sibley family farm from W. I. Sibley. This land lay on the east side of the Washington and Baltimore Turnpike. It was surveyed in 1887 by Surveyor George W. Jackson, and a subdivision of 35 lots was laid out on both sides of the old lane which led east from the Turnpike to the Sibley farmhouse; this right-of-way gave access to all of the building lots, and was named Sibley Avenue. The sale of lots began immediately, and by 1894 eleven houses lined the street.¹

The subject house stands on Lot 34, the next-to-the-last lot on the south side of the street. This lot was purchased unimproved in 1902 by Paul Higdon, a carpenter who had been living in Hyattsville at least since 1900. Higdon owned several lots in East Hyattsville and in the nearby subdivision of Riverdale Park; in 1902 he built a house on Lot 5 of the Emmons-Swartzell subdivision (where Sibley Avenue intersected with the Turnpike), and in 1903 sold the more easterly lots 32, 33 and 34 to William A. Dorr. At that time, all three lots

¹ Prince George's County Deed JWB#8:306; Prince George's County Plat JWB#8:165 (Plat Book A, 32); G. M. Hopkins Map of the Vicinity of Washington D. C., 1894.

The hip roof of the house is covered with gray asbestos shingle; a corbelled brick (kitchen) chimney rises from the south plane. The plain boxed cornice has a deep overhang. The third story is lighted by two hip-roof dormers, one in the north and one in the west plane of the roof. Each dormer is lighted by two side-by-side two-pane windows, and has a plain boxed cornice.

On the south (rear) elevation of the house is a one-story shed-roof porch which was clearly added at a date later than that of the main block. This porch rests on a concrete block foundation, and has been enclosed with narrow wooden wainscoting, both horizontal and vertical. Entrance to the enclosed porch is in the westerly section of its south elevation, through a door flanked by two small six-pane single-sash windows; the easterly section of this south elevation is lighted by a modern four-section window. The narrow east and west ends of the enclosed porch are lighted by two six-pane single-sash windows. The porch addition covers and encloses the original rear kitchen door in the first bay of the south elevation; it also encloses an original first-story window in the second bay.

The house rests on a foundation of (plain) concrete block which encloses a full basement. There is a bulkhead opening to the basement in the first bay of the east elevation.

Interior floor plan consists of four unequal spaces. The main entrance leads into the stairhall in the northwest sector. The two-run open-string stair rises along the west wall to a landing, turns 90 degrees to the east and rises to the second story. The body of the heavy turned newel is octagonal in section, with deeply molded base and cap. The balusters (two per tread) have recently been replaced with new turned balusters of yellow pine; the present owner has also applied new geometric string moldings to frame the stairs, on both wall and spandrel.

A slanting corridor leads back to the southeast parlor, from which one can enter the kitchen in the southwest section. Floors are of original yellow pine, and have plain high baseboards with crown molding. Surrounds of doors and windows are multiband, typical of the early twentieth century, with bulls-eye cornerblocks.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM

Survey No. PG#68-77

Description (continued)

Section 7 Page 3

A concrete retaining wall (constructed in the 1930s) forms the east boundary of the subject lot, #34. The ground drops off to the east to triangular Lot #35, where an earlier Dorr family house once stood. Beyond this lot to the east is the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad right-of-way and the Northeast Branch. In the rear (south) of Lot #34 are the concrete foundations of a long narrow laundry building, as well as a modern garden shed.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM
Statement of Significance (continued)

Survey No. PG#68-77

Section 8 Page 2

were unimproved, but within the year Dorr constructed a modest house on Lot 32. William Dorr was the son of a German immigrant; he lived with his widowed mother in Hyattsville, working as a butcher. He married in 1907, and it was probably at that time that he began to plan the construction of a family dwelling on Lot 34; by 1908 a modest dwelling had been erected, and in 1913 William A. Dorr sold the slightly earlier house on Lot #32 to his brother George A. Dorr.²

There is some question about the date of construction of the house which William A. Dorr built for his family on Lot #34. The present handsome brick-and-concrete-block house may have been built as early as 1908, and was certainly standing by 1921. The County real estate tax assessments are somewhat ambiguous. They indicate a new improvement (assessed at \$800) on Lot #34 in 1909; by early 1912, however, Lot #34 is shown as unimproved, and later in that year a new and small improvement of \$300 is shown, while a \$1200 improvement is shown for the adjoining Lot #33. These indications remained the same until 1921, when a new and very substantial improvement of \$2250 was registered for Lot #34, together with a doubling of the improvement value on Lot #33. All of this could indicate that the original house on Lot #34 was destroyed (although no substantiation of this has yet been found), and replaced nearly ten years later with a much more substantial house. Or the information in the tax assessments may be incorrect; William Dorr owned several lots in the Emmons-Swartzell subdivision, and it is possible that the improvement value of the various lots was accidentally interchanged, i.e., that the house on Lot #34 was indeed built in 1908 but that after 1912 its improvement value was registered incorrectly as being that of Lot #33. In any case the subject house stood in its present configuration by 1921.³

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1911 shows a house on Lot #34. A house of roughly the same dimensions is shown on Lot #34 on the Sanborn map of 1922. On both of these maps, the first Dorr house is shown on Lot #32, while the house on Lot

² Prince George's County Deeds #7:90, #17:164; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1900-1909; Federal Census Records for Prince George's County, Enumeration District #2, 1900; Enumeration District #16, 1910.

³ Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-1926

#33 is not shown until the map of 1922.⁴ The evidence of the Sanborn maps, therefore, tends to reinforce the theory that the improvement values for Lots #33 and #34 were temporarily interchanged in the tax assessments, and that the house now standing on Lot #34 was in fact built circa 1908.

In any case, this house was a prominent feature in the small Sibley Avenue neighborhood. It was constructed of a combination of brick and molded concrete block, on a modified Foursquare plan. Foursquares of concrete block were becoming a popular form during this period, but the Dorr house had several decorative details which set it apart from some of the others of that type: the windows of the principal facade had segmentally arched upper sashes recalling features from earlier Victorian and Italianate architecture, and all windows were distinctly framed by the quoined pattern in the brick around them. The house became a prominent and distinctive landmark in its neighborhood.

Members of the Dorr family operated a commercial laundry facility for some years in this neighborhood, and the long and narrow foundation of the laundry building can still be seen in the rear (south) section of Lots 32 through 34. William A. Dorr, however, listed himself as a merchant in the oil business in the 1910 census, and a Standard Oil superintendent in 1920.⁵ Members of the family were very much involved in the development of the town of Hyattsville; both William and George Dorr, as well as their brother, John, served as volunteer firemen, and during several years, some of the fire-fighting equipment of the City of Hyattsville was stored on the Dorrs' property on Sibley Avenue.⁶

William A. Dorr sold the house on Lot #34 in 1921 to James and Mary O'Malley, and from that time until 1935 the property changed hands several times. In 1935 it was sold to Curry and Anna Carter, and the house remained in the Carter

⁴ Sanborn Map Company, Fire Insurance Maps for Hyattsville, Maryland, 1911 and 1922

⁵ Federal Census Records for Prince George's County, Enumeration District #16, 1910 and 1920

⁶ Geary, F. X., Fire Call, A History of the Hyattsville Volunteer Fire Department, Hyattsville, Maryland, 1979

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM
Statement of Significance (continued)

Survey No. PG#68-77
Section 8 Page 4

family for more than 50 more years.⁷

The Dorr House exemplifies the social, cultural and historic heritage of the County in the development of its suburban communities. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of early twentieth-century domestic architecture; it is a good representative of the Foursquare form in masonry construction. It is distinguished from others of this type, however, by its distinctive decorative detail. It is an outstanding and distinctive feature of its neighborhood.

⁷ Prince George's County Deeds, PG#432:173; #2956:521; #5183:249; #7150:615, 617.

SUBDIVISION OF TRACT OF LAND
CONTAINING 7 ACRES
IN
HYATTSVILLE,
Prince George County, Maryland,

BY
GEORGE E. EMMONS and
Geo W. S. SWARTZELL
Trustees.

SCALE BUFF TO 1 INCH
Surveyed Apr. 10, 1907.
by Geo W. Swartzell, C.E.

Washington DC.
Apr. 10, 1907

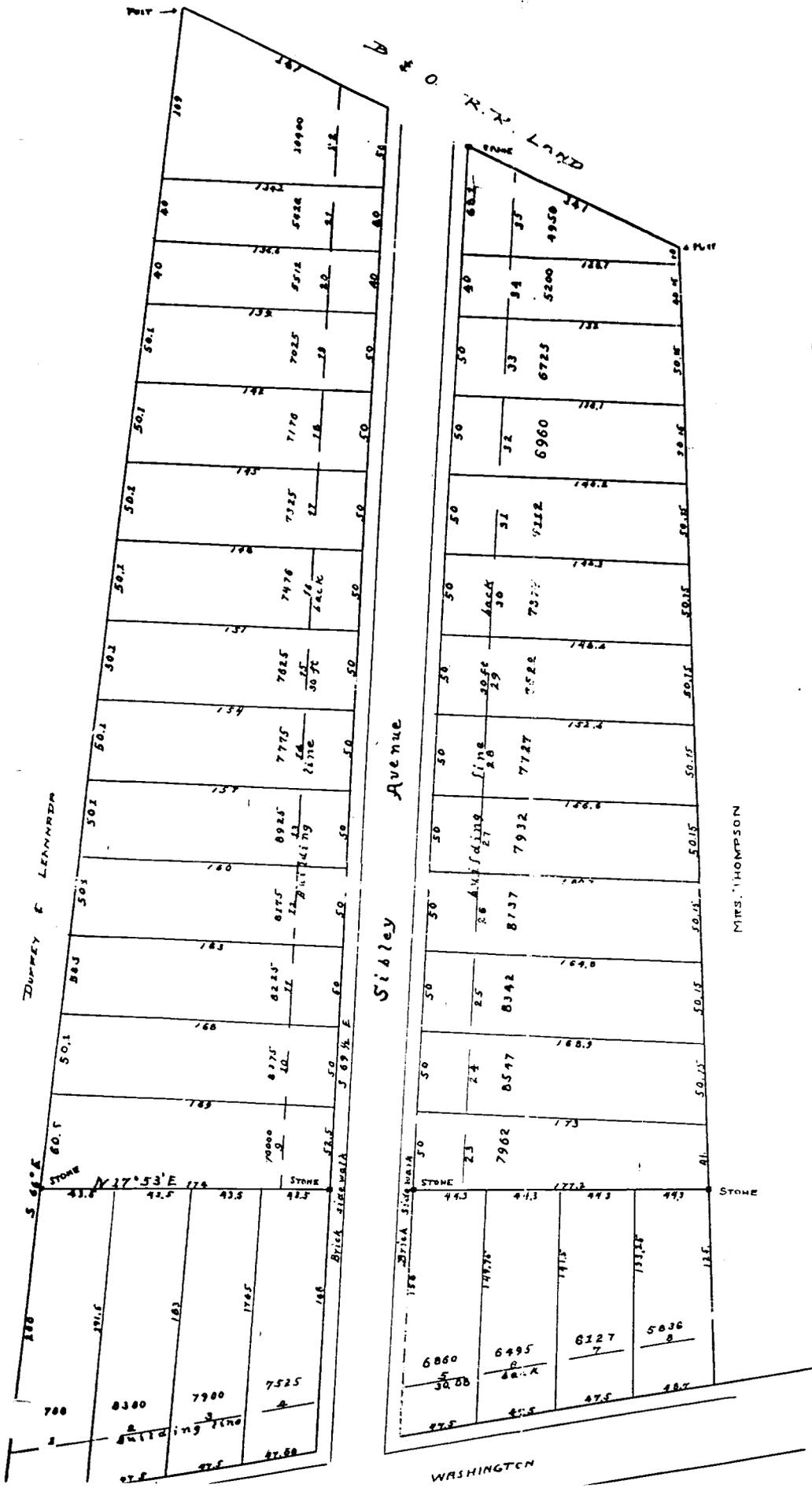
WE hereby submit for record this proposed
Subdivision of a tract of land containing 7A
1R-87A, and described in the deed to the under
signed from W. I. Sibley dated Apr. 9, 1907 and
duly recorded in Liber J. W. D. No - Folio -
of the Land Records of Prince George's Co. Md.
and do hereby dedicate for public use the Road
and Avenue herein laid out.

Geo. E. Emmons
Geo. W. Swartzell.

Acknowledged before me this 10th. day of Apr.
A.D. 1907

Andrew Parker.
Notary Public

ENROLLED Apr. 20, 1907.

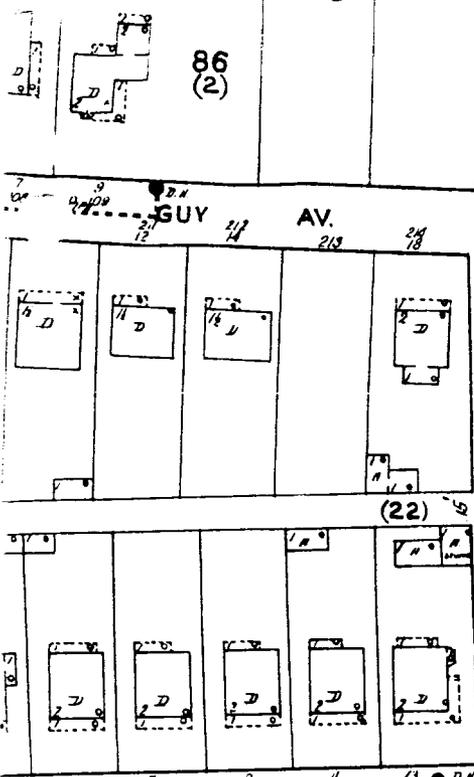


MRS. THOMPSON

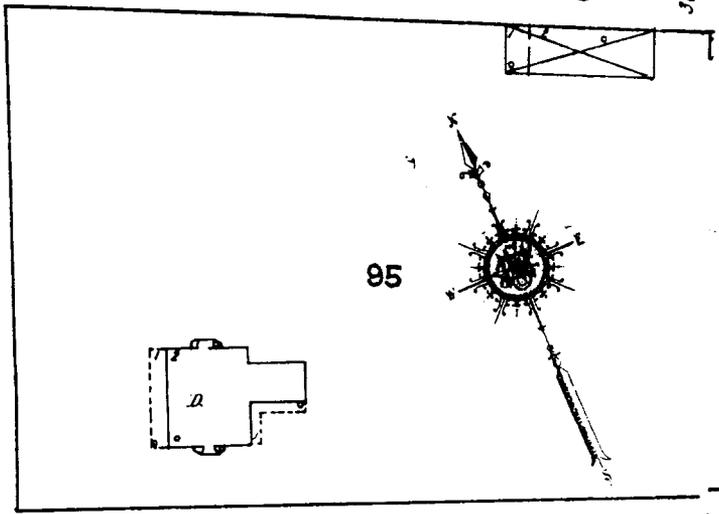
86
(2)

4
AUG. 1922
HYATTSVILLE
MD.

AUG. 1922
HYATTSVILLE
MD.



AV.
MANSION

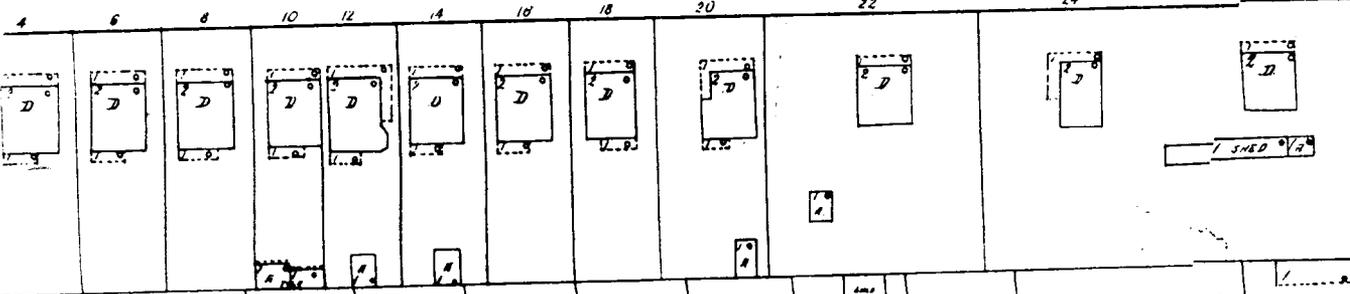


95

95

BALTIMORE

BALTIMORE

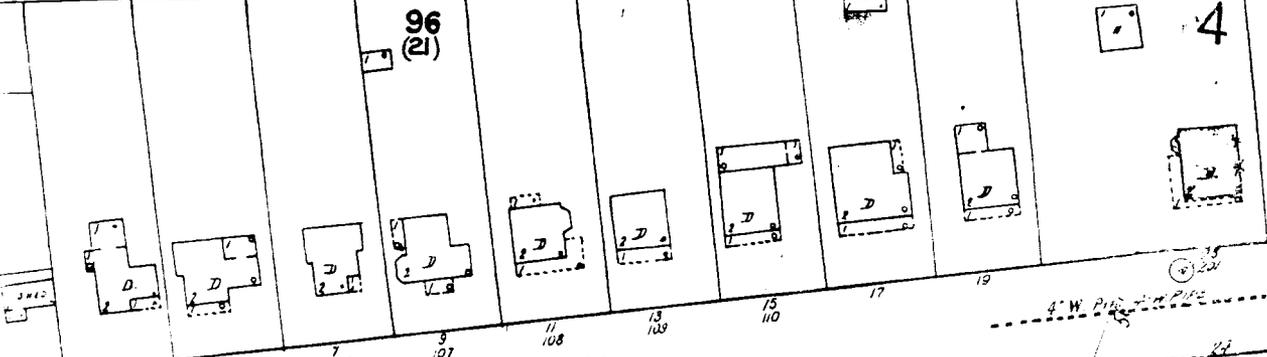


96
(21)

96
(21)

SIBLEY AV.

SIBLEY AV.



4

105
(20)

PG: 68-77

105
(20)

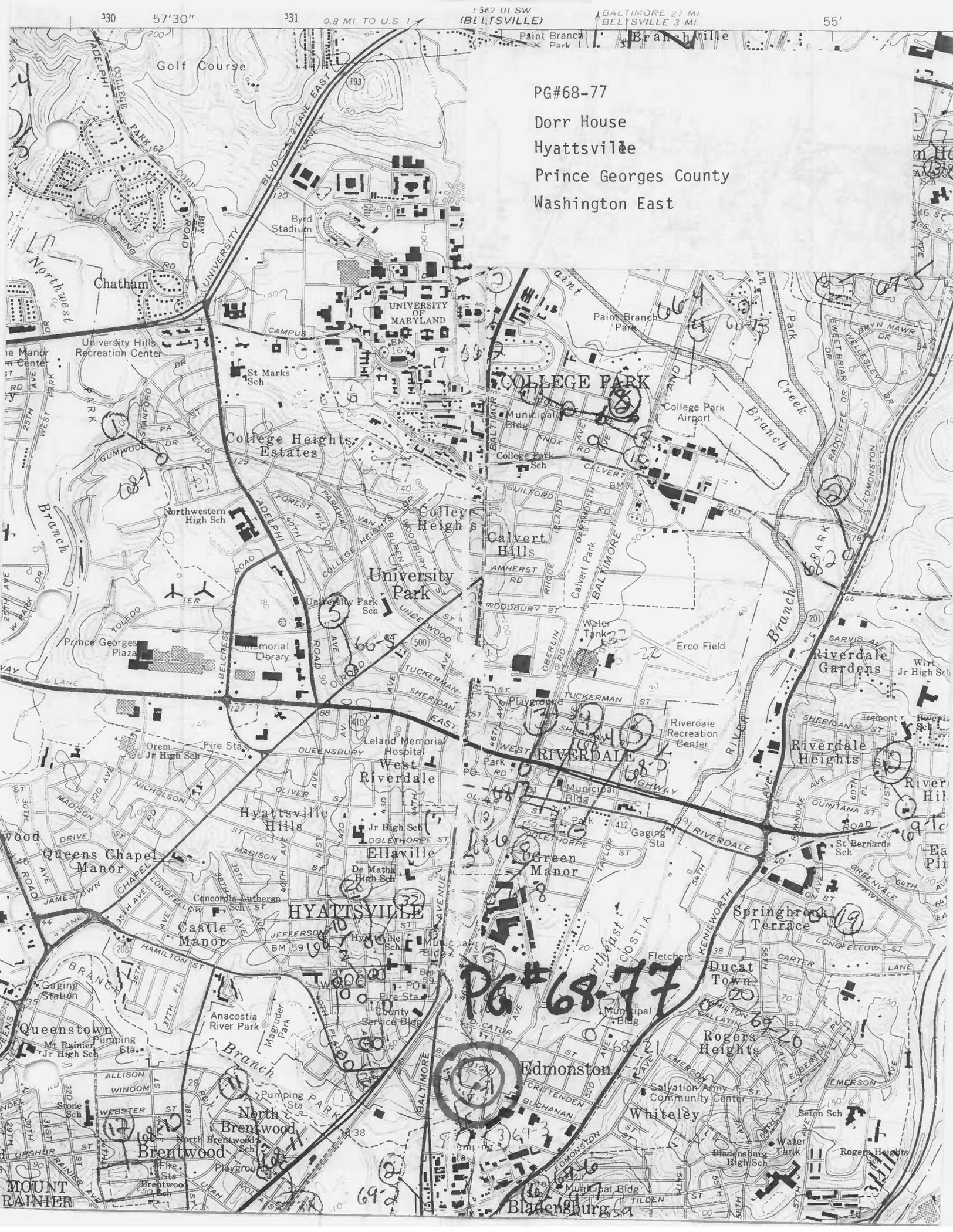
PG#68-77

Dorr House

Hyattsville

Prince Georges County

Washington East





Pg # 68-77

Dock House

Prunice Sharp's Co. MD

Susan G. Pearl

May 92

MD SHPO

North facade from NW

1 of 8



Pg. # 68-77

Dear House

Princi Lerjio Co MD
Susan H. Pearl

May 1992

MD SHPO

Yrth dar

278



Pl. # 68-77

Lock House

Prince Georges Co. MD

Jean H. Pearl

May 1992

MD SHPO

North window

378



PC # 68-77

Lorr House

Prince Georges Co MD

Susan H. Sears

May 1992

MD SHPO

West window

428



P6 # 68-77

do's House

Princi Kemp's Co 111)

Sara H. Paul

May 1992

MD SHPO

Smith (near) elevation

5 28



Pg # 68-77

State House
Prince Georges Co MD
Susan E. Price

May 1992

MD SHPO

East side elevation

678



Pl # 68-77

Lock House

Prince George's Co MD

Susan L. Pearce

May 1992

MD SHPO

Sevi

798



PG # 68-77

Love House

Pence House's Co MD

Susan H. Kane

May 1992

MD SHPO

Interim moldmap

8 of 8