

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: P.G. #67-15

Building Date: ca. 1889

Building Name: Wolfe House

Location: 5617 Ruatan Street, Berwyn Heights, Maryland

Private/Residence/Occupied/Good/Inaccessible

Description

The Wolfe House is a two-and-one-half-story frame mansard-roof dwelling which has been lengthened by a full-height rectangular projecting bay at the southwest end. Entrance is in the central bay of the (northwest) five-bay principal facade, through a double door with a plain surround and a large single pane transom. The building is now covered with white metal siding which hides a belt course of patterned tin shingles and a plain board frieze under the cornice. The cornice survives, boxed with crown molding. Prominent wooden window lintels with projecting crown moldings have been removed, and the window surrounds are covered by the modern metal siding. Across the principal (northwest) facade is a one-story hip-roof porch supported by chamfered posts with a lattice frieze course. There is a similar one-story porch across the rear facade. At the southwest end of the building is a full-height rectangular projecting bay, one bay deep and two bays wide surmounted by the same mansard roof as the rest of the building. The mansard roof is covered with patterned tin and pierced by four evenly spaced gable dormers on the principal facade. Each has a pediment formed by crown molding. The nearly vertical plane of the mansard roof is surmounted by a crown molding. Piercing the east plane of this roof just behind the northerly dormers is a tall corbelled brick chimney.

Significance

The Wolfe House is a good example of a late Victorian house with Queen Anne and Second Empire stylistic elements. Although alterations have removed some of its distinctive decorative features, it is still a noticeable landmark in its community and was one of the first dwellings built in the 1888 town of Charlton Heights, now known as Berwyn Heights. The Town of Charlton Heights was platted in 1888 by Edward Graves, on 383 acres of land bounded by the Branchville Road and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Graves sold the land to the Charlton Heights Improvement Company in that year, and the company immediately began construction of dwellings ordered by pattern through the mail. The subject house was built in 1889 by Andrew B. Stine who, in the previous year, had purchased two unimproved lots from the Charlton Heights Improvement Company. Stine built (probably from a pattern book design) a handsome and commodious frame dwelling distinguished by its bracketed cornice, its patterned tin belt course, and lacework verandah. It reflects a house plan which is surprisingly rare in Prince George's County in this period. Although altered, the Wolfe house is still a noticeable landmark in the old community of Berwyn Heights.

Acreage: 10,600 square feet

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Wolfe House

2. Location

street & number 5617 Ruatan Street not for publicationcity, town Berwyn Heights 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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name Thomas and Linda Wolfe

street & number 5617 Ruatan Street telephone no.:

city, town Berwyn Heights state and zip code MD 20740

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. P.G.Co. Courthouse liber #4983

street & number Main Street folio 603

city, town Upper Marlboro state MD

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title None

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. PG#67-15

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 Wolfe House is a two-and-one-half-story frame mansard-roof house which stands on one of the original house lots in the 1888 subdivision of Charlton Heights, now known as Berwyn Heights.

The house is five bays by two bays, increased in length by a full-height rectangular projecting bay at the southwest end of the building. The house fronts on Ruatan Street, and entrance facing northwest is in the central bay of this five-bay principal facade, through a double door with a plain (metal) surround and a large single pane transom. Each leaf of the double door consists of a glazed panel over two molded panels.

The building is now covered with white metal siding, grained to resemble wood. This siding covers (or replaces) the original German siding. The metal siding also covers an original belt course between first and second stories; this belt course was composed of two rows of patterned tinshingles (similar to those which still cover the mansard roof). Also covered by the modern siding is a plain board frieze under the cornice; the jig-sawn brackets which embellished the frieze and cornice have been removed. The cornice survives, boxed with crown molding.

Windows are 2/2 double hung sash; originally they had prominent wooden lintels, with projecting crown molding. These lintels have been removed, and the window surrounds are covered by the modern metal siding. Original louvered shutters have been removed.

Across the principal (northwest) facade is a one-story hip-roof porch supported by chamfered posts with a lattice frieze course. (Original "chippendale" geometric railing around the porch has been removed.) The porch rests on brick piers infilled with lattice. There is a similar one-story porch across the rear facade.

At the southwest end of the building is a full-height rectangular projecting bay, one bay deep and two bays wide. It is surmounted by the same mansard roof as the rest of the building.

The mansard roof is covered with patterned tin. It is pierced by four evenly spaced gable dormers on the principal facade. (The five openings in first and second stories of this facade are not evenly spaced: openings in the three inner bays are grouped more closely together than those in the first and fifth bays.) The dormers contain 2/2 double hung sash windows; each had a pediment formed by crown molding. There are two dormers in the east plane of the roof and two in the west (one of which is in the projecting bay). The nearly vertical plane of the mansard roof is surmounted by a crown molding. Piercing the east plane of this roof just behind the northerly dormers is a tall corbelled brick chimney. The foundation of the house is of brick.

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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1889 **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 Wolfe House is a good example of a late Victorian house with Queen Anne and Second Empire stylistic elements. Although alterations have removed some of its distinctive decorative features, it is still a noticeable landmark in its community; it is one of the first dwellings built in the 1888 town of Charlton Heights, now known as Berwyn Heights.

In 1887, Edward Graves of Washington, D.C. purchased 383 acres south of the Branchville Road and bounded on the west by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. He engaged the firm of Newby and Howell to survey and plat a new residential community, and called it Charlton Heights.¹ The plat of 1888 showed 50-foot-wide streets, criss-crossing at varied angles, and lots of approximately 50 by 200 feet. Graves sold the land in 1888 to the Charlton Heights Improvement Company, which immediately began construction of dwellings ordered by pattern through the mail. Within the same year, the Company began to sell lots, some unimproved, and some with new houses already erected.² By the end of the first year, approximately 20 houses had been built, and the new town became the home principally of professionals who used the Baltimore and Ohio railroad to commute into Washington, D.C.³

For the next three years, the Charlton Heights Improvement Company continued to sell lots, but with only limited success. In 1892, Edward Graves, the developer, and James Waugh, secretary of the Company, both of whom resided in Charlton Heights, bought the remaining unsold lots; they continued to sell them, and the Charlton Heights Improvement Company ceased operations. In 1896, by an act of the Maryland General Assembly, the town was incorporated, and its name was changed to Berwyn Heights. It continued to grow slowly; by 1910, the population was slightly over 150, and there were 38 dwellings.⁴ Today most of the lots have been filled in by 1950's subdivision housing, and Berwyn Heights is a quiet residential community with curving streets and old trees, set back and somewhat secluded, between two major highways.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM

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Description (continued)

Section 7 Page 2

A later one-story porch was constructed behind (south of) the projecting bay; it has been enclosed, and now forms a one-story addition to the building.

The subject house was built in 1889 by Andrew B. Stine who in the previous year had purchased two unimproved lots (Block B, Lots 17 and 18) from the Charlton Heights Improvement Company. Stine built (probably from a pattern book design) a handsome and commodious frame dwelling distinguished by its bracketed cornice, its patterned tin belt course, and lace-work verandah. It reflects a house plan which is surprisingly rare in Prince George's County in this period. A similar dwelling, built in 1897 in the nearby and nearly contemporary suburb of Riverdale Park, is one of few comparable examples.⁶

For many years, this house was leased to residents of Charlton (Berwyn) Heights, and ownership changed several times. A photograph of the house in its original condition was taken by Robert Sadler in June 1909; the residents at that time were the family of Richard W. Bowling, a hardware salesman.⁷

The house has changed hands many times during this century. In recent years the German siding and tin belt course have been covered by metal siding, and the cornice brackets and some of the porch trim has been removed. It is, however, still a noticeable landmark in the old community of Berwyn Heights.

Notes

1 Prince George's County Deeds, JWB #9:127, 130; Prince George's County Plat, JWB #10:309.

2 Prince George's County Deeds, JWB #11:543; R. W. Shoppell Modern Houses, 1887; Artistic Modern Houses at Low Cost, 1888; Beautiful Homes, 1887; Building Plans for Modern Low Cost Houses, 1884, etc.; cf. Charlton Heights Improvement Company deeds, 1888.

3 Prince George's County Tax Assessments 1888-1890; Census for Prince George's County, E. D. #1, 1900.

4 JWB #20:496; JWB #21:225; JWB #22:53; G. M. Hopkins map, 1894; Census for Prince George's County, E.D. #1, 1900, 1910; Prince George's County Tax Assessments 1890-1910; Skarda, D.D., Berwyn Heights - History of a Small Maryland Town.

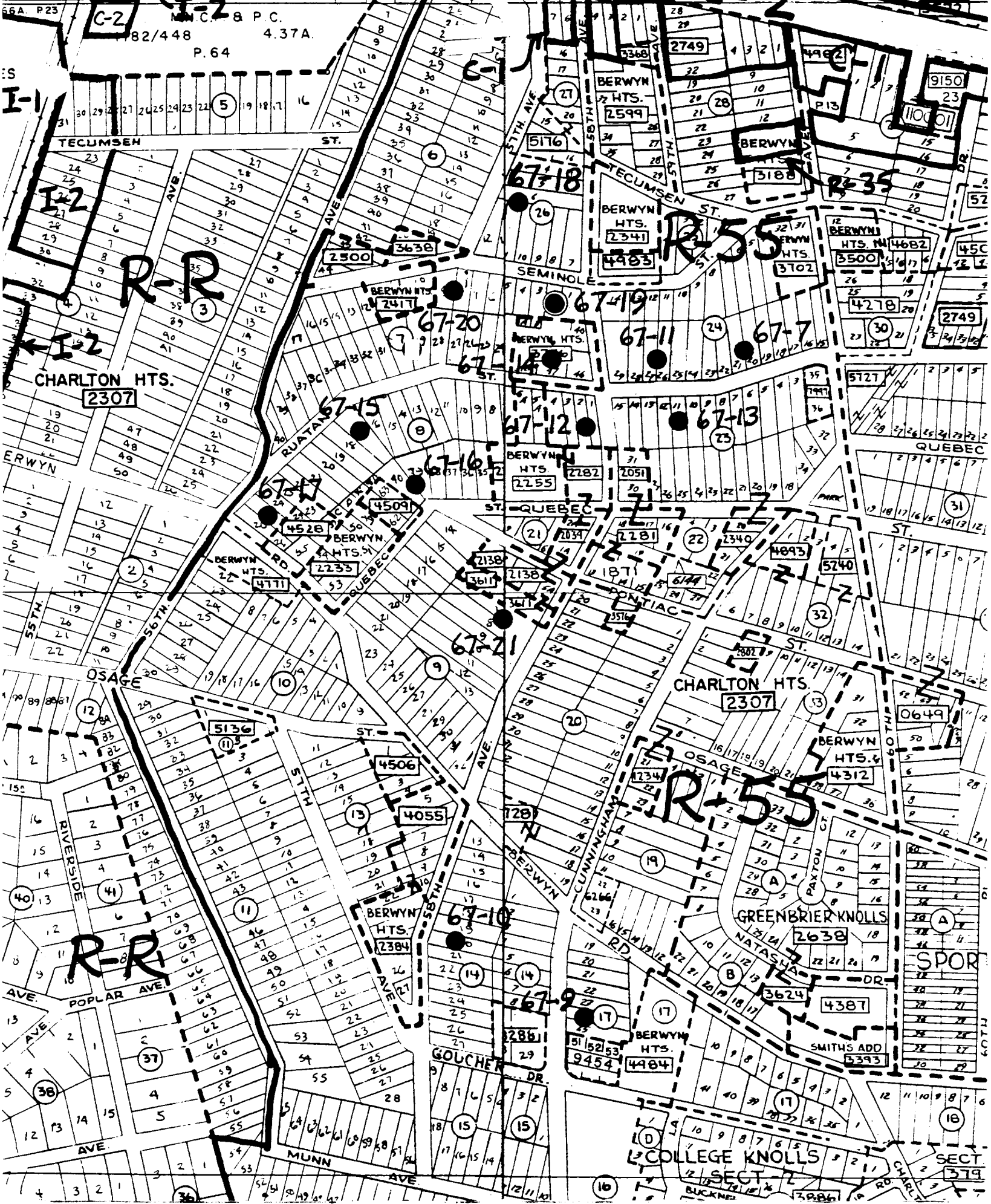
5 Prince George's County Deed JWB #13:666; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1888-1900.

6 Warren, Marion and Mame, Maryland Time Exposures, 1840-1940, 1984, photo p. 232; cf. also MHT form P.G. #68-6, Chambers Funeral Home.

7 Warren, op. cit., cf. photo p. 232; Census for Prince George's County, E.D. #1, 1910.

GREENBELT RD.

P-17-15 I-1



M.C. & P.C.
82/448 4.37A
P. 64

R-R

R-55

R-55

R-R

CHARLTON HTS.
2307

CHARLTON HTS.
2307

BERWYN HTS.
2384

GREENBRIER KNOLLS
2638

BERWYN HTS.
4484

SMITHS ADD
3393

GOUCHER DR.

COLLEGE KNOLLS

SECT 319

TECUMSEH ST.

ST.

SEMINOLE ST.

ST. QUEBEC

OSAGE ST.

ST.

OSAGE ST.

POPLAR AVE.

MUNN AVE.

COLLEGE KNOLLS

SECT 319

TECUMSEH ST.

ST.

SEMINOLE ST.

ST. QUEBEC

OSAGE ST.

ST.

OSAGE ST.

POPLAR AVE.

MUNN AVE.

COLLEGE KNOLLS

SECT 319



P.G. #67-15

Wolfe House
Prince George's County, MD.
Susan G. Pearl
March 1986
Northwest elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD.



P.G. #67-15

Wolfe House
Prince George's County, MD.
Susan G. Pearl
March 1986
West 3/4 elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD.



P.G. #67-15

Wolfe House
Prince George's County, MD.
Susan G. Pearl
March 1986
North 3/4 elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD.