

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: P.G. #67-19 Building Date: 1888

Building Name: Schniedman-Seal House

Location: 5713 Seminole Street, Berwyn Heights, Maryland

Private/Residence/Occupied/Excellent/Inaccessible

Description

The Schniedman-Seal house is a two-and-one-half-story frame cross-gable dwelling with elaborate late Victorian trim. It is distinguished by its decorative shingling and lacework trim on bargeboards and balcony. Roughly cruciform in plan, the house is made asymmetrical by a projecting one-story bay and second-story balcony on the west side of the principal north cross-gable. A one-story hip-roof porch shelters the north gable end and wraps around its east facade. The porch is supported by chamfered bracketed posts which rest on tall brick piers and has a frieze course of plain vertical spindles and circles. The surfaces of the house are varied by ornamental shingling and decorative cornices, including fishscale shingles at the gable ends. Frieze courses at each gable end have applied bands of jig-sawn wave molding. Overhanging eaves are supported by large jig-sawn brackets with cut-out circles and embellished with highly decorative bargeboards with perforated jig-sawn wave pattern. In the first bay of the west facade is a one-story projecting semi-octagonal bay. Above the bay is a highly decorative second-story gable-roof balcony. The pedimented gable-end above the balcony has the same decorative treatment (shingling and bargeboards) as the four principal gable ends of the house. Across the rear (south) facade of the house is a one-story shed-roof porch, partially enclosed.

Significance

The Schniedman-Seal House, a fine example of a late Victorian suburban cottage distinguished by exuberant lacework trim on bargeboards and balcony, is unique in Prince George's County. Built in 1888, it was one of the first dwellings erected in the late 19th century 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 1888 by the Charlton Heights Improvement Company, probably from a design by the Cooperative Building Plan Association. It probably served originally as a model home for prospective buyers. In 1948 the house and lot were purchased by Harvey and Sara Schniedman and it was their family home for approximately 35 years. The decorative trim of this house is essentially original but the siding has recently been replaced by grained steel. Noticeable for its exuberant lacework trim, the Schniedman-Seal house is a distinctive landmark in the community of Berwyn Heights.

Acreage: 6,000 square feet

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Schniedman House

and/or common Seal House

2. Location

street & number 5713 Seminole 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 type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name Stewart and Paula Seal

street & number 5713 Seminole Street telephone no.:

city, town Berwyn Heights state and zip code MD 20740

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber #5744

street & number Main Street folio 634

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

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input 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 Schniedman-Seal house is a two-and-one-half-story frame cross-gable house with elaborate late Victorian trim. It stands on one of the original lots of the (1888) town of Charlton Heights, now known as Berwyn Heights. It is distinguished by its decorative shingling and lacework trim on bargeboards and balcony.

The house faces north toward Seminole Street; it is roughly cruciform in plan, made asymmetrical by a projecting one-story bay and second-story balcony on the west side of the principal north cross-gable. A one-story hip-roof porch shelters the principal north gable end and wraps around its east facade to shelter also the principal entrances into the north face of the easterly cross-gable. The porch is supported by chamfered bracketed posts which rest on tall brick piers (it appears that the lower sections of the posts were removed and replaced by the piers). The porch has a frieze course of plain vertical spindles and cut-out circles. The principal entrance has a large transom, presently being restored.

Siding of the house was of plain horizontal board, covered in this century with red brick shingle, which has recently been replaced by yellow grained steel horizontal siding. Windows are 1/1 double hung sash with plain surrounds. The surfaces of the house are varied by ornamental shingling and decorative cornices. The upper sections of all gable ends are sheathed with fishscale shingles. At each gable end there is a frieze course (below the slightly flared lowest course of shingles) to which are applied bands of jig-sawn wave molding. The deeply overhanging eaves are supported by large jig-sawn brackets with cut-out circles, and embellished with highly decorative bargeboards with perforated jig-sawn wave pattern. Above the bargeboards, the raking cornices are decorated with incised grooves, and at each apex is an applied bulls-eye molding.

In the first bay of the west facade (north of the westerly cross gable) is a one-story projecting semi-octagonal bay. Above the bay, supported by large deeply molded triple brackets, is a highly decorative second-story gable-roof balcony. The pedimented gable-end above the balcony has the same decorative treatment (shingling and bargeboards) as the four principal gable ends of the house. The balcony itself has chamfered posts and a plain baluster railing, as well as lacework frieze of plain vertical spindles which forms arches between the posts.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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 1888 **Builder/Architect** Charlton Heights Improvement Co.

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 Schniedman-Seal House is a fine example of late Victorian suburban cottage Distinguished by exuberant lacework trim on bargeboards and balcony, it is today unique in Prince George's County. It was 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)

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The multi-gable roof is covered with gray asbestos shingle, and there is a tall brick chimney in the north plane of the westerly cross gable. The foundation of the house is brick parged with concrete. Across the rear (south) facade of the house is a one-story shed-roof porch, partially enclosed.

Behind the house, in the southwest corner of the lot, is a gable-roof shed.

The subject house was built in 1888 by the Charlton Heights Improvement Company, probably (like the other houses built by the Company) from a design by the Cooperative Building Plan Association. Although its first occupants have not been identified, this house probably served originally as a model home for prospective buyers. This was one of the model houses which was not sold by the Company until 1892, when Edward Graves purchased it along with eleven other already-constructed houses.⁵ Graves held this property (Lot 2 in Block #7) until 1908, leasing it for several years to the Horn family. In 1908, he sold the house and lot; it continued to be a rental property until the 1940's. In 1948 the house and lot were purchased by Harvey and Sara Schniedman and it was their family home for approximately 35 years.⁶

The decorative trim of this house is essentially original but the siding has recently been replaced by grained steel. The resulting house is a particularly fine example of a late Victorian cottage. Noticeable for its exuberant lacework trim, it is a distinctive landmark in the community of Berwyn Heights.

Notes

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

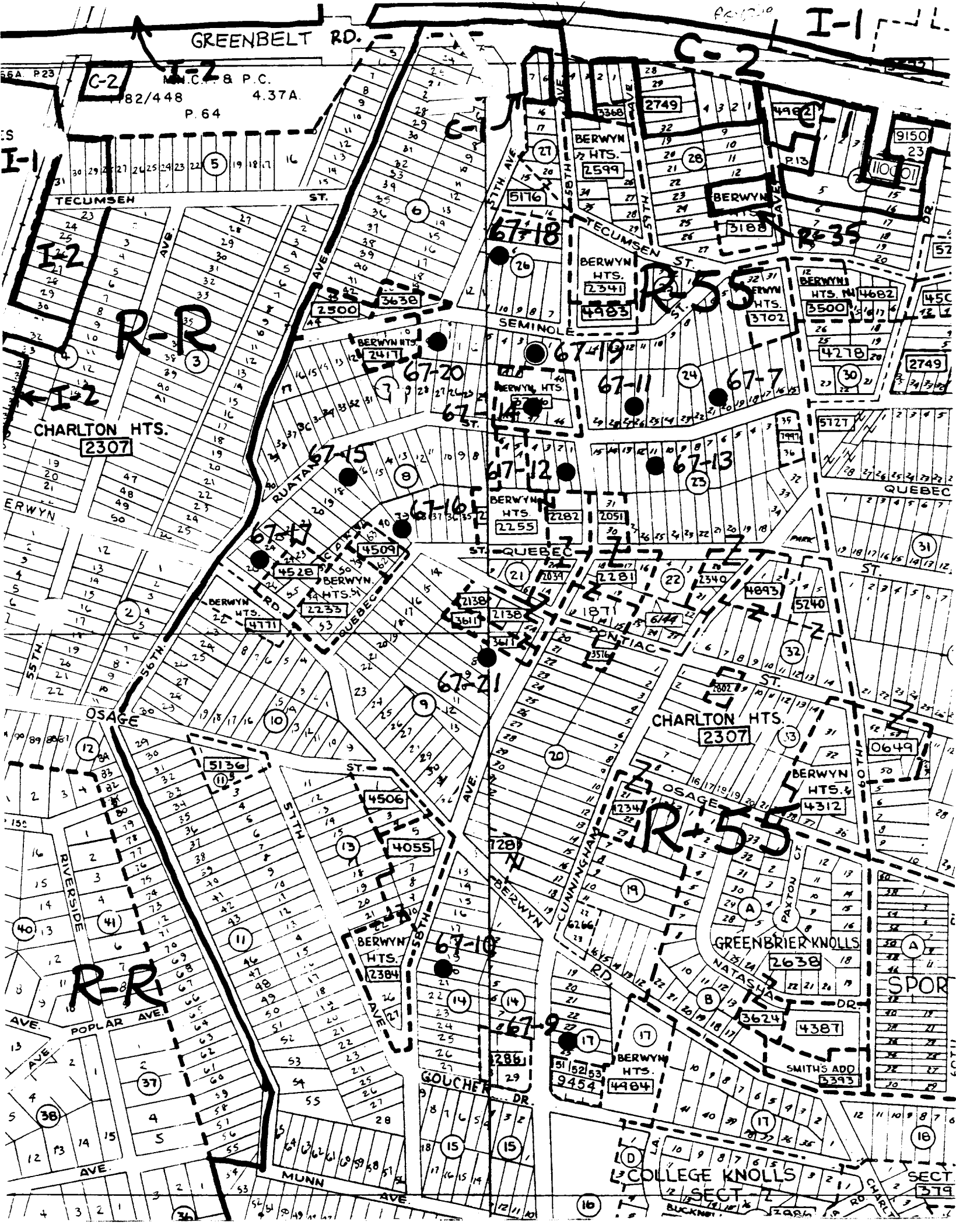
2 Prince George's County Deeds, JWB #11:543; R. W. Shoppell Modern Houses, 1887; Artistic Modern Houses at Low Cost, 1888; Beautiful Homes, 1887; Building Plans for Modern Low Cost Houses, 1884, etc.; cf. Charlton Heights Improvement Company deeds, 1888.

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 #31:225; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1888-1900.

6 Prince George's County Deeds #47:5; #163:233; #224:427; #1007:329; #5744:634; Prince George's County Tax Assessments 1889-1910;





P.G. #67-19

Schniedman-Seal House
Prince George's County, MD.
Susan G. Pearl
April 1986
Northwest 3/4 elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD.



P.G. #67-19

Schniedman-Seal House
Prince George's County, MD.
Susan G. Pearl
April 1986
South elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD.



P.G. #67-19

Schniedman-Seal House
Prince George's County, MD.
Susan G. Pearl
April 1986
Northeast 3/4 elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD.



P.G. #67-19

Schniedman-Seal House
Prince George's County, MD.
Susan G. Pearl
April 1986
Northwest detail
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD.



P.G. #67-19

Schniedman-Seal House
Prince George's County, MD.
Susan G. Pearl
April 1986
North elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD.