

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: P.G. #68-26 Building Date: ca. 1886

Building Name: William Giusta House

Location: 4204 Gallatin Street, Hyattsville, Maryland

Private/Residence/Occupied/Good/Inaccessible

Description

The William Giusta House is a two-and-one-half story frame gable-roof dwelling; it consists of an asymmetrical cross-gable main block, roughly L-shaped, with an added extension to the east. Entrance to the main block is in the south facade. A one-story hip-roof porch shelters the entire south facade, wrapping around corners to shelter the kitchen ell to the west, the principal south gable end, and the stairhall to the east; it has been continued, in shed-roof form, across the east addition. The house is sheathed with German siding, now covered by "Insulbrick" asphalt shingle. Windows are 2/2 double hung sash. Both south and west gable ends are lighted at third level by a louvered lunette window. The overhanging eaves are punctuated with exposed rafter ends, and the rake boards have applied decoration. There is a corbelled brick chimney at the southwest corner where the main block forms an ell. Extending to the east from the east facade of the main block is a two-story, hip-roof addition with semi-octagonal projecting bay.

Significance

The William Giusta House is an unusual two-part Victorian dwelling which occupies a prominent and visible location in the community. It stands on one of the original lots in Wine and Johnson's second Addition to Hyattsville. Lots 15 through 18 were purchased in 1886 by William Giusta, a linguist who had immigrated from Italy as a child, and who worked as a translator for the U.S. State Department. Within a year Giusta built a modest asymmetrical frame house, highlighted by Victorian trim on its gables and porch. Giusta increased the size of his dwelling by the addition of the east hip-roof section, and lived in the house until his death in 1922. The property was sold in 1926 to the Cosmopolitan Club of Prince George's County, and it was converted into a Club House. When the Club House was sold three years later, it was described as "an eight-room, two-story frame dwelling which has been repainted within the last six months, equipped with all modern improvements, formerly known as the Giusta property." In 1929, the Club House was sold to the trustees of the Snyder-Farmer Post #3 of the American Legion, and it continued to be used as a Club House until 1932. Since that time, this two-part house has been sheathed with synthetic shingle, and an added room has been built onto the north. The present owners are attempting to return much of it to its earlier appearance. The house was built by and for one of the town's outstanding early citizens; it is a noticeable and familiar landmark in the Town of Hyattsville.

Acreage: 7310 square feet

7. Description

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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 William Giusta House is a two-and-one-half story frame gable-roof dwelling which stands on one of the lots in the Town of Hyattsville. It is distinguished by its complex plan and prominent location above the street at the corner of two residential streets.

The house consists of an asymmetrical cross-gable main block, roughly L-shaped with an added extension to the east. Entrance to the main block is in the south facade. A four-panel door leads into the stairhall on the east side; its two upper panels are glazed, with leaded sections. The door has a single pane transom. A one-story hip-roof porch shelters the entire south facade, wrapping around corners to shelter the kitchen ell to the west, the principal south gable end, and the stairhall to the east; it has been continued, in shed-roof form, across the east addition. A 1930's photograph shows that the hip-roof porch was originally supported by plain posts with stick-style brackets, and plain balustrade railing; it now has plain square posts with fan brackets and stick frieze, as well as a plain railing. The 1930's photo shows the easterly shed-roof porch with fan brackets; these brackets have been reproduced, turned to a horizontal position and installed with the stick frieze across the entire porch. The porches rest on brick piers.

The house is sheathed with German siding, painted white in the 1930's photo, and now covered by "Insulbrick" asphalt shingle. Windows are 2/2 double hung sash, and on the main block have plain board surrounds with outer molding, and no shutters. Both south and west gable ends are lighted at third level by a louvered lunette window. The overhanging eaves are punctuated with exposed rafter ends, and the rake boards have applied decoration. The gable roof is covered with gray asbestos shingle; the 1930's photo shows standing seam metal. There is a corbelled brick chimney at the southwest corner where the main block forms an ell. The building rests on a high brick foundation which encloses a cellar.

Extending to the east from the east facade of the main block is a two-story, hip-roof one-bay-by-two-bay addition. The south facade consists of a two-story semi-octagonal projecting bay surmounted by a small cross-gable roof supported by jig sawn brackets. Flared bargeboards decorate this cross-gable, and its tympanum is sided with vertical wainscot panelling, ending in a saw tooth design. There is an interior corbelled brick chimney at the north end of the addition.

There are two further additions to the house. A two-story square hip-roof addition fills the north east corner, probably replacing an original porch; from the second story bathroom in this addition, one can see a portion of the original German siding and eaves of the main block. A second addition is a small screen-enclosed porch which shelters the rear (north) door into the kitchen.

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Description (continued)

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Interior of the main block consists of a stairhall on the east, and L-shaped living space on the west. The principal south entrance leads into the stairhall, the one-run staircase rises along the east wall; it has a square paneled newel with applied bullseye decoration, and turned balusters. Door and window surrounds in the main block have bold banded moldings and bullseye corner blocks.

The house stands on a corner lot at a fairly high setting above the street. There is a large old tree in the front (south) yard.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) local history
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1886 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 William Giusta House is an unusual two-part Victorian dwelling which occupies a prominent and visible location in the community. It stands on one of the original lots in Wine and Johnson's second Addition to Hyattsville.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Christopher C. Hyatt had purchased property at the intersection of the old Washington Baltimore Turnpike and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad north of Bladensburg; he built his brick mansion (no longer standing) on the west side of the railroad, and opened a store directly across the tracks. In 1859, Hyatt was appointed postmaster of the new crossroads community which from thence forward was to bear his name.¹

In 1873, Hyatt had a section of his property surveyed and platted into building lots roughly 60 by 280 feet. This roughly 20-acre area was known as Hyatt's Addition to Hyattsville.² By 1878 the town was developing into a desirable place of residence for commuters to the Capital city. An 1878 account describes the new town as follows: "Hyattsville, on the Washington Branch of the Baltimore Ohio Railroad, is a beautiful village, tasteful houses in the modern style of architecture, ornamented with gardens and lawns, is largely indebted, for its prosperity, to Christopher C. Hyatt, ...it has gradually increased in beauty and prosperity until it stands as one of the foremost villages between Baltimore and Washington."³

In 1882, George Johnson and Louis Wine purchased 196 acres adjoining the original section of Hyattsville, and undertook the development of what they called "Wine and Johnson's First Addition to Hyattsville." This section was surveyed and platted by Surveyor George W. Jackson in September 1882, to create approximately 100 building lots (roughly 50 by 150 feet each), two areas of parkland, and street names honoring the developers.⁴

In 1884, Wine and Johnson surveyed and platted another section of the growing community, immediately east of their First Addition, and began to sell the building lots -- 143 more lots, approximately 50 by 150 feet each.⁵ In December of 1886 they sold Lots 15 through 18 of Block F to William Giusta, a linguist who had immigrated from Italy as a child, and who worked as a translator for the U.S. State Department.⁶ Giusta's new property was located on Avon Avenue at the corner of Spencer Street (now 42nd Place and Gallatin Street) just west of the old Ravenswood mansion, at that time the residence of Louis Wine. Within a year Giusta built a modest asymmetrical frame house, highlighted by Victorian trim on its gables and porch. William Giusta, a naturalized U.S. citizen, frequently accompanied Jackson Ralston (cf. P.G. #68-30) on his travels abroad, serving as a translator for Mr. Ralston's undertakings in international law.⁷

Giusta increased the size of his dwelling by the addition of the east hip-roof section, and lived in the house until his death in 1922. In his will, he devised his home property to his son and three granddaughters, all of whom had removed from the State of Maryland.⁸ The property was sold in 1926 to Samuel and Annie Pleasants. They immediately sold it to the Cosmopolitan Club of Prince George's County, and it was converted into a Club House.⁹ When the Club House was sold three years later, it was described as follows: "the premises on the northwest corner of Spencer Street and Avon Avenue, improved by an eight-room, two-story frame dwelling which has been repainted within the last six months, equipped with all modern improvements, formerly known as the Giusta property."¹⁰

In 1929, the Club House was sold to the trustees of the Snyder-Farmer Post #3 of the American Legion, and it continued to be used as a Club House. It was reconveyed to the Pleasants family in 1932.¹¹

Since that time, this two-part house has been sheathed with synthetic shingle, and an added room has been built onto the north. The present owners are attempting to return much of it to its earlier appearance. The house was built by and for one of the town's outstanding early citizens; it is a noticeable and familiar landmark in the Town of Hyattsville.

Notes

¹ Prince George's County Deeds JBB #1:280; JBB #2:481; JBB #4:113,337; CSM #3:476, 477.

² Prince George's County Plat HP #8:176.

³ G. M. Hopkins Atlas of Prince George's County, 1878, "Historical Sketch".

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Statement of Significance (continued)

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- 4 Prince George's County Deed JWB #1:244; Prince George's County Plat JWB #1:286, 1882.
- 5 Prince George's County Plat JWB #2:618.
- 6 Prince George's County Deed JWB #7:634.
- 7 Notes on Jackson Ralston by Francis X. Geary, Prince George's County Tax Assessment 1888; Census of Prince George's County, 1900.
- 8 Prince George's County will GPH #2:491; estate file #3412.
- 9 Prince George's County Deed #236:461, and #274:425.
- 10 Prince George's County Equity #7482.
- 11 Prince George's County deed #391:127.

WASHINGTON EAST





P.G. #68-26
William Giusta House
Prince George's County, Md.
Susan G. Pearl
March 1987
Southwest 3/4 elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, Md.



P.G. #68-26
William Giusta House
Prince George's County, Md.
Susan G. Pearl
March 1987
East elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, Md.



P.G. #68-26
William Giusta House
Prince George's County, Md.
Susan G. Pearl
March 1987
South entrance
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, Md.



PG#68-26

William Giusta House
Prince George's County, MD
Susan G. Pearl
February 1987
South elevation
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD