



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

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FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION ON THE **BLAIR-SMITH HOUSE (DOCUMENTED PROPERTY 68-010-94)** AND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING FOR CLASSIFICATION AS A HISTORIC SITE

March 27, 2024

Procedural Background

November 2010	Preliminary survey and documentation of the property completed by Nancy Bazaar, UMD.
October 14, 2023	Property owner submitted a request for Historic Site Evaluation.
January 17, 2024	The property owner, the adjacent property owners, and other interested parties were mailed written notice of the time, date, and location of the public hearing on the application.
March 4, 2024	The property was posted “at least 14 days in advance,” according to the provisions of the Prince George’s County Historic Preservation Ordinance (Subtitle 29-118) 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.
March 19, 2024	Date of Historic Preservation Commission public hearing.

Findings

Description: The Blair-Smith House is a one-and-one-half story stucco Tudor-Revival style house with a raised basement. Built c. 1931, the home is a modified “Bellewood” model kit house sold by Sears Modern Homes. The dwelling is built of frame construction, and clad in stucco with a rear addition, added in 1963. The house retains its original round arched plank door. The majority of the house’s windows are six-over-six double-hung wood windows. The house retains a combination of original and replacement decorative wood batten-type shutters. The house is capped with a characteristic steep-pitched cross-gabled roof sheathed in asphalt shingles.

Setting: The Blair-Smith House sits on the corner of 39th Avenue and Jefferson Street at 5416 39th Avenue. It is in the City of Hyattsville and within the Hyattsville National Register Historic District. The property comprises a 0.433-acre quadrangle made up of lots 11 and 12 of Block 5 of Hyattsville Hills. The house sits on lot 11 and a large, shaded grass lawn occupies lot 12 in the foreground, along Jefferson Avenue. The vicinity is characterized by a mix of detached houses and low-rise apartment buildings.

History: Hyattsville developed gradually over time between the initial platting in 1873 to its final addition in 1942. Residential buildings make up most of the community, with a commercial corridor on the eastern boundary along Rhode Island and Baltimore Avenues. The buildings reflect late nineteenth and early twentieth-century architectural trends, particularly the Queen Anne, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival styles. The residential buildings of Hyattsville are typically set back from the tree-lined streets on rectangular building lots.

Following the pattern of many suburban communities throughout the United States, Hyattsville grew exponentially after the First World War. The success of the streetcar, emergence of the automobile and continued growth of Washington, D.C. stimulated residential and commercial construction in Hyattsville. As

a result, the suburb experienced a second phase of development beginning in the 1920s that resulted in the construction of nearly 700 buildings in just thirty years. This included more than 600 dwellings, and fifty commercial and industrial resources.

A large portion of this growth occurred in the Hyattsville Hills subdivision, platted in 1922, which contained 498 building lots on nearly 90 acres. During this period of growth, the Colonial Revival and Craftsman styles dominated. The American foursquare, bungalow, and two-story/side-gable structures commonly adorned with Colonial Revival-style elements were popular forms. Most of the dwellings were wood-frame construction clad with weatherboard siding, wood shingles, asbestos shingles, or a brick veneer.

The Blair-Smith house was built on Lot 11, Block 5 of the Hyattsville Hills subdivision c. 1931. 39th Avenue, at that time called McKinley Avenue, was unpaved. An open stream ran through the property on Lot 12. In the 1930s the property would have been on the outside perimeter of Hyattsville's development.

Howard Richardson Severe and Inez M. Brock Severe bought lots 11 and 12 in 1930 and obtained a loan from Edwards D. Ford to build a house. Inez Severe's father, Addison Brock, was a housebuilder listed as a house carpenter in the 1930 census and was presumably the builder of the house. The 1930 census lists Addison Brock living on Banner Street in Hyattsville with his wife and three daughters, including Inez and his son-in-law Howard. Later occupants of the house recalled that the father was building the house for his daughter and son-in-law.

The house can be clearly identified as a Bellewood model Sears kit home offered in the Sears Modern Homes catalogue from 1931-1933. The Bellewood was advertised as a "happy combination of a well laid out floor plan with a modern attractive exterior." The design was described as an "adaptation of a small English cottage with five rooms and one bath". The description calls out the arched front door with strapped hinges and batten-type shutters. The exteriors were often clad in shingles rather than stucco.

The young Severe couple was never able to move in. Maryland Land Records suggest that the Severes defaulted on their loan and surrendered the property to their lender, Edwards D. Ford, who then transferred the property to Sears, Roebuck and Company.

Sears Modern Homes

From 1908 to 1942, Sears, Roebuck and Company sold more than 70,000 houses in North America purchased primarily by customers through the Sears and Roebuck mail order catalog and sent to states on the East Coast and in the Midwest. Sears offered a wide range of architectural styles and sizes. Often shipped via railroad, the kits included most of the materials needed to assemble the house, including lumber, nails, and even staircases.

Sears offered financing plans starting in 1911. Early mortgage loans were typically for 5 to 15 years at 6 to 7 percent interest. Sales peaked in 1929. While financing through Sears helped homeowners purchase homes, many of those purchasers defaulted during the Great Depression, resulting in a public relations disaster. Sears stopped offering mortgages by the end of 1933, and the company was forced to liquidate millions in defaulted debt. Combined with pre-WWII shortages of building materials, Sears discontinued the Modern Homes catalog in 1940 and stopped sales in 1942.

Louise F. Blair

Following the Severes' default, Sears, Roebuck and Company sold the house to Louise F. Blair in 1936. Louise F. Blair was born December 1, 1886, to Hervey Addison Blair and Adelaide Preston in Kansas. Following the tragic childhood death of her younger brother in 1891, her mother left Louise and her father in

Kansas and moved to Michigan, where she died eight years later. Census records suggest that Louise F. Blair led an independent life from an early age. She is listed in the 1900 federal census at age 13 as a border in a household of three in Solomon, Kansas. By 1905, she was listed in the Kansas state census with an H.A. Blair, believed to be her father, in a household of three other people. Louise Blair graduated from Salinas High School in 1906.

Louise Blair attended the College of Emporia in Emporia, Kansas, a college affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. There, she was an engaged student as a member of the YWCA, vice-president of the Alethean Society, and the contributor of a lengthy poem to the 1910 Allah Rah yearbook. While at Emporia College, she applied for and received her passport, which listed her at age 22 in 1909. She graduated in 1910 with a B.A. in the Classical course and a teaching certificate. The 1910 Federal Census listed her as renting a home in Emporia as a single white female head of house at age 23 and the 1911 student newspaper reported she was teaching German in a high school in Flora, Illinois.

By 1920, Blair had obtained a job in Washington, D.C. as a government clerk. She is listed as a resident of Washington, D.C. in the 1920 and 1930 censuses, first as a roomer with a family of four and later living on her own. In 1920, she joined the Eleanor Wilson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington, D.C.

Louise Blair bought 5416 39th Avenue in 1936. The 1940 Federal Census lists her at age 53 living in the house (then listed as 21 McKinley Avenue) that she owned, which was valued at \$6,500. The census information described her profession as a grade clerk, wage or salary worker in the Department of Agriculture with an income of \$1,800. This information describes her as a successful and atypical Hyattsville citizen. In 1940, of Hyattsville citizens twenty-five and older, less than two percent had completed four or more years of college, although eleven percent had attended some college. Twenty five percent had completed one to three years of high school. Thirty two percent of the women over fourteen were employed, over half as clerks or in sales. Little information was found about her involvement in the community. Blair sold the house in 1949 to Claude and Geraldine Smith.

Claude and Geraldine Smith

Claude Argyle Smith was born in Auburn, Indiana in January of 1913 to Audry Lee “Jake” Smith and Esta Mae Hummon. Thin, with dark red hair, he grew up on a farm milking cows and driving horses and is remembered as always liking animals. At the age of 12, he moved to Michigan, where he met Geraldine “Gerry” Pruden. Family recalls that he appeared in Gerry’s high school diaries.

Geraldine “Gerry” E. Pruden was born November 26, 1916, in Toledo, Ohio to Merlin D. Pruden and Florence L. Gray. She grew up in Fayette, Ohio and graduated from the Riverside Hospital School of Nursing in Toledo in 1938. Upon graduating, she cared for her grandmother and lived with her parents in Adrian, Michigan.

Claude Smith received his degree in veterinary medicine in 1935 from Ohio State University. The 1934 Ohio State yearbook listed him as an intramural horseshoe-pitching champion. After college, from 1935 to 1940, Claude Smith worked in eastern Tennessee and Puerto Rico as a USDA field veterinarian concentrating on the detection and eradication of tuberculosis and brucellosis in cattle and dairy herds. It was around this time that he reconnected with Gerry. Family history holds that during a trip to visit relatives, Claude got into a car accident during a snowstorm after he swerved off the road to avoid hitting a sledding child. He happened to be in the town of Adrian, where he remembered Gerry to be living and looked her up. They were married a year later, on August 11, 1940. After they were married, they moved to Maryland and Claude worked at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. In 1942, Claude enlisted as a first lieutenant in the Army Air Force, where he inspected meat and dairy products in New York and Florida, before they were shipped overseas for

use by US troops. In 1946, Claude left active duty and returned to working with the USDA. The Smiths had three children: Claudia, Gary, and Jack. In 1949 after turning down an offer to move his family to Mexico to work on Foot and Mouth Disease the Smiths bought 5416 39th Avenue in Hyattsville.

The three children remember growing up in the house and playing in and around the yard, creek, and neighborhood. Some of Gary's first memories at the age of three are jumping off the side porch, before it had a railing, and a tricycle accident in front of the house. Claudia recalled sledding down 39th Avenue.

When the Smiths first moved in during 1949, the creek was open and ran through the side yard (Lot 12) between the two apartment complexes and down to Magruder Park. Where the stream exited the culvert under Jefferson Street there was a deep pond-like area where Gary Smith recalled neighborhood boys swimming. During the 1940s the Washington Suburban Sanitation Commission, its headquarters located two blocks from the Blair-Smith House, took on the task of assessing storm drainage in the bi-county area. Hyattsville along with surrounding communities petitioned the WSSC for the creation of storm drains. In 1944, Louise Blair conveyed an easement to the county in connection with road improvements to Jefferson Avenue and the right to straighten the stream to operate and maintain a storm sewer. Not long after the Smiths moved in, around 1951, the stream was rerouted through a culvert and buried. Gary Smith remembers venturing into the newly installed culvert as a child.

Claude Smith continued his work as a USDA veterinarian until 1972, protecting American consumers from diseases in livestock, meat, and animal products. His obituary described his acquaintance with animals rivaling that of Dr. Dolittle. He regularly worked with chickens, cows and horses. One of his notable professional responsibilities included isolating Jackie Kennedy's horse Sardar to clear it of disease and release it after it was gifted to her from the president of Pakistan. Claude Smith became a Senior Staff Veterinarian, continuing to work with imported and exported animal products, with the Animal Health Division, Agricultural Research Service, USDA. His work included inspecting slaughterhouses around the world which exported products to the US, and he traveled to 30 countries. One of his last duties was overseeing the arrival of the Giant Pandas, Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing to the National Zoo in 1972. The giant pandas' presence at the National Zoo, associated with "Panda Diplomacy," has come to represent a period of successful diplomatic relations between the U.S. and China. Claude Smith retired later that year.

Throughout his life he was considered a tinkerer and inventor and during his time in Hyattsville worked with the Boy Scouts and YMCA. Gerry Smith was known for her flower gardens and was an engaged community member: she served as a Civil Defense Coordinator during the duck and cover era, volunteered with the Girl Scouts, and served as a substitute teacher at local elementary schools. They were both longtime members of First Baptist Church of Hyattsville and later of University Baptist Church in College Park. Gerry taught Sunday School for 52 years. Claude Smith died at home in Hyattsville on February 15, 2005, at the age of 92, and Gerry at Sacred Heart Home in Hyattsville in 2017 at age 100.

The Blair-Smith House is significant as an intact example of Tudor Revival domestic architecture identified in the Hyattsville Historic District National Register of Historic Places form. The Blair-Smith House is also a recognizable Sears model home. The property embodies the heritage theme of streetcar suburb development in Prince George's County in the early twentieth century.

Significance: The Blair-Smith House is significant as an intact example of Tudor Revival domestic architecture identified in the Hyattsville Historic District National Register of Historic Places form. The Blair-Smith House is also a recognizable Sears model home. The property embodies the heritage theme of streetcar suburb development in Prince George's County in the early twentieth century.

Integrity/Degree of Alteration: The Blair-Smith House has retained its character as a Tudor Revival dwelling dating from the period of rapid suburban growth in Prince George’s County. The original stucco cladding remains intact. The rear addition is generally compatible with the architecture of the original structure. The house retains its original arched front door and many of its original windows. The property retains its original size, and its suburban context remains unchanged. Overall, the Blair-Smith House retains a high degree of integrity of location, association, workmanship, feeling, design, materials, and setting.

Historic Preservation Commission Policy #1-87, “Evaluating Integrity, Degree of Alteration, and Scarcity and Frequency,” states that a property’s integrity should be considered in the context of the scarcity of the resource type it represents, with a less restrictive standard of integrity applied when few or no other similar properties exist in the Inventory of Historic Resources. There are currently few examples of Tudor Revival residential architecture in the Inventory. The Hyattsville National Register Historic District nomination form lists Tudor Revival as an architectural style of the district and identifies 5416 39th Avenue as an example. Other examples identified in the nomination form include 4907 42nd Avenue, 5717 39th Avenue, 5020 28th Avenue, 5022 38th Avenue, 5605 42nd Avenue, 5803 40th Avenue, and 4111 Hamilton Street (another Belwood model Sears, Roebuck, and Company house) none of which are county designated Historic Sites or documented on Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties forms.

Public Hearing Testimony: At the Historic Preservation Commission’s March 19, 2024, public hearing, Historic Preservation Section staff provided a slide presentation on the Blair-Smith House and presented its recommendation on the proposed designation of the subject property as a Historic Site. The property owners, Daniel Schaible and Jennifer Linn, were present at the hearing and entered a statement into the record expressing support for the staff’s recommendation that the subject property be designated as a Historic Site.

Conclusions

1. Staff concluded that the Blair-Smith 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) **X** 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) **X** 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) **X** 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, in weighing both the alterations that have been made to the house and the


current representation of the resource type within the Inventory of Historic Resources, the Blair-Smith 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 Blair-Smith House, Documented Property 68-010-94, and its 0.433-acre Environmental Setting (Lots 11–12 of Block 5, Hyattsville Hills), 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 District Council that the Blair-Smith House, Documented Property 68-010-94, and its 0.433-acre Environmental Setting (Lots 11–12 of Block 5, Hyattsville Hills), 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). Commissioner **Jenkins** seconded the motion. The motion was approved by roll call vote and without objection (6-0).



John Peter Thompson, Chairman

c:

Inventory File 68-010-94

Josephine Selvakumar, Community Planner, Planning Area 68

Owners:

Daniel Schaible and Jennifer Linn
5416 39th Avenue
Hyattsville MD 20781

Prince George’s County Council:

Wanika Fisher, District 2
Wayne K. Curry Administration Building, 2nd Fl.
1301 McCormick Drive
Largo MD 20774

The Honorable Mel Franklin, At-Large
Wayne K. Curry Administration Building, 2nd Fl.
1301 McCormick Drive
Largo MD 20774

The Honorable Calvin Hawkins II, At-Large
Wayne K. Curry Administration Building, 2nd Fl.
1301 McCormick Drive
Largo MD 20774

Donna J. Brown, Clerk
Wayne K. Curry Administration Building, 2nd Fl.
1301 McCormick Drive
Largo MD 20774

Municipality:

The Honorable Robert S. Croslin, Mayor
City of Hyattsville
4310 Gallatin Street
Hyattsville MD 20781

Interested Parties:

Donna Schneider, President
Prince George’s County Historical Society
PO Box 1513
Upper Marlboro, MD 20773-1513

Douglas McElrath, Chairman
Prince George’s Heritage
4703 Annapolis Road
Bladensburg MD 20710

Jack I. Thompson, Jr., Chairman
Prince George’s Historical & Cultural Trust
PO Box 85
Upper Marlboro MD 20773

Elizabeth Hughes, Director
Maryland Historical Trust
100 Community Place, 3rd Floor
Crownsville MD 21032-2023

Capsule Summary

PG:68-10-94

Blair-Smith House

5416 39th Avenue, Hyattsville, MD 20781

c. 1931

Private

The Blair Smith House is a c. 1931, Tudor Revival Style, one-and-a-half story stucco building with a walk-out basement. The main elevation of the house faces Jefferson Street and is defined by a one and ½ story steeply pitched asymmetrical gable and a round arched plank front entrance door with three large decorative strap hinges. The house is situated on a 0.433-acre quadrangle property. It is within the Hyattsville National Register Historic District and surrounded by single-family residential development and low-rise apartment buildings.

The Blair-Smith House is significant as an intact example of Tudor Revival domestic architecture identified as such in the Hyattsville National Register Historic District nomination form. The Blair-Smith House is also a recognizable Sears, Roebuck, and Company model home. The property embodies the heritage theme of streetcar suburb development in Prince George's County in the early twentieth century.

7. Description

Inventory No. PG:68-10-94

Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Site Description

The Blair Smith House is in the City of Hyattsville and within the Hyattsville National Register Historic District. The Blair-Smith House sits on the corner of 39th Avenue and Jefferson Street at 5416 39th Avenue. The house retains its historic function as a single-family residence. The property comprises a 0.433-acres quadrangle made up of lots 11 and 12 of Block 5 of Hyattsville Hills. The property includes the house on lot 11 and a large, shaded grass lawn along Jefferson Avenue on lot 12. The property is bounded by Jefferson Street to the north, 39th Avenue to the east, a single-family residence to the south and apartment buildings to the west.

Summary Description

The Blair-Smith House is a one-and-one-half story stucco Tudor-Revival style house with a walk-out basement. Built c. 1931 the home is an intact “Bellewood” model kit house sold by Sears Modern Homes. The dwelling is built of frame construction on a concrete block foundation. It is clad in stucco with a rear addition partially clad in horizontal wood siding. The majority of the house’s windows are six over six double hung wood windows and two small leaded glass casement windows with diamond-shaped glass panes. The house retains a combination of original and replacement decorative wood batten-type shutters. The house is capped with a characteristic steep-pitched cross gabled roof sheathed in asphalt shingles.

East Elevation (Façade)

The main elevation of the house faces Jefferson Street to the is defined by a one and ½ story steeply pitched asymmetrical gable end accommodating the front door and entrance vestibule under the modest curve of its lower end. The front door is a round arched plank door with three large decorative strap hinges and a small off-centered rectangular six-light window. Two six over six windows are centered in the first-floor front gable elevation with a small rectangular leaded glass window in the half story above. An asphalt drive and concrete walk provide access from 39th Avenue.

South Elevation

The south elevation has a low side entry hip roofed porch built around a large brick and stone chimney. The chimney steps inward on the east side. The chimney is topped with two visible flues. To the right of the chimney under the porch roof is a rectangular leaded glass casement window with diamond panes.

West Elevation

A back sunroom addition was added to the house in 1967. The gable roof is not as steeply pitched as the original house. The lower level is stucco, while the main level is sheathed with wide painted plank siding. The sunroom addition is lit by two groups of three ganged six over six double hung wood windows. The lower level has two six over six double hung wood windows obscured by foundation plantings.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-10-94

Blair-Smith House
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1

North Elevation

The home sits on a sloping lot and the structures north elevation reveals two full stories facing Jefferson Street. The south elevation has an entrance on the lower level and a short set of concrete stairs leading down to the side yard. The main floor contains three six over six double hung wood windows, the central one slightly smaller providing light to the bathroom. The second floor gable contains another six over six double hung wood window. The basement level contains a small, barred window centered under the side gable. The sunroom addition contains a set of two six over six ganged windows on the main level and lower level.

Outbuilding

There is an outbuilding in the southwest corner of the property. It appears on the 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance map which indicates frame construction with a metal exterior and a tin roof. The outbuilding has double wood swinging garage doors and a six-lite window in its north elevation.

Integrity

The Blair-Smith House retains sufficient physical integrity to convey its significance. The home remains in its original location and while the adjacent landscape has changed, the diversion of the creek through a buried culvert and construction of the adjacent apartment buildings are reflections of this site's historic context and do not undermine its integrity of setting. The property holds a high degree of integrity of design, workmanship, and materials: the home has had minimal alterations to the Bellewood model Sears kit house.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-10-94

Blair-Smith House
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 2



Figure 1: The east elevation (façade) of 5416 39th Avenue.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-10-94

Blair-Smith House
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 3



Figure 2: The south elevation of 5416 39th Avenue.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-10-94

Blair-Smith House
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 4



Figure 3: The south and west elevations of 5416 39th Avenue with the sunroom addition.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-10-94

Blair-Smith House
Continuation Sheet

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Figure 4: The north elevation of 5416 39th Avenue.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-10-94

Blair-Smith House
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 6



Figure 5: The front door on the east elevation of 5416 39th Avenue.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-10-94

Blair-Smith House
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 7



Figure 6: Casement window in south elevation (side porch) of 5416 39th Avenue

8. Significance

Inventory No. PG: 68-10-94

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates	Architect/Builder
	Sears, Roebuck, and Company
Construction dates 1931	

Evaluation for:

National Register

Maryland Register

not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The Blair-Smith House is in Hyattsville Hills, an almost 90-acre subdivision added to Hyattsville in 1922. The house is identified as a Sears and Roebuck catalogue home built around 1932. Hyattsville developed gradually over time between the initial platting in 1873 to its final addition in 1942. Residential buildings make up most of the community, with a commercial corridor on the eastern boundary along Rhode Island and Baltimore Avenues. The buildings reflect late nineteenth and early-twentieth-century architectural trends, particularly the Queen Anne, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival styles. The residential buildings of Hyattsville are typically set back from the tree-lined streets on rectangular building lots.

Following the pattern of many suburban communities throughout the United States, Hyattsville grew exponentially after the First World War. The success of the streetcar, emergence of the automobile and continued growth of Washington, D.C. stimulated residential and commercial construction in Hyattsville.¹ As a result, the suburb experienced a second phase of development beginning in the 1920s that resulted in the construction of nearly 700 buildings in just thirty years. This included more than 600 dwellings, fifty commercial and industrial resources, three churches, a post office, two schools, a meeting hall, and a municipal building.²

A large portion of this growth occurred in the Hyattsville Hills subdivision, platted in 1922, which contained 498 building lots on nearly 90 acres. This section added nineteen blocks to Hyattsville, west of 42nd Avenue.³ During this period of growth, the Colonial Revival and Craftsman styles dominated. The American foursquare, bungalow, and two-story/side-gable structures commonly adorned with Colonial Revival-style elements were popular forms. Most of the dwellings were wood-frame construction clad with weatherboard siding, wood shingles, asbestos shingles, or a brick veneer.⁴

The Blair-Smith house was built on Block 5, Lot 11 of the Hyattsville Hills subdivision c. 1931. 39th Avenue, at that time called McKinley Avenue, was unpaved, and Block 5 was on the outside perimeter of Hyattsville's development. An open stream ran through the property on Lot 12.

¹ Barr, Allison, et al. "Hyattsville Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Studying the Development Trends, Infrastructure, Social Profiles and Visual Analysis of Hyattsville, MD." *George Washington University*, 1996.

² Kristie, Baynard, and Trieschmann V. Laura. Hyattsville Historic District, PG-68-10: National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2004, [PG:68-10 \(maryland.gov\)](#).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG:68-10-94

Blair-Smith House Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

Howard Richardson Severe and Inez M. Brock Severe bought lots 11 and 12 in 1930 and obtained a loan from Edwards D. Ford to build a house. Inez Severe's father, Addison Brock, was a housebuilder listed as a house carpenter in the 1930 census and was possibly the builder of this house. The 1930 census lists Addison Brock living on Banner Street in Hyattsville with his wife and three daughters including Inez and son-in-law Howard, who was listed as a State Road Inspector. Later occupants of the house recalled that the father was building the house for his daughter and son-in-law.⁵

The house can be clearly identified as a Bellewood model Sears kit home offered in the Sears Modern Homes catalogue from 1931-1933. The Bellewood was advertised as a "happy combination of a well laid out floor plan with a modern attractive exterior". The design was described as an adaptation of a small English cottage with five rooms and one bath. The description calls out the arched front door with strapped hinges and batten-type shutters. The exteriors were often clad in shingles rather than stucco.

The young Severe couple never moved in. Maryland Land Records suggest the Severe's defaulted on their loan and surrendered the property to their lender, Edwards D. Ford, who then transferred the property to Sears, Roebuck and Company. The structure appears on the 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Hyattsville.

Sears Modern Homes

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Louise F. Blair

Following the Severes' default, Sears, Roebuck and Company sold the house to Louise F. Blair in 1936. Louise F. Blair was born December 1, 1886, to Hervey Addison Blair and Adelaide Preston in Kansas. Following the tragic childhood death of her younger brother in 1891⁷, her mother left Louise and her father in Kansas and moved to Michigan, where she died eight years later.⁸ Census records suggest that Louise F. Blair led an independent life from an early age. She is listed

⁵ Smith, G. (2024). Re: 5416 39th Avenue Historic Site Evaluation.

⁶ DeLuca, L. (2023, January 26). *Before folding 30 years ago, the Sears Catalog sold some surprising products*. Smithsonian.com. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/before-folding-30-years-ago-the-sears-catalog-sold-some-surprising-products-180981504/>

⁷ *Gypsum Advocate*, Friday, 17 Nov 1899, Pg. 2, col. 1

⁸ The Saline County journal. [volume] (Salina, Kan.), September 17, 1891, Image 3

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in the 1900 Federal census at age 13 as a border in a household of three in Solomon, Kansas.⁹ She was listed in the 1905 Kansas state census with an HA Blair, believed to be her father, in a household of three other people.¹⁰ Louise Blair graduated from Salinas High School in 1906.

Louise Blair attended the College of Emporia in Emporia, Kansas, a college affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. She graduated in 1910. Blair received a B.A. in the Classical course with a teaching certificate. At Emporia College she was a member of the YWCA, and vice-president of the Alethean Society, and the contributor of a lengthy poem to the 1910 Allah Rah year-book.¹¹ During her time at Emporia College she applied for and received her passport which listed her at age 22 in 1909.¹² The March 31st *College Life* newspaper noted that Louise Blair was teaching German in a high school and “reports pleasant work”.¹³ The 1910 Federal Census listed her as renting a home in Emporia as a single white female head of house at age 23.¹⁴

By 1920, Blair had obtained a job in Washington, D.C. as a government clerk. She is listed as a resident of Washington, D.C. in the 1920 and 1930 censuses, first as a roomer with a family of four and later living on her own. In 1920, she joined the Eleanor Wilson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington, D.C.^{15, 16}

Louise Blair bought 5416 39th Avenue in 1936. The 1940 Federal Census lists her at age 53 living in the house (then listed as 21 McKinley Avenue) that she owned, which was valued at \$6,500. The census information described her profession as a grade clerk, wage or salary worker in the Department of Agriculture with an income of \$1,800.¹⁷ This information describes her a successful and atypical Hyattsville citizen. In 1940, of Hyattsville citizens twenty-five and older, less than two percent had completed four or more years of college, although eleven percent had attended some college. Twenty five percent had completed one to three years of high school. Thirty two percent of the women over fourteen were employed, over half as clerks or in sales. For males the top employers were craftsman, foreman, clerks, managers, and professional workers.¹⁸ Little information was found about her involvement in the community. Blair sold the house in 1949 to Claude and Geraldine Smith. Gary Smith, one of the Smith children, later recalled that the boys in the neighborhood may have

⁹ Louise Blair. Ancestry.com. 1900 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004. [1900 United States Federal Census - Ancestry.com](#)

¹⁰ 1905 Kansas State Census, Saline, population schedule, Solomon, page 15, household 74, Louise Blair. [Kansas, U.S., State Census Collection, 1855-1925 - Ancestry.com](#)

¹¹ *Alla Rah*. (1910). Yearbook, College of Emporia.

¹² Louise Blair. Ancestry.com. *U.S., Passport Applications, 1795-1925* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007. [U.S., Passport Applications, 1795-1925 - Ancestry.com](#)

¹³ Louise F. Blair. *College Life, Emporia, Kansas*, Vol XXIII, No 26. March 31, 1911.

¹⁴ Louise F. Blair. Ancestry.com. *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006. [1910 United States Federal Census - Ancestry.com](#)

¹⁵ Louise F. Blair. Ancestry.com. *1920 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. [1920 United States Federal Census - Ancestry.com](#)

¹⁶ Louise F. Blair. Ancestry.com. *1930 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. [1930 United States Federal Census - Ancestry.com](#)

¹⁷ Louise F. Blair. Ancestry.com. *1940 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. [1940 United States Federal Census - Ancestry.com](#)

¹⁸ US Census Bureau. (2021, October 8). *1940 Census of Population: Volume 2. Characteristics of the Population. Sex, Age, Race, Nativity, Citizenship, Country of Birth of Foreign-born White, School Attendance, Years of School Completed, Employment Status, Class of Worker, Major Occupation Group, and Industry Group*. [33973538v2p3ch5.pdf \(census.gov\)](#) Maryland, Table 30. - *Composition of the Population, For Incorporated Places of 2,500 to 10,000: 1940*. p. 563

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bothered Ms. Blair because when she sold the property there was an arrow stuck in the side of the house and a BB hole in one of the windows.¹⁹

Claude and Geraldine Smith

Claude Argyle Smith was born in Auburn, Indiana in January of 1913 to Audry Lee “Jake” Smith and Esta Mae Hummonboth. Thin, with dark red hair, he grew up on a farm milking cows and driving horses and is remembered as always liking animals. At the age of 12, he moved to Michigan, where he met Geraldine “Gerry” Pruden. Family recalls that he appeared in Gerry’s high school diaries.²⁰

Geraldine E. Pruden “Gerry” was born November 26, 1916, in Toledo, Ohio to Merlin D. Pruden and Florence L. Gray. She grew up in Fayette, Ohio and graduated from the Riverside Hospital School of Nursing in Toledo in 1938. Upon graduating, she cared for her grandmother and lived with her parents in Adrian, OH.²¹

Claude Smith received his degree in veterinary medicine in 1935 from Ohio State University. The 1934 Ohio State yearbook lists him as an intramural horseshoe-pitching champion.²² After college from 1935 to 1942 Claude Smith worked as a USDA field veterinarian concentrating on the detection and eradication of tuberculosis and brucellosis in cattle and dairy herds working in eastern Tennessee and traveling to Puerto Rico.²³ In 1942 Claude enlisted as first lieutenant in the Army Air Force, where he inspected meat and dairy products in New York before they were shipped overseas for use by US troops.²⁴ It was around this time that he reconnected with Gerry. Family history holds that during a trip to visit relatives, Claude got into a car accident in Ohio during a snowstorm after he swerved off the road to avoid hitting a sledding child. He happened to be in the town of Adrian, where he remembered Gerry to be living and looked her up. They were married a year later, on August 11, 1945. In 1946, Claude left active duty and returned to working with the USDA. The Smiths had three children: Gary, Claudia, and Jack. After turning down an offer to move his family to Mexico to work on Foot and Mouth Disease, the Smiths bought 5416 39th Avenue in 1949.²⁵

The three children remember growing up in the house and playing in and around the yard, creek, and neighborhood. Some of Gary’s first memories at the age of three are jumping off the side porch, before it had a railing, and a tricycle accident in front of the house.²⁶

Claudia recalled sledding down 39th Avenue²⁷

When the Smiths first moved in during 1949, the creek was open through the side yard (Lot 12) between the two apartment complexes and down to Magruder Park. Where the stream exited the culvert under Jefferson Street there was a deep pond

¹⁹ Smith, G. (2024). Re: 5416 39th Avenue Historic Site Evaluation.

²⁰ Smith, G. (2024). Re: 5416 39th Avenue Historic Site Evaluation.

²¹ Ibid

²² Ohio State Yearbook: 1935. U.S., School Yearbooks, 1880-2012. Ancestry.com [Claude A Smith \(ancestry.com\)](https://www.ancestry.com/Claude-A-Smith).

²³ Parr, Susan. *A Biographical Interview with Dr. Claude A. Smith*. 04/22/1968.

²⁴ Ancestry.com. *U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. Claude A Smith. 16, Oct, 1940.

²⁵ Parr, Susan. *A Biographical Interview with Dr. Claude A. Smith*. 04/22/1968.

²⁶ Smith, G. (2024). Re: 5416 39th Avenue Historic Site Evaluation.

²⁷ Smith, C. (2024). Re: 5416 39th Avenue Historic Site Evaluation.

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like area where Gary Smith recalled neighborhood boys swimming there.²⁸ When the Smiths first moved in during 1949, the creek was open through the side yard (Lot 12) between the two apartment complexes and down to Magruder Park. Where the stream exited the culvert under Jefferson Street there was a deep pond like area where Gary Smith recalled neighborhood boys swimming there. In 1944, Louise Blair conveyed an easement to the county in connection with road improvements to Jefferson Avenue and the right to straighten the stream to operate and maintain a storm sewer. Not long after the Smiths moved in, around 1951, the stream was rerouted through a culvert and buried. Gary Smith remembers venturing into the newly installed culvert as a child.²⁹

Claude Smith continued his work as a USDA veterinarian until 1972, protecting American consumers from diseases in livestock, meat, and animal products. His obituary described his acquaintance with animals rivaling that of Dr. Dolittle. He regularly worked with chickens, cows and horses. He often worked at BARC (Beltsville Agricultural Research Center). One of his notable professional responsibilities included isolating Jackie Kennedy's horse Sardar to clear it of disease and release it after it was gifted to her from the president of Pakistan.³⁰ Claude Smith became a Senior Staff Veterinarian continuing working with imported and exported animal products, within the Animal Health Division of the Agricultural Research Service of the USDA.³¹ One of his last duties was overseeing the arrival of the Giant Pandas, Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing to the National Zoo in 1972. The giant pandas presence at the National Zoo associated with "Panda Diplomacy", has come to represent a period of successful diplomatic relations between the U.S. and China. Claude Smith retired later that year. Throughout his life he was considered a tinkerer and inventor and during his time in Hyattsville worked with the Boy Scouts and YMCA.

Gerry Smith was known for her flower gardens and was an engaged community member: she served as a Civil Defense Coordinator during the duck and cover era, volunteered with the Girl Scouts, and served as a substitute teacher at local elementary schools. They were both longtime members of First Baptist Church of Hyattsville and later of University Baptist Church in College Park. Gerry taught Sunday School for 52 years.³² Claude Smith died at home in Hyattsville on February 15, 2005, at the age of 92,³³ and Gerry at Sacred Heart Home in Hyattsville in 2017 at age 100.³⁴

The present owners, Danny Schaible and Jennifer Linn bought the property in 2016.

²⁸ Smith, G. (2024). Re: 5416 39th Avenue Historic Site Evaluation.

²⁹ Smith, G. (2024). Re: 5416 39th Avenue Historic Site Evaluation.

³⁰ The first lady ignored the quarantine.

³¹ Parr, Susan. *A Biographical Interview with Dr. Claude A. Smith*. 04/22/1968.

³² Geraldine "Gerry" Smith Obituary 2017 - Gasch's Funeral Home, P.A. [Gasch's Funeral Home, P.A. Geraldine "Gerry" Smith Obituary 2017 - Gasch's Funeral Home, P.A. \(gaschs.com\)](#)

³³ Holley, J. (2024, January 30). Claude A. Smith dies at 92. *Washington Post*. [Claude A. Smith Dies at 92 - The Washington Post](#)

³⁴ Geraldine "Gerry" Smith Obituary 2017 - Gasch's Funeral Home, P.A. [Gasch's Funeral Home, P.A. Geraldine "Gerry" Smith Obituary 2017 - Gasch's Funeral Home, P.A. \(gaschs.com\)](#)

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CHAIN OF TITLE

33878:586 July 14, 2016	Geraldine E Smith Et Al to Daniel L Shaible Et Al
36483:143 November 17, 2014	Claude A and Gerladine E Smith to Geraldine E Smith Et Al: Lots 11 and 12 of Block 5, Hyattsville Hills
1118:135 April 12, 1949	Louise F. Blair to Claude A. Smith and Geraldine E. Smith: Lot 11 and 12 Block 5 Plat Book R.N.R. No. 2, folio 64., from Louise F. Blair to Board of County Commissioners of Prince George's County, January 24, 1944 758:15
758:15 January 24, 1944	Louise F. Blair to Board of County Commissioners of Prince George's County - Easement over part of Lot 12
443:268 March 26, 1936	Sears Roebuck + Co to Louise F. Blair
390:466 December 24, 1932	Edwards D. Ford to Sears, Roebuck and Co.
360:308 February 11, 1931	Howard Richardson Severe and Inez Brock Severe to Edwards D. Ford, Trustee
363:199 December 2, 1930	Zantzing Properties to Howard Richardson Severe and Inez M. Brock Severe: Lots 11 and 12 of Block 5, Hyattsville Hills
1922 Plat Book R.N.R. No. 2, folio 64	Hyattsville Hills resurveyed
31:142 January 13, 1912	William M. Lewin to Otway B Zantzing
175:297 May 2, 1922	Robert M Richards to Otway B Zantzing

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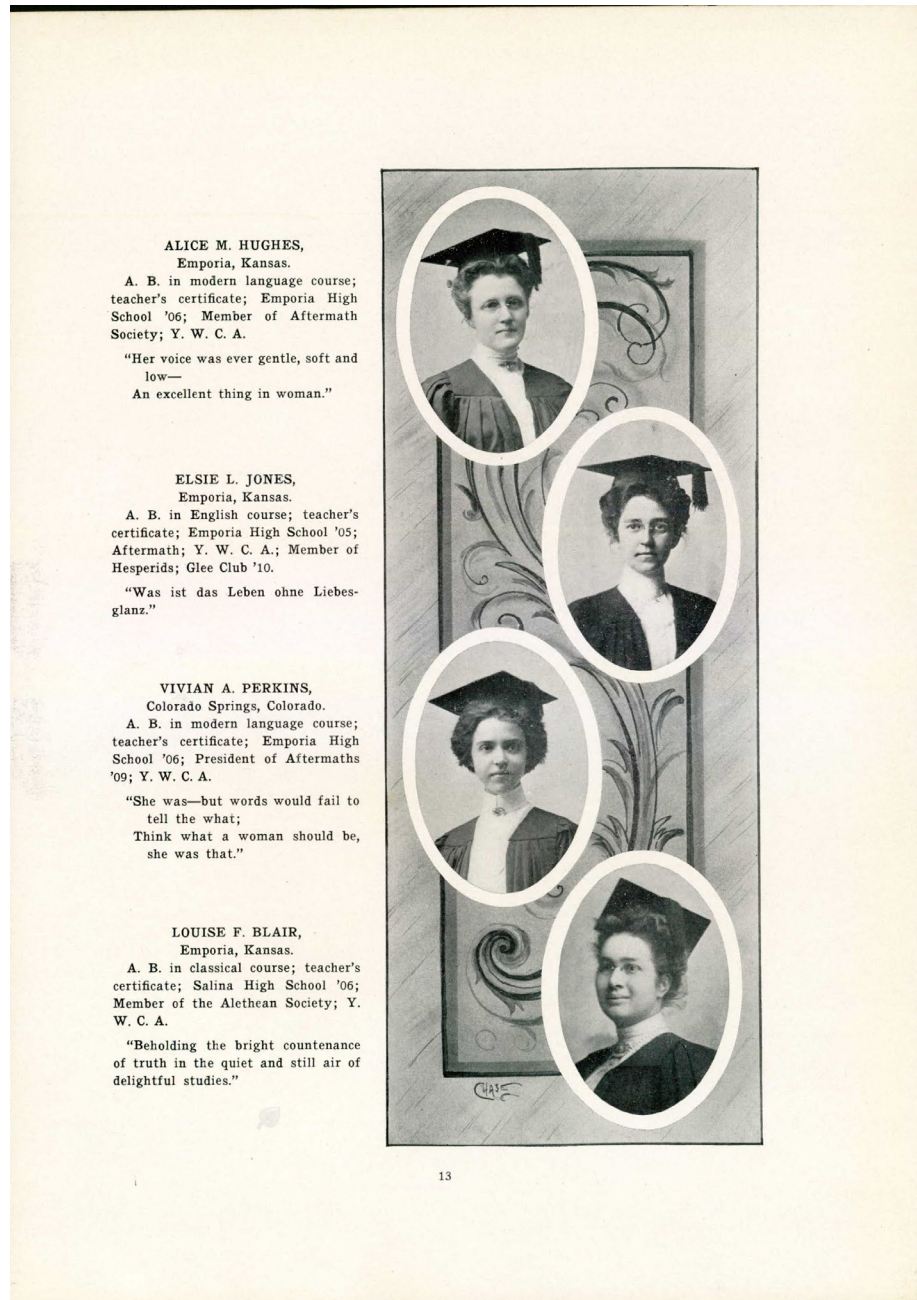


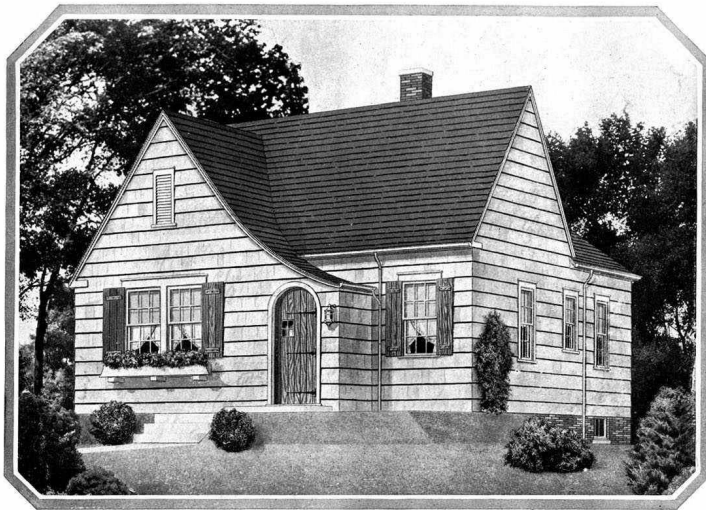
Figure 7. 1910 College of Emporia yearbook, Louise F. Blair pictured at bottom.

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The BELLEWOOD Five Rooms and Bath

No. 3304—Honor Bill Home—Already Cut and Fitted.
Monthly Payments As Low As \$30 to \$45

THE "BELLEWOOD" is another happy combination of a well laid out floor plan with a modern attractive exterior. The design is an adaptation of a small English cottage. Exterior walls are planned to be covered with gray pre-stained clear Red Cedar shingles, laid with 10-inch exposure.

The graceful manner in which the front gable roof curves over the vestibule gives this home an unusually inviting entrance. Careful grouping of the windows and batten type shutters also add to the exterior.

THE FLOOR PLAN. A clear White Pine batten type front door, equipped with ornamental wrought iron hinges, is used at the entrance to the vestibule which in turn connects with the living room with a plastered arch.

THE LIVING ROOM is 13 ft. 5 in. by 15 ft. 5 in. and lends itself to varied arrangements on account of good wall space. The balance of the left side of the plan is devoted to dining room, kitchen and rear hall with cellar stairs and refrigerator platform. Kitchen cabinets consist of one wall and one counter unit.

TWO LARGE BEDROOMS and bath complete the plan. The bath is planned to be equipped with Venetian mirrored medicine case and (Triple A-A-A) quality bath fixtures.

The Bellewood can be built on a 32-foot lot.
For complete delivered price, fill out Information Blank enclosed.



FLOOR PLAN

HOME CONSTRUCTION DIVISION

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Figure 8. Sears Modern Homes Catalog advertisement c. 1931-1933.

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Figure 9. Detail of 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

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Figure 10. Claude Smith pictured in the 1934 Ohio State University Yearbook.

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Figure 11. 4916 39th Avenue 1949.

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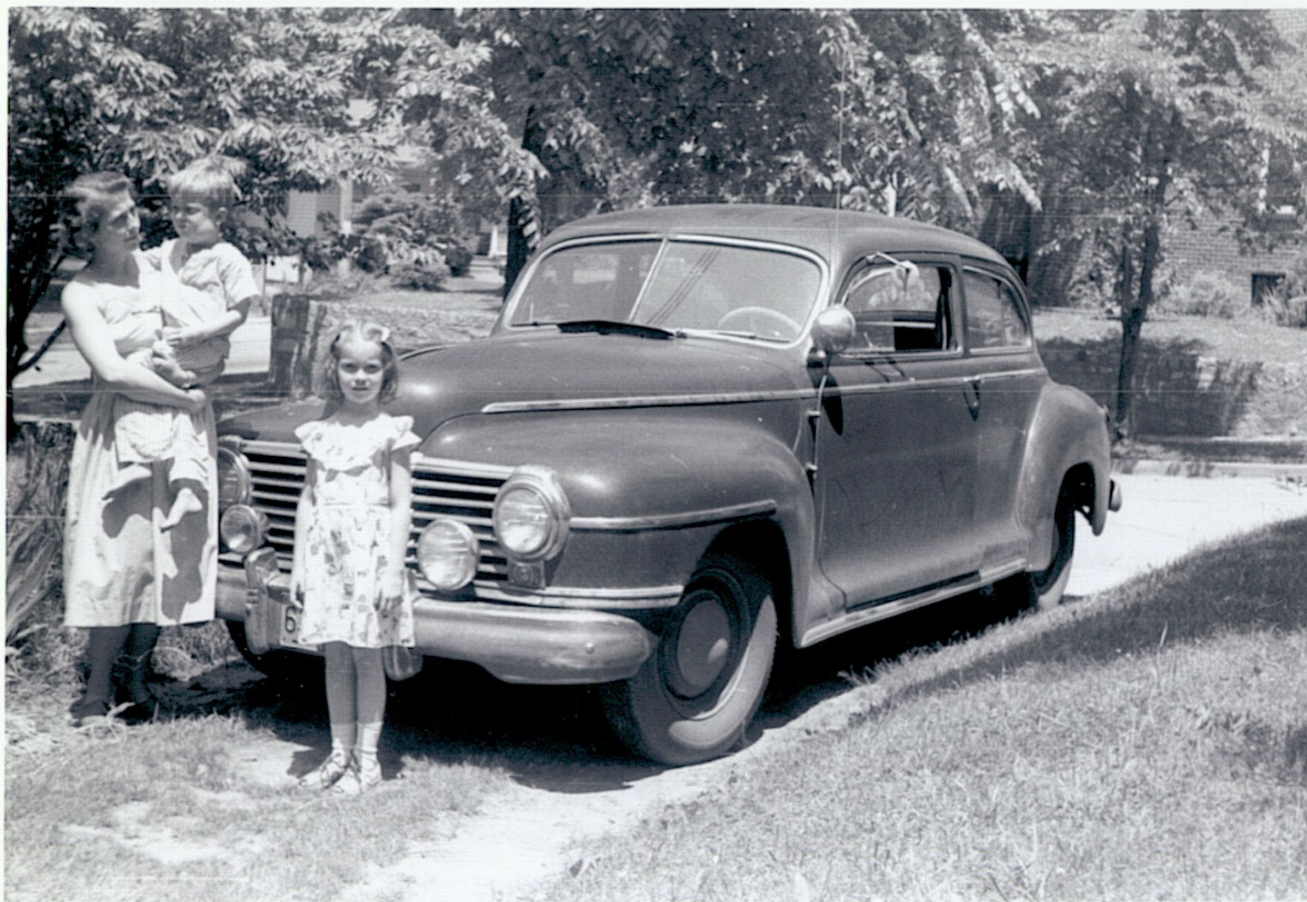


Figure 12. Gerry (left), Gary(middle), and Claudia(right) Smith in the driveway of 5416 39th Avenue, 1949.

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Figure 13. Geraldine Smith on stairs of the rear sunroom addition.

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Figure 14. Claude Smith (right) observing panda, 1972.

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Figure 15. Claude Smith dumping his flip-down gutters.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Ancestry.com, Various

Land Records of Prince George's County

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	<u>0.433</u>	
Acreage of historical setting	<u>0.433</u>	
Quadrangle name	<u>Washington East</u>	Quadrangle scale: <u>1:24,000</u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 11 and 12 of Block 5 of "Hyattsville Hills" as per plat thereof recorded R.N.R No. 2, folio 64, among the Land Records of Prince George's County Maryland.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Tyler Smith, Planner II, Historic Preservation Section		
organization	Prince George's County Planning Department	date	March 4, 2024
street & number	1616 McCormick Drive	telephone	(301) 952-5902
city or town	Largo	state	MD

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Department of Planning
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-697-9591