

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes no

Property Name: North Decatur Heights & Section 4 Decatur Heights Inventory Number: PG:69-37
 Address: Taylor Street and Edmonston Road (MD 769B) Historic district: X yes no
 City: Bladensburg Zip Code: 20710 County: Prince Georges
 USGS Quadrangle(s): Washington East
 Property Owner: Multiple Tax Account ID Number: Multiple
 Tax Map Parcel Number(s): Multiple Tax Map Number: 50
 Project: MD 201: MD 450 to Edmonston Road Agency: Maryland State Highway Administration
 Agency Prepared By: Maryland State Highway Administration
 Preparer's Name: Matt Manning Date Prepared: 09/19/2012
 Documentation is presented in: Project Review and Compliance Files
 Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: Eligibility recommended Eligibility not recommended
 Criteria: A B C D Considerations: A B C D E F G
Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:
 Name of the District/Property: _____
 Inventory Number: _____ Eligible: yes no Listed: yes no
 Site visit by MHT Staff yes no Name: _____ Date: _____

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

Description

North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights form a small-scale residential planned suburban development north of Annapolis Road (MD 450) in Bladensburg, Maryland. Together, the communities comprise 29 single-family dwellings on approximately 7.25 acres. The houses are primarily one-and-one-half-story Craftsman-style bungalows on 0.1-acre lots. According to state tax data, the majority of building construction was completed between 1925 and 1931.

The community incorporates two streets: Taylor Street and Edmonston Road. Sixteen houses front Taylor Street, and thirteen face Edmonston Road. The houses on Taylor Street were constructed first; most dwellings are one-and-one-half-story side-gabled Craftsman-style bungalows. These houses are three bays wide with full-width raised front porches. At most houses, a single and a paired window flank an off-center entrance; however, at 4201 and 4203 Taylor Street, both flanking bays hold paired windows. Entrances have simple wood surrounds and include flush or paneled metal or wood doors; some are partially glazed. A wood door with three vertical panels surmounted by an eight-light window (at 4909 and 4910 Taylor Street) may be original. The majority of windows are vinyl-clad one-over-one double-hung sash units; original windows appear to have been six-over-one wood-framed units. At each house, rusticated concrete block piers with square wood columns support the porch and low-pitched principal roof, including a central gabled dormer. The houses originally had exposed rafter tails, but many of these have been covered over time.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended Eligibility not recommended
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MHT Comments:

Jim Talano
 Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

2/13/2013
 Date

[Signature]
 Reviewer, National Register Program

2/14/13
 Date

The houses at 4906, 4910, and 4911 Taylor Street have clipped gabled roofs and dormers. Vinyl or aluminum siding is the most common cladding material, but asbestos and wood siding are also present. Roofs are finished with asphalt shingles, and each house includes a side-mounted exterior split-face concrete block chimney.

A different side-gabled Craftsman-style house is located at 4916 Taylor Street. This three-bay house includes an off-center entrance beneath a half-width front-gabled porch. A shed-roofed dormer is centered on the roof. Taylor Street also includes a two-story side-gabled dwelling at 4912 Taylor Street and a two-story duplex at 4918 Taylor Street (ca. 1988). The house at 4912 Taylor Street appears to have been a bungalow that was converted to two stories.

Although they were constructed later, the side-gabled bungalows on Edmonston Road are similar to those along Taylor Street. There are six such houses on the road's west side and two more on its east. Like the houses at 4201 and 4203 Taylor Street, the Edmonston Road houses include an off-center entrance flanked by paired windows.

Three front-gabled one-and-one-half-story dwellings are also present on Edmonston Road's east side. The houses at 4201 and 4209 Edmonston Road are three bays wide with off-center entrances between paired windows. A two-bay front-gabled porch shelters the entrance and one adjacent window. The third front gabled house, at 4205 Edmonston Road, has an enclosed full-width porch. The house has an off-center entrance with a tripartite window in the south bay and a paired window in the north bay. Paired one-over-one windows occupy the second story of each front-gabled house.

The houses along Edmonston Road have been more severely altered than those on Taylor Street; windows have been removed, porches have been enclosed, and unsympathetic additions have been constructed. Two houses, 4206 and 4212 Edmonston Road, have been converted to commercial use. Other houses on the street include a one-and-one-half-story Cape Cod-style dwelling constructed in 1951 (4200 Edmonston Road) and a two-story side-gabled house constructed in 1931 (4111 Edmonston Road) (short form).

Landscape/Setting

The houses in North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights are set behind grass lawns on asphalt streets. Taylor Street is one way heading east, and on-street parking is permitted along its north side; concrete sidewalks border the road. A grass tree lawn is present on the road's south side from 4901-4913 Taylor Street and on the north side from 4902-4904 Taylor Street; elsewhere, the sidewalks abut the curb. Edmonston Road is a two-way street, and parking is not allowed. Concrete sidewalks with grass tree lawns border both sides of the road. Wood utility poles are present on both streets. Front lawns are typically enclosed with chain-link fencing, and concrete walkways extend from front porches to the sidewalk. Concrete, asphalt, and gravel driveways are present in the development. Space for a driveway is provided along one side of each house, suggesting the driveways are original; however, the current variety of driveway surfaces suggests the originals were unpaved or only partially paved. Several houses include single- or two-car garages that do not appear to be original.

A freestanding rusticated concrete block column stands at the northeast corner of the Taylor Street/Edmonston Road intersection; Twelve units high and one-and-one-half units square, it is capped by a precast concrete sphere. The concrete block is similar but not identical to that used in the houses' foundations and chimneys. It may originally have marked the entrance to the North Decatur Heights community from Edmonston Road.

History/Context

North Decatur Heights was platted in 1925 by Clarence B. Gasch, Headley Gasch, and Effie Gasch. The Gasch family was well known in the Bladensburg area; Edward Gasch, father to Clarence and uncle to Headley, operated Gasch's Funeral Home in

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

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MHT Comments:

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

Date

Reviewer, National Register Program

Date

Hyattsville.

As platted, North Decatur Heights included 29 lots along the east side of Edmonston Road and both sides of the newly created Gasch Avenue (now Taylor Street). Advertisements from the period list "Gasch & Gasch, Builders" responsible for on-site construction. The Gasches constructed a combination of five and seven room bungalows, in a pattern indicative of a small-scale planned suburban development. Planned suburban developments involved comprehensive planning by a developer from the design stage to construction completion, resulting in a cohesive appearance with houses similar in form and style. The developer provided streets and utilities and typically offered individual buyers a few standard house plans with material or stylistic variations. Subdivisions with curvilinear streets, sidewalks, parks, and public utilities became common by the mid-twentieth century.

In 1927, Edward Gasch signed the plat creating Section 4 of Decatur Heights along Edmonston Road, immediately adjacent to North Decatur Heights. This plat contained nine lots on Edmonston Road's west side, south of present-day Tilden Road. This development was not advertised like North Decatur Heights, but the houses constructed were similar in size and appearance. Tax records indicate that construction was complete at most lots along Taylor Street by 1925. The houses along Edmonston Road, including those platted as part of North Decatur Heights, were not constructed until 1931.

In early 1928, Clarence Gasch was indicted on 15 counts of misappropriation of funds during a three-year tenure as cashier at the First National Bank in Hyattsville. During the ensuing trial, it was revealed that Gasch had embezzled nearly \$136,000, which he used to fund the North Decatur Heights real estate development. Gasch was sentenced to three years in prison; shortly after his release, he was elected treasurer of the Bladensburg Volunteer Fire Department.

In the early twentieth century, the Washington, Spa Spring, and Greta Railroad connected Bladensburg to Washington, D.C., and Berwyn Heights. The single-car line began operation in 1910, originating at 15th and H streets in Washington and continuing northeast along Bladensburg Road. Starting in 1918, cities in the United States experienced a suburban boom, characterized by new subdivisions and single-family dwellings. The automobile played an important role in development patterns and housing forms; houses could be constructed farther from cities and public transportation routes, along a growing network of highways. To accommodate the car's rising popularity, houses increasingly incorporated driveways and garages.

The Washington, Spa Spring, and Greta Railroad was in use only a short time before buses replaced the streetcars in 1923. At this time, the tracks were removed, and the road was widened and paved. The final unimproved section of Bladensburg Road was paved in 1925, fully opening the route between Washington, D.C., and Bladensburg. By the end of that year, hundreds of new residences had been constructed along both sides of the newly completed highway. These neighborhoods, including Arboretum, Cottage City, and Colmar Manor, all contain Craftsman-style bungalows similar in form and style to those in North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights.

The bungalow form drew inspiration from Dutch and British colonies in Asia, where local building traditions incorporated porches and low-pitched roofs with wide overhangs to shield houses from the sun. Architects Charles and Henry Greene experimented with the form in California, combining elements of the Arts and Crafts movement using natural materials and avoiding extraneous ornament. Their work was publicized in influential design periodicals, and the Craftsman style grew in popularity, spreading across the country. Pattern books offered a variety of designs, and companies such as Sears, Roebuck, and Co. provided ready-to-assemble kits containing all the necessary materials for a new house. The widespread exposure and ready availability made the style the most dominant among small houses constructed from 1905 into the early 1920s. These houses are characterized by low-pitched gabled roofs with overhanging eaves; exposed rafter ends and decorative beams or knee braces; and porches supported on square columns. Gabled dormers are common, and the houses are typically clad in wood clapboard or shingles.

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The North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights houses were constructed near the end of the Craftsman style's popularity. In Bladensburg, the Dutch Colonial Revival style became popular in the second quarter of the twentieth century, and by the late 1930s, the Cape Cod form was the predominate new house type. These houses spread west of Bladensburg along Annapolis and Landover roads. By the mid-twentieth century, new commercial buildings were rapidly appearing along Annapolis Road to serve the growing suburban developments. South of North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights, a shopping center was erected at the intersection of Edmonston Road and Annapolis Road in 1949. Edmonston Road (as MD 205) between Bladensburg and Riverdale remained a well traveled arterial route until the mid-1950s, when four-lane MD 201 was completed to the west. Thru traffic to Washington, D.C., shifted to the new highway, and further construction along Edmonston Road was limited.

Today, although the layout of North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights largely remains the same as when the development was constructed, the surrounding area has changed. A mid-twentieth-century shopping center borders the community to the south, and a firehouse of the same period is located to the north. The community's western edge abuts late twentieth-century development along MD 201. Most houses in the subdivision have undergone some form of alteration. Common changes to the original designs and materials include porch enclosures, new porch railings, and window and door replacement. Cladding has also been replaced with non-historic materials including vinyl and aluminum. One of the original bungalows, at 4912 Taylor Street, has been modified by a second-story addition. Some houses along Edmonston Road have been adapted for commercial use; the dwelling at 4212 Edmonston Road now includes a brick, one-story flat-roofed facade addition. Aerial photography indicates that two houses on Taylor Street's south side were demolished between 1963 and 1980 to allow for a paved service and loading area for a new commercial building at the corner of Annapolis Road and 51st Street.

Significance Evaluation

North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights was evaluated for significance under National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Criteria A, B, and C, using the guidelines set forth in the NRHP bulletin "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," and the Maryland "Suburbanization Historic Context and Survey Methodology."

North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights is typical of small-scale residential planned suburban developments around Washington, D.C., and in Maryland. The neighborhood is a basic example of the type built in northeast Washington and Prince George's County in the early twentieth century. As a 1920s-era planned suburban development, the community is small in scale and did not introduce any design innovations. Furthermore, the property is not known to be associated with any other events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history. Therefore, the property is not eligible under Criterion A.

Although the Gasch family was well-known in the Bladensburg area, it is more closely associated with the funeral home in Hyattsville; the family's housing development activities were limited. Research has not shown that the property is associated with the lives of other persons significant in the past. Therefore, the property is not eligible under Criterion B.

North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights is a basic and altered example of a planned suburban development created by a single developer with a limited selection of house models, and the subdivision has not been shown to have had any influence on the design of later housing developments. The development's Craftsman-style houses include standard elements such as broad front porches, overhanging eaves, and exposed rafter ends; they demonstrate no distinctive stylistic details. The houses are not the work of master architects and exhibit common materials and forms, which have been altered over time; windows, doors, and exterior cladding have been replaced and new additions have been added to the houses. Collectively, these alterations obscure the development's historic appearance and diminish its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and association. Therefore, because North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights does not convey any distinctive characteristics or artistic values

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Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services	Date
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Reviewer, National Register Program	Date

and has been altered, it is not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C.

North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights was not evaluated for eligibility under Criterion D as part of this assessment. Based on the evaluated criteria, North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights is not eligible for listing in the NRHP.

The North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights development encompasses 29 single-family dwellings on approximately 7.25 acres and is found on Prince George's County Tax Map 50 (2012).

Works Consulted

Advertisement. "Only Two." The Washington Post, July 12, 1925: A4.

EHT Tracerics. "Bladensburg (69-005); North Decatur Heights (69-037); Washington Suburban Homes (69-038)." Prince George's County Planning Department, 2008.

KCI Technologies. Suburbanization Historic Context and Survey Methodology. Hunt Valley, Maryland: Maryland DOT and Maryland SHA, November 1999.

McAlester, Virginia & Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.

The Washington Post. "2 Toll Roads, Suburban Loop Proposed in Maryland Plan." November 13, 1952: 1.

The Washington Post. "Beatty and Gasch Win Bladensburg Reelection." June 8, 1933: 5.

The Washington Post. "C.B. Gasch Pleads Guilty in Hyattsville Bank Fraud." March 27, 1928: 1-2.

The Washington Post. "Former Bank Cashier Held in \$50,000 Charge." January 5, 1928: 1.

The Washington Post. "Gasch Given 3 Years in Bank Defalcation." March 28, 1928: 2.

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North Decatur Heights and Section 4 of Decatur Heights (PG:69-37) Prince George's County



USGS 7.5' Quadrangle - Washington East
1:24,000





PG: 69-37

North Decatur Heights & Section 4 of Decatur Heights
Prince Georges Co MD

M. Manning

8/29/12

MD SHPO

View west along Taylor St. from 51st St.

1/12



PB: 69-37

North Decatur Heights & Section 4 of Decatur Heights
Prince Georges Co. MD

M. Manning

8/29/2012

MD SHPO

View SW along Taylor St. to 4911 & 4909 Taylor St.

2/12



PB:69-37

North Decatur Heights + Section 4 of Decatur Heights

Prince Georges Co. MD

M. Manning

8/29/2012

MD Stpo

View west along Taylor St. to Edmonston Rd.

3/12



PB:69-37

North Decatur Heights + Section 4 of Decatur Heights
Prince Georges Co MD

M. Manning

8/29/2012

MD Sttpo

View NW along Edmonston Rd from Taylor St.

4/12



PG: 69-37

North Decatur Heights & Section 4 of Decatur Heights

Prince Georges Co MD

M. Manning

8/20/12

MD steps

View north from Taylor St. to concrete black column
and Edmonston Rds. east side

5/12



PG: 69-37

North Decatur Heights + Section 4 of Decatur Heights

Prince Georges Co MD

M. Manning

8/29/2012

MD SHPO

View SE along Edmanston Rd.

6/12



PG: 69-37

North Decatur Heights + Section 4 of Decatur Heights

Prince Georges Co MD

M. Manning

8/29/2012

MS SHPO

4908 Taylor St.; south facade

7/12



P6: 69-37

North Decatur Heights + Section 4 of Decatur Heights

Prince Georges Co MD

M. Manning

8/29/2012

MD SHPo

4910 Taylor St.; South facade

8/12



PB: 69-37

North Decatur Heights & Section 4 of Decatur Heights
Prince Georges Co. MD

M. Manning

8/29/2012

MS SHPa

View South to 4901 & 4903 Taylor Street

9/12



PB:69-37

North Decatur Heights & Section 4 of Decatur Heights
Prince Georges Co. MD

M. Manning

8/29/2012

MD SHPO

4916 Taylor Street, South facade

10/12



PB: 69-37

North Decatur Heights & Section 4 of Decatur Heights

Prince Georges Co MD

Mr Manning

8/29/2012

MD SHP

4201 Edmonston Road; NW facade

11/12



Pb: 69-37

North Decatur Heights + Section 4 of Decatur Heights

Prince Georges Co MD

McManning

8/29/2012

MD SHPO

4212 Edmonston Road; SE facade

12/12