

INVENTORY CAPTION: THE WALTER A. CURTIS HOUSE

CT-178  
CLVT-178  
Dowell  
Private

c. 1904

This handsome two story house stands on a lovely site , overlooking St. John's Creek. The principal facade is four bays in length, symmetrically arranged and accented by a cross gable pediment. In 1904 Graham Curtis, a black waterman and cook, hired two white carpenters to build this house and then gave it to his son Walter, who was also a waterman.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC THE WALTER A. CURTIS HOUSE

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

End of Curtis Rd., 200 yards East of Jct. of Curtis Rd. and Dowell Rd.

CITY, TOWN

Dowell

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Calvert

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Walter A. Curtis

Telephone #: None

STREET & NUMBER

Curtis Rd.

CITY, TOWN

Dowell

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Md

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Calvert Couty Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Map 44 P. 125  
Liber #: JLB 18  
Folio #: 11

CITY, TOWN

Prince Frederick

1

STATE

Md.

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

NONE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

|  |                                       |   |   |                                |            |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|------------|
| <b>CONDITION</b>                         |                                       | <b>CHECK ONE</b>                            |   | <b>CHECK ONE</b>               |            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT       | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED | DATE _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED |   |                                |            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR            | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |   |   |                                |            |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This handsome two story frame house stands on an impressive site, overlooking St. John's Creek. On the water in front of it (east) are the docks for the family boats, this family having worked on the water for generations.

The house consists of a principal block of four bays in length and one in depth. To the northern side of the back length, a small one room kitchen has been added. The principal facade is pierced by two doors in the first and fourth bay, with 2 windows with 2x2 lights in double hung sashes in the 2nd and 3rd bay. Above each opening on the first floor is another one on the second, creating the symmetrical facade that was the style of the times for rural middle class housing. The frame was originally sheathed with weatherboards that were painted white, but is now covered with asbestos shingles. The roof line in front is crossed by a gable pediment with a single hung sash window as its decorative feature.

The floor plan consists of two rooms downstairs, each with its front and back door. They are separated by a single straight flight of stairs through the middle of the house. In the northern gable end, was a small fireplace surrounded by a mantel with neo-Georgian pilasters and scrollwork, painted white, and serving as the principal stylistic fixture in the interior. The ceilings and walls had been lathed and plastered <sup>AND</sup> were now sheet-rocked, except along the bottom third of the walls which were lined with vertically placed tongue and groove siding. Around the doors and windows inside were plain trims similar to those on the exterior.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

| PERIOD                                    | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC      | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499        | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION           | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS              | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION              | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799        | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899        | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY               | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)     |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION               |   |   |   |

Black History

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SPECIFIC DATES                      c. 1904                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT Local white carpenters

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE                      hired by Negro waterman.

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Today the house is surround<sup>ed</sup> by houses of Curtis's numerous heirs to whom he has given small tracts from his original 3 or 4 acres.

SIGNIFICANCE

The size, construction, and the principal features of the exterior design are representative of the houses built by rural middle class black families in the last quarter of the 19th century, and the first quarter of the 20th.

The following history of this house was provided by Walter A. Curtis, the owner/occupant who was born in 1883 in Calvert County. See the article in the Calvert Journal-Gazette that is included with this survey. His father, Graham Curtis, who was born in the 1840's--bought this tract of land overlooking St. John's Creek and left it to his son. Graham had worked as a cook for watermen and hired out his services for special jobs, in this way accumulating money to buy the property. In c. 1904 Graham hired two white carpenters at rates of \$1.75 a day for the master carpenter and \$1.25 a day for his assistant to build this house for his son Walter, who married the next year and moved into it. Walter does not remember how long it took to build the house, nor how much it cost. It was among the largest belonging to a black family in this area, he said. Curtis worked at the boat docks of M.M. Davis and Sons in Solomons for 50 years. After retiring, he was given no pension from the company he said, and has only enough income from welfare and his family to meet bare necessities, and not enough to maintain his house. He would like very much, he urged, to get some money to repair his house before "it gets too bad".

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | COUNTY |
|-------|--------|
| STATE | COUNTY |

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

|                 |   |                       |
|-----------------|---|-----------------------|
| NAME / TITLE    | George W. Mc Daniel, Historic Sites Surveyor        |                       |
| ORGANIZATION    | Md. Commission on Afro-American History and Culture | DATE<br>January, 1977 |
| STREET & NUMBER | 20 Dean Street                                      | TELEPHONE<br>269-2893 |
| CITY OR TOWN    | Annapolis, Maryland                                 | STATE<br>21401        |

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory 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  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438







CREDIT TO  
GEORGE W. McDANIEL



CREDIT TO  
GEORGE W. McDANIEL

Walter A. Centes  
& his great  
grandson



CT-178

LETTER TO  
GEORGE A. DANIEL