

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY  
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: P.G. #67-14 Building Date: 1889/1890

Building Name: Gohr House

Location: 5712 Ruatan Street, Berwyn Heights, Maryland

Private/Residence/Occupied/Good/Inaccessible

Description

The Gohr House is a two-story gable-roof frame house which is distinguished by a two-story pedimented porch on the principal south facade. The main block of the house is side gabled and entrance is through a five-panel door with a projecting lintel. The northwest and southeast sections of a one-story hip-roof porch have been enclosed; the remaining section across the main south facade is supported by plain square posts. Above the central entrance, the porch rises to a full two stories, with a double door leading out onto a balcony with bracketed posts and plain railing. Siding of the house is plain horizontal board painted white. The boxed cornice has crown molding and is returned at the gable ends. A corbelled brick chimney rises at the ridge, between first and second bays, and at the juncture of the main block and wing. A two-story hip-roof kitchen addition was built onto the east gable end, extending to the north. Northeast of the house is a small pyramidal-roof well house.

Significance

The Gohr House is a good example of a late Victorian suburban dwelling. It is distinguished by a two-story pedimented porch on the principal facade. Constructed from a pattern book plan, this 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 1889/1890 by the Charlton Heights Improvement Company. It was based on a plan designed by the Cooperative Building Plan Association, and distributed through the pattern book catalogs of R. W. Shoppell. The subject house differed considerably from the first group of dwellings constructed in 1888 in that it was a more modest dwelling with only minimal Queen Anne style decoration. Since 1950 the house has been the home of the Gohr family. Although additions have considerably altered the east and rear facades, it is still a noticeable landmark in Berwyn Heights today. It is the only residence whose well house survives; and it is a conspicuous reminder of the first dwellings constructed in the town of Charlton Heights.

Acreeage: 15,000 square feet

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Magi No.

DOE  yes  no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Gohr House

## 2. Location

street & number 5712 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 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input 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 Carl Gohr, Jr.

street &amp; number 5712 Ruatan 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 #2739

street &amp; number Main Street folio 471

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

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<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 Gohr House is a two-story gable-roof frame house which is distinguished by a two-story pedimented porch on the principal south facade. It stands on one of the original lots in the 1888 subdivision of Charlton Heights, now known as Berwyn Heights.

The main block of the house is side gabled, three bays by two bays, with entrance in the central bay of the principal three-bay south facade. Entrance is through a five-panel door with a projecting lintel; it is flanked by full-length black louvered shutters. The south facade was originally sheltered by a one-story hip-roof porch which wrapped around both east and west gable ends, and was supported by chamfered bracketed posts. The northwest and southeast sections of this porch have been enclosed; the remaining section across the main facade is supported by plain square posts. Above the central entrance, the porch rises to a full two stories, with a double door leading out onto a balcony with bracketed posts and plain railing. The roof of the balcony forms a cross gable, and its boxed cornice forms a pediment over the balcony. The tympanum is ornamented with geometric panels.

Siding of the house is plain horizontal board painted white. Windows are generally 1/1 double hung sash, and have plain board surrounds with projecting upper bead, and black louvered shutters. The boxed cornice has crown molding and is returned at the gable ends; within the returned cornices, the east and west gable ends are sided with scalloped shingles. The roof of the house has been newly covered with red aluminum shingle; a corbelled brick chimney rises at the ridge, between first and second bays. The house rests on a brick foundation which encloses a basement space.

Interior plan of the main block is central stairhall with flanking parlors. The one-room staircase has square panelled newel with urn-shaped cap, and turned balusters.

A two-story hip-roofed addition was built onto the east gable end, partly covering that gable end and continuing the line of the enclosed porch. This addition extends to the north, forming a two-bay-by-two-bay (north) kitchen wing. There is a corbelled brick chimney at the juncture of main block and wing. There is a pedimented dormer, diagonally positioned in the northwest corner where the wing joins the main block; this 1/1 dormer window lights a passage which gives second-story access from the main block into the ell. A one-story shed-roof porch has been enclosed and forms a rear addition to the kitchen wing; it is lighted by banks of modern windows. A one-story enclosure fills the northwest space between main block and wing, and covers an early cistern.

# 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** 1889/1890 **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 Gohr House is a good example of a late Victorian suburban dwelling; it is distinguished by a two-story pedimented porch on the principal facade. Constructed from a pattern book plan, this 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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

Survey No. PG#67-14

Description (continued)

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Northeast of the house is a small square well house, its shaped being the fustrum of a pyramid; it has a pyramidal roof and German siding. The tank which was originally constructed above this small outbuilding is now gone, and the well house is used for storage. Behind the well house is an open shed.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

Survey No. PG#67-14

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The subject house was built in 1889/1890 by the Charlton Heights Improvement Company; it was one of the second group of homes built by the Company in Charlton Heights. It was based on a plan designed by the Cooperative Building Plan Association, and distributed through the pattern book catalogs of R. W. Shoppell.<sup>5</sup>

The house differed considerably from the first group of dwellings - constructed in 1888 (cf. P.G. #67-11, -12, -17 and -18) in that it was a more modest dwelling with only minimal Queen Anne style decoration. The house and the two lots on which it stood were sold by the Company in 1890; in the next 15 years, the house was occupied by tenants, and passed through a series of short-term owner-landlords.<sup>6</sup> In 1905, the house (now with six lots) was sold to John McNitt, and remained his family home for twenty years. McNitt was a telegraph operator for the U.S. Post Office; it was during his ownership that some of the first alterations (e.g. the two-story addition on the east) were undertaken.<sup>7</sup>

This house received further alterations during the ownership of the Brelsforths, and since 1950 has been the home of the Gohr family.<sup>8</sup> Although additions have considerably altered the east side and rear of the house, it is still a noticeable landmark in Berwyn Heights today. It is the only residence whose well house survives; and it is a conspicuous reminder of the first dwellings constructed in the town of Charlton 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 R. W. Shoppell, Shoppell's Modern Houses, 1887, cf. design #204; Prince George's County Tax Assessments 1888-1890.

6 Prince George's County Deeds JWB #15:739; JWB #17:219; JWB #19:124, #17:453.

7 Prince George's County Deed #23:176; Census for Prince George's County, 1910.

8 Prince George's County Deeds #198:185; #1292:426; #2285: 534,535; #2739:477.





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301-325-2600

P.G. #67-14

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



P.G. #67-14

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



P.G. #67-14

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



P.G. #67-14

Gohr House

Prince George's County, MD.

Susan G. Pearl

March 1986

Well house from south

Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD.