

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

2162

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NOV 28 1989

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name George Wurts summer home
other names/site number Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory 1303-12

2. Location

street & number 306 Eighth Avenue
city, town Asbury Park
state New Jersey code 034 county Monmouth code 025 zip code 07712

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private (checked)
Category of Property: building(s) (checked)
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing 0, Total 1

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources
Date: 11/14/89

In my opinion, the property meets (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official:
Date:
State or Federal agency and bureau:

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
Entered in the National Register. (checked)
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper:
Date of Action: 12/28/89

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

(summer home)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

(year-round home)

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls wood shingles (cedar, unpainted)

roof asphalt shingles

other wooden porch

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

One of the grander homes of Asbury Park, 306 8th Avenue is a 2 1/2 story, 3 bay, irregular plan, wood frame, Colonial Revival residential building. Locally known as the George Wurts house, the 18 room single family house features an asymmetrical facade typical of Colonial Revival homes built prior to 1900. This pre turn-of-the-century house resembles the free classic Queen Anne style rather than colonial prototypes which typified later Colonial Revival houses. The structure is located in northeast Asbury Park, two blocks east of the Atlantic Ocean and one block south of Deal Lake. At the turn-of-the-century this neighborhood was one of the wealthiest in Asbury Park and featured large and distinct homes built by prominent summer residents.

The cedar shingle clad exterior is dominated by stacked irregular horizontal architectural elements which provide three-dimensionality and textural variety to an otherwise rectangular plan regulated by a narrow urban lot. The ground floor features a Doric order wrap-around porch with a curved east corner. Behind the columns is the two bay bow front of the house ornamented by an elaborate tri-partite entrance of a curved northeast corner window, a central door and stained glass sidelights immediately to the west of the door; the elements are separated by fluted Doric pilasters. The porch is supported by proportioned (with entasis) Doric columns connected by a square spindle balustrade at the bottom and a full entablature composed of a simple architrave, a dentillated frieze and a plain cornice. The easternmost bay is set back from the bow front and contains a wide 6/1 double hung cottage window.

The second floor features the same two bay bow front facade but with an asymmetrical arrangement of windows. The eastern corner is fenestrated with a curved glass 6/1 double hung sash with an attached 6/1 window facing the street. The opposite (west) corner features a bowed rectangular Queen Anne cottage window located immediately below the entablature. Evenly spaced between the two windows is a 1/1 double hung sash with a round arched carved wooden fanlight. The easternmost bay features a set back cluster column supported open porch with a single segmental arched opening facing the street and a single round arched opening facing east. The entablature of the second floor is identical to that of the first.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Communications
Literature
Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1899 - 1914

Significant Dates

1899-1900

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Wurts, George: Noted newspaper editor, writer and N.J. Sec. of State, 1897-1902

Architect/Builder

Smith, Clarence W., architect

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

306 Eighth Avenue, the summer home built by George Wurts and his wife, Elizabeth, in 1899-1900, is significant architecturally as one of the finest Colonial Revival homes erected in the area between Sunset Lake and Deal Lake and close to the beachfront at the north end of Asbury Park. At the turn-of-the-century, this neighborhood was one of the wealthiest in the city and featured homes of similar scale and ornamentation. Although many of the homes have been altered and converted to multiple family use, this structure is one of the best remaining single family houses from the neighborhood's early period of development. The structure is also significant in the areas of communications, literature, and politics/government as the summer home of George Wurts, editor and half-owner of the Paterson Press, writer, and one of New Jersey's Secretaries of State.

The land on which the Wurts house stands was part of 653 acres bought in 1871 (1) by James A. Bradley, founder of Asbury Park. The tract stretched south from Deal Lake to the present community of Bradley Beach, bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean. The Wurts purchased their lot from Bradley in 1895 (2), after having lived next door at 308 Eighth Avenue since 1886. Most of the houses in that section of the city were built before 1930 and few remain in as original form as the Wurts house.

On May 24, 1895, Elizabeth C. Wurts and her husband obtained a \$2750.00 mortgage (3) from Bradley for the full purchase price of the lot at 306 Eighth Avenue. It was against their existing summer home next door and the new lot, although a deed in the name of Elizabeth C. Wurts alone, was not given by Bradley until July 1. A \$5000.00 mortgage was issued by Mr. and Mrs. Wurts on Feb. 23, 1900, to the Morris County Savings Bank, apparently for construction money (4). It was against the east lot and

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet 9.1.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .20 acre Asbury Park, NJ Quad

UTM References

A

18	5	8	4	9	2	3
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1	8	4	4	5	3	4
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

1. S 22 W 150' Asbury Park Tax Map Block 210, Lot 18
2. N 68 W 53'
3. N 22 E 150'
4. S 68 E 53'

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

1984 survey by William H. Zieman Jr. L.S., for the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew E. Ruscil Jr., who occupy the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James S. Brown/ revised by Ulana D. Zakalak, Historic Preservation Consultant
 organization Zakalak Associates date July 29, 1989
 street & number 57 Cayuga Avenue telephone (201) 571-3176
 city or town Oceanport state New Jersey zip code 07757

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George Wurt's Summer Home, Asbury Park,
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The third, or half-story above the second, is dominated by a truncated hipped roof with balustrades and a variety of dormers. The front facing gabled dormer is composed of a tri-partite window grouping with diamond-paned upper sash surmounted by a pedimented entablature. The east dormer features four 4/1 windows with a broken pediment entablature. The west and south dormers are single pedimented gabled dormers with traceried upper sash. The entablatures of the attic story and the dormers are identical to those used in the rest of the house.

The west facade is dominated by a two story, half-hexagonal bay fenestrated by paired diamond-paned casements with stained glass transoms and a half-hexagonal oriel window. The east facade is unrelieved and the south facade contains a half-hexagonal bay window in the easternmost bay.

The exterior appearance of the house is unaltered except for a steel fire escape installed on the rear side to comply with the local fire code. There is a full cellar with brick walls, and a few remnants of the original gas illumination system remain there. While in use as a summer residence, the house was heated only with fireplaces served by two interior chimneys. A modern heating system was installed at some later date.

Interior

(First Floor)

Reception Hall, 12'-0" by 17'-6". This spacious entryway across the front of the house leads to a curving staircase (to the west) and to a five-foot wide center hall that extends from the back of the room completely through the house, providing access to all the public rooms on this floor. The staircase rises, with a series of landings, in an open stairwell ending on the third floor. The wall beneath the stairs at the west end of the room is finished with raised paneling and all woodwork is painted white.

Facing the front door is a fireplace of reddish-brown brick trimmed with unglazed terra cotta mouldings of the same color and a double row of delft tiles with Biblical scenes above the firebox. To the left of the center hallway is a four-foot statuary niche with an arched top trimmed with turned spindles and dentil molding. The room is lighted by a Tiffany-type hanging fixture. The front of the room is rounded at each corner and a large 6/1 window of curved glass is at the northeast corner of the room.

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At the west side of the front door is a window of stained glass in a floral pattern.

Behind the reception room, in the center hallway, are matching entrances to the parlor (east) and the dining room (west), each flanked by fluted Ionic columns.

Parlor, 12'-0" by 14'-6". Ornate millwork in the Colonial Revival style provides formal treatment for this room. On the south wall is a fireplace trimmed with pale green marbled tiles and a firebox lined with iron plates decorated with a floral pattern. The mantle apron is decorated with applied floral garlands and ovals trimmed with bead molding. Turned, tapered columns in the Empire style flank the fireplace below the mantle shelf.

On either side of the fireplace are mullioned glass doors leading into the library behind the parlor. These are topped by fan-shaped transoms, each with a keystone in the Adam style. There are two 6/1 windows on the east wall and all the woodwork is painted white.

Library, 12'-0" by 18'-0". Located on the north wall, a fireplace, with a fleur-de-lis ornamented iron liner, shares a common chimney with the parlor fireplace. On the opposite wall is a large half-hexagonal bay window of 1/1 double hung sash overlooking the rear yard. Over the book shelves on the east wall are two stained glass windows in geometric patterns, each 2' by 3' and five feet above the floor. In this room less ornate trim was used on the two door surrounds leading into the parlor.

Dining room, approximately 15'-0" by 15'-6". The woodwork of the octagonal dining room, unlike the other public rooms in the house, which are painted, is finished with a brown stain designed to show the grain of the wood. The walls are finished with a recessed panel wainscot with plaster walls above except for a corner fireplace and corner cupboard built-in on either side of the 5-foot wide entry from the center hall. This reeded Ionic column flanked fireplace is ornamented with an overmantle mirror, a fleur-de-lis decorated iron liner and a mottled tile surround. (A loosened tile was marked "Maywood," indicating tilework in the house probably came from Maywood Art Tile Co. of Maywood, N.J., in business near Paterson from 1891 to 1905.) The corner cupboard is trimmed with a broken arch pediment and dentil molding above two doors glazed with small panes with gothic tops. Along the west wall are two pairs of diamond-paned casement windows separated by a 20" by 52" stained glass window in a

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geometric pattern six feet above the floor. The ceiling is decorated with 4" by 8" boxed beams with moulded trim. This room is now used as a sitting room and the room behind it, once the kitchen, now serves as the dining room.

Between the original dining room and kitchen is a 5' by 12' area that encloses a butler's pantry, a back staircase to the second floor and stairs leading to the cellar.

In converting the original 12' by 15 1/2' kitchen to a dining room, an 8' by 10' laundry room behind it at the rear of the house was turned into a modern kitchen with a porch opening on to the rear yard. Both the former kitchen and laundry room lack ornamentation.

(Second and Third Floors)

Morning room, 12'-0" by 14'-0". Located above the reception hall and adjoining the open stairwell, this room has the same curved front corners found below, with a large curved-pane window providing a view down Eighth Avenue to the ocean. On the east wall is a doorway to the arcaded open air balcony, which features a shingled balustrade typical of this style construction. The open staircase is illuminated by a large diamond-paned oriel window at the landing between the first and second floors and a curved glass Queen Anne cottage window at the landing between the second and third floors.

The remaining rooms on the second floor are four bedrooms and a bath opening off the center hall and following much the same plan as the first floor although lacking the ornamentation present in the rooms below. An exception is the southeast bedroom, now used as a parlor, which has a fireplace trimmed in light green tiles surrounding a firebox lined with floral-decorated iron plates, and an Empire-style mantle with beaded decoration. The southwest bedroom has been converted to a kitchen and bath, permitting use of this rear portion of the second floor as a private apartment.

Third-floor dormered bedrooms and a bath are arranged on either side of the center hall. These have even less ornamentation than the rooms on the second floor.

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Site

The site on which the house is located is on the southerly side of Eighth Avenue, Block 210, Lot 18. The property dimensions are 53.0' by 150.0'. The total area is .20 acre.

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"buildings erected and to be erected."

A report on the Wurts house in Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory (1980) states:

"The area north of Sunset Lake, between Main and Webb Streets, is dominated by single-family and two-family dwellings constructed between 1890 and 1930. This is one of the better remaining houses from the neighborhood's early period of development."

Information about construction of the Wurts house was found in the City of Asbury Parks' records storage in Convention Hall. Files of the city's Board of Health titled "Description of the Plumbing, Drainage, Ventilation, Lighting and Heating of the within described building" were signed by Elizabeth C. Wurts as owner and Clarence W. Smith as architect of the project. The records include floor plans of the house, and copies of the plans are submitted with this nomination. The earliest date on file was Dec. 19, 1899, when the house was well under construction. Also listed were inspection notations on Jan. 16, 17, 18, 19 and March 7, 1900. It was identified as Plan #1242.

Efforts to learn more about the architect Clarence W. Smith were unsuccessful. He is not listed in the files of the New Jersey Society of Architects, the New Jersey Board of Architects, or a number of state and local histories of the 1900 period.

George Wurts was born in Easton, Pa., in 1829 and moved to New Jersey while still a small boy. His career in journalism began at the start of the Civil War when he accepted a job as a reporter with the Newark Advertiser. Within a short time he obtained a better post with the Newark Mercury and upon the death of editor John Y. Foster, Wurts took over that position. While at the Mercury he was also a correspondent for the New York Times and the New York Evening Post.

After several years at the Mercury, Wurts was offered the position of associate editor with the newly-founded Brooklyn Daily Union, where he remained until 1865. At that time he became editor and half-owner of the Paterson Press, a leading Republican newspaper and one of the best in the city. Wurts served as editor of the Press until its merger with the

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Guardian about 1915. At the Guardian, a leading liberal Democratic paper, Wurts served as an associate editor until his death on May 17, 1923.

The obituary in the Paterson Morning Call identified him as "dean of newspaper editors in New Jersey and probably the oldest active newspaper man in the United States." Still writing at 93, his news career had spanned 62 years. In 1876 he served as president of the New Jersey Editorial Association.

In addition to his editorial work, Wurts frequently wrote prose and verse for some of the nation's leading periodicals, including Knickerbocker Magazine, Continental Monthly, Harper's Magazine and Weekly, Northern Monthly and Scribner's Magazine. In 1914 he wrote "The First Half Century of The First National Bank of Paterson, N.J.," a pamphlet relating the history of the bank.

George Wurts' appointments to state offices stemmed from his associations with two prominent Republican lawyers from Paterson, Garrett A. Hobart and John W. Griggs. When Wurts was named Secretary of the State Senate in 1880, a post he held for two years, Garret A. Hobart of Paterson was the state senator from Passaic County and became president of the Senate in 1881 when Republicans took control of the upper house of the legislature. More than a decade later, Hobart became William McKinley's vice president.

When Hobart left the state Senate in 1882 he was succeeded by Republican John W. Griggs, another Paterson lawyer who moved up from the Assembly. Hobart and Griggs had been fellow law students in the office of Socrates Tuttle in Paterson. Griggs stayed in the Senate until 1888 and in 1896 became the state's first Republican Governor since 1868. He named Wurts to his cabinet as commissioner of banking and less than six months later promoted him to Secretary of State.

Wurts remained Secretary of State even though Griggs resigned the governorship in 1898 to become Attorney General of the United States. Wurts continued as Secretary under Grigg's successor, Governor Foster M. Voorhees, also a Republican.

Wurts declined numerous requests to seek elective office though he was a founding trustee of the Paterson Free Public Library in 1885 and also served on the Passaic County Tax Board. He was also a member of the commission for construction of the Passaic County Court House.

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In Wurts' obituary in 1923, the Paterson Morning Call commented: "Mr. Wurts was a zealous Republican but never allowed partisanship to disturb his sound judgment, in view of which his advice was often sought in political matters."

(Wurts should not be confused with his contemporary, Democrat George T. Werts of Morris County who served as governor from 1893-1896.)

Elizabeth C. Wurts, wife of George Wurts, died Jan. 21, 1913, at their winter home at 149 Hamilton Avenue in Paterson. She was 78 and had been married for more than 55 years (5). They had two sons, William L. R. Wurts, music writer for the Newark Star-Eagle, and George Herbert Wurts, an assistant librarian at the Paterson Library.

A little over a year after his wife's death, Wurts sold the Asbury Park summer home. Owners of the property since then have been:

George B. Whitfield ux	1914-1920
Charles E. Lawrence ux	1920-1928
Mary F. Ockershausen	1928-1943
John P. Brown ux	1943-1944
Louis Becker ux	1944-1945
Joseph J. Roden ux	1945-1984
Andrew E. Ruscil ux	1984-

FOOTNOTES TO SECTION 8

1. Monmouth County deeds, Book 230, page 274
2. Monmouth County deeds, Book 559, page 207
3. Monmouth County mortgages, Book 190, page 432
4. Monmouth County mortgages, Book 245, page 182
5. Monmouth County Surrogate records, Will Book 54, page 126

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9. Major Bibliographic References

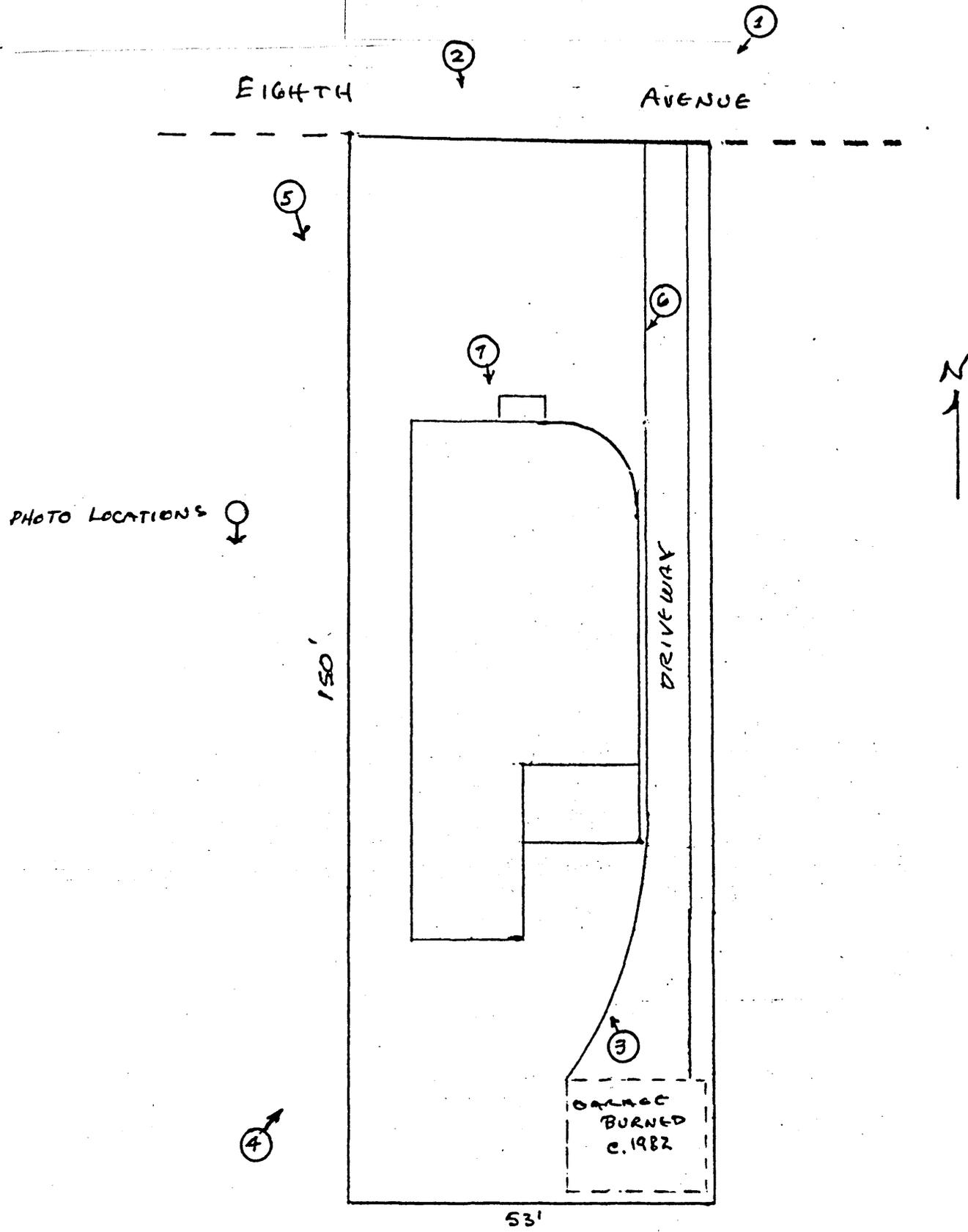
- Boyd. Boyd's Directory of Asbury Park. Asbury Park: no publ., 1896.
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- Sackett, William E. Modern Battles of Trenton II. New York: no publ., 1914.
- Scully, Vincent Jr. The Shingle Style and the Stick Style. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Shriner, Charles A. Paterson, New Jersey... Paterson: The Press and Publishing Company, 1890.
- Wolverton, Chester. Atlas of Monmouth County, New Jersey. Philadelphia: A. H. Mueller, 1889.

Newspapers

Paterson Morning Call files, 1913-1923, Paterson Public Library. (January 22, 1913 and May 17, 1923).

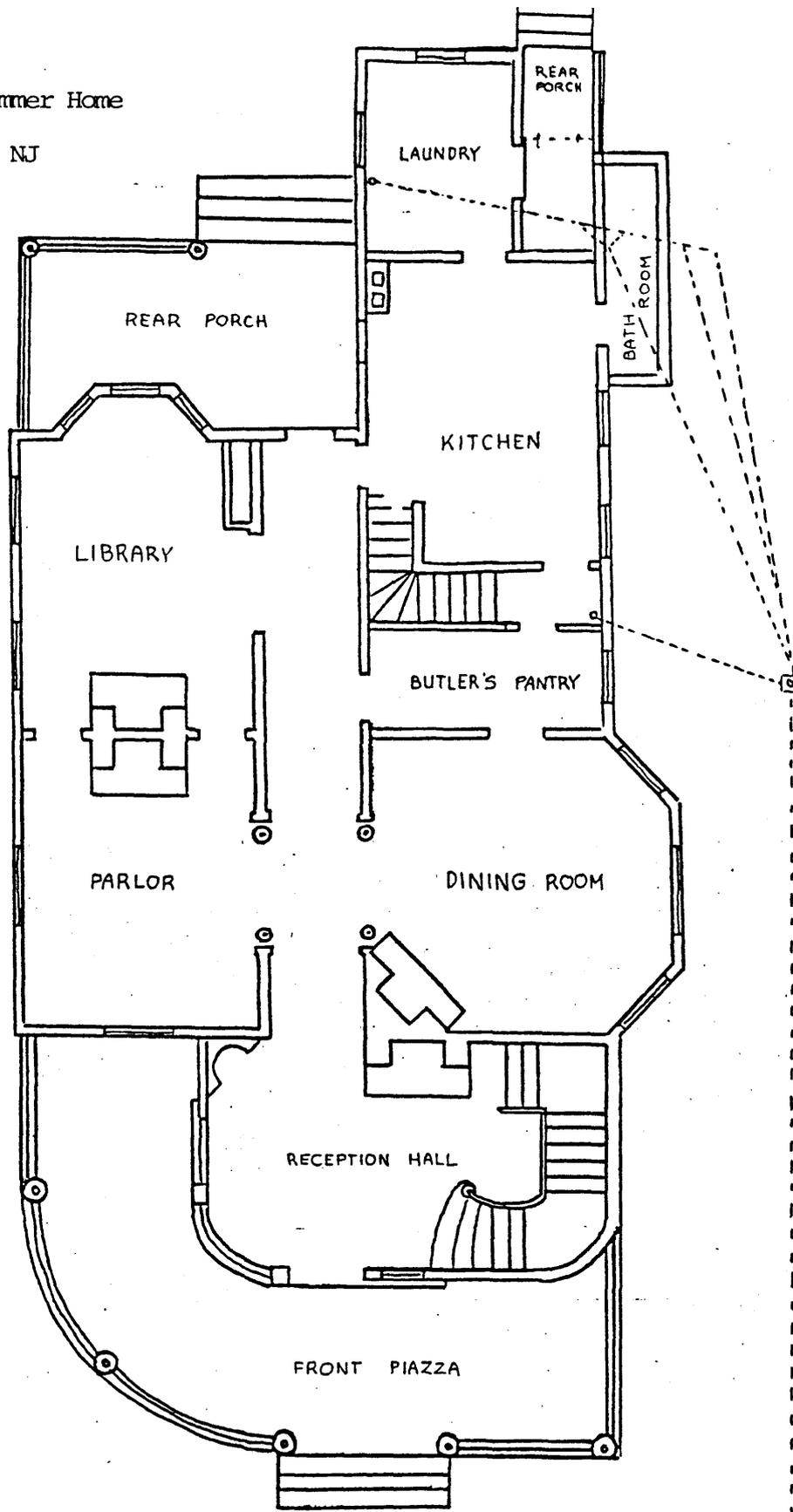
Miscellaneous Documents

Deeds, mortgages and wills, Monmouth County Hall of Records, Freehold, N.J.



George Wurt's Summer Home, Asbury Park, Monmouth County, New Jersey

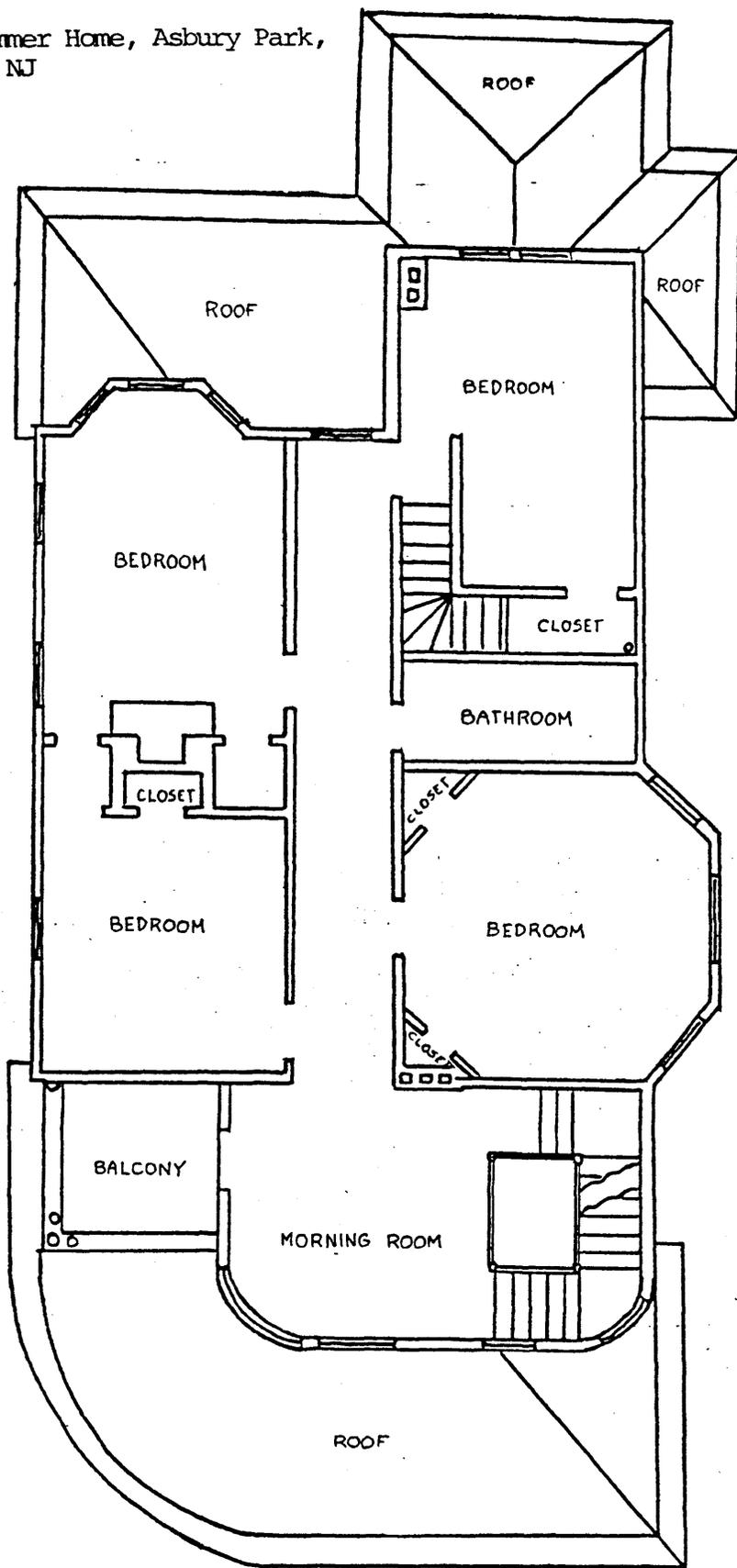
George Wurt's Summer Home
Asbury Park
Monmouth County, NJ



first floor

SCALE: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'$

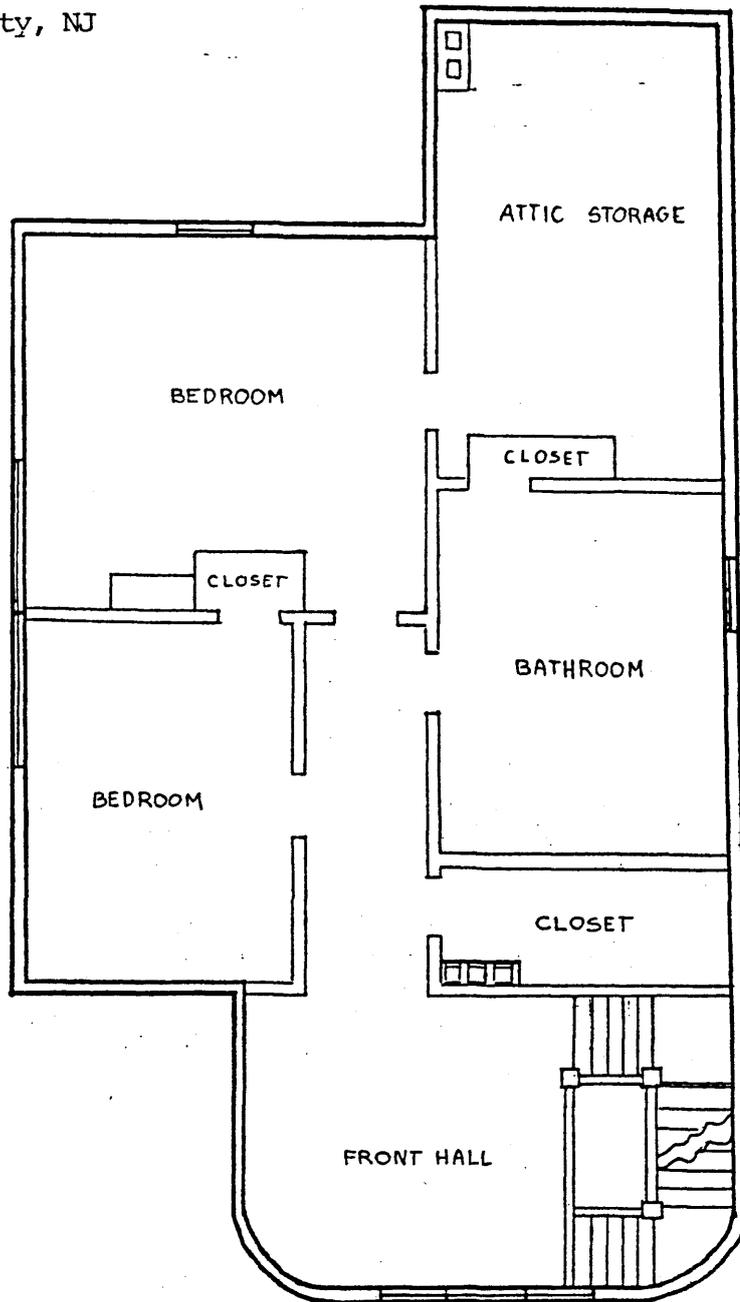
George Wurt's Summer Home, Asbury Park,
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Second floor

SCALE: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'$

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Third Floor

scale $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'$