

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY  
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: P.G.# 72-9-24 Building Date: 1905

Building Name: James F. Armstrong House

Location: 908 59th Avenue, Fairmount Heights, Md.

Private/Residence/Occupied/Fair/Inaccessible

Description:

The James Armstrong House is a two-and-one-half-story frame crossgable house, Victorian vernacular in style. The principal east facade exhibits gable-front-and-wing plan, with the wing to the left and the gable front to the right. Entrance is in the second bay of the two-bay wing; the gable front is lighted by a two-story projecting semi-octagonal bay, with 2/2 windows in all faces. Both the wing and the gable front are sheltered by a one-story hip-roof wraparound porch with plain rail balustrade, turned posts, jigsawn openwork brackets, and rail frieze with alternating criss-cross detail. The original German wood siding is covered with gray asphalt shingle. The original siding is visible in the front gable; it is painted light beige. The crossgable roof is covered with red asphalt shingle. The hip roof which covers the two-story projecting bay forms the lower boundary of the east front gable at loft level, giving it the look of a pediment. The cornice of this hip roof is deeply molded with shallow medallions. The raking cornice of the gable is similarly molded. The east pediment itself is lighted by a four-pane round-arch window with board keystone molding.

Significance:

The James F. Armstrong House is a good representative of late Victorian vernacular dwellings with Queen Anne style decorative detail: it has fine detail in its wraparound porch, projecting bays and pediments. It was built circa 1904 for James F. Armstrong, who came to Fairmount Heights in that year and purchased three lots in the original subdivision. James F. Armstrong was a graduate of Tuskegee Institute; he subsequently attended Howard University Law School, graduating in 1904. In the following year he came to Fairmount Heights, purchased three lots in the original subdivision, and had the subject house built. In 1911 Armstrong was appointed as a member of the building committee for the proposed Fairmount Heights elementary school; he also served as the Superintendent of Colored Schools in Prince George's County. His tenure in this office was controversial, but he served until 1919. After his resignation in July of that year, he continued to be active in Fairmount Heights community affairs, and served as one of the first Council Members after the town was incorporated. His original dwelling is an important historical and architectural component in the community of Fairmount Heights.

Acreage: 10,800 square feet

Survey No. PG#72-9-24

Magi No.

DOE  yes  no

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic James F. Armstrong House

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number 908 59th Avenue  not for publication

city, town Fairmount Heights  vicinity of congressional district 5

state MD 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                   | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                          | <b>Accessible</b>                            | <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 Don Garris

street & number 908 59th Avenue telephone no.:

city, town Fairmount Heights state and zip code MD 20743

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber 7347

street & number 14735 Main Street folio 128

city, town Upper Marlboro state Maryland

## 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 type="checkbox"/> good            | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved    date of move _____ |
| <input checked="" 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 James F. Armstrong house stands at 908 59th (originally Fairmount) Avenue. It was built in 1905 on lots 33/34, Block B of the Fairmount Heights subdivision, which was platted in 1900.

The James Armstrong House is a two-and-one-half-story frame crossgable house, Victorian vernacular in style. The principal east facade exhibits gable-front-and-wing plan, with the wing to the left and the gable front to the right. Entrance is in the second bay of the two-bay wing; the gable front is lighted by a two-story projecting semi-octagonal bay, with 2/2 windows in all faces. Both the wing and the gable front are sheltered by a one-story hip-roof wraparound porch with plain rail balustrade, turned posts, jigsawed openwork brackets, and rail frieze with alternating criss-cross detail.

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from the northeast boundary of the District of Columbia. The deep, narrow lots were generally 25 by 125 feet; two of the streets were named for these first two developers. Sale of lots began almost immediately, and within a few years, dwellings were constructed and a community began to form.

From the beginning, blacks were encouraged to buy lots and settle in the new community. White and Clark sold the lots at relatively low prices, making home ownership finally attainable for black families. Most of the earliest purchasers of lots worked for government agencies; many built their own houses, or relied on friends and family to help with construction. Many families were quick to seize the opportunity to move out of the city, determined to progress, by hard work and amid healthful surroundings, toward a better life.

The earliest dwellings were of frame construction, modest in size and form, and many of these have not survived. Within a few years, however, several interesting and substantial houses were constructed for individuals who would make significant contributions to the development of Fairmount Heights.

The James F. Armstrong House is a good representative of late Victorian vernacular dwellings with Queen Anne style decorative detail: it has fine detail in its wraparound porch, projecting bays and pediments. It was built circa 1904 for James F. Armstrong, who came to Fairmount Heights in that year and purchased three lots in the original subdivision.

James F. Armstrong was a graduate of Tuskegee Institute; he subsequently attended Howard University Law School, graduating in 1904. In the following year he came to Fairmount Heights, purchased three lots in the original subdivision, and had the subject house built. It was a fine example of late Victorian Queen Anne style domestic architecture, a visual landmark and one of the handsomest dwellings in the early community. Its prominence is a reflection of the prominence of its earliest resident in the affairs of Fairmount Heights.

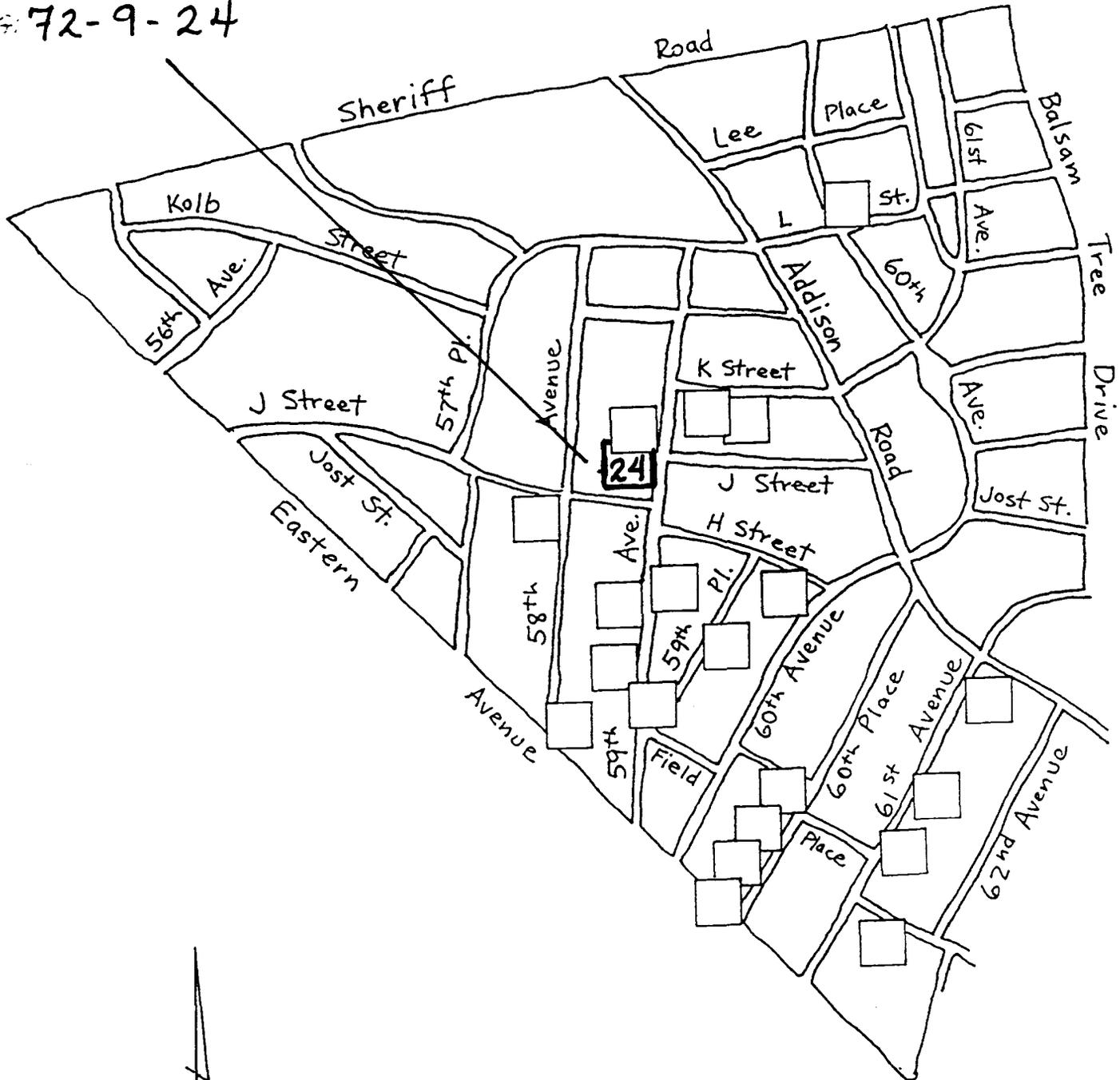
In 1911 Armstrong was appointed as a member of the building committee for the proposed Fairmount Heights elementary school, designed by W. Sidney Pittman. A few years later, Armstrong was named Director of Manual Training at that school; he also served as the Superintendent of Colored Schools in Prince George's County. His tenure in this office was controversial, but he served until 1919. After his resignation in July of that year, he continued to be active in Fairmount Heights community affairs, and served as one of the first Council Members after the town was incorporated. His original dwelling is an important historical and architectural component in the community of Fairmount Heights.

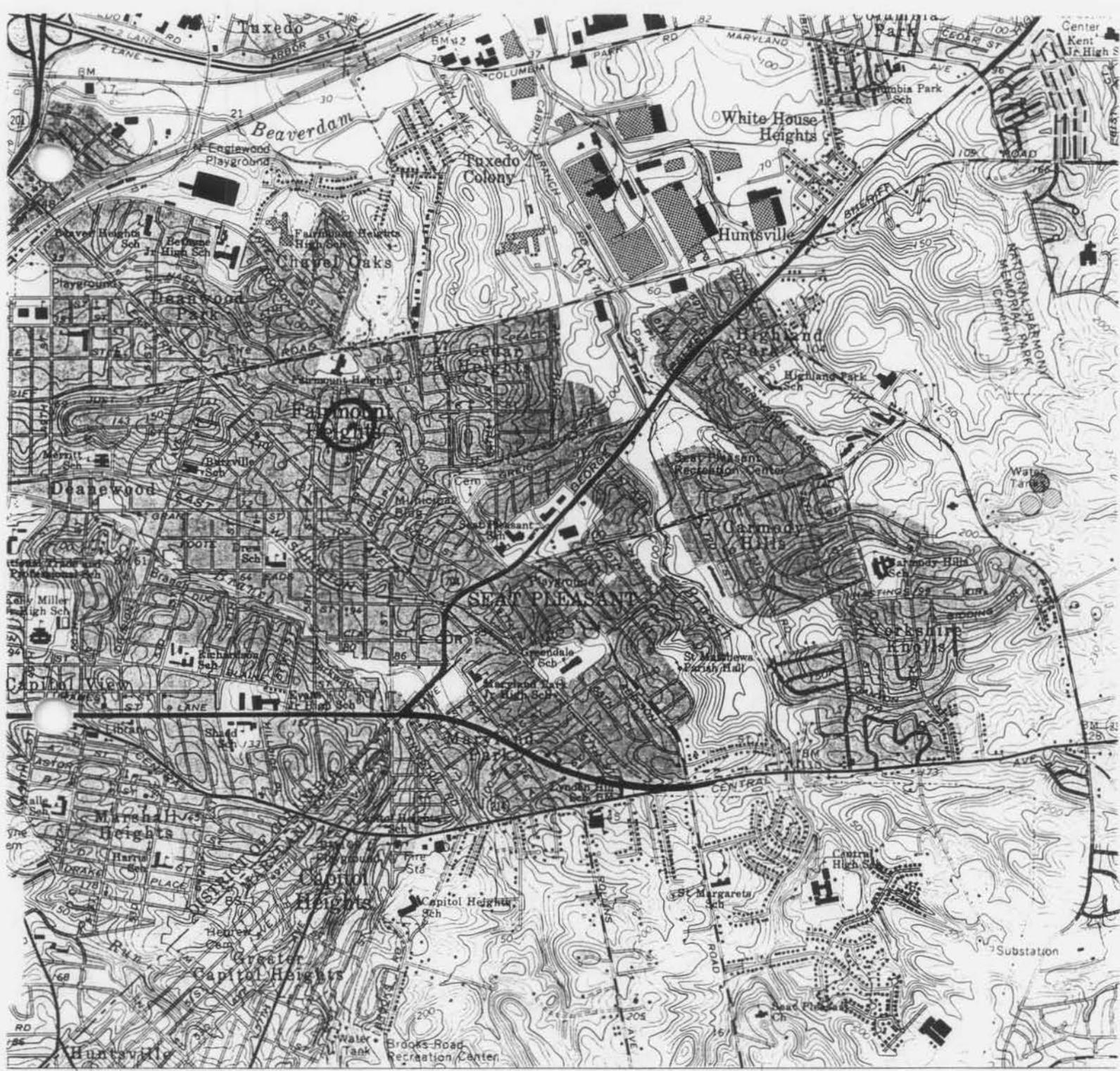


# Town of Fairmount Heights

## JAMES F. ARMSTRONG HOUSE

PG: 72-9-24





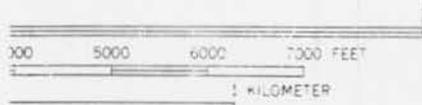
DISTRICT HEIGHTS 2.3 MI  
UPPER MARLBORO 11 MI

55' 334

335000m E

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WASHINGTON D. C. — 1971

76'



0 FEET  
EVEL  
ATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
ATEL FEET

PG: 72-9-24

72-9-24

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty
- Medium-duty
- Light-duty
- Unimproved dirt
- Interstate Route
- U. S. Route
- State Ro



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

WASHINGTON EAST, MD. — D. C.  
N3852.5—W7652.5/7.5

ACCURACY STANDARDS  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
MBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

1965  
PHOTOREVISED 1971  
AMS 5661 IV NW—SERIES V833



Pl. # 72-9-24

James F. Armstrong House

908 59<sup>th</sup> Ave, Fairmount  
Hghts.

(FH B. 33/34) P.G.C.

Susan H. Pearl

September 1990

East facade

Ref: MH/T