

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	AUG 21 1979
DATE ENTERED	OCT 1 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

George M. Curtis House

AND/OR COMMON

Clinton Women's Club

LOCATION

420 S. 5th Ave.

STREET & NUMBER

420 Fifth Avenue South

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Clinton

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

Iowa

CODE

COUNTY

Clinton

CODE

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:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Clinton Women's Club

STREET & NUMBER

420 Fifth Avenue South

CITY, TOWN

Clinton

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa 52732

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clinton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Clinton

STATE

Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Curtis house was built about 1883. It is located on one of Clinton's principal streets, on a block immediately to the west of the central business district. The street, to the west, is primarily residential, with rather large houses on small lots, dating from the 1880's to about WWI. The George Curtis house is among the earliest and largest houses on the street. It is essentially a late Victorian suburban "cottage" form, 2½ stories high, of heavy wood frame construction with exterior walls veneered in dark red brick. The form is basically rectangular, beneath a very high, hipped roof; both these elements are somewhat obscured by the profusion of intersecting gables, dormers, porches, bays and tall, panelled chimneys.

The south (main) and west elevations feature large open gables, with a bank of 4 windows, each bank with its own bracketted cornice, set within the gable end. On the south and east are projecting polygonal bays. That of the east side is full-height, topped with an attic-story projecting porch supported on large fanlike brackets. The southwest corner bay begins at second story level and breaks through the roof to form a small polygonal dormer.

On the west side, a wide chimney panel rises from ground level, to pierce through the roof and then to bisect a small dormer.

There are five porches, including the attic-story porch on the east side. On the west is a porte-cochere, the drive-through sheltered beneath a small front gable on wooden posts. Two smaller porches on this side are at second floor level, recessed beneath the high gable and flanking a one-story polygonal bay. At the northeast corner is a simple wooden porch, with plain posts and frieze of widely-spaced spindles. Finally, there is a wide veranda wrapped around the southeast corner of the house. The sloping roof of the veranda has protruding rafter ends and is supported on thick, square brick pillars on high pedestals. A small front gable roof shelters the porch steps.

All facades of the house are characterized by variety of materials, shapes and textures. Noted already are the large triangular gables. Windows are variously rectilinear, rectilinear with rounded top corners, segmentally-arched, or, on the east side, round-arched. Brick, used for the exterior veneer, is also given a decorative role in window arches and the corbelled chimney panels. Gable ends feature scalloped shingles, and diagonal and checkerboard "stickwork". Other elements include lattice-work, leaded and stained glass window transoms, bands of figured molding, and ornamental terracotta panels.

The principal loss on the exterior was the semicircular conservatory, with domed glass roof, removed from the east side in the 1940's.

The main floor of the house features a wide center hall, extending from an entrance/stairhall with fireplace, past service stairs, to the kitchen at the extreme rear. An equally broad hallway runs west, to the entrance beneath the porte-cochere, and separates the library and dining room. Most of the east side is given over to a long parlor. Woodwork and fireplaces (several with elaborately carved and mirrored overmantels), some light fixtures, pairs of sliding doors, and the immense, intricately-carved oak staircase are among the most prominent original features. The second and third floors have been apartments for a number of years. The third floor was originally a ballroom.

There is a brick carriage house, now a theater, behind the northwest corner of the house. It is constructed of the same materials as the house, and is clearly part of the original building program.

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1883

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The George M. Curtis house is an architectural and historical artifact from this city's most exciting and prosperous decades -- the years of the late 19th century when the lumber industry gave Clinton a fair number of millionaires, and residences clearly planned to reflect that wealth. From shortly after the Civil War until about the turn of the century, men of Clinton were in the forefront of lumber milling in the upper midwest, their great plants lining the west bank of the Mississippi from Lyons (now a part of Clinton) to the city's southern edge. Associated with men such as Chancy Lamb and W.J. Young, whose mills converted logs to raw lumber, were brothers George and Charles Curtis, who took the industry one step further by producing doors, window sash and the elaborate millwork that was an integral part of late 19th century residential architecture and interior furnishing.

In the 1880's and 1890's, the houses of many of Clinton's industrial and commercial elite were located near the business district, particularly on 5th and 7th Avenues South. They were big, bold, and displayed, if not always the best that money could buy, certainly some of the most ostentatious. Most are now gone -- victims of time and the city's expanding business district. Of the few that remain, the house of George Curtis is one of the most notable and well-preserved. The house is a good example of the late Victorian "country house", a form recommended in Palliser's New Cottage Homes as particularly suited for "the businessman of fair means" (Plate 1). The Curtis house displays many characteristic features of this country house form: large, high hipped roof, a plenitude of intersecting open, and on occasion asymmetrical gables, variously-shaped dormers, large chimneys, and overhanging upper floors, supported on brackets, of projecting bays.

George M. Curtis was born in New York state in 1844. The Curtis family moved to Illinois in 1856, and farmed there until the late 1860's, when they arrived in Clinton. George, his brother Charles, and an uncle (Judson E. Carpenter) established a small planing mill in Clinton, which within two years had grown enough to require new quarters -- these near the lumber mills on Second Avenue between 11th and 12th Streets. By the 1880's, the Curtis Companies had branches in Wausau, Wisconsin; Minneapolis, Lincoln, Chicago, and Oklahoma City. The firm was not only large and profitable, but also innovative. George Curtis is credited with introducing glazed sash -- glass was installed at the factory, making the sash ready for immediate use, rather than requiring the traditional employment of a glazier to do this on-site.

The Curtis Companies, along with Martin Disbrow's sash, door and millwork factory, contributed to Clinton's economy long after the big lumber mills closed around 1900, and were in operation until 1966.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wolfe, P.B. Wolfe's History of Clinton County, Iowa. Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen, 1911.
 History of Clinton County, Iowa. Clinton: Clinton County Historical Society, 1978.
 Haworth, F.B. Economic Development of the Woodworking Industry in Iowa. Iowa Studies
 in Business XIII. State University of Iowa, 1933.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

QUADRANGLE NAME Clinton; Ill.-Iowa

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,5 7,3,2,9,5,0 4,6,3,5,7,4,0

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 4 and the East 51.6 feet of Lot 5, Block 29; and the West 8.4 of Lot 5 and all of Lot 6, Block 29, original town plat of Clinton. Iowa.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

M.H. Bowers, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

July 1979

STREET & NUMBER

26 East Market Street

TELEPHONE

319/353-6949

CITY OR TOWN

Iowa City

STATE

Iowa 52240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Adrian S. Anderson

TITLE Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

8/10/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

William A. Shelton

DATE

10-1-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: *William A. Shelton*

DATE

9.27.79

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION