

# Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 67-022-24

## 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Kleiner-Davidson-White House (preferred)  
 other John J. Kleiner House; William and Ida May Mercer House

## 2. Location

street and number 8529 58th Avenue    not for publication  
 city, town Berwyn Heights    vicinity  
 county Prince George's County

## 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Ann Harris Davidson and Stephen White  
 street and number 8529 58th Avenue telephone 301-345-1624  
 city, town Berwyn Heights state MD zip code 20740-2703

## 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber 7386 folio 188  
 city, town Upper Marlboro tax map 34 / A2 tax parcel 43 tax ID number 21 2312346

## 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
- Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Recorded by HABS/HAER
- Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
- Other: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Prince George's County Planning Department

## 6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	Contributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<u>  1  </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> domestic	<u>  </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<u>  </u> structures
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<u>  </u> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<u>  1  </u> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	
		<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
		<input type="checkbox"/> social	
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
		<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:	
			<b>Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory</b>
			<u>  0  </u>

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## 7. Description

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### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

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

The Kleiner-Davidson-White House, located at 8529 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Berwyn Heights, was constructed in 1927. The one-story, Craftsman-style bungalow is a mail-order kit house with plans and materials provided by Sears, Roebuck and Company (Sears). The dwelling has been identified as the “Argyle” model, which was sold from 1915 to 1927. The house has a rectangular plan and is sited on a triangular-shaped lot on the southeast corner of the intersection of Pontiac Street and 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The property is landscaped with mature trees and shrubs. The property is enclosed by an unpainted split-rail fence, a white picket fence, and an unpainted spruce stockade fence. A flagstone patio extends from the east side of the house; there is a paved driveway to the south. There are currently no secondary resources associated with this property.

### DWELLING

The one-story, three-bay, Craftsman-style bungalow was built in 1927 with plans and materials purchased from Sears for the “Argyle” model. A one-story addition was constructed on the east (rear) elevation of the house in the 1950s and was razed in 2005. Architect Julia Caswell Daitch, renowned for her additions to Craftsman homes, designed the architecturally compatible one-story replacement for the rear addition, completed in May 2005. Set on a parged concrete foundation, the rectangular structure of the dwelling is wood-frame construction. A side-gabled bay with exposed rafters that is located on the north (side) elevation of the main block delineates the dining room on the interior of the house. The house retains its original double-lapped wood siding and decorative corner boards. A low-pitched, front-gabled roof caps the structure. Asphalt shingles cover the roof, which is pierced by an interior chimney of brick with a concrete cap. A second brick chimney is located on the north elevation of the house; this full-shouldered chimney has an arched hood. Characteristic of the Craftsman style, the roof has wide overhanging eaves and a flat fascia board with notched ends. Projecting square support beams are visible in the gable apexes and along the gable edges, parallel with the roofline. Due to deterioration, several of the square support beams were cut, or capped with pentagonal-shaped plates prior to 1989. The side-gabled bay has had its posts cut and reversed, turning the deteriorated ends that had been exposed, so that the deterioration is visible only from inside the attic.<sup>1</sup> The gable ends are clad in stucco. A one-story, one-bay, front-gabled porch frames the entrance. The porch, supported by stucco-clad piers, shares a portion of the roofline with the main block of the house. The porch gable is also clad in stucco and has a flat fascia with notched ends mirroring the main block. Although the posts, square balusters, and decorative fascia board remain, the size of the porch was reduced. As originally constructed, a section of the porch extended past the eaves on the north elevation of the house. The Jennings family (1978-1984), altered the porch so that the entire porch is now sheltered by the eaves. By 1999, the Jennings earlier renovations had deteriorated. The

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Harris Davidson, interview held at her residence, Berwyn Heights, Maryland, 2007.

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Davidson-White family rebuilt the front porch, keeping the fully sheltered design, and finished the space below for storage. This interior space is accessible via a small opening on the north (side) elevation of the porch, beneath the porch floorboards.

A single-leaf, wood door is located in the central bay of the façade (west elevation). The door features a large, centered, fixed light and a square-edged wood surround. The entrance is flanked with large 12/1 windows. The windows have unequal sash sizes, with the lower 1-light sash comprising the majority of the window. The images of the design in the 1927 Sears catalogue, in addition to patched holes in the siding, alerted the Davidson-White family that there was once a flower box located below the window south of the porch. In 2004, the Davidson White family reinstalled a historically accurate flower box. The south (side) elevation has an exposed basement with a combination of 2- and 3-light awning windows. The 2-light window is a replacement window. The first story of the south elevation has three window openings of different sizes. The easternmost and the two westernmost bays have 1/1 windows. A small 1-light window and a slighter larger boxed window with an operable hopper pane are situated in between the standard-sized 1/1 windows. All these windows have square-edged surrounds.

A one-story addition constructed in 2005 is located on the east (rear) elevation of the house. The current addition replaced a one-story addition constructed during the 1950s. The previous addition was clad in asbestos shingles and covered by a front-gabled roof. The addition had a shed-roofed porch located on its north (side) elevation.

The current addition is architecturally compatible with the main block. The southern (side) elevation is recessed from the south (side) elevation of the main block in order to allow for a single-leaf, wood door (matching the existing, original front door) on the east (rear) elevation of the main block. The wood-frame addition is clad in double-lapped wood siding, to match the original siding. A low-pitched, front-gabled roof with overhanging eaves caps the addition. Like the gable on the main block, the addition's gable has a flat fascia board with notched ends and projecting square beams at the apex and sides of the gable. The gable end is clad in a synthetic material approximating the appearance of stucco. Fenestration on the south (side) elevation of the addition consists of a small plywood door framed by a square-edged surround that leads to the crawl space, which, with a concrete floor, electric light and a discreet lock on its door, serves as a garden storage shed for the lawnmower and other implements. The east (rear) elevation of the addition has a French door with fixed lights in each leaf, also to match the original front door. The exterior light fixtures on either side of the double-leaf door and the hardware on the new doors are Craftsman-styled. The centrally placed door is flanked by paired 1/1 windows with square-edged

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surrounds. This east side of the addition was designed to recall the group of four windows under the original north-facing gable. A flagstone patio abuts the rear elevation of the addition. The north (side) elevation of the addition, like the south elevation, has no fenestration. The north elevation of the addition projects slightly past the north (side) elevation of the main block but does not extend past the shared eave line of the two structures. The change in line identifies the end of the original structure and beginning of the addition.

The north (side) elevation of the main block has, as its easternmost bay, a side-gabled bay. The side-gabled bay has four 1/1 windows in a band with a square-edged surround. A louvered vent is located in the gable end with an attic exhaust fan behind the vent. The bay has corner boards to distinguish it further from the rest of the north elevation. The exposed basement has a 2-light awning window just west of the side-gabled bay. The exterior chimney is located on the north elevation. Two 1-light casement windows with square-edged surrounds flank the chimney.

With the exception of the one-story addition on the east (rear) elevation and the relocation of a closet within the rear bedroom, the house retains its original interior plan. The plan is a reversed plan version as advertised in the Sears catalog. The interior retains several original features such as the crown molding, the ornamental half-mortise wrought-steel strap hinges on the door and two casement windows, light fixtures, and the wood floors. The interior door and window surrounds are mostly intact but are missing the lintel moldings. The fireplace displays characteristics typical of a Sears house such as the herringbone pattern on the face and the three rows of square floor tiles fronting the hearth. As originally constructed, the house had built-in bookcases that serve as a half wall separating the living room from the dining room. The half wall of bookcases was described in the Sears catalogue as “the colonnade with china closet.” According to photographs and the accounts of previous owners, these bookcases were removed sometime after 1950 and before 1978; although ghosting of their location is evident. The bathtub supports the 1927 date of construction for the house. The bottom of the tub is imprinted “Made in United States of America by Standard Sanitary Manufacturing, Co. Baltimore 11.10.26.”

A one-story, wood-frame garage was located at the rear of the property. The garage is no longer extant; it was razed between 1950 and 1959. A carport was constructed on the property sometime between 1959 and 1968 but was demolished prior to 1989.

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### INTEGRITY

The Craftsman-style bungalow, located at 8529 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Berwyn Heights, is the only positively identified Sears, Roebuck and Company mail-order kit house in Berwyn Heights. Overall, the dwelling maintains a high level of integrity. The house retains its original siding, windows, and architectural detailing. The rear addition is architecturally compatible with the design of the main block and does not compromise the integrity of design or workmanship. The building retains sufficient integrity of design, workmanship, materials, association, feeling, location, and setting to convey the qualities for which it is judged significant.

## 8. Significance

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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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <u>Local History</u>

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<b>Specific dates</b>	1927	<b>Architect/Builder</b>	Sears, Roebuck and Company
<b>Construction dates</b>	1927, 2005		

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.)

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Craftsman-style bungalow located at 8529 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue is the only positively identified Sears, Roebuck and Company mail-order kit house in Berwyn Heights. John J. Kleiner Jr., a real estate entrepreneur, oversaw construction of the house using plans and materials provided by Sears and shipped by rail to the nearby B&O Railroad Berwyn train station. The deed for the property remained in Kleiner's name until 1946, although William N. and Ida May Mercer occupied the house with rent-to-own agreements during most of that time. The exterior of the house and the interior floor plan are largely unaltered, making this house easily identifiable as the "Argyle" model. The design source for the Argyle by Sears is believed to have been based on Gustav Stickley's Craftsman-style bungalow. The house, one of only two Argyle models identified in Prince George's County, retains a high level of integrity conveying the architectural qualities that identify the building as a Sears, Roebuck and Company house. The property on which the house stands, originally known as Lots 20 and 21 in Block 20 of Charlton Heights (now Berwyn Heights), was subdivided in 1959 and again in 1968. Although two dwellings have been constructed on the adjacent subdivided lots, the Kleiner-Davidson White House retains its integrity of setting and location, illustrating its construction as part of the second phase of development in Berwyn Heights.

### HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Kleiner-Davidson-White House is located in present-day Berwyn Heights, which was subdivided by Edward Graves. In 1887, Edward Graves of Washington, D.C., purchased 393-acres between Branchville Road and the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad. Graves hired the firm Newby and Howell to survey and plat a subdivision on his newly acquired land.<sup>2</sup> Graves sold the land in 1888 to the Charlton Heights Improvement Company, which began construction of mail-order pattern houses in Charlton Heights, present-day Berwyn Heights.<sup>3</sup> By 1888, the construction of almost twenty houses was complete. In 1896, by an act of the Maryland

<sup>2</sup> Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Prince George's County Planning Department, *Historic Sites and Districts Plan* (1992).

<sup>3</sup> Susan G. Pearl, "Chlopicki House," (PG: 67-12) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (1986), 8:1.

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General Assembly, the town was incorporated as Berwyn Heights.<sup>4</sup> A two-block concentration of dwellings remains along Ruatan Street, between Berwyn Road and 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Four of the oldest houses were constructed from mail-order plans with specifications produced by R. W. Shoppells' Cooperative Building Plan Association of New York City.<sup>5</sup> A second phase of construction occurred in the 1920s, followed by the final period of development in the post World War II years.

In 1913, John J. Kleiner Jr. purchased Lots 20 and 21 in Block 20 of Charlton Heights (now Berwyn Heights) from Charles and Mamie Elliott in 1913.<sup>6</sup> Kleiner Jr. was born on July 14, 1874 in Evansville, Indiana. He was the son of Representative John Jay Kleiner, who served in Congress from 1883 to 1887. The 1880 census records Kleiner Sr. was employed as an editor. Born in 1845 in Ohio, Kleiner, enlisted in the Ohio Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. Kleiner Sr., despite being an unsuccessful candidate for reelection in 1887, moved his family to Washington, D.C., in 1890. Kleiner engaged in the real estate business, maintaining an office in the nation's capital, until his death in 1911.<sup>7</sup> John J. Kleiner Jr. also dealt in real estate, employed just after the turn of the twentieth century by his father. At one time, Kleiner Jr. and his wife Eliza, owned hundreds of lots in areas such as Lakeland, Timber Bottom Enlarged, Mount Rainier, Rogers Heights, and Berwyn Heights in Prince George's County, where the family lived by 1900.<sup>8</sup> Kleiner Jr. established the Highland Park Improvement Company in partnership with his wife and another couple – Charles and Florence Shepard. Kleiner served as president and Shepard served as secretary of the company.<sup>9</sup>

A member of the Berwyn Heights Building Association and active real estate entrepreneur, Kleiner Jr., oversaw construction of a single-family dwelling on the two adjoining lots in Block 20 in 1927.<sup>10</sup> The bathtub supports the 1927 date of construction for the house. The bottom of the tub is imprinted "Made in United States of America by Standard Sanitary Manufacturing, Co. Baltimore 11.10.26." The lots fronted Huntley Avenue, which is known today as 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The design plans and building materials used in the construction of the house were purchased from Sears, Roebuck and Company (Sears), which shipped the kit-house by rail to the nearby B&O Railroad Berwyn train station. The design chosen by Kleiner Jr., was the "Argyle," a Craftsman-style bungalow offered by Sears between 1915 and 1927. The single-family dwelling included five rooms and one bath with a gabled front porch, notched bargeboard, exposed rafter ends, beamed ceiling, fireplace flanked

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<sup>4</sup> Susan G. Pearl, "Chlopicki House," (PG: 67-12) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (1986), 8:1.

<sup>5</sup> Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Prince George's County Planning Department, *Historic Sites and Districts Plan* (1992).

<sup>6</sup> Charles and Mamie Elliot to John J. Kleiner, Jr., Prince George's County Land Records, 90:23.

<sup>7</sup> Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, "John Jay Kleiner," <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=K000263> (accessed July 2, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> 1900 U.S Federal Census, Vansville, Prince George's County, Maryland, Roll T623-626, Page 7B, Enumeration District 90 (research compiled by Ann Harris Davidson).

<sup>9</sup> Research conducted by Ann Harris Davidson.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Skarda, "Berwyn Heights: History of a Small Maryland Town." (Research compiled by Ann Harris Davidson).

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by built-in bookcases with glass doors, and a paneled dining room separated from the living room by a colonnade of china cabinets.<sup>11</sup> A mark on the underside of the flooring in the bathroom documents the building's construction with materials from Sears delivered by rail. The floorboard is inscribed "Kliener [*sic*], Berwyn, Md.

The design source for the Argyle by Sears is believed to have been based on Craftsman-style bungalows designed by Gustav Stickley. Stickley, a renowned furniture designer and architect, published several books and *The Craftsman*, a magazine that illustrated his furniture, touted the Craftsman style, and promoted the bungalow form. The magazine, in publication from 1901 until 1916, also included house plans. In *House About It*, Sheri Koonen notes "Sears, Roebuck and Company picked up on the concept" of the Craftsman-style bungalow as presented by Stickley "and offered several models in their mail-order catalog."<sup>12</sup> The National Trust for Historic Preservation publication, *Houses By Mail*, also supports the inspiration of architects such as Stickley in the design of mail-order houses, stating that "Sears bought from outside architects designs of houses that had already been constructed and proven successful. This was thought to have occurred throughout the history of the Modern Homes program but was probably most common before 1919," when the Argyle design was offered by Sears.<sup>13</sup> Although the source for the Sears Argyle has not been positively attributed to Stickley, it is very likely his work influenced the design, specifically Design No. 58539. Known as the California bungalow, the design by Stickley was commonly illustrated and described in detail in his publications.<sup>14</sup> The similarities of Stickley's Design No. 58539 to the Sears Argyle and the house at 8529 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Berwyn Heights are notable.

The Argyle was a popular design for Sears in the years between 1915 and 1927, selling in 1918 for \$1,479.<sup>15</sup> One other example of the Argyle model has been positively identified in Prince George's County. This dwelling, which has been substantially enlarged and altered, is located at 6016 Kilmer Street in Cheverly.<sup>16</sup> A handful of Sears, Roebuck and Company (Sears) mail-order kit-houses were constructed in Berwyn Heights in

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<sup>11</sup> Katherine Cole Stevenson and H. Ward Jandl, *Houses by Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company*, (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1986), 45.

<sup>12</sup> Sheri Koonen, *House About It: Dream Design, Dwell*, (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2004), 13. Also see Caroline T. Swope, *Classic Houses of Seattle*, (Portland, Oregon: Timber Press, 2005) and Rosemary Thornton, *The Houses That Sears Built: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Sears Catalog Homes*, (Alton, Illinois, Gentle Beam Publications, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Stevenson and Jandl, 32.

<sup>14</sup> Gustav Stickley, *Craftsman Homes: Architecture and Furnishings of the American Arts and Crafts Movement*, (New York, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1979, reprint of 1909 edition of *Craftsman Homes* published by Craftsman Publishing Company); Gustav Stickley, *Craftsman Bungalows: 59 Homes From The Craftsman*, (New York, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1988, reprint of 1916 edition published by Craftsman Publishing Company); and Gustav Stickley, *More Craftsman Homes*, (New York, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1982).

<sup>15</sup> Thornton, 78.

<sup>16</sup> Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Prince George's County Planning Department, *Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order House Survey in Prince George's County, Maryland* (1988).



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the 1920s. Two examples have been positively identified as Sears's models – 8607 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 5616-5618 Ruatan Street. The first example has been extensively altered and no longer retains any of the identifying elements. The latter example was demolished in 1993 and replaced by two split-foyer houses.

No members of the Kleiner family resided in the house at 8529 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue; rather oral history recounts that John J. Kleiner Jr. had the house constructed for his “paramour.”<sup>17</sup> Long-time residents of Berwyn Heights report that upon his wife’s relocation to Michigan, where she died in 1936, Kleiner “unofficially installed the paramour in the Kleiner family home at 5603 Ruatan Street.”<sup>18</sup> It is not clear if the house at 8529 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue was occupied as oral history characterizes. The U.S. Federal Census records that William N. and Ida M. Mercer lived in the house in 1930. The Mercers were also active, well-known and long-time members of the Berwyn Heights community. In 1915, William Mercer was one of the founding members of the Berwyn Heights Association and the Secretary of the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department for many years.<sup>19</sup> The census, together with the World War II Draft Registration, documents that William Nathneil Mercer, born February 22, 1881 in Baltimore, was chief machinist at the U.S. Navy Yard, which was located in Washington, D.C.<sup>20</sup> Mercer’s World War I Draft Registration Card states he was employed in 1918 as a torpedo mechanic at the Navy Yard.<sup>21</sup> Ida May Mercer was born in 1881 in Pennsylvania. The couple, married about 1904, was childless. At the time of the 1930 U.S. Federal Census, the Kleiner family was living on Keleher Avenue in Berwyn Heights, in their 1888 home (currently known as 5603 Ruatan Street).<sup>22</sup>

The agreement between John J. Kleiner Jr. and William Mercer was originally an unwritten, gentlemen’s rent-to-own or personal loan agreement. Accordingly, the Mercers indicated in the 1930 census that they owned the building rather than rented it from Kleiner. Decades later, long-time residents of Berwyn Heights still referred to 8529 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue as “the Mercer House,” even though the Kleiners only officially transferred the title to the Mercers in 1946.<sup>23</sup> The property, as noted by the census records, was valued at \$12,000, which is notably higher than many of the neighboring lots improved by single-family dwellings. A number of the houses in the immediate area were used as rental property.

A “sale agreement” was made purportedly between John J. Kleiner Jr. and the Mercers. The agreement specified the sale price of \$4,879.13, towards which the Mercers would pay a minimum of \$50 per month. The document was dated October 28, 1936 and filed September 26, 1944, five years after the death of John J.

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<sup>17</sup> Edna Waters to Ann Harris Davidson.

<sup>18</sup> Ann Harrison Davidson to EHT Tracerics, email dated July 25, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Research conducted by Ann Harris Davidson.

<sup>20</sup> 1930 U.S. Federal Census, Berwyn Heights, Prince George's, Maryland, Roll 878, Page 1B, Enumeration District 55, William Mercer; U.S. World War II Draft Registration Card, 1942, Serial Number 1125; Middle name “Nathneil” also seen as “Nathaneal.”

<sup>21</sup> U.S. World War I Draft Registration Card, 1918, Serial Number 1320.

<sup>22</sup> 1930 U.S. Federal Census, Berwyn Heights, Prince George's, Maryland, Roll 878, Page 2B, Enumeration District 55, John Kleiner.

<sup>23</sup> Research conducted by Ann Harris Davidson, recounted to Tracerics via email July 25, 2008.

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Kleiner, Jr. This suggests R. Murray Kleiner acted on his father's behalf in an effort to regularize the original verbal arrangement with the Mercers. R. Murray Kleiner became the sole heir of the Kleiner estate upon the death of his father in 1939 and that of his younger brother, John Kleiner III, who was killed July 19, 1944 while fighting in France during World War II. On September 25, 1946, R. Murray Kleiner as "sole devisee and heir at law for John J. Kleiner, John J. Kleiner Jr. [III], and his wife, Josephine C. Kleiner" officially transferred the property to the Mercers.<sup>24</sup> The next day, the Mercers sold the property to David and Mary Elizabeth Morrow for \$6,000.<sup>25</sup>

The Morrow family lived at 8529 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue for four years, raising their two sons – David and Gerard – in the five-room house. On February 27, 1950, the property was sold to Warren and Laura L. Norris.<sup>26</sup> It is likely that the house's associated garage was razed and a carport constructed between 1950 and 1959 while the Norris family owned the property. During this period, a one-story addition was built on the rear elevation of the house. After the death of Warren Norris, his widow, Laura, sold the rear portion of Lots 20 and 21, a total of 6,476 square feet, in 1959, which allowed the construction of the house at 5801 Pontiac Street (now 5803 Pontiac Street).<sup>27</sup>

Karl A. Baranek and Wilbert B. Danser, who also owned investment property in Beltsville they subdivided for resale in the late 1960s, resubdivided the property a second time in order to construct a third house at the intersection of Pontiac Street and 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The lot was divided diagonally, creating two triangular-shaped parcels. The newly created lot would become 5801 Pontiac Street and the old house numbered 5801 Pontiac Street was changed to 5803 Pontiac Street. The resubdivision changed the legal description of the property to Lot 44 in Block 20.<sup>28</sup>

Between 1968 and 1989, the property changed hands seven times. The current owners have resided at the property since 1989 and have worked diligently to restore the significant architectural features of the Kleiner-Davidson-White House.

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<sup>24</sup> R. Murray Kleiner to William and Ida Mercer, Prince George's County Land Records, 903:83.

<sup>25</sup> William Mercer to David and Mary Elizabeth Morrow, Prince George's County Land Records, 903:85; Mortgage for David and Mary Elizabeth Morrow from Northwestern Federal Savings and Loan Association, 884:125 (September 26, 1946).

<sup>26</sup> David Morrow to Warren and Laura L. Norris, Prince George's County Land Records, 1204:230.

<sup>27</sup> Laura L. Norris to William T. and Hilde Casey, Prince George's County Land Records, 2352:89. The lot was officially re-subdivided in 1968 when the rear portion of Lots 20 and 21 became Lot 37 of Block 20.

<sup>28</sup> Elwood A. and Lorene G. Stine to Karl A. Baranek and Wilbert B. Danser, Prince George's County Land Records, 3561: 230.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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1920 and 1930 US Federal Census (Population Schedule). Online: The Generations Network, Inc., 2007. Subscription database. Digital scan of original records in the National Archives, Washington, DC. <http://www.ancestry.com>.

Donald Skarda, "Berwyn Heights: History of a Small Maryland Town."

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Prince George's County Planning Department, *Historic Sites and Districts Plan*, 1992.

Office of History and Preservation, "Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, John Jay Kleiner."  
<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=K000263>.

Pearl, Susan G. "Sears House" (PG: 67-24) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 1986.  
Prince George's County Land Records.

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of surveyed property less than one acre  
Acreege of historical setting less than one acre  
Quadrangle name Washington East                      Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The Sears house at 8529 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue, originally located on Lots 20 and 21 of Block 20 in Charlton Heights (now known as Berwyn Heights), is now located on Lot 44 of Block 20. The property is bounded on the north by Pontiac Street and to the west by 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue. In 1959, 6,476 square feet of the rear portion of Lots 20 and 21 were sold and became part of the property currently known as 5803 Pontiac Street. A second subdivision in 1968 reconfigured the lot into its current triangular shape, creating Lots 43 and 44. The property at 8529 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue is associated with Lot 43 (Tax Map 34, Parcel A2).

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## 11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Laura Trieschmann and Paul Weishar, Architectural Historians		
organization	EHT Traceries, Incorporated	date	February 2008/Updated July 2008
street & number	1121 5th Street NW	telephone	202.393.1199
city or town	Washington	state	DC

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  
   DHCD/DHCP  
   100 Community Place  
   Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
   410-514-7600

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Kleiner-Davidson-White House  
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### Chain of Title

Deed JWB 14:34 October 15, 1888	Benjamin Charlton, president, and James E. Waugh, secretary of the Charlton Heights Improvement Company to Charles S. Elliott
Deed 90: 23 March 17, 1913	Charles S. and Mamie G. Elliott to John J. Kleiner (Jr.)
Deed 759: 215 October 28, 1936	John J. Kleiner (Jr.) to William N. and Ida May Mercer (sale agreement enrolled September 26, 1944)
Deed 903: 83 September 25, 1946	R. Murray Kleiner as "sole devisee and heir at law for John J. Kleiner, John J. Kleiner Jr. [III], and his wife, Josephine C. Kleiner" to William N. and Ida May Mercer
Deed 903: 85 September 26, 1946	William N. and Ida May Mercer to David and Mary Elizabeth Morrow
Deed 1204: 230 February 27, 1950	David and Mary Elizabeth Morrow to Warren and Laura L. Norris
Deed 2352: 89 July 10, 1959	Laura L. Norris (widow of Warren Norris) to William T. (Jr.) and Hilde Casey (this sale was for 6,476 square feet of the rear portion of Lots 20 and 21)
Deed 2507: 387 November 18, 1960	Laura L. Norris (widow of Warren Norris) to Raymond B. and Margaret I. Shoop
Deed 2817: 209 May 6, 1963	Raymond B. and Margaret I. Shoop to the Laurel Building Association
Deed 2887: 410 October 24, 1963	The Laurel Building Association to Elwood A. and Lorene G. Stine
Deed 3561: 230 January 16, 1968	Elwood A. and Lorene G. Stine to Karl A. Baranek and Wilbert B. Danser

# Maryland Historical Trust

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Plat 67:76 February 28, 1968	Karl A. Baranek and Wilbert B. Danser resubdivision of Lots 20 and 21 of Block 20 in Charlton Heights (now known as Berwyn Heights) as Lots 43 and 44 of Block 20 (8529 58 <sup>th</sup> Avenue is located on Lot 44)
Deed 3610: 92 June 19, 1968	Karl A. Baranek and Wilbert B. Danser to Edward J. and Barbara A. Dabolt Lot 44 of Block 20
Deed 4569: 843 December 9, 1975	Edward J. and Barbara A. Dabolt to Peter Alan and Nila Jo Goodell
Deed 4877: 840 January 18, 1978	Peter Alan and Nila Jo Goodell to Donald E. and Jeanne E. Jennings
Deed 5890: 616 May 7, 1984	Donald E. and Jeanne E. Jennings to Leo J. Cotnoir and Margaret J. Mayham
Deed 6167: 297 August 26, 1985	Leo J. Cotnoir and Margaret J. Mayham to Margaret J. Mayham
Deed 6282: 8 February 28, 1986	Margaret J. Mayham to Michael D. Visconage
Deed 7386: 188 August 4, 1989	Michael D. Visconage to Stephen White and Ann Harris Davidson

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**\$785<sup>00</sup>**

For \$785.00 we will furnish all the material to build this Five-Room Bungalow, consisting of Mill Work, Lumber, Lath, Shingles, Flooring, Ceiling, Finishing Lumber, Cabinets, Kitchen Cupboard (see plan and description below) and Medicine Case, Building Paper, Pipe, Gutter, Sash Weights, Hardware and Painting Material. **NO EXTRAS**, as we guarantee enough material to build this bungalow according to our plans.

By allowing a fair price for labor, cement, brick and plaster, which we do not furnish, this house can be built for about \$1,750.00, including all material and labor.

**For Our Offer of Free Plans See Page 6.**

**I**F YOU are looking for a home in the Bungalow style that will not be too extreme and yet entirely different from a cottage, we recommend the design shown on this page. It is a neat, well arranged, solidly constructed little home, pretty without being too showy, not too large or too small but just suitable for the average small family. We have considered more convenience than is usually found in a six or seven-room two-story house. Much room is saved by the built-in fixtures which do away with the necessity of purchasing four bulky pieces of furniture, namely, bookcase, china cabinet, kitchen cabinet and settee. These fixtures, with the beamed ceilings and paneled walls, give you a home already more than half furnished.

**Floor Plan.**  
From the porch, with its distinctively bungalow porch rail, you enter the living room which has a rustic brick mantel. On one side of this mantel is provided a bookcase, and on the other a settee with hinged cover, making a nook; where many articles can be stored away. A colonnade with china cabinet on the dining room side ceiling. Dining room has plate rail and paneled sides. In the kitchen you will notice three spacious cupboards which take the place of a pantry and make work much easier. A passageway separates the two bedrooms and bathroom from living room, dining room and kitchen, securing a desirable privacy that is seldom provided in a house of this size. All interior doors and trim, as well as floors, are of first quality clear yellow pine.

**Basement.**  
Excavated basement with cement floor under the rear half of this bungalow.

**Height of Ceilings.**  
The basement is 7 feet high from floor to joist, and the rooms on the main floor are 8 feet 6 inches from the floor to the ceiling. This bungalow is built on a concrete foundation and is of frame construction, sited and roofed with red cedar shingles, except gables which are sided with stonework.

**Can be built on a lot 35 feet wide.**

Complete Warm Air Heating Plant, for soft coal, extra.....**155.50**  
Complete Warm Air Heating Plant, for hard coal, extra.....**88.79**  
If estimates and specifications for plumbing and hot water or steam heating systems are desired write for them, mentioning Modern Home No. 264P245 in your request.

**SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO. CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

**MODERN HOME No. 264P245**

**Saved \$2,000.00.**  
360 Morgantown St., Uniontown, Penn.  
Sears, Roebuck and Co., Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen:—We have finished our new brick house, built from your plan No. 119. We bought everything from your firm, excepting the brick for wall, slate roof and bath fixtures. I can say that we are more than pleased with what you sent. All material was first class. The carpenters were loud in their praises of the lumber and mill work.

I estimate that I have saved nearly \$2,000.00 on the job. If I were to build ten or more good houses and wanted to save money, I should buy from you. I do not hesitate to recommend your firm to my best friends.

Yours truly,  
**MILES E. PRITTS.**

**Floor Plan.**  
24-0  
BED ROOM 10-6x12-0  
KITCHEN 9-0x12-0  
DINING ROOM 11-3x14-0  
LIVING RM. 12-0x15-9  
BED ROOM 10-6x12-5  
BATH 5-0x7-3  
HALL  
CLOSET  
PORCH 4-7-0

Figure 1: Modern Home No. 264P245, The Argyle, from the Sears *Modern Homes* Mail Order Catalog (1915-1927)

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Continuation Sheet

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## THE ARGYLE



The Argyle is a bungalow whose exterior appearance suggests extra-fine interior arrangement and furnishings. The front elevation, as you glance at it, bespeaks richness and comfort on the inside. The living room and dining room prove this conclusively. Note the bookcase colonnade, the beamed ceiling, the massive brick mantel with the built-in bookcase on the side. Note also the extra depth of the living room and dining room, nearly 30 feet long.

.....

Details and features: Five rooms and one bath. Gabled front porch; notched bargeboards; exposed roof rafter tails. Beamed ceiling and fireplace flanked by built-in bookcases with glass doors in living room; paneled dining room.

Years and catalog numbers: 1916 (264P245, 2018); 1917 (C2018, 245); 1918 (2018); 1919 (7018); 1921 (7018); 1922 (17018); 1925 (17018A); 1926 (P17018A)

Price: \$827 to \$2,150

Locations: Bridgeport, Conn.; Des Plaines and Rantoul, Ill.; Detroit, Mich.; Garvin, Minn.; Niagara Falls, N.Y.; Toledo and Xenia, Ohio; Hellerton, Pa.



*Living room*



*Dining room*



45

Figure 2: The Argyle, from *Houses by Mail – A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company*

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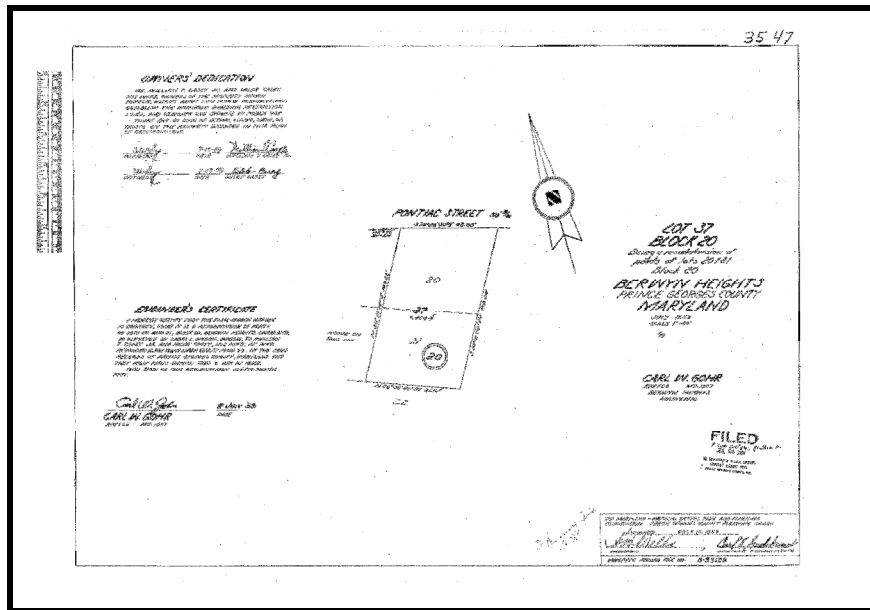


Figure 3: 1959 Subdivision Plat

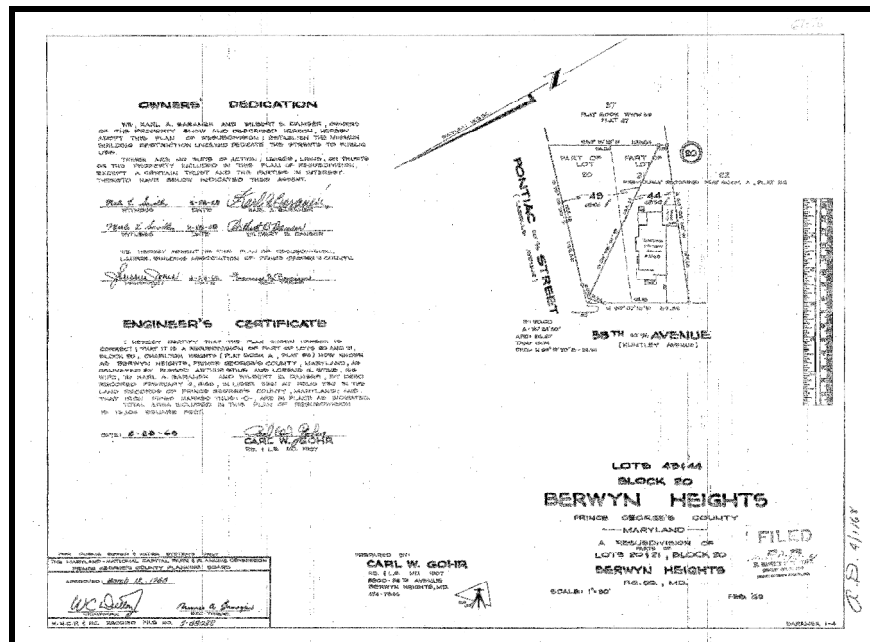


Figure 4: 1968 Subdivision Plat



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**Figure 5: Kleiner-Davidson-White House, view of the northwest corner, looking southeast.**

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**Figure 6: Kleiner-Davidson-White House, view of the façade (northwest elevation), looking east.**

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**Figure 7: Kleiner-Davidson-White House, view of the southeast elevation, looking northwest.**