

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 28

16. (N-5350):

A. Property Name: Curtis Mansion

B. Location and Verbal Boundary Description: The Curtis Mansion is located on the south side of West Main Street between Hillside and Old Oak Roads. The property being nominated includes the building and the land on which it is situated, totaling 5.16 acres (Property Tax Map, City of Newark, no. 19, lot no. 163).

C. Owner: University of Delaware, HULLIHEN Hall, Newark, Delaware 19711

D. Property Description:

The Curtis Mansion is a two and one half story rectangular-shaped stone building with a five bay facade, cross gable roof and northeast corner tower. The massive proportion of this building, the use of monochromatic random coursed and rock faced stone, and the semi-circular arched entry at the southeast corner all reflect an influence of the Richardsonian Romanesque architectural style. Additional noteworthy embellishments include a projecting cross gable at the south facade with exposed stocks and struts, and a drop pendant with ball finial at the gable end ridge line. A broad hip roof is broken by several small dormers, and a wrap-around porch with Doric column posts and square balustrade lines the northwest corner and west facade of this building.

E. Historical Background

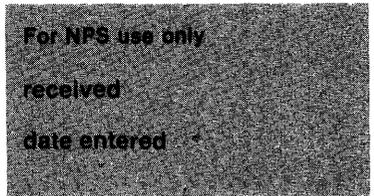
Number 189 West Main Street, or the Curtis Mansion, was built by Mr. A.A. Curtis in approximately 1903. The land on which this structure is built was originally part of an estate known as "Oaklands," the Wilson family property which stretched south of West Main Street to what is now Barksdale Road. Toward the end of the nineteenth century the Wilsons began to subdivide their land and in 1899 a large plot fronting on West Main Street was sold to A.A. Curtis.

Alfred A. Curtis was one of the three sons of F.D. Curtis, owner and operator of the Monantum (later Curtis) Paper Mill which had carried on business in Newark since the mid-1840s. Curtis' monumental Romanesque style home was built of stone quarried locally in Port Deposit.

The building is one of the largest homes on what was once referred to as "Quality Hill" and one of the few homes in this area which was constructed of stone. The Curtis Mansion was eventually purchased by the University of Delaware and today serves as a dormitory for French students. It is currently known as the "Maison Francaise."

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Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

29

F. Significance

The Curtis Mansion is a significant and outstanding example of the Romanesque architectural style in Newark. One of the largest homes on a street once referred to as "Quality Hill," this monumental structure also illustrates a period of post-1900 home building carried out by some of Newark's enterprising and affluent men. Although the interior has experienced some renovation as a result of conversion to dormitory use, the exterior retains excellent architectural integrity.

