

Raleigh Department of City Planning
One Exchange Plaza
3rd floor
Raleigh, NC 27602
919-516-2626

www.raleighnc.gov/planning

Fee	_____
Amt Paid	_____
Check #	_____
Rec'd Date:	_____
Rec'd By:	_____
Completion Date:	_____

(Processing Fee: \$266.00 - valid until June 30, 2011 - Checks payable to the City of Raleigh.)

RALEIGH HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION

This application initiates consideration of a property for designation as a Raleigh Historic Landmark by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission (RHDC) and the Raleigh City Council. It enables evaluation of the resource to determine if it qualifies for designation. The evaluation is made by the Research Committee of the RHDC, which makes its recommendation to the full commission which in turn makes its recommendation to the City Council. Procedures for administration by the RHDC are outlined in the Raleigh City Code, Section 10-1053.

Please type if possible. Use 8-1/2" x 11" paper for supporting documentation and if additional space is needed. All materials submitted become the property of the RHDC and cannot be returned. Return completed application to the RHDC office at One Exchange Plaza, Suite 300, Raleigh or mail to:

Raleigh Historic Districts Commission
PO Box 829 Century Station
Raleigh, NC 27602

1. Name of Property (if historic name is unknown, give current name or street address):

Historic Name: William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza)
Current Name: _____

2. Location:

Street 1415 Poole Rd, Raleigh, NC 27610
Address: _____
NC PIN No.: 1713386686
(Can be obtained from <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>)

3. Legal Owner of Property (If more than one, list primary contact):

Name: Xin-Rui Xia and Xiang Q. Kong
Address: 106 Rocklyn Lane
City: Apex State: NC Zip: 27502
Telephone No: (919) (889)-(7104) Fax No. () ()-()
E-Mail: xia@ncsu.edu

4. Applicant/Contact Person (If other than owner):

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Telephone No: () ()-() Fax No. () ()-()
E-Mail: _____

5. General Data/Site Information:

Date of Construction and major additions/alterations: was built in 1915, Repaired and complete utility upgraded (including plumbing, electrical, heating, ventilation and air conditioning during 2013-2017.

Number, type, and date of construction of outbuildings: Sunroom addition to replaced collapsed backdoor entrance with approvals from NC Preservation and Raleigh Renovation Permit

Approximate lot size or acreage: 0.3

Architect, builder, carpenter, and/or mason: Unknown

Original Use: Residential

Present Use: Rental home or office

6. Classification:

A. Category (check all that apply):

Building(s) Structure Object Site

B. Ownership

Private
Public Local State Federal

C. Number of contributing and non-contributing resources on the property:

	Contributing	Noncontributing
Buildings	1	
Structures	1	
Objects		

D. Previous field documentation (when and by whom): n/a

E. National Register of Historic Places Status:

Check One:

Entered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date: 9/12/2008	Nominated <input type="checkbox"/>
Determined Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Date:	Determined Not Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Date:
Nomination Not Requested <input type="checkbox"/>	Removed <input type="checkbox"/> Date:

Significant changes in integrity since listing should be noted in section 10.B. below.

7. Reason for Request: Historic building protection

8. Is the property income producing? Yes No

9. Are any interior spaces being included for designation? Yes No

10. Supporting Documentation (Attach to application on separate sheets. Please type or print):

A. Photographs/Slides:

Figure 1: Façade elevation of William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza).

Figure 2: Right side elevation of William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza).

Figure 3: Left side elevation of William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza).

Figure 4: Rear elevation of William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza).

B. Boundary Map:

Please include a map showing the location of the property. A sketch map is acceptable, but please note street names and number. Any other structures on the property should also be shown. Please include a "North" arrow. Map should be no larger than 11" x 17". A tax map with boundaries marked is preferred, which can be found at: <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>.

Figure 5. Boundary Map of William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza).

C. Architectural Significance:

Describe the property, including exterior architectural features, additions, remodelings, and alterations. Also describe significant outbuildings and landscape features. If the owner is including interior features in the nomination for the purpose of design review protection; describe them in detail and note their locations. Include a statement regarding the architectural significance of the property.

The William A. Curtis House, 1415 Poole Road, built about 1915, has local architectural significance under Criterion C as one of the largest and most stylish dwellings built for an African American family in Raleigh during the Jim Crow era of the early twentieth century. Built in the Lincoln Park subdivision along New Bern Avenue by William A. Curtis, his mother, and seven siblings as a family home, the two-story Late Victorian house with bay windows, leaded glass transoms, and a spacious wraparound porch with classical columns is a landmark in southeast Raleigh.

D. Historic Significance:

Note any significant events, people, and/or families associated with the property. Include all major owners. Note if the property has ever been recorded during a historic building survey by the City of Raleigh or by the NC State Historic Preservation Office. If so, who and when? (See application item 6.D.) Please include a bibliography of sources. Information regarding prior designations can be found by contacting the Survey and Planning Branch of the NC State Historic Preservation Office (NCSHPO) at 919-807-6570, 919-807-6573 or at: <http://www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us/spbranch.htm>.

In 1913 William purchased three lots in Lincoln Park [Wake County DB 276, 198], a subdivision platted in 1911 just three blocks east of the family home. The lots, numbers 36, 37, and 38 on the Lincoln Park subdivision plat (Book 1911, page 55) face New Bern Avenue at the northwest intersection with Spruce (now Carver) Street. In June 1914 William mortgaged the property to the Raleigh Building and Loan Association for \$800 in order to build a new family house on the property.^{1,2} The house does not appear on the 1914 Raleigh Sanborn map. According to family tradition, the family moved into their new house about 1915. One of the first major events in the new house was the 1917 wedding of daughter Jennie Meeks Curtis to Royal James Smith. The young couple had met while attending Shaw University. The ceremony took place in the parlor.³

Following the death of William H. Curtis in 1905, his widow Jennie Curtis and her three older children, Lafayette, Mary, and William A., rallied to support the five younger children. Through his work as a drayman, as vendor at a produce stand at the City Market, and at a south Raleigh laundry, William A. Curtis and his family erected a spacious, beautiful house that served as the family home for three generations. Its period of significance is ca. 1915, the year of construction.

E. Special Significance Summary:

Include a one to two paragraph summary of those elements of the property that are integral to its historical, prehistorical, architectural, archaeological, and/or cultural importance.

Lincoln Park was a triangular-shaped, grid-blocked development on the north side of New Bern Avenue that included Cross Street (parallel to New Bern Avenue) and the intersecting Park, Spruce, Lake, and Star streets. Lincoln Drive was the north boundary. The individuals who developed Lincoln Park are not known. Probably named Lincoln Park because of its proximity to the older Lincoln Court area on the west, it became an important African American neighborhood, with a small commercial area along Cross Street in the center. During the Depression of the 1930s, Lincoln Park had its own baseball team that played the other black neighborhood teams. Mt. Calvary Church (now Lincoln Park Holiness Church) has stood on Park Street in the neighborhood since at least 1949.⁴ Single family and duplex houses filled most of the lots by the mid-twentieth century.⁵ Lincoln Park continues to be a recognizable African American neighborhood that retains many of its original houses, but some of the streets have been renamed. The section of New Bern Avenue in Lincoln Park was renamed Poole Road in the early 1940s. The intersecting streets are now named Heath, Carver, Fisher, and Star streets. Lincoln Drive at the north actually became a section of New Bern Avenue, which was realigned in a more eastwardly direction around 1940, probably when Dr. Clarence Poe, editor of the Progressive Farmer magazine, created the huge suburb of Longview Gardens along both sides of New Bern Avenue. The avenue was designed as a central boulevard with a central median.

On the 1949 updated Sanborn map, the Curtis House stands out as the largest dwelling in Lincoln Park. As evidenced by the industry of all members of the Curtis family and by the exceptionally large, stylish house that they built for themselves, the family was one of the most financially well-off and prominent in Raleigh's African American community. William A., credited with supervision of the house's construction, engaged in a number of entrepreneurial business pursuits that earned enough capital and sufficient financial stability to purchase the property and engage a building contractor to erect the new house. Descendants mention a set of house

blueprints that were stored on the premises, but have been lost. Whether the blueprints were prepared by an architect, or ordered through the mail from a plan service, is unknown. Its polished transitional Late Victorian/Neoclassical Revival design is proof that the Curtises worked with professionals to construct the house.^{6,7}

Bibliography

1. Curtis, William A. newspaper obituary (reference unknown, probably The News and Observer, Raleigh), Sept. 25, 1965.
2. Nelson, Michele. Typescript history of the William A. Curtis family, 2007. Copy in file.
3. Nelson, Michele. Documentary photos of the William A. Curtis House and the Curtis children. Copies in file.
4. Raleigh City Directories, 1914-2000.
5. Sanborn Map Company. Raleigh, N.C. 1914 (updated 1949), Vol. 2.
6. Simmons-Henry, Linda and Linda Harris Edmisten, Culture Town: Life in Raleigh's African American Communities. Raleigh: Raleigh Historic Districts Commission Inc., 1993.
7. North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. William A. Curtis House. National Registry of Historic Places. <http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/WA4305.pdf> (accessed 8/25/2017)



Figure 1: Façade elevation of William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza).
1415 Poole Rd, Raleigh, NC 27610. Photo by Xin Rui Xia in July 2017.



Figure 2: Right side elevation of William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza).
1415 Poole Rd, Raleigh, NC 27610. Photo by Xin Rui Xia in July 2017.



Figure 3: Left side elevation of William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza).
1415 Poole Rd, Raleigh, NC 27610. Photo by Xin Rui Xia in July 2017.



Figure 4: Rear elevation of William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza).
1415 Poole Rd, Raleigh, NC 27610. Photo by Xin Rui Xia in July 2017.

Figure 5. Boundary Map of William A Curtis House (Other Name: Villa Florenza). 1415 Poole Rd, Raleigh, NC 27610. Reprinted courtesy of Wake County iMAPS.



NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

William A. Curtis House

Raleigh, Wake County, WA4305, Listed 9/12/2008

Nomination by M. Ruth Little

Photographs by M. Ruth Little, August 2007



Overall front view



Overall rear view

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Curtis, William A., House

other names/site number Villa Florenza

2. Location

street & number 1415 Poole Road not for publication N/A

city or town Raleigh vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Wake code 183 zip code 27610

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

William A. Curtis House
Name of Property

Wake Co., North Carolina
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Work in progress Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
Late Victorian

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
roof fiberglass
walls weatherboard

other metal

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

William A. Curtis House
Name of Property

Wake Co., North Carolina
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca. 1915

Significant Dates

ca. 1915

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

Name of repository: _____

William A. Curtis House
Name of Property

Wake Co., North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0.3 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 714440 3962020
2 _____

Zone Easting Northing
3 _____
4 _____
____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title M. Ruth Little

organization Longleaf Historic Resources date Nov. 2, 2007

street & number 2312 Bedford Avenue telephone 919.412.7804

city or town Raleigh state N.C. zip code 27607

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name William H. and Jenny C. Curtis Heirs

street & number 4210 Willow Oak Road telephone 919.733.4910

city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27604

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1
William A. Curtis House
Wake County, North Carolina

Section 7: Description

The William A. Curtis House at 1415 Poole Road stands in southeast Raleigh one block south of the main artery of New Bern Avenue. It occupies a 0.3 acre wooded lot at the northwest corner of Poole Road and S. Carver Street. The neighborhood is historically single family residential, but on the rear, east, and south are commercial and institutional properties. The lot is elevated above the street and sidewalk, with a concrete block retaining wall across the frontage. Tall deciduous trees surround the house. A chain link fence encloses the front and a portion of the side yards. A dirt driveway provides parking at the rear.

The two-story, three-bay-wide frame house with pyramidal roof, of late Victorian style, dominates the streetscape due to its size and stylishness in comparison to the one-story houses of late Victorian and bungalow form around it. A high brick foundation supports the house. A full-height pedimented wing extends out from the rectangular core on the east front. The central door is flanked by wide glazed and paneled sidelights and a leaded glass transom. The door contains an oval beveled glass insert, with decorative relief ornament at each corner of the wooden panel holding the glass. Above the entrance is a double one-over-one sash window. Centered in the front roof is a hipped dormer window with a six-over-six sash and a slate roof. The main roof originally had slate shingles as well, but has recently been reshingled with fiber glass shingles. All of the windows on the first and second stories are one-over-one sash windows with the exception of the first story front window in the wing, which contains a large fixed sash with a leaded glass transom. Original plain weatherboard, corner boards, and flat fascias cover all walls. Tall interior brick chimneys with corbelled caps flank the highest ridge of the pyramidal roof. On the east side, the rear bay of the main block projects as a full-height bay capped by a pediment. The first story of the bay contains a door in the front face, a leaded glass transom in the side face, and a one-over-one sash window in the rear face. On the second floor each face has a one-over-one sash window. Paired diamond-paned windows decorate the front and side roof pediments. On the west side, the rear bay is a full-height pedimented projection of the main block, with a paired sash with diamond-paned windows. The roof, dormer window, and pediments are unified by continuous wide boxed eaves. The final architectural feature that completes the handsome dwelling is a one-story porch that wraps around the east side to the door in the bay window. A paneled brick foundation supports the porch. Simple classical columns and a balustrade with square balusters and a molded handrail support and enclose part of the porch. Several columns are missing. Tall boards prop up the porch roof at intervals.

At the rear is an original one-story hip-roofed kitchen wing with identical weatherboard, windows, and eave treatment as the main block. A small low hip-roofed section, apparently original, on the west side of the kitchen contains a bathroom. An apparently original latticed porch extends to the west side of the bathroom. It is covered by a very old standing seam metal roof. The porch is now concealed by exterior plywood sheeting.

The house has been unoccupied since 1997 and has some exterior deterioration, particularly in the eaves of the porch and the eaves of the upper rear elevation. The weatherboard has water damage at the rear where the wings meet the main block. The first story windows are covered with plywood. A number of window panes are broken or missing. However the house is structurally sound.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Section 7 Page 2
William A. Curtis House
Wake County, North Carolina**

The interior of the Curtis House is basically unaltered, although in need of cosmetic attention. On both floors the finish consists of elegant, well-preserved Neoclassical Revival-style staircases, mantels, baseboards and surrounds. The wide center hall is flanked by two rooms on both sides. (See Figs. 1 and 2 for the floor plan.) All of the original finishes remain in place: narrow wooden flooring, plaster walls and ceilings, high molded baseboards, six-raised-panel doors, and symmetrically molded door and window surrounds with molded caps.

The hall is dominated by a large, highly decorative Neoclassical Revival-style stair. The first freestanding section, facing the front door, ascends five steps to a landing. A longer flight ascends against the east hall wall to the upper hall. Large paneled wooden newels, set on the diagonal, flank the first stage at the bottom and at the top, with closely spaced square balusters and a heavy molded handrail. The rear of the first stage is decorated with flat paneling. The second stage has an open string.

From the front of the hall, one enters the parlor (labeled as living room on the floor plan), to the east, through pocket doors. A second set of pocket doors leads from the parlor into the dining room to the rear. To the west, single doors lead into the front west room, known as the library, and to the rear west room, a bedroom with a closet known as "Granny's Room." An original door in the rear of the hall leads to the back porch. An original swinging door leads from the dining room into the kitchen.

Handsome mantels of Neoclassical style decorate the fireplace in each first floor room. Each of these has a firebox with original cast-iron fire cover, a tile hearth, and a tile surround. The east side fireplaces are set on the diagonal against the interior wall. The west side fireplaces are centered in the interior wall. The parlor mantel features a bracketed shelf and tall classical columns flanking a mirrored overmantel. The dining room mantel is similar, but has square posts flanking a mirrored overmantel. The library mantel has a more delicate design, with slender classical columns supporting the fireplace shelf and a second set of slender columns flanking an overmantel with a smaller mirror. The downstairs bedroom, "Granny's Room," has a mantel with slender colonettes supporting the shelf. Beside it is a closet with a six-raised-panel door.

The parlor and dining room finishes are further set apart from the rest of the rooms by leaded glass transoms. The parlor transom surmounts the front window. The dining room transom is set high on the center wall of the bay window to allow for the placement of a piece of furniture, probably a sideboard, against this wall.

The second floor contains a wide center hall with a finely finished upper stair railing. At the top of the stair is a pair of heavy square newel posts, with the same balustrade as the lower stair. At the rear of the hall is an original full bathroom. In the ceiling near the bathroom door is an access opening for the unfinished attic. Four bedrooms flank the hall, two on each side. Each of these has a closet. In the east front bedroom, to balance the diagonally-placed fireplace, is a diagonal closet. The west side bedrooms have closets flanking the center fireplaces. The only bedroom that does not contain a fireplace is the east rear bedroom. It is said to have originally been heated by a space heater that vented into the chimney located in the inner corner. Like the other bedrooms it contains a closet, located on the diagonal in the left rear corner. The other three bedrooms have

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Section 7 Page 3
William A. Curtis House
Wake County, North Carolina**

identical mantels that are simpler versions of the downstairs mantels, consisting of wide surrounds with bracketed shelves.

Statement of Integrity

The Curtis House is nearly unaltered, making it an excellent example of a significant Late Victorian/Neoclassical Revival-style dwelling built about 1915. In recent years it has suffered deterioration of the exterior. Some of the porch columns have been removed for safekeeping. Some of the original porch balusters are missing. Some window panes are broken. Some of the eaves and fascias have missing sections. On the interior, the original fabric is intact. The only alterations are the application of asbestos ceiling tiles to a few of the plaster ceilings. Despite the surface deterioration, the house retains its structural stability and stands ready for restoration.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 4
William A. Curtis House
Wake County, North Carolina

Section 8: Statement of Significance

The William A. Curtis House, 1415 Poole Road, built about 1915, has local architectural significance under Criterion C as one of the largest and most stylish dwellings built for an African American family in Raleigh during the Jim Crow era of the early twentieth century. Built in the Lincoln Park subdivision along New Bern Avenue by William A. Curtis, his mother, and seven siblings as a family home, the two-story Late Victorian house with bay windows, leaded glass transoms, and a spacious wraparound porch with classical columns is a landmark in southeast Raleigh. Following the death of William H. Curtis in 1905, his widow Jennie Curtis and her three older children, Lafayette, Mary, and William A., rallied to support the five younger children. Through his work as a drayman, as vendor at a produce stand at the City Market, and at a south Raleigh laundry, William A. Curtis and his family erected a spacious, beautiful house that served as the family home for three generations. Its period of significance is ca. 1915, the year of construction.

Historical Background

The Curtis family, African Americans, were well-established in east Raleigh by the late 1800s. William Henry Curtis (1860-1905) was born in the infirmary on the campus of St. Augustine's College in Raleigh. William H. met Jennie Geary (1863-1937), who was raised in Robeson County, in Raleigh and married her about 1880. Their first three children were Lafayette Curtis (1881-1906); Mary (Mamie) Curtis Barnhill (1882-1960); and William A. Curtis (1885-1965). In 1890 William H. and Jennie purchased a lot on New Bern Avenue at the intersection with Tarboro Road, a few blocks east of the original city limits, and apparently built a house where they raised their first three children. This section of east Raleigh, known as Lincoln Court, hosted the yearly circus in the early years of the twentieth century.¹ After an interval of eight years, five more children were born to the couple: Garland Curtis (1893-1937); Florence Hattie Curtis Martin (1894-1993); Jenny Meeks Curtis Roberts (1896-1948); Maurice A. Curtis (1898-1962); and Wilhelmina Curtis Williams (1901-1943).

When William H. died in 1905, his funeral was held at the family church, St. Ambrose Episcopal Church. The oldest son, Lafayette, went to New York to work in order to help out the younger children. The next year he was killed in a subway accident. Jennie, Mary, and William A., along with the five younger children, continued to live in the family home at 1115 New Bern Avenue. Jennie had a hairdressing business at the home. Mary attended St. Augustine's College, then taught in Ahoskie, N. C. William A. worked several jobs, including operating a dray service and a produce stand at the City Market. In 1914 the Curtis family still lived at 1115 New Bern Avenue. According to the city directory William A. worked as a drug clerk at I. A. Shade Drug Company; Mary as a domestic, and Maurice as a messenger.

In 1913 William purchased three lots in Lincoln Park [Wake County DB 276, 198], a subdivision platted in 1911 just three blocks east of the family home. The lots, numbers 36, 37, and 38 on the Lincoln Park

¹ Octavia Raney, long-time resident of East Raleigh, phone interview, Oct. 30, 2007.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 5

**William A. Curtis House
Wake County, North Carolina**

subdivision plat (Book 1911, page 55) face New Bern Avenue at the northwest intersection with Spruce (now Carver) Street. In June 1914 William mortgaged the property to the Raleigh Building and Loan Association for \$800 in order to build a new family house on the property.² The house does not appear on the 1914 Raleigh Sanborn map. According to family tradition, the family moved into their new house about 1915. One of the first major events in the new house was the 1917 wedding of daughter Jennie Meeks Curtis to Royal James Smith. The young couple had met while attending Shaw University. The ceremony took place in the parlor.³

Lincoln Park was a triangular-shaped, grid-blocked development on the north side of New Bern Avenue that included Cross Street (parallel to New Bern Avenue) and the intersecting Park, Spruce, Lake, and Star streets. Lincoln Drive was the north boundary. The individuals who developed Lincoln Park are not known. Probably named Lincoln Park because of its proximity to the older Lincoln Court area on the west, it became an important African American neighborhood, with a small commercial area along Cross Street in the center. During the Depression of the 1930s, Lincoln Park had its own baseball team that played the other black neighborhood teams. Mt. Calvary Church (now Lincoln Park Holiness Church) has stood on Park Street in the neighborhood since at least 1949.⁴ Single family and duplex houses filled most of the lots by the mid-twentieth century.⁵ Lincoln Park continues to be a recognizable African American neighborhood that retains many of its original houses, but some of the streets have been renamed. The section of New Bern Avenue in Lincoln Park was renamed Poole Road in the early 1940s. The intersecting streets are now named Heath, Carver, Fisher, and Star streets. Lincoln Drive at the north actually became a section of New Bern Avenue, which was realigned in a more eastwardly direction around 1940, probably when Dr. Clarence Poe, editor of the *Progressive Farmer* magazine, created the huge suburb of Longview Gardens along both sides of New Bern Avenue. The avenue was designed as a central boulevard with a central median.

On the 1949 updated Sanborn map, the Curtis House stands out as the largest dwelling in Lincoln Park. As evidenced by the industry of all members of the Curtis family and by the exceptionally large, stylish house that they built for themselves, the family was one of the most financially well-off and prominent in Raleigh's African American community. William A., credited with supervision of the house's construction, engaged in a number of entrepreneurial business pursuits that earned enough capital and sufficient financial stability to purchase the property and engage a building contractor to erect the new house. Descendants mention a set of house blueprints that were stored on the premises, but have been lost. Whether the blueprints were prepared by an architect, or ordered through the mail from a plan service, is unknown. Its polished transitional Late Victorian/Neoclassical Revival design is proof that the Curtises worked with professionals to construct the house.

² Wake County Deed of Trust, Book 291, 129.

³ Nelson, Michele, interview on Oct. 12, 2007.

⁴ *Culture Town: Life in Raleigh's African American Communities*, 108, 109, 158; Octavia Raney interview.

⁵ Raleigh Sanborn Map, 1914, updated to 1949, Vol. 2, page 104.

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Between 1914, when Jennie Curtis is listed at 1115 New Bern Avenue, and 1918, when Jennie is listed on New Bern Avenue in Lincoln Park (presumably in the new house), the city directories do not list her or her children at all. Likely the new house was too far outside the city limits to be included in the directory until 1918. The 1921 directory includes Jennie and four of her children, Mary, William A., Florence, and the youngest child, Wilhemina, living in the new house, whose address was "New Bern Avenue extended, Lincoln Park." Jennie continued to operate a hairdressing business in her new home.⁶ Her bedroom, the first floor bedchamber in the spacious house, is still known as "Granny's Room." The older children had good jobs. William A. was a solicitor for the Sanitary Laundry located on S. Blount Street in downtown Raleigh; Mary had returned from Ahoskie and was teaching in Raleigh; and Florence was a clerk at Dr. J. O. Plummer's office. Wilhemina was a student. Jennie's son Maurice A. and his wife Gertrude lived at the old family homeplace at 1115 New Bern Avenue. Maurice was a laborer; Gertrude a maid at the First Presbyterian Church. As the younger siblings grew up in the 1920s, they moved to New York like their oldest brother Lafayette had done. Garland, Florence Hattie, Jenny Meeks, and Wilhelmina relocated permanently to New York City. "Granny Jennie" moved up to the city to help out with the grandchildren, and remained there until her death in 1937.

In 1925 William A. and his sister Mary A. were the only family members left in the house, still outside the city limits and still with no street number. The house marked the boundary between white residents to the west and nearly solid African American residents to the east. By 1930 William A. had married Mabel E. Whitaker. They shared the house with Mary A., then working with the Traveler's Aid Society located at the train station. The house, now numbered 1415 New Bern Avenue, had evidently been taken into the city limits. Mary moved to Washington, D. C. in the 1930s and married.

By the mid-1930s only William A. and Mabel remained in the family home. They had no children, but raised Mabel's niece Marion, who married Booker Spaulding when she grew up. The Curtises were prominent members of Raleigh's African American community. They belonged to St. Ambrose Episcopal Church, where William was a vestryman. William, known as "Mr. Will," belonged to a number of African American fraternal organizations. From at least 1921 until the mid-1950s William A. worked almost continuously at the Sanitary Laundry in various capacities, sometimes as a driver, sometimes as a salesman.⁷ William A. owned at least four other houses in Lincoln Park in addition to the family home. In 1919 he bought lot 42, located behind his house, from the Lincoln Park developers [Wake County DB317, 489]. In 1923 he bought a Lincoln Park lot, presumably containing a dwelling, at public auction because the owner defaulted on her mortgage [Wake County DB432, 49]. In 1927 he bought two more lots in Lincoln Park [Wake County DB381, 431.] He gave one of the houses to his wife's sister; apparently he rented the other three.⁸

The 1940 city directory, the first to identify owner-occupants, demonstrates the economic status of the Curtises

⁶ Raleigh City Directory, 1918.

⁷ Raleigh City Directories, 1921-1955.

⁸ Mozelle Christmas interview, Oct. 29, 2007.

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in comparison to most of their neighbors. In that year the Curtises were the only people on the block who owned their home. The other families, all African American, were renters. The Curtises were also the only family on the block with a telephone.

William A. and Mabel lived out their lives at 1415 Poole Road. Mabel passed away in the late 1950s. In 1962 William A.'s sister Florence, her husband Arthur Martin, her niece Gwendolyn Nelson (daughter of Jennie Meeks Roberts), and Gwendolyn's daughter Michele Nelson moved from New York City back into the family home with William A. William died in 1965. After his funeral at St. Ambrose Church, he was buried beside his wife in the family plot at Mt. Hope Cemetery. Florence lived in the house for nearly three more decades. She called the house "Villa Florenza," perhaps a play on her name. Arthur passed away in 1972. Florence's niece Gwendolyn and great-niece Michele remained in the house. Michele moved out in 1982; Florence died in 1993; and Gwendolyn remained in the house until December 1997.

Context for Early Twentieth Century African American Houses in Raleigh

African Americans, both slave and free, lived among whites in the small town of Raleigh prior to the Civil War. This integrated arrangement slowly moved towards segregated white and black neighborhoods in the later 1800s, but it was not until the early twentieth century that Jim Crow laws divided Raleigh and the rest of the South into fairly rigid racial enclaves. The African American freedman communities of Oberlin and Method were established on the west outskirts of Raleigh in the postbellum era. On both sides of Oberlin Road and both sides of Method Road, small villages of frame one- and two-story houses of Late Victorian and Craftsman style grew from the 1860s into the early 1900s. In the early 1900s a number of new black subdivisions were planned in east Raleigh, including Idlewild and College Park near St. Augustine's College and Lincoln Park along New Bern Avenue east of the city limits. These were middle-class, owner-occupied and tenant-occupied subdivisions that developed with modest frame houses of two dominant types: the one-story side-gabled house with a decorative center front gable and a shallow front porch, and the bungalow--a one or one-and-one-half-story house. Two-story houses were exceptional in these subdivisions. The Ed May House, 205 N. Tarboro Street, in the College Park subdivision, is one of these.⁹ The hip-roofed 1920s house has a one-story porch. The Ligon family built a two-story Craftsman-style house at 573 E. Lenoir Street in southeast Raleigh about 1914.¹⁰ Most of the houses in these African American neighborhoods were modest one-story houses. Even the so-called "Faculty Row" along E. South Street adjacent to the campus of Shaw University is composed of simple one-story Late Victorian-style houses with modest sawnwork decoration. The older houses in the Idlewild, College Park, and Shaw University neighborhoods have undergone much government-funded renovation in recent years and do not retain a high degree of architectural integrity.

Some of the most stylish houses built for African Americans in Raleigh during the early years of the Jim Crow

⁹ *Culture Town*, 137.

¹⁰ *Culture Town*, 86.

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era stand on Oberlin Road in Oberlin Village. A handful of these are generally well-preserved, nearly unaltered, and owned and occupied by descendants of the African American families that built them. One of the oldest is the Graves-Fields House, 802 Oberlin Road, a late 1800s vernacular two-story with some Queen Anne features. The Turner House, 1002 Oberlin Road, is an early twentieth century two-story I-House with a wraparound porch and an upstairs balcony. The Latta House, the residence of Mr. Latta who established a school on his property on Parker Street, was a large two-story frame house of simple design with a wraparound one-story porch. It was destroyed by fire in early 2007. The numbers of these architecturally-significant dwellings of Raleigh's African Americans are dwindling rapidly due to redevelopment of the inner-city areas where they are located, architectural obsolescence, and accidental destruction.

The distinguished Late Victorian/Neoclassical Revival-style William A. Curtis House in Lincoln Park is one of the most significant African American dwellings in Raleigh. Its original fine finishes, including the leaded glass ornament in the entrance and in the transoms of the front parlor window and the bay window of the dining room, the spacious classical-style wraparound porch, the grand staircase in the center hall, and the completely intact collection of Neoclassical mantels with overmantels, pocket doors, and nicely molded baseboards and surrounds set the Curtis House apart from any other surviving house in Raleigh built by an African American family in the first quarter of the twentieth century. While its architectural design is now marred by the deterioration of the exterior during the past decade, it is structurally sound and retains its stylish design with almost no alterations.

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Section 9: Bibliography

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**Section 10: Boundaries
Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary is the 0.3 acre lot at 1415 Poole Road shown on the attached Wake County GIS Map and identified as Parcel 1713386656. It is delineated by a solid dark line.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is the property that has been associated with the house since its construction about 1915.

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**Section Photos Page 11
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Photographs:

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Photographer: M. Ruth Little

Date: August and October 2007

Location of Negatives: State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina.

1. Front elevation from south.
2. Overall view from southeast.
3. Streetscape from southeast.
4. West elevation from west.
5. Overall view from northeast
6. Rear view from north.
7. Closeup of front elevation from south.
8. View of center stair hall.
9. Parlor (living room) mantel
10. View of dining room.
11. Front west bedroom on second floor.