

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 67-022-06

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

historic      Sauer House  
other

### 2. Location

street and number    5625 Ruatan Street      \_\_\_ not for publication  
city, town      Berwyn Heights      \_\_\_ vicinity  
county      Prince George's

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

name      Kevin Clauss  
street and number    5625 Ruatan Street      telephone  
city, town      Berwyn Heights      state    MD      zip code      20740-4311

### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.    Prince George's County Courthouse      liber    19101    folio    449  
city, town      Upper Marlboro      tax map    33      tax parcel    13      tax ID number    21 2288199

### 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: \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
____ district	____ public	____ agriculture	Contributing
<u>X</u> building(s)	<u>X</u> private	____ landscape	Noncontributing
____ structure	____ both	____ commerce/trade	<u>2</u> buildings
____ site		____ defense	____ sites
____ object		<u>X</u> domestic	____ structures
		____ education	____ objects
		____ funerary	<u>2</u> Total
		____ government	
		____ health care	
		____ industry	
		____ recreation/culture	
		____ religion	
		____ social	
		____ transportation	
		____ work in progress	
		____ unknown	
		____ vacant/not in use	
		____ other:	

**Number of Contributing Resources  
previously listed in the Inventory**  
0

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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 Sauer House is located at 5625 Ruatan Street in Berwyn Heights. This level, grassy lot is set on the south side of Ruatan Street. The narrow property is lined by fencing, which is primarily chain-link but does have sections of wood. A gentle slope is located on the north side of the property, leading down to Ruatan Street. The building has a typical setback for this area of Berwyn Heights. A gravel driveway is located in the northeast corner of the lot. Landscaping details include mature trees and shrubs, foundation plantings, and a flagstone patio on the rear of the building. A shed is located in the southeast corner of the property.

### DWELLING

This vernacular single-family dwelling, constructed c. 1890, is two-and-one-half stories high, two-bays wide and two-bays deep. Set on a solid concrete foundation, the wood-frame structure has been reclad in asbestos shingles. A front-gable roof covered with asphalt shingles features overhanging eaves, an ogee-molded cornice, and enclosed gable ends. A decorative spindle-bracket is located in the upper gable end of the façade (north elevation). Fenestration of the building consists of replacement, 1/1, double-hung, vinyl-sash windows. The windows have wide, square-edge wood surrounds with prominent sills.

The façade (north elevation) features a one-story, full-width porch. The porch is set on a wood pier foundation with lattice infill. The half-hip roof of the porch is covered with asphalt shingles. It is supported by square wood posts with accompanying square balusters. The porch originally had no balusters. Small spindled brackets like that found in the upper gable end ornament the porch, which is accessed via wood steps. The spindles replaced sawn brackets. (See c. 1928 photograph at end of document). The first story of the façade is fenestrated by a window opening in the easternmost bay. The westernmost bay is pierced with a single-leaf, paneled wood door with a square-edge, wood surround. The entry opening is set close to the corner of the house. The second story has two window openings, symmetrically located. The upper gable end, which features a closed gable with molded cornice, has a small window opening.

The west (side) elevation is pierced with two window openings on the first story and one on the second story. The second-story opening abuts the cornice. A small dormer is capped by a front-gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The roof includes overhanging eaves. Asbestos shingles clad the dormer cheeks. The dormer is fenestrated with a 1/1, double-hung, vinyl-sash window with a square-edge wood surround.

The east (side) elevation is pierced by two window openings on the first story and one on the second story. A small opening in the foundation has a three-light, metal-sash fixed window.

The south (rear) elevation is obscured on the first story by a one-story addition. Based on its form and materials, it appears this addition was constructed in the mid- to late twentieth century. The addition projects approximately two feet to the east from the main block. The solid concrete foundation has been obscured by plywood along the south (rear) and west (side) elevations. This wood-frame addition is clad in asbestos shingles with wide wood corner boards. A front-gable roof covered with asphalt shingles caps the addition.

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The roof includes overhanging eaves and a metal gutter system. The west (side) elevation is three-bays deep. This elevation has a small, 1/1, double-hung, vinyl-sash window with a square-edge wood surround that projects approximately four inches. The center bay is pierced by a two-light, vinyl-sash casement window with a square-edge wood surround that projects approximately four inches from the plane of the wall. The southernmost bay has a two-light, vinyl-sash window with narrow, square-edge wood surround. The south (rear) elevation is fenestrated with double-leaf, sliding metal doors with 21-light (false muntins). The operable doors are framed by fixed 21-light windows (false muntins). The doors feature a square-edge wood surround. This opening is accessed via wood steps with wooden hand rails. The east (side) elevation is fenestrated with two, 1/1, double-hung, vinyl-sash windows with square-edge wood surrounds. These openings also have narrow wood sills.

The second story of the south elevation, above the one-story addition, features two window openings that abut the cornice of the closed gable. The upper gable end has a small, 1/1, double-hung, vinyl-sash window with wide square-edge wood surround.

#### SHED

The shed is located southeast of the dwelling. Based on its form and materials, it appears this building was constructed in the mid-twentieth century. The wood-frame structure is clad with vertical boards and capped with a front-gable roof. The roof is covered with asphalt sheets and features deep, overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. Fenestration of the façade (north elevation) consists of a double-leaf, vertical-board door with metal strap hinges. Based on its materials, it appears this door is a replacement. The entry is accessed via a small, poured concrete ramp. The east (side) elevation is clad with horizontal wood boards on the bottom half. The top half is clad in vertical boards. The remaining elevations were not accessible due to fencing.

#### INTEGRITY

The Sauer House retains a moderate level of integrity of design, workmanship, and materials due to the replacement of the original windows, recladding of the exterior with asbestos shingles, additional ornamentation to the porch and upper gable, and construction of the rear addition. The building maintains a high level of integrity of feeling, location, setting, and association to convey the qualities for which it is judged significant.

The associated shed retains a moderate level of integrity. The building retains its integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association as it still functions as the Sauer House shed. The shed's integrity of materials, workmanship, and design have been affected, but not compromised, its fair condition.

Overall, the Sauer House and associated resource retain a moderate level of integrity.

## 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>	c. 1890	<b>Architect/Builder</b>	Unknown
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<b>Construction dates</b>	c. 1890, c. 1965
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Evaluation for:

<input type="checkbox"/> National Register	<input type="checkbox"/> Maryland Register	<input type="checkbox"/> not evaluated
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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 Sauer House, constructed c. 1890, is located at 5625 Ruatan Street in Berwyn Heights. This single-family dwelling is representative of the late-nineteenth-century development that occurred in this community. Although the property is now surrounded by dwellings of different architectural styles and forms from early to late twentieth century, the primary resource retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as a single-family dwelling constructed during the first phase of the development of Berwyn Heights. This development occurred in 1888 with the establishment of the Charlton Heights (now known as Berwyn Heights). Constructed as speculative development, the Sauer House, unlike many of the houses constructed during this time period, was not an income-producing asset for its owners but was actually owner-occupied. Also unlike many of the houses in Berwyn Heights, the Sauer House has only been owned by four families since its construction c. 1890. The Sauer House as maintained sufficient integrity to convey its significance as a late-nineteenth-century dwelling constructed in the town of Berwyn Heights.

### HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Sauer House is located in present-day Berwyn Heights, which was subdivided by Edward Graves. In 1887, Edward Graves of Washington, DC, 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> He sold most of 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> Within the year, the construction of almost twenty houses was completed. Charlton Heights was heavily promoted as a “modern suburban town of the United States,” a “beautiful suburban retreat” and an “earthly paradise” with easy access to the District of Columbia via a new Baltimore & Ohio Railroad station.<sup>4</sup> By 1890, Charlton Heights contained a population of “some of the leading people in every walk of life in this vicinity,” who “owing to the number of trains daily, affording quick and easy transportation to the city of Washington...generally experience no difficulty in reaching their desks in good time for any work they may be called upon to perform and for this reason they never tire in sounding the praises of Charlton Heights as a

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desirable place of residence.”<sup>5</sup> In 1896, by an act of the Maryland General Assembly, the town was incorporated as Berwyn Heights.<sup>6</sup> A two-block concentration of dwellings remains along Ruatan Street, between Berwyn Road and 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue; the Sauer House is one of the oldest buildings in the subdivision. 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>7</sup> A second phase of construction occurred in the 1920s, followed by the final period of development in the post World War II years.

The Sauer House, located at what is now 5625 Ruatan Street (formerly Keleher Avenue), was amongst those that the Charlton Heights Improvement Company was unable to sell before its collapse in 1892.<sup>8</sup> The property was conveyed on April 15, 1892 by the Charlton Heights Improvement Company to Edward Graves as part of a large land deal for \$40,000. Graves, a nephew of Benjamin Charlton, was born in Hancock, Maryland, in 1844.<sup>9</sup> A well-respected businessman in Washington DC, he served as president of the Havenner Baking Company, director of the National Bank in Washington and of the Norfolk and Washington Steamboat Company, as well as a member of the Board of Trade. In 1901, fourteen years after the platting of the community, Edward Graves conveyed Lots 13 and 14 to James G. Brelsford for \$1,000.<sup>10</sup> At the time of the 1910 census, Brelsford (born 1858) is documented as working as a clerk in a pension office. He resided with his wife, Emma (born 1859) and their two children, Jean (born 1879) and Hazel (born 1882).<sup>11</sup>

In 1924, James Brelsford entered into a deed of agreement with John Lorenz Sauer and Ruth Sauer.<sup>12</sup> The agreement stipulated that the Sauers would live in the house on Ruatan Street for the monthly fee of \$44.50. The monthly payments would continue until the \$4,200 selling price was reached. In 1936, the property was conveyed to the Sauers, having fulfilled their debt to Brelsford.<sup>13</sup> It was during the ownership of the Sauer family that the one-story rear addition was added and the asbestos shingles replaced (or covered) the original weatherboard siding.

A machine shop mechanic, Sauer and his wife, Ruth (born 1898) raised their family in Berwyn Heights. They had three daughters: Bettie Prosis, Ruth Ellsworth, and Leah J. Harcourt.<sup>14</sup> Bettie Prosis was a president of the Bowie Belle Aire Chapter of Sweet Adelines, Inc., a worldwide organization of women singers committed to advancing the musical art form of barbershop harmony through education and performance. In 1981, following the death of John and Ruth Sauer, the property was conveyed by Myrtle Elizabeth Prosis to Glenne M. Bannon and his wife, Donna M. Bannon.<sup>15</sup> No information concerning the Bannons could be located.

In 2004, the Bannon conveyed the property to Kevin Clauss.<sup>16</sup> Clauss worked in the janitorial business during the 1980s.<sup>17</sup> Mr. Clauss currently resides at the Sauer House.

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Harris Davidson, *Then & Now: Berwyn Heights* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 24.

<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.

<sup>4</sup> "Everybody Benefited: Comfortable Homes Guaranteed Those Who May Desire Them." *The Washington Post* (1877-1954), July 20, 1890, <http://www.proquest.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/> (accessed January 7, 2009); "ON CHARLTON HEIGHTS: A Suburban Resort Unequaled for Its Natural Advantages." *The Washington Post* (1877-1954), June 22, 1890, <http://www.proquest.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/> (accessed January 7, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> "Terraced Villa Sites: Panoramas Which Delight Residents of Charlton Heights." *The Washington Post* (1877-1954), July 13, 1890, <http://www.proquest.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/> (accessed January 7, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Susan G. Pearl, "Chlopicki House," (PG: 67-12) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (1986), 8:1.

<sup>7</sup> Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Prince George's County Planning Department, *Historic Sites and Districts Plan* (1992).

<sup>8</sup> Ann Harris Davidson, *Then & Now: Berwyn Heights* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 24.

<sup>9</sup> "Edward Graves Dead: Apoplexy Claims Washington Man at Atlantic City." *The Washington Post* (1877-1954), November 7, 1910, <http://www.proquest.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/> (accessed January 7, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Edward Graves to James G. Brelsford., Prince George's County Land Records, 5:478.

<sup>11</sup> 1910 U.S. Federal Census, Election District 1, Prince George's, Maryland, Series T624, Roll 567, Page 21A, Enumeration District 60, Image 44, James G. Brelsford.

<sup>12</sup> James G. Brelsford to John Lorenz and Ruth Sauer, Prince George's County Land Records, 231:99.

<sup>13</sup> James G. Brelsford and S. Marvin Peach, Administrator, C.T.A., to John Lorenz Sauer and Ruth Sauer, Prince George's County Land Records, 468:305.

<sup>14</sup> 1930 U.S. Federal Census, Berwyn Heights, Prince George's County, Maryland, Series 878, Page 2A, Enumeration District 55, Image 477.0, John Lorenz Sauer.

<sup>15</sup> Myrtle Elizabeth Prosis, Representative of the Estate of John Lorenz Sauer, to Glenne M. Bannon and Donna M. Bannon, Prince George's County Land Records, NLP 5375:257.

<sup>16</sup> Glenne M. Bannon and Donna M. Bannon to Kevin Clauss, Prince George's County Land Records, REP 19101:449.

<sup>17</sup> "Classified Ad 1080." *The Washington Post* (1974-Current file), October 30, 1988, <http://www.proquest.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/> (accessed January 9, 2009).

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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1880, 1910, 1930 U.S. 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>.  
Hopkins, G.M. *Prince George's County, from Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington*. Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1878.  
Martenet, Simon J. *Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland*. Baltimore: Simon J. Martenet, 1861.  
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Prince George's County Planning Department, *Historic Sites and Districts Plan*, 1992.  
Prince George's County Land Records.

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property	<u>0.234</u>	
Acreage of historical setting	<u>0.234</u>	
Quadrangle name	<u>Washington East</u>	Quadrangle scale: <u>1:24,000</u>

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The Sauer House is situated on a 0.234-acre parcel. The northern boundary of the property is formed by Ruatan Street. The western boundary follows a chain-link and wood fence line. The southern boundary also follows a chain-link fence. The eastern boundary extends along a chain-link fence and then along a line running perpendicular to the eastern edge of the gravel driveway. This property has been associated with Parcel 13 as noted on Tax Map 33 since its construction c. 1890.

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## 11. Form Prepared by

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name/title	Paul Weishar and Maria Dayton/Architectural Historians		
organization	EHT Traceries, Inc. for M-NCPPC Planning Department	date	March 2009
street & number	1121 Fifth Street, NW	telephone	(202) 393-1199
city or town	Washington	state	DC

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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  
410-514-7600

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CHAIN OF TITLE  
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY LAND RECORDS

Deed  
JWB 10:309  
July 20, 1888

Plat of Charlton Heights.

Deed  
21:225  
April 15, 1892

Charlton Heights Improvement Company to Edward Graves.

Deed  
5:478  
April 30, 1901

Edward Graves to James G. Brelsford.

Deed of Agreement  
October 31, 1924

James G. Brelsford to John Lorenz Sauer and Ruth Sauer.

Deed  
468:305  
December 5, 1936

S. Marvin Peach, Administrator, C.T.A., to John Lorenz Sauer and Ruth Sauer.

Deed  
NLP 5375:257  
February 17, 1981

Myrtle Elizabeth Prosis, Representative of the Estate of John Lorenz Sauer, to  
Glenne M. Bannon and Donna M. Bannon.

Deed  
REP 19101:449  
March 15, 2004

Glenne M. Bannon and Donna M. Bannon to Kevin Clauss.



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Photo: Sauer House, Berwyn Heights, view of the façade (north elevation), looking southwest. (April 2008)

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Photo: Sauer House, Berwyn Heights, view of the façade (north elevation), looking southeast. (April 2008)



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Photo: Sauer House, Berwyn Heights, view of the south (rear) elevation, looking northeast. (April 2008)



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Photo: Sauer House, Berwyn Heights, view of the south (rear) elevation, looking northwest. (April 2008)



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Photo: Shed, Berwyn Heights, looking south. (April 2008)

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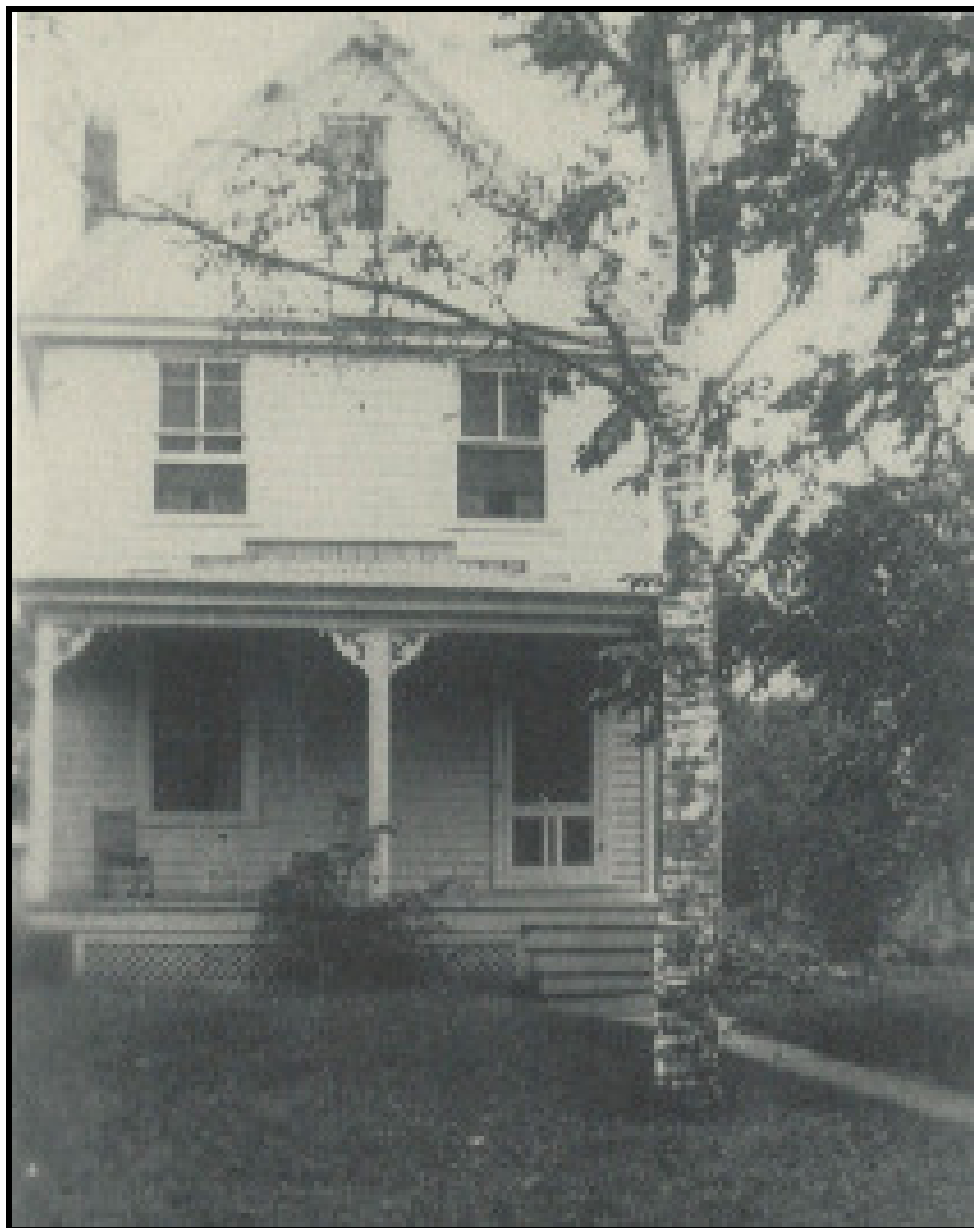


Photo: 1928 Image, Sauer House, Berwyn Heights, view of the façade (north elevation), looking South.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Harris Davidson, *Then & Now: Berwyn Heights* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 24.