



# PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

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## FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION ON THE **CLARENCE AND EDITH PEARCE HOUSE (DOCUMENTED PROPERTY 66-029-10)** AND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING FOR CLASSIFICATION AS A HISTORIC SITE

April 16, 2025

### Procedural Background

December 18, 2024	The owner submitted an Application for Historic Site Evaluation in compliance with Subtitle 29-120.01. The property is not listed in the Inventory of Historic Resources.
February 12, 2025	The property owner and the adjacent property owners were mailed 60-day written notice of the time, date, and location of the public hearing.
March 7, 2025	The survey and documentation of the property were completed by Daniel Tana.
March 31, 2025	The property was posted "at least 14 days in advance," according to the provisions of the Prince George's County Historic Preservation Ordinance (Subtitle 29-120.01) and the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance (Subtitle 27-125.03). Evidence of sign posting and written notice to the property owner are attached.
April 15, 2025	Date of HPC public hearing.

### Findings

#### *Architectural Description*

The circa-1935 Clarence and Edith Pearce House, at 6605 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue, University Park, is a two-story, Colonial Revival dwelling consisting of a rectangular main block with two rear ells. The home is of frame construction and principally clad in painted wood clapboard. The three-bay façade faces west and features a central entry door sheltered by a one-story entry portico with a gable roof. The home's main block is capped with a side-gambrel, asphalt shingle roof with aluminum k-style gutters and downspouts, beadboard soffits, and has a brick exterior end chimney and a one-story screened side porch on the south elevation. The second story of the house is given additional space via nearly-full-width shed dormers on the front and rear. The rear elevation of the house is made up of the rear shed dormer, two one-story shed-roofed ells of different depths on the first floor, and a small shed-roofed cellar entry. To the east of the house there is a small, detached garage clad in painted wood clapboard with an asymmetrical gable roof.

#### *Setting*

The Clarence and Edith Pearce House sits on an 8,960-square-foot rectangular lot and faces west towards 44th Avenue. The landscape is mainly flat with grass lawns, trees (including four large older trees), and gardens spanning the length of the public sidewalk. The surrounding area is characterized by single-family residential development of similarly sized lots that make up the University Park National Register Historic District, of which the Pearce House is a contributing resource.

#### *Historic Context*

The first land patent within the Town of University Park, Edmonston's Pasture, was recorded in 1723. In 1759, William Deakins purchased a portion of Edmonston's Pasture containing approximately 224 acres. The Deakins family owned the property until 1920, when William's great-grandchildren sold the then- 285-acre property to the Riverdale Realty Company. The surrounding rural area had suburbanized significantly by then, with the adjacent development of Hyattsville, Riverdale, College Park, and other municipalities

beginning in the late nineteenth century, and in 1923, the Riverdale Realty Company sold the property to the University Park Company, Inc. In April 1925, the University Park Company platted Section 3 (27.5 acres), which contains the subject parcel.

Based on available documentation, the six-room home and garage at 407 Cecil Avenue (now 6605 44th Avenue) were constructed sometime after the 1930 Census was taken, and before late 1935, while the property was still in the ownership of the University Park Company. Census records show that the Pearce family were living at the property as early as 1935. The company sold the property to Dr. Thomas Latimer and his wife, Eleanor Latimer in 1943. The Latimers in turn sold the property to Clarence and Edith Pearce in 1946. At the time of the 1950 Census, Clarence (age 56) and Edith (age 53) are recorded as living in the subject property with their daughter, Virginia (age 25). Additional information on the Pearce family can be found on the attached Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) form.

The Pearce family owned the property until 1952, at which time it was sold to Austin and Ruth Woolley. The Woolleys in turn sold the property to Seth and Mollie Sterling in 1958. In 1979, they sold the property to Neil and Elizabeth Yoder, who sold the property to Michael and Barbara Alushin in 1983. The Alushins sold the property to Cathy and Jeffrey Berenberg in 2015. They resided in the property until selling it to the current owners, Kristen Norton and Robert Zellem, in 2024.

### *Significance*

The Clarence and Edith Pearce House is a two-story side gambrel Colonial Revival style house. The Colonial Revival style encompasses a wide variety of subtypes inspired by Federal, Georgian, and Dutch Colonial architecture. Houses of this style typically include facades with symmetrical fenestration, a center door that is accentuated (e.g., with sidelights, a decorative pediment, pilasters, or a small entry porch), double-hung sash windows, and frequently, decorative louvered or paneled shutters. Colonial Revival architecture became the dominant style of domestic building in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century following a revival of interest in the early English and Dutch houses of the east coast. The Pearce House is a good example of the Dutch Colonial Revival subtype, specifically. Notable features of this subtype that can be found in the design of the Pearce House include a gambrel roof with overhanging eaves, large dormers (in this case, a continuous shed dormer variation), and symmetrical fenestration on the front elevation (in this case, the symmetry is implied). Many examples, such as the Warren McArthur House, in Chicago, Illinois, also feature a screened or open porch on one side like the one that is present on the Pearce House.

While Colonial Revival style is one of the principal subtypes in the University Park Historic District, only one other home of this style—in a different subtype—has been individually designated. Located in one of the earlier subdivisions of the Town, the house retains its original wood siding and fenestration, while many homes of similar style and vintage do not.

The Clarence and Edith Pearce House reflects the automobile-oriented suburban development that began in the second quarter of the 20th century. Unlike earlier neighboring streetcar suburbs, garages—either attached or freestanding—were included in a majority of the houses in University Park. The National Register registration form for the University Park Historic District notes that the district as a whole “reflects the principles and practices of subdivision design and residential development representative of mainstream national trends from 1830 to 1960,” and the preponderance of garages noted in the attached inventory of contributing resources emphasizes that point.

### *Integrity/Degree of Alteration*

Historic Preservation Commission Policy #1-87, “Evaluating Integrity, Degree of Alteration, and Scarcity and Frequency,” states that a property must possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent, or contain the

values and qualities for which it is judged significant, judged by examining the degree of overall change in a structure's appearance, based on the number of "detrimental" or "critical" (irreversible) changes. The Clarence and Edith Pearce House has retained its essential character as a Colonial Revival dwelling dating from the period of rapid suburban growth in Prince George's County and has negligible number of detrimental or critical changes. The original wood clapboard siding and original wooden double-hung windows remain, protected by storm windows, which offer additional protection and could be removed without deleterious effect, if desired. The property also retains its original size, original garage outbuilding (indicative of University Park's development as an automobile suburb), and its suburban context remains unchanged. Overall, the Clarence and Edith Pearce House retains a high degree of integrity of location, association, feeling, design, and setting with a moderately high degree of integrity of workmanship and materials. The Colonial Revival style is well represented throughout Prince George's County, with several such houses in the University Park National Register Historic District. However, only one of these has been designated as a Historic Site to date.

### **Public Hearing Testimony**

At the Historic Preservation Commission's April 15, 2025, public hearing, Historic Preservation Section staff provided a slide presentation on the Clarence and Edith Pearce House and presented its recommendation on the proposed designation of the subject property as a Historic Site. No public testimony was received.

### **Conclusions**

1. Staff concluded that the Clarence and Edith Pearce House meets three of the nine designation criteria of Subtitle 29-104(a).

#### *Historic and Cultural Significance*

- |             |          |  |
|-------------|----------|--|
| 1. A. (i)   |          | has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the County, State or Nation |
| 1. A. (ii)  |          | is the site of a significant historic event  |
| 1. A. (iii) |          | is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society   |
| 1. A. (iv)  | <b>X</b> | exemplifies the cultural, economic, industrial, social, political or historical heritage of the County and its urban and rural communities   |

#### *Architectural and Design Significance*

- |             |          |   |
|-------------|----------|---|
| 2. A. (i)   | <b>X</b> | embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction  |
| 2. A. (ii)  |          | represents the work of a master craftsman, architect or builder   |
| 2. A. (iii) |          | possesses high artistic values  |
| 2. A. (iv)  |          | represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction  |
| 2. A. (v)   | <b>X</b> | represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or County due to its singular physical characteristics or landscape |
2. Staff further concluded that the degree of alteration to the property is low, and the Clarence and Edith Pearce House can be found to possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent, or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommended that the Historic Preservation Commission recommend to the Planning Board and District Council that the Clarence and Edith Pearce House, Documented Property 66-029-10, and its 0.206-acre Environmental Setting (Lot 7 and the north 15 feet of Lot 8 in Block 13 of “Section Three, University Park,”), be designated a Prince George’s County Historic Site as meeting the following criteria in Subtitle 29-104(a): (1)(A)(iv), (2)(A)(i), and (2)(A)(v).

### **Historic Preservation Commission Recommendation**

Commissioner **Pruden** moved that the Historic Preservation Commission recommend to the Planning Board and the District Council that the **Clarence and Edith Pearce House, Documented Property 66-029-10, and its 0.206-acre Environmental Setting (Lot 7 and the north 15 feet of Lot 8 in Block 13 of “Section Three, University Park,”)**, be designated a Prince George’s County Historic Site as meeting the following criteria in Subtitle 29-104(a): (1)(A)(iv); (2)(A)(i); and (2)(A)(v). The motion was seconded by Commissioner **Reff**. The motion was approved 6-0.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Peter Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Peter Thompson, Chairman

Evaluation for Historic Site Designation: Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Recommendation  
Clarence and Edith Pearce House (Documented Property 66-029-10)

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Inventory File 66-029-10

Maha Tariq, Community Planner, Planning Area 66

*Owner:*

Kristen Norton and Robert Zellem

6605 44th Avenue

University Park MD 20782

*Prince George's County Council:*

The Honorable Eric Olson, District 3

Wayne K. Curry Administration Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl.

1301 McCormick Drive

Largo MD 20774

The Honorable Calvin Hawkins II, At-Large

Wayne K. Curry Administration Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl.

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The Honorable Jolene Ivey, At-Large

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Donna J. Brown, Clerk

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*Municipality:*

The Honorable Laurie K. Morrissey, Mayor

Town of University Park

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University Park MD 20782

*Interested Parties:*

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