

WILLIAM W. EARLY HOUSE
13907 Cherry Tree Crossing
Brandywine
Prince Georges County
Maryland

HABS NO. MD-989

HABS
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17-BRAN,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS AND
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILLIAM W. EARLY HOUSE

HABS NO. MD-989

Location: 13907 Cherry Tree Crossing, Brandywine, Prince George's County, Maryland

Present Owner: Guy P. & Rhoda Clark (also present occupant)

Present Use: Private residence

Significance: The William W. Early House is probably the best example of turn-of-the-century Queen-Anne-style domestic architecture in the county. This highly ornamented dwelling reflects its status as the home William W. Early, of one of the most successful and prominent members of this small railroading community.

PART I, HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The current dwelling was constructed in 1907 to replace an earlier home.

2. Original and subsequent owners:

1893 Equity #1904
Charles S. and Georgia Early vs. Sarah A.M. Early for the purpose of dividing the real estate of William H. Early, who died in 1890 possessed of real estate comprising the village of Brandywine.
To
William W. Early, son of James A. Early, deceased son of William H. Early, 1/4 of 1/4 of the estate, including lot #7, 23 acres.

1920 Estate file #3182
William E. Early died leaving widow, Maria H. Early, and children Chesley and William W., Jr.

1946 Deed #826:413, 27 March 1946
William W. Early, Jr., (sole surviving son and heir of William W. Early, deceased)
To
Richard and Madeline Bennett
19 acres being part of lot #7

- 1949 Deed #1150:355, 18 August 1949
Richard and Madeline Bennett
To
Kenneth and Susan Smith
10 acres, part of lot #7
- 1972 Deed #4163:508, 16 December 1972
Kenneth and Susan Smith
To
H. Meinhardt and J. Walder
4.37 acres, part of lot #7
- 1973 Deed #4280:390, 18 September 1973
H. Meinhardt and J. Walder
To
Ralph and Doris Pardee
3.27 acres, as per Meekins survey
- 1977 Deed #4721:596, 7 June 1977
Ralph and Doris Pardee
To
Frederick and Susanne Hodgdon
3.27 acres
- 1980 Deed #5287:288, 31 July 1980
Frederick and Susanne Hodgdon
To
Guy P. and Rhoda Clark
3.27 acres

3. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The house was built for William W. Early. It is suspected that the house came from a mail-order catalog as it resembles other pattern book houses in the county. The fact that it was mail order could also help account for the appearance of a predominately late 19th-century style dwelling constructed in 1907. Its location along the railroad would have made for easy delivery.

4. Alterations and additions: A wall, which separated the large living room into living and dining rooms has been removed, along with a fireplace. During the late 1940s, a portion of the second floor was converted into an apartment with part of the northwest porch being made into a kitchen. In the late 1970s it was converted back into a porch using antique materials. A doorway in the kitchen was closed off and the breakfast room at the northeast corner was added.

B. Historical Context:

The small town of Brandywine developed in the 1870s as a stop on the Pope's Creek Branch of the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad. The line had been planned prior to the Civil War by planters anxious to establish rail connection between Southern Maryland and Baltimore (the B&O had long since established rail line in the northern part of the county). They were not able to get the capital together, however, undoubtedly due to the economic effects of the Civil War. In the early 1870s, the Pennsylvania Railroad--seeking routes in the Baltimore-Washington area--built the Baltimore & Potomac with a Washington line and this line, from Baltimore to Upper Marlboro and on to Pope's Creek in Charles County. Later, the Southern Maryland Railroad (appearing on the Hopkins 1878 Atlas as proposed) would cross the B&P in the center of Brandywine. Brandywine, like most of Prince George's County, was surrounded by agricultural lands. Thus, the town developed as a small center for transport of agricultural produce and to serve the commercial and business needs of the community.

Among the most prosperous families of Brandywine was the Early family. The Hopkins Atlas of 1878 shows "Brandywine City" dotted with farms and a residence owned by William H. Early (grandfather of William W.) and other Early family properties, including the town's store and Post Office. The Hopkins Atlas lists William H. as a merchant and farmer with 8,000 acres, having settled in the county in 1820. Upon his death in 1890, his estate included most of the land that was platted into the lots of the village of Brandywine. It was divided among his three living children, 1/4 each, with the last 1/4 being divided among the four children of his deceased son James. William W. Early was the oldest son of James, and he received lot #7, a 23-acre parcel--on which James Early had built his home--soon after his marriage in the early 1870s.

William W. Early worked for the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad, first as a conductor and eventually as general manager of the Southern Maryland Railroad. His prosperity allowed him to build the finest home in Brandywine. In 1907 he dismantled his family home and began construction of the current dwelling house. Other family members followed suit, and soon the town was dotted with Victorian residences. None, however, were as fine as that of William W. Early. The west room of Early's house served as his office during the time he

managed the railroad. He retired in poor health in 1917, and died soon after, in 1920 (Pearl).

Upon his death, the house and property was passed to his widow, Maria, and their two children, Chesley and William W., Jr. It remained the family home until March of 1946 when William W., Jr., then the only surviving heir, sold the property. It has passed through a number of hands since that time, having been purchased by the current owners, Guy and Rhoda Clark, in 1980 (Pearl).

The elaborate Queen Anne design of the house reflects the popular styles of the day, as seen largely in suburban areas. It is suspected that William W. Early's house was built from a pattern book design as was common during that period. The rise of suburban development which took place nationwide during the late-19th and early-20th centuries, spurred on by the development of commuter rail lines, created a whole new housing market. The suburban house was unlike the urban row house or the rambling country house. It was something between, with an orientation to the street--like the urban house, but sitting on its own plot of land--like a country house (Gowans p. 29). To meet the ever increasing demand for suburban house types, mail order and pattern book mass marketing was developed. It was an affordable means of creating professionally designed homes, and thus became one of the primary means for designing and constructing housing of that period.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The William W. Early House is probably the best surviving example of a turn-of-the-century Queen-Anne-style residence. Its asymmetrical massing, towers and extending bays, wrap-around porch, jig-sawn trim, and decorative shingles are indicative of the Queen Anne style.

2. Condition of fabric: The house appears to be good, original condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: It is a large, roughly square structure, with a two-and-a-half-story main block with projecting north and rear wings, and a hip roof with

projecting gables. Its projecting bays, wings and corner tower give it an asymmetrical massing.

2. Foundations: The house rests on a brick foundation.

3. Walls: The exterior walls are covered with German siding with patterned shingles in the gable ends.

4. Structural systems, framing: The house is of balloon, wood-frame construction.

5. Porches, balconies: The house has an elaborate jig-sawn trim porch which runs the length of the facade and wraps around both sides of the house. To the center of the porch roof is a gable front with shingles and jig-sawn trim. The porch is supported by bracketed, turned posts and balusters, with spindle-work to match the balustrade running along the top. To the rear, northwest corner of the house are two stories of porches. The first story is supported by plain squared posts with a cut-out balustrade. The second story is supported by turned posts and balustrade to match.

6. Chimneys: The house has four tall, asymmetrically placed, interior corbelled brick chimneys. There are two at the west side, one to either side of the cross-gable wing. A third is located at the north rear, northeast corner of the main block. The fourth chimney is located at the east side of the north wing.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main entry is to the center of the south facade. The frontispiece consists of a single-light transom, with small corner lights, and single-light sidelights with wood panels below. The front door is five panel. There is also an entry from the kitchen onto the rear porch.

b. Windows: The house has two-over-two-light double-hung-sash windows, with one-over-one-light double-hung-sash windows on the projecting bays and tower. The tower, located at the southeast corner, has three windows at each level, as does the extending bay at the facade, to the west of the front entry. In the gable front of the south front bay window is a small four-light casement window, with a slightly arched windowhead. In the west gable end is a similar opening but with louvers

instead of lights. The windows have plain board surrounds with narrow molding at the lintel. The house has louvered shutters all around.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The main block has a hipped roof with gable projections at the west and north wings and at the south front extended bay. The roof is covered with patterned metal. The ridge of the main, hipped roof is embellished with a spiral acroteria, one each facing front and rear, with a lighting rod between. Single acroteria and lighting rods appear at the gable ends.

b. Cornice, eaves: The house has a boxed return cornice, with a plain frieze board below. The eaves of the gable ends are ornamented with verge boards.

c. Towers: There is a two-story, octagonal tower to the southeast front of the house, crowned by a conical roof, with an ornamental finial.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The front door enters into a small vestibule--with an inner, double door--beyond which is a large center stairhall with a fireplace along the west wall. The stairway is to the west side of the hall, and to the rear of the hall is a doorway into a small, perpendicular hall, and into the kitchen wing. A large double parlor runs the length of the east side of the main block, entered from both and front and rear of the hall. The tower bay window lights the southeast corner, and there is a fireplace at the north rear wall. A doorway in the northwest corner of the stairhall leads into the former office, where there is a fireplace on the east wall, and an extended bay, on the west. At the northeast corner is a doorway into a small hall behind the stairway, with a doorway to the rear porch, access to a back stairway, and the doorway into the rear kitchen wing. The kitchen forms the western section of the wing, with a bath to the southeast and a modern breakfast room addition to the northeast (where there was formerly a porch).

2. Stairways: There are two stairways, a main stair in the entry hall, and a back stair in the service wing between the kitchen and the main block. The main stair

is a closed-string, two-flight stair which runs along the west wall of the hall to a landing where it turns 90 degrees and continues up to the second story hall. The wall going up the stair has paneled wainscoting, and the wall to the side of the stair has paneled spandrels. The stairway has a squared newel post with recessed panels, round newel cap and turned balusters. The enclosed, back stair runs along the north wall of the hall behind the main stair.

3. Flooring: There is narrow board flooring throughout (the entry hall is currently covered with wall-to-wall carpeting).

4. Wall and ceiling finish: There is paneled wainscoting, with cornerboards, in the entry/stair hall and in the office room. There is also a crown cornice molding.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The doorways are surrounded with square molded bands, with crown molding above the doorways.

b. Windows: The windows surrounds match the doorways.

6. Decorative features and trim: There are three ornate Victorian-era mantels on the first floor. One is in the living room on the far north wall, one in the office on the east wall and one is in the entry/stair hall on the west wall (there was a fourth on the wall that once divided the parlor into two rooms). All three are of marbleized slate incised with diamond-on-square and linear patterns, painted in black and gold. The hearths are of rectangular, glazed tile, some in variegated patterns.

7. Hardware: The doors have oval brass plates and knobs with decorative beading.

8. Mechanical systems:

a. Heating: In the office room there is an ornate cast-iron fireplace insert and surround which reads, "Open Franklin No. 16" and is part of a heat-o-lator system which feeds heat into the bedroom above as well.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house sits on a large flat lot (3.27 acres), facing south-southeast, with trees around the perimeter and to the front of the house. The street, Cherry Tree Crossing Road, lies to the east with the driveway running in front of the house and around to the garage to the west of the house. It is located one block from the main street through town (Brandywine Road), which is lined with mostly commercial structures.

2. Historic landscape design: William Early's lot, lot #7 in the division of the real estate of his deceased grandfather, originally contained twenty-three acres. The house was sold on a ten-acre lot by his heirs in 1946, and it was gradually reduced to its current 3.27 acres. At the time that the house was constructed it sat on a large lot on the outside of a thriving railroad town. The town has dwindled since, and the large lot was later subdivided to accommodate other Early family residences.

3. Outbuildings: There is a frame shed building, and a later, board-and-batten garage to the west of the house.

PART IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Pearl, Susan G. (P.G. Co. HPC) Maryland Historical Trust/National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, prepared September 1986 & November 1987.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Gowans, Alan. The Comfortable House; North American Suburban Architecture, 1890-1930. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987.

Hopkins, G.M. Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1878.

Pearl, Susan G. "Victorian Pattern Book Houses in Prince George's County" Friends of Preservation Newsletter, Spring 1989.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the William W. Early House was undertaken as part of a cooperative project between the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert J. Kapsch, Chief, and the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission on behalf of the Prince George's County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). A memorandum of agreement was signed in August of 1988 and the project, to span one year, began in January of 1989. The site selections were made by Gail Rothrock, director and Susan G. Pearl, research historian of the HPC, who also provided access to their research and information on file with the HPC, as well as their extensive knowledge of county history. The large-format photography was undertaken by HABS photographer, Jack E. Boucher. The historical report was prepared by HABS historian, Catherine C. Lavoie who accompanied the photographer into the field for on site investigation.