

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Graves-Fields House

Raleigh, Wake County, WA8688, Listed 8/16/2021

Nomination by Cynthia de Miranda, MdM Historical Consultants, Inc.

Photographs by Cynthia De Miranda, March 2020; Jim Lamb and K. Lord, Capital City Camera Club, November 2020



Graves-Fields House façade, view E



Graves-Fields House, parlor, view NW

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 an 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 Graves-Fields House

other names/site number Willis M. Graves House, Oakcrest

2. Location

street & number 814 Oberlin Road

n/a not for publication

city or town Raleigh

n/a vicinity

state North Carolina

code NC

county Wake

code 183

zip code 27605

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally, statewide, locally.

[Signature]

Deputy SHPO

7/6/2021

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other,

(explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Four horizontal lines for signature and date entries.

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 count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Historic and Architectural Resources of Oberlin, Wake Co, NC 1865-1952

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/organizational

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD: Weatherboard, Shingle

roof METAL, ASPHALT

Narrative Description

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

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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

Ca. 1886

Significant Dates

Ca. 1886

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

unknown

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:

Graves-Fields House
Name of Property

Wake County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A
Zone Easting Northing
B

C
Zone Easting Northing
D

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 Cynthia de Miranda
organization MdM Historical Consultants, Inc. June 22, 2021
street & number P.O. Box 1399 telephone 919-906-3136
city or town Durham state NC zip code 27702

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Preservation North Carolina (contact: Myrick Howard)
street & number PO Box 27644 telephone 919-832-3652
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27611-7644

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 listing. 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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Graves-Fields House, ca. 1886, is a single-pile, two-story, frame Queen Anne dwelling built onto a ca. 1865 single-pile, single-story house. Previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as the Willis M. Graves House and known historically as Oakcrest, the building stands in the freedman's village of Oberlin, now subsumed into the City of Raleigh in central Wake County. When originally listed in the NRHP in 2002, the house stood at its original location at 802 Oberlin Road, on the second parcel south of its current site at 814 Oberlin Road. In 2019, due to a demolition threat, both nineteenth-century sections were moved and twentieth-century rear additions deemed not significant were not salvaged. The Graves-Fields House was rehabilitated in conjunction with its move. A new addition at the rear elevation is very similar in size and placement to the twentieth-century rear additions. The new portion is frame with a weatherboard exterior, but windows are single-light to easily differentiate from the older sections.

The house stands, as it always has, on the east side of Oberlin Road, today a main artery in west Raleigh that runs south from Glenwood Avenue to Hillsborough Street. The roadway is lined with residences, commercial areas, and institutional buildings from the late nineteenth-century through the early twenty-first century. Heading south from Wade Avenue, the street passes through the location of the nineteenth-century freedmen's village of Oberlin, which occupied an area extending south to Everett Avenue and from Oberlin Road on the east as far as Latta Road on its irregular west edge. The limits of the village blended over time with white suburban development later listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as the West Raleigh Historic District (NR 2003). To the southeast on the east side of Oberlin Road is Cameron Village shopping center (renamed Village District in 2021) and the early-twentieth-century white suburban development of Cameron Park (NR 1985).

Original Site

The parcel at 802 Oberlin Road where the house was built is roughly 75 feet at the west lot line and 360 feet deep. The west end of the parcel was at a diagonal to follow the angle of Oberlin Road, and the house was built so that the façade paralleled the street. Immediately neighboring buildings date to the mid-twentieth century and do not follow this pattern, facing due west instead. The house stood at a setback of about 35 feet from the front parcel line, creating a very long rear yard. The rear lot line was 52-1/2 feet, creating an irregular, .39-acre parcel. A straight front walk paved with brick extended from the sidewalk to the center of the façade and a pair of brick piers marked the entrance at the sidewalk end. Mature trees dotted the rear yard. No outbuildings from the period of significance were present. Around 2010, the piers marking the

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sidewalk entrance were removed. By 2017, some non-historic outbuildings had been removed from the rear yard, which was paved with gravel for parking.

New Site

The Graves-Fields House now stands on the south half of a .37-acre parcel, next to the Plummer T. Hall House (NRHP 2002, Raleigh Historic Landmark 1993). This parcel is the result of a 2016 recombination of two individual lots that each held a house historically, although the south parcel was vacant as early as 1950. Additionally, in 2019, the Hall House was moved east from its original location on the north half of the .37-acre parcel to stand back farther from Oberlin Road, now a busy north-south traffic artery, so that the Hall House no longer encroaches on the sidewalk and public right of way. A request for prior approval of the move of the Hall House was approved by SHPO and NPS in 2015. Additional documentation for the Hall House has not been submitted as of March 2021. The two houses now stand side by side in a configuration that resembles the historic building pattern in Oberlin, as depicted in the 1914 Raleigh Sanborn Map. Landscaping in the front yards reinforces the residential character with concrete front walks from the existing sidewalk along Oberlin Road, grassy lawns with newly planted shrubs and trees. An asphalt-paved driveway along the north edge of the neighboring parcel to the south provides access to parking area at the back of the .37-acre parcel. A concrete sidewalk from the parking area aids access to the buildings' rear entrances. A new deck provides passage between buildings at the rear additions' ground level without having to navigate steps.¹

At the new location, the Graves-Fields House stands on the south half of a parcel that is 100 feet wide. The roughly 35-foot setback has been observed and its façade is again parallel to the street. A concrete walk leads straight from the sidewalk to the center of the façade. A pair of young trees have been planted in the front lawn midway between the sidewalk and the façade, and shrubs accent the front walk where the lot slopes up in a short run toward the house. The 1914 Sanborn map helped determine the new position of the house: The map shows a single-story dwelling immediately south of the Hall House, and the Graves-Fields House was set down to match the distance that existed between the neighboring houses here in 1914.

Details of the Relocation

The move was required to save the Graves-Fields House from demolition after a new owner acquired the 802 Oberlin Road parcel in 2016.² Preservation North Carolina (PNC), the

¹ The parcel recombination plat is recorded at the Wake County Registry Book of Maps 2016 at page 314. The 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Raleigh shows that the house immediately south of the Hall House, which is seen in the 1914 Sanborn map, is no longer at that location.

² Mary Haywood et al to 616 Partners, LLC, August 29, 2016, Wake County Deed Book 16511, page 1262.

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statewide preservation non-profit, moved the house in order to use it for the organization's offices. The moving and rehabilitation of the Hall House, for the same purpose, was already underway, and PNC was able to change plans for the Hall House move slightly to accommodate the Graves-Fields House on a recombined .37-acre parcel that included the Hall House's original parcel and one neighboring parcel to the south.

In preparation for the move and rehabilitation, the altered and deteriorated chimneys and plaster walls and ceilings were removed from the house. Architectural trim was also removed and later repaired, repainted, and reinstalled during rehabilitation. Interior features falling into this category include mantels and baseboards. At the exterior, the porch frieze and columns were removed and restored, as was the replacement porch railing. All wood sash windows were retained. The two nineteenth century sections of the house were moved separately, and the twentieth-century rear additions were demolished. Other twentieth-century alterations were generally not retained, including aluminum siding, Craftsman-style porch alterations, and, at the interior, closets. Individually, each house section was jacked up to separate it from its foundation, then supported by steel I-beams resting on remote-controlled dollies. Each section was moved to the new parcel via a path made behind the church that stood in between. In the new location, the porch floor is rebuilt, as is the foundation. The latter was designed based on good archival photographs and physical evidence. The framing has been reinforced and supported as needed due to structural demands, and a basement has been added under the new addition. The existing hipped roof on the ca. 1865 dwelling was removed before the move and a new, stronger roof structure built to match the slope of the previous roof. The current green paint scheme dates to the earliest years of the two-story section of the house and was revealed by architect and architectural historian David Black's paint analysis.³

An archaeological study of the site assisted in the placement of the Graves-Fields House in its new location. For more information, please see Appendix: Archaeological Study Summary.

Graves-Fields House, ca. 1886 built onto ca. 1865 dwelling, moved and rear addition in 2020

The two-story, ca. 1886 section of the Graves-Fields House features the complicated massing associated with the Queen Anne style, including a façade tower, multiple gables, and a two-story, three-sided projecting bay. Stained glass, decorative faux shingling, and the tower's pyramidal roof with finial also mark the style. The ca. 1865 single-story rear section with two rooms and center hall has period-appropriate Greek Revival elements at the exterior, including a boxed cornice with torus molding. The two structures together have a weatherboard exterior and, in the new location, stand on new brick foundation piers with brick lattice infill that mimics the original

³ David Black, "Graves-Fields House Exterior Finishes Analysis," January 2018, prepared for Preservation North Carolina.

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at the two-story section. The front porch foundation has new brick piers with brick lattice infill that also mimics that original foundation. New weatherboards replace a few small areas of rotted or missing siding on the older single-story portion and at the tower, and the porch floor and substructure are rebuilt to match the original. The roof of the two-story section is side-gabled at the south end but has a truncated hip at the north end where the façade's front-gabled bay intersects. The single-story section has a hipped roof. These roofs are covered with new asphalt shingles that replace the previous mid-twentieth-century asphalt shingle roofing; the porch roof is asphalt shingle with copper flashing. The gabled rear addition was completed after the move and in conjunction with the rehabilitation.⁴

The two-story, single-pile front section has a façade three bays wide. The hip-roofed porch shelters a centered entrance with mid-twentieth-century Colonial Revival paneled door and new single-light wood storm door. The square tower at the right end of the façade has dentil molding under the eaves of its pyramidal roof. The tower projects forward slightly from the second story, rests on the porch roof, and rises above the eave of the side-gabled main roof. The front-facing gabled projection at the north end of the facade has three-sided bay windows at both the first and second stories. The porch follows the contour of the bay. Typical windows are 2/2 double-hung sash. Windows at the first-floor façade, however, have a different upper sash: small, stained-glass lights surround a larger plain light. Stained glass is also seen in the gable ends and at a transom above the front door. A rectangular sash in the front gable holds 12 stained-glass lights and a 6-light stained-glass window at the south gable end has a segmental arch. The stained-glass lights at the front-door transom surround a clear light with the name "Oakcrest" painted on it. A window at the tower and a pair of windows at the north side of the Greek Revival one-story section had been replaced with 1/1 sash in the twentieth century and those remain. Exterior window and door trim is plain with thick squared sills. Panels below the windows at the first-floor of the bay have diagonally laid tongue-and-groove beaded boards framed with half-round molding on batten strips. The house has corner boards with quarter-round molding.

The front porch wraps to both side elevations of the two-story section and a partially glazed door on the south elevation provides egress to the porch. Across the porch, a frieze with alternating turned spindles and squared elements is another marker of the Queen Anne style. A band of reeded molding at the bottom of the frieze is notable because the detail is repeated at architraves, wainscot trim, baseboard molding, and mantles at the interior. The porch ceiling is beadboard. Supporting the porch roof are slender turned porch posts that are not an identical set. They occur singly and in pairs and are accented with carved brackets. A few reproduction posts were

⁴ This description is augmented with information drawn from two main sources: the original nomination and the paint analysis referenced in the previous footnote. For the original nomination, see Sherry Joines Wyatt, "Willis M. Graves House," 2002, NRHP Nomination Form, <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/nr/WA3521.pdf>. PNC has also done additional research that is also incorporated here as noted.

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required due to loss or damage of originals. The ca. 1920s Craftsman-style porch supports that framed the entry for much of the twentieth century were replaced with spindlework supports. At the center of each section of railing between porch posts is a flat cutout piece that can be seen as a geometric, stylized depiction of a beefy turned baluster. These were documented in the nomination as “diamond-shaped, sawnwork balusters,” and had at that time been removed from the house. Those on the house today are reproductions based on photographic evidence. The rest of the square-picket balustrade with plain handrail is not original but was present before the move and was cleaned up and reinstalled after the move.

The single-story ca. 1865 house attached to the back of the two-story section has paired 1/1 sash on the north side that probably replaced a single six-over-six window, as remains at the south side. This wing is set on a solid brick foundation; its original foundation was stone piers that no longer provided stable support. The hipped roof has a boxed cornice finished with torus molding along the bottom edge. Both the west and east elevations are joined to other sections and those original exterior walls and any fenestration and trim were lost decades ago. Window architraves at the north and south sides are plain with drip-cap molding and thick squared sills. A new hipped roof has been installed because the existing hipped roof was poorly built and did not appear to be original. Circular-sawn framing at the walls was observed during the rehabilitation.

The gabled rear addition, completed in 2020, is frame with single-light wood windows clad with aluminum at the exterior that generally match the historic fenestration pattern in size and distribution. They occur singly, in pairs, and, at the rear elevation, in a set of three. Some are fixed, others are casements. Like the rest of the dwelling, the rearmost addition has weatherboard siding. The end-gable roof matches the height of the new roof ridge of the mid-nineteenth century section. There is a small window near the top of the wall on the south elevation and a door leading to a patio on the north elevation. The addition does not extend the full width of the rear ca. 1865 wing, so a portion of that wing’s east wall is exposed, but it is blind.

The interior has a center-hall plan in both nineteenth-century sections. At the first floor, fireplaces in the flanking rooms are back-to-back at the shared wall between the nineteenth-century structures. The mantels are varied. Two are Queen Anne with bracketed shelves, mirrored overmantels, colonettes, and ornate carvings. In the front hall, a closed-stringer, Queen Anne-style stair rises from front to back. Turned balusters support a molded handrail; a hefty turned newel post with octagonal base and turned cap finish the rail. The wood flooring throughout the house is original. All plaster was removed before the move, and new walls and ceilings are drywall finished with a full skim coat. Additionally, walls in the hall have tongue-and-groove wainscot topped with a band of reeded trim framed with quarter-round molding. There are a variety of trim details throughout the house, but the reeded design seen at the porch frieze and the wainscot is repeated throughout the nineteenth-century sections. All the trim is

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original with the exception of the wainscot in the back hall. Its original wainscot was removed and what was in good condition was reused in the back rooms to patch holes that had been cut in the twentieth century for access into the rear additions. New beadboard wainscot was then installed in the back hall. Additionally, quarter-round shoe mold was added in the rehabilitation.

Overall, the finest finishes are in the front hall and in the two front rooms that flank it. Heavily molded architraves accented with bullseye cornerblocks frame the four-panel stile-and-rail doors with raised panels that open into the rooms. The two upper panels are slightly more than three times the height of the two lower panels, and doors have ceramic knobs. At the door that leads into the parlor, the northeast room, the molded architrave with cornerblocks is at the room side as well, and the underside of the architrave has reeding carved into the trim. All windows at the parlor, the first-floor room at the northwest corner, have Queen Anne-style stained glass and the same heavily molded trim and bullseye cornerblocks seen at the door. Below the windows are beadboard panels. Baseboards, now with shoe molding, encircle the room. Framing the transition between the room and the three-sided bay is a broad, round-arched opening that springs from carved wood brackets. The mantel on the opposite side of the room features a shelf over a frieze bisected with a band of reeding and supported by brackets on pilasters highlighted by a grooved centerline. A simple, mirrored overmantel has slender fluted columns.

The room at the southwest corner is also finished with a lot of architectural detail but repeats little of what is seen in the parlor. The architraves at the room-side of the doors are molded with mitered corners and lack the reeded detail at the underside. There is tongue-and-groove wainscot as in the hall, but the reeded band at the top is finished with a cavetto edge at its top. The ornately carved mantel has Eastlake detailing: engaged, paired, turned pilasters are topped by broad, carved brackets supporting a shelf with curved corners. The brackets have three rows of reeding and the exposed edge of the shelf is reeded as well. The mantel frieze is adorned with three bands of carved molding.

The two back rooms flanking the back hall in the single-story section have the same four-paneled doors and wainscot with reeded trim seen in the front hall. In the southeast room, the mantel is a post-and-lintel design with squared pilasters featuring high bases and simple caps. They support a plain, flat frieze where the bottom edge curves in a subtle arch. The thick, flat shelf has minimal molding at its juncture with the frieze. Across the hall, the northeast room's mantel is a plainer version of that in the parlor, lacking the incised decoration and fluting on the overmantel columns. It does, however, have a floral detail in the center. Architraves at doors in the back rooms are molded with mitered corners and feature the reeded trim around the inside of the opening.

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The second story is simpler but repeats some designs seen at the first floor. The wainscot is seen again in the stair hall, and all spaces at the second story have flat baseboards bisected horizontally with reeding. The stair climbs toward the back of the front hall to a landing, then turns to complete the ascent to the second story. There is some indication that the south wall of the north room was shifted to the north, making that room smaller and the center hall wider. The wall is not continuous with the north edge of the stair, a condition that creates a narrow ledge along the north side of the upper flight of the stair. Flooring, similarly, extends to the place in the center hall where one would have expected the wall to have been originally. The baseboards and architrave at the north room's door, however, match all the trim elsewhere in the second story.

At the upstairs hall, windows and doors have molded architraves with mitered corners, and doors are the same seen at the first floor. Window and door trim is varied, from molded to completely flat. The wainscot seen at the first floor occurs in the three-sided angled bay at the north room. The mantel in that room has pilasters, angled brackets supporting the plain shelf, and a plain frieze. The south room mantel has a post-and-lintel design with an unadorned flat frieze, molded pilasters on high bases, and a plain shelf with rounded corners.

The interior space of the 2020 addition is intentionally austere. Baseboards are flat with quarter-round molding; windows lack trim and are simply underscored with sills. Windows are single light; some are fixed and others casements. A restroom is at the south end, but the remainder of the space is open. Cabinets and work counters have been installed along the north and south walls. A stair at the back of the room leads down into a basement.

Aside from the move, changes to the house since its original listing in the NRHP have improved its architectural integrity. Most importantly, the aluminum siding has been removed, revealing original weatherboards and corner boards. Metal awning has been removed from the porch, making the surviving spindle frieze visible from the street once again. The Craftsman-style alterations to the porch that appeared to date to the 1920s have also been reversed by removing the brick piers and wood archway that framed the porch entry. Closets installed in the twentieth century were removed from the interior and the rear addition dating to that century was not moved with the nineteenth century sections. Adding the new rear section did not require the removal of any historic fabric. A single-light storm door has been added at the front entrance.

The house retains most aspects of integrity, excepting, of course, integrity of location. The removal of aluminum siding and awnings has revealed the original weatherboard siding as well as the spindlework frieze and carved brackets at the porch. This removal dramatically improved integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Removal of other twentieth-century alterations, such as the Craftsman-style changes to the porch, has also reasserted the original Queen Anne appearance, further improving the integrity of the original design. The retention of stained-glass

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in the original window sash as well as original mantels and trim and preservation of the original interior layout, including removal of twentieth-century closets, also contribute to integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The nineteenth-century residential setting has been recreated in the new location in terms of setback, the dwelling's relationship to another historic Oberlin house, and front-yard landscape elements. The Graves-Fields House and the Hall House stand as close together as houses did in Oberlin historically, as documented in the 1914 Sanborn map. The setback distance from Oberlin Road seen at the original site has been maintained here, and the Graves-Fields House stands on the same side of the road as it did historically with identical orientation—that is, the façade is parallel to the street. The house remains on the same block as its original site, within the bounds of the historical Village of Oberlin and maintains its close proximity with the main roadway of the village and near its surviving historical neighboring properties. Relocating the property while taking into account all these considerations has preserved the dwelling's integrity of feeling and association with the late nineteenth-century development of the village of Oberlin. The relocation of the Graves-Fields House, therefore, meets the special requirements of Criteria Consideration B for moved properties. Thanks to the post-move rehabilitation, the building now retains the integrity necessary to convey its significance for architectural value.

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SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Graves-Fields House is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent and intact example of the Queen Anne style as exhibited by the most financially successful Oberlin homeowners in the first decades of the development that freedmen's village. Characteristic Queen Anne elements at the two-story house include asymmetrical massing created by the front- and side-facing gables at the roof, a two-story polygonal bay window at one end of the façade, and a pyramidal-roof tower at the other end. Other exterior Queen Anne features include carved and turned decorative detailing on the wrap-around porch, faux-shingling the gable ends, and stained glass in multi-light windows. At the interior, the dwelling features Queen Anne finishes and details, including beadboard wainscot and a stair with turned balusters and newel post. Queen Anne-style mantels have turned colonettes, bracketed shelves, mirrored overmantels, and Eastlake-style carving. The period of significance is ca. 1886, the approximate date the two-story section was built and alterations were made to the ca. 1865 single-story Greek Revival dwelling to make it a rear wing with some compatible Queen Anne wainscot and mantels. Because the current appearance of the two nineteenth-century sections reflects the later the nineteenth century date, that is the only appropriate date for the Period of Significance. The Graves-Fields House also meets Criteria Consideration B for moved properties that retain integrity and derive significance primarily from architectural value.

Historical and architectural context for the Graves-Fields House is found in the Oberlin Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), titled "Historic and Architectural Resources of Oberlin, Wake County, North Carolina, 1865-1952." The relevant context statements are "The Freedman's Village Phenomenon and the Early Development of Oberlin Village, 1865-1880" (pages E1-E10); "The Cultural and Social Life of Oberlin" (pages E10-E22); and "The Jim Crow Years: Modest Prosperity and Sense of Community, 1880-1950" (pages E22-E28). The Graves-Fields House satisfies the registration requirements for its property type as established by the Oberlin MPDF under "Residential Buildings" (pages F31-F36). Those requirements state that "residential properties must be intact examples of the important architectural styles and house types built during the period of significance from 1865 to 1952[...]. Intact interiors enhance the level of integrity." As stated in the original nomination, the Graves-Fields House (referred to as the Graves House in the original nomination and the MPDF) is "one of the largest and most stylistically exuberant Queen Anne dwellings in Oberlin" and it compared favorably to the more modest "tri-gable cottages with restrained Queen Anne motifs." The heavily molded architraves, decorative mantels, stained glass, wainscot, and stair with turned balustrade are intact interior architectural features that express the Queen Anne style. The post-move rehabilitation improved

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architectural integrity by removing twentieth-century alterations, including aluminum siding and porch alterations at the exterior and the addition of closets at the interior.⁵

Additional Architectural Context

Survey in Oberlin for preparation of the MPDF revealed that nearly sixty percent of buildings dated from the late nineteenth century through 1952. Those at the early end of that range tended to be “primarily one-story, side-gable, frame cottages with minimal Queen Anne or classical references.” Such dwellings were often triple-A cottages with turned porch posts and sometimes sawn brackets. Other two-story houses in Oberlin were triple-A I-houses, with a few more “substantial” being more decorative examples of the Queen Anne style. The Oberlin MPDF notes that the ca. 1899/ca. 1910 Turner House (NRHP 2002), the ca. 1905 Latta House (NR 2002, not extant), and the Graves-Fields House are important examples of more “substantial” Oberlin’s Queen Anne dwellings. The Turner House, an early twentieth-century Queen Anne I-house added to ca. 1899 single-story structure, features a double-tier porch retains integrity today. The Latta House was a two-story Queen Anne with Tuscan-order wraparound porch destroyed by fire in 2007.⁶

The Graves-Fields House compares favorably with the most architecturally decorative Queen Anne dwellings in Oberlin. The two-story house has characteristic asymmetrical massing created by the front-and side-facing gables at the roof, a two-story polygonal bay window at one end of the façade, and a pyramidal-roof tower at the other end. Other exterior Queen Anne features include carved and turned decorative detailing on the wrap-around porch, and stained glass in multi-light windows.

The MPDF also asserts that the interior of the Graves-Fields House was finer than other houses in Oberlin, noting the “fashionable, molded millwork” and “fancy fireplace surrounds.” The rehabilitated dwelling retains its notable Queen Anne finishes including beadboard wainscot and a stair with turned balusters and newel post. Queen Anne-style mantels have turned colonettes, bracketed shelves, mirrored overmantles, and Eastlake-style carving. In comparison, other dwellings more often tended toward simplicity at the interior: “Wood floors, a mixture of door styles, and simple door and window surrounds are typical,” the MPDF reported.⁷

The NRHP nomination for the house in its original location notes that while the dwelling is an “exuberant” example of the Queen Anne style, it does not appear to be professionally designed or a pattern book example. “The way that the corner tower is actually set in from the corner of

⁵ Sherry Joines Wyatt, “Historic and Architectural Resources of Oberlin, Wake County, North Carolina, 1865-1952,” Multiple Property Documentation Form, F28; “Graves House NRHP Nomination,” 8.1.

⁶ Wyatt, “Oberlin MPDF,” F28, F32.

⁷ Wyatt, “Oberlin MPDF,” F28; “Graves House NRHP Nomination,” 8.1.

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the house, merely attached to the façade of the house, and the unusually large gable and hip roof that extends to the rear of the front gable” are features that the nomination’s author saw as marks that the house may have been designed by Graves “in a way that pleased him rather than a strict adherence to popular stylistic rules.”⁸

History

Oral histories of Oberlin credit brick mason Willis M. Graves as the first owner and likely builder of the 1886 portion of the house; deeds support this information. In October 1886, Willis M. Graves (ca. 1856-1942) purchased a parcel on the east side of Oberlin Road for \$90.00 from white carpenter William D. C. Riddle (1821-1892) and his wife Cynthia (1826-1901). The deed refers to what appears to be the parcel at 802 Oberlin Road, the original location of the house, describing a parcel line beginning at the “church lot southwest corner” and west and east lot lines that are 52-1/2 feet long. Today’s parcel is minimally different, with a slight expansion at its northwest corner taken from the church some time before 1922. The parcel may have been part of the three acres “about a mile northwest of the City of Raleigh on the east side of the new Hillsboro Road” that Riddle purchased in 1870 from white landowners George (1801-1871) and Margaret Mordecai (1810-1886) in 1870. Hillsboro Road is an earlier name for Oberlin Road.⁹

Early records for Willis M. Graves are scarce but show that he was born in the South and likely before Emancipation. Census records from 1880 and 1900 through 1930 list his birth state variously as Mississippi or North Carolina, and his inferred birth year as 1856, 1859, 1867, or 1869. Willis married Eleanor Hinton (1859-1922) in Oberlin in 1883, and their marriage license contains other helpful biographical information. It records Willis as 27 years old (inferring a birth year of 1856) and Eleanor as 21 years old (inferring her birth year as 1859). Willis’s father, Matthew Graves, was “living in Mississippi” at that time, while his mother was in Wake County, North Carolina. Willis’s mother’s name appeared on the marriage certificate as Lavina (Lasina) Farrar, but a Wake County deed from 1916 recorded that she was also known by another name: It states that “Viney Graves was the mother of Willis M. Graves and Christopher C. Graves” and that Viney had purchased land along Hillsboro Road as early as 1871. Viney Graves appears in the 1870 census in Wake County with a teenaged Christopher. Both worked and resided at the North Carolina Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind. The next year, Viney married Nelson Farrar of Raleigh, a brick mason and plasterer, and the 1880 census documents the couple living with Willis and Christopher in Oberlin. The brothers, listed under the Farrar name,

⁸ Wyatt, “Graves House NRHP Nomination,” 8.4.

⁹ Linda Simmons-Henry and Linda Harris Edmisten, *Culture Town: Life in Raleigh’s African American Communities* (Raleigh: RHDC, 1993), 35; W. D. and C. H. Riddle to Willis Graves, October 14, 1886, Wake County Deed Book 97, page 462; Ancestry.com, *1860 United States Federal Census* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009; George and Margaret Mordecai to W. D. C. Riddle, May 24, 1870, Wake County Deed Book 30, page 254.

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are both recorded as 21 years old and born in Mississippi. Willis's documented occupation in the 1880 census is brick mason and Christopher's is farm laborer. That census, shortly before the marriage of Willis Graves and Eleanor Hinton, also recorded that Eleanor lived nearby with her family; she was a school teacher at the Oberlin School.¹⁰

Willis Graves worked for many years as a brick mason but also owned land in Oberlin as early as 1884. He and John Flagg, another African American brick mason, were parties to a financed agreement that year with white building contractor Jacob Allen to purchase land from Allen. This has previously been mistaken as the deed to the land at 802 Oberlin Road; it was credited as such in the NRHP nomination for the house in its original location. The 1884 document actually refers to parcels of land that total around fifteen acres, while the 1886 deed describes the parcel at 802 Oberlin Road. The exact location of the property in the 1884 deed has not been determined and the referenced plat, drawn by Fendol Bevers in 1869, has not been located. The original nomination cited city tax rolls from 1900 that indicated that Willis Graves still owned six lots in Oberlin with values ranging from \$50 to \$800. About a month after Graves purchased what is now 802 Oberlin Road, W. D. C. Riddle sold land immediately north of the church parcel to John Flagg. The Flagg family would also continue to live in Oberlin for decades; the 1940 federal census records that the family was still living at 808 Oberlin Road, immediately north of Oberlin Baptist Church. It is interesting that Graves and Flagg purchased land from a contractor and carpenter, as it implies they were involved in construction of houses in Oberlin Village. The Oberlin MPDF states that the houses lining Oberlin Road and nearby streets were "often owner-occupied," raising the possibility that part of Graves's income came from rent.¹¹

No primary documents relating to construction of the Graves-Fields House have been located. However, the 1886 deed for the land at 802 Oberlin Road mentions the sale includes the land "with and all privileges and appurtenances thereto." This language could refer to an easement, right-of-way, or building—perhaps the older, one-story house that became the back two rooms of the Graves-Fields House. A 2018 paint analysis by architect and architectural historian David

¹⁰ Willis M. Graves, death certificate, September 1, 1942, Borough of Manhattan Department of Health; Ancestry.com, *North Carolina, Marriage Records, 1741-2011* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015; Ancestry.com, *North Carolina, U.S., Death Certificates, 1909-1976* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007; Willis M. Graves to Christopher C. Graves, June 15, 1914, Wake County Deed Book 290, page 81; Ancestry.com, *1870 United States Federal Census* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009; Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *1880 United States Federal Census* [database on-line], Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2010; "Married," (marriage announcement of Lavina Graves and Nelson Farrar), *The [Raleigh] Weekly Era*, October 21, 1971; "A Convention of the Colored Teachers of Wake County," *The Observer* July 31, 1877.

¹¹ Jacob Allen to Willis M. Graves and John F. Flagg, January 21, 1884, Wake County Deed Book 78, page 146; Wyatt, "Graves House," NRHP Nomination, 8.4; W. D. Riddle and Cynthia H. Riddle to John F. Flagg, Jr., November 15, 1886, Wake County Deed Book 94, page 137; Wyatt, "Oberlin MPDF," E-20.

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Black identified features of that building that assist in dating it to ca. 1865. Black states that “The Greek Revival cornice, six over six window sash, interior Greek Revival trim, stuccoed foundation piers incised in imitation of stone, and circular sawn framing suggest that it was constructed in the late 1860s as a one-story, center hall plan house that faced away from the Oberlin Road.” The paint analysis also found that the one-story dwelling likely sat unpainted until construction of the 1886 portion.¹²

Graves also operated a grocery, ran a post office, and was a justice of the peace. The 1914 Sanborn map shows a separate store building in the front yard—a small, single-story, rectangular frame building with porch across the narrow façade wrapping to about half of the north side elevation. The house, meanwhile, is marked on this same map as “Oakcrest.” The store, and the “Oakcrest” label, are not present on the 1950 update of the map.¹³

Willis and Eleanor Graves raised six children in the house; some stayed in Raleigh and were active in Oberlin and others moved north in the Great Migration. Their children attended Oberlin School and St. Augustine Normal School and Collegiate Institute in Raleigh. Some pursued higher education at Shaw University and farther afield at Cornell University, Columbia University, and Howard University, and a few of the Graves children and grandchildren achieved notable firsts or career accomplishments. While pursuing a bachelor’s degree in agriculture at Cornell in 1906, their son Lemuel Eugene Graves (1877-1942) was in the first class of initiates into Alpha Phi Alpha, the first intercollegiate Greek-letter fraternity founded by and for African American men. He taught for a time at Florida A&M University, returned to Raleigh and worked in real estate and insurance, and moved to Harlem in the 1920s with his own family and his father, by then a widower. A generation later, his son Lemuel (Lem) Graves Jr. (1915-1972) was an Alpha at St. Augustine’s College and became a journalist. While working as the Washington correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, he received a State Department appointment in Paris, helping implement the Marshall Plan. He continued his career with the State Department, later working as a public affairs officer at the United States Embassy in Montevideo in Uruguay. Another son of Willis and Eleanor’s Willis (Bill) Graves Jr. earned a law degree at Howard University and went on to work in civil rights in Detroit. He acted as counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Detroit and contributed to an argument against racially restrictive deed covenants in a case that was consolidated with others into *Shelley v. Kraemer*, the suit argued by Thurgood Marshall that resulted in the landmark Supreme Court ruling that enforcement of such restrictions was unconstitutional. The Shelley

¹² Black, 1.

¹³ Wyatt, “Graves House,” NRHP Nomination, 8-5; *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Raleigh, Wake County, North Carolina*. Sanborn Map Company, 1914 and 1950, 71; Simmons-Henry and Edmisten, 19. The 2002 nomination notes that the grocery and post office were in the dwelling around 1917.

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House in St. Louis, at the center of the Supreme Court Case, has been designated a National Historic Landmark.¹⁴

Willis's and Eleanor's two adult daughters, Christine (1890-?) and Mildred (1892-1926), both teachers, acquired the house parcel from their father in 1922, the year their mother died. Christine married James Harris in 1927, the year following her sister's early death. In 1928, the couple mortgaged the house and then lost it, and ownership eventually transferred to John and Alice Graham. The Grahams lived in the house until 1945, then sold it to Spurgeon and Jeannetta Fields, already Oberlin residents. According to Jannette Fields-Harris, as reported in the first nomination, the house was a center of social activity in the community. The Fields family owned the house until 2016, when heirs sold it to real estate developers. When a demolition threat arose from redevelopment plans, Preservation North Carolina acquired the house and moved it to avoid destruction.¹⁵

Previous NRHP Listing and Ramifications of the Move and Rehabilitation

In 2002, the house was listed in the NRHP as the Willis M. Graves House under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage/Black and Social History. The nomination listed "Graves-Fields House" and "Oakcrest" as other names. No significant dates or persons were identified, and no architect or builder was listed. The period of significance was ca. 1884-1935. The house was not listed under Criterion C in the area of Architecture because aluminum siding added after the period of significance reduced integrity. The dwelling was moved in 2019 in the face of a demolition threat and was delisted as a result of the move.

In its new location, eligibility under Criterion A has been lost because the relationship between the Graves House and its original site was destroyed by the move. Additionally, another dwelling, the ca. 1899/ca. 1910 Turner House (NRHP 2002), is listed in the same areas of eligibility for its association with Oberlin. The Turner House remains in its original location, so

¹⁴ Ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004; "Lemuel Eugene Graves," *Who's Who in Colored America*, Sixth Ed. (Brooklyn: Thomas Yenser, 1942), 600; Donald L. Ross, "Thank you Brother Poindexter?" *The Sphinx* Spring/Summer 2015; "Willis Graves Jr.," *Who's who in Colored America*, (N.p.: C.E. Burckel., 1950), 221-222; "Pat on Back for Courier's Lem Graves," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 10, 1949; Lynn Williams, "Did State Department Give False Picture?" *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 16, 1961; "The Shelley House," <https://www.nps.gov/places/missouri-the-shelley-house-1.htm>. Some biographical information from oral history interviews conducted by Preservation North Carolina with various family members.

¹⁵ Willis M. Graves to Christine and Mildred Graves, May 10, 1922, Wake County Deed Book 437, page 203; Ancestry.com, *1920 United States Federal Census* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010; Ancestry.com, *North Carolina, U.S., Death Certificates, 1909-1976* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007; Wyatt, "Graves House," NRHP Nomination 8.8.

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the Graves-Fields House is not the surviving property with the most compelling association with the development and existence of Oberlin Village.

Eligibility under Criterion C has also changed. The rehabilitation has improved architectural integrity of the Graves-Fields House with removal of aluminum siding, reversal of ca. 1920 alterations to the front porch, removal of closets added at the interior, and restoration of the original paint scheme.

Finally, this nomination uses the name "Graves-Fields House" as it best reflects the property's historic importance to the Oberlin community. Willis M. Graves and Eleanor Hinton Graves were married by the time the house was built. The family owned it just shy of fifty years, from 1886 until 1934, and referred to it as "Oakcrest," according to the first nomination. The Fields family, in turn, owned the house for over seventy years, from 1945 through 2016. Today, Oberlin community members and those with historical ties to Oberlin strongly associate the Fields family and family name with the house. Community members have made the point that other names are currently viewed as obscure and researchers looking for information about the house may not know to look for it under the names "Oakcrest" or "Graves House." It is commonly referred to as the Graves-Fields House and promoted by that name by groups such as Preservation North Carolina, the current owner-occupant, and Friends of Oberlin Village. Community stakeholders feel strongly that continuity and recognition of the association of the Fields family be recognized in the National Register re-listing of the house.

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LATITUDE/LONGITUDE

35.795077/-78.661048

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The NRHP boundary for this property is the building footprint, including both nineteenth-century sections and the 2019 rear addition.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This parcel is not historically associated with the Graves-Fields House, so the boundary for the property is the building footprint.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs 2, 3, 13, 15, and 16 taken by Cynthia de Miranda in March 2020.

Photographs 6, 7, 9, 14 taken by K. Lord of the Capital City Camera Club in November 2020.

Photographs 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, and 12 taken by Jim Lamb of the Capital City Camera Club in November 2020.

The digital files are held at the State Historic Preservation Office in Raleigh, North Carolina.

1. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0001 Graves-Fields House façade, view E
2. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0002 Graves-Fields House, south elev., view N
3. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0003 Graves-Fields House, rear elev., view W
4. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0004 Graves-Fields House, north elev., view SW
5. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0005 Plummer T. Hall House and Graves-Fields House, view SE
6. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0006 Graves-Fields House, front hall, view W
7. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0007 Graves-Fields House, parlor, view NW
8. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0008 Graves-Fields House, parlor, view NE
9. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0009 Graves-Fields House, SW room, view NE
10. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0010 Graves-Fields House, SE room, view NW
11. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0011 Graves-Fields House, NE room, view NW
12. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0012 Graves-Fields House, addition, view NE
13. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0013 Graves-Fields House, upstairs north room, view E
14. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0014 Graves-Fields House, upstairs north room, view SW
15. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0015 Graves-Fields House, upstairs south room, view E
16. NC_WakeCounty_Graves-Fields House_0016 Graves-Fields House, upstairs south room, view SW

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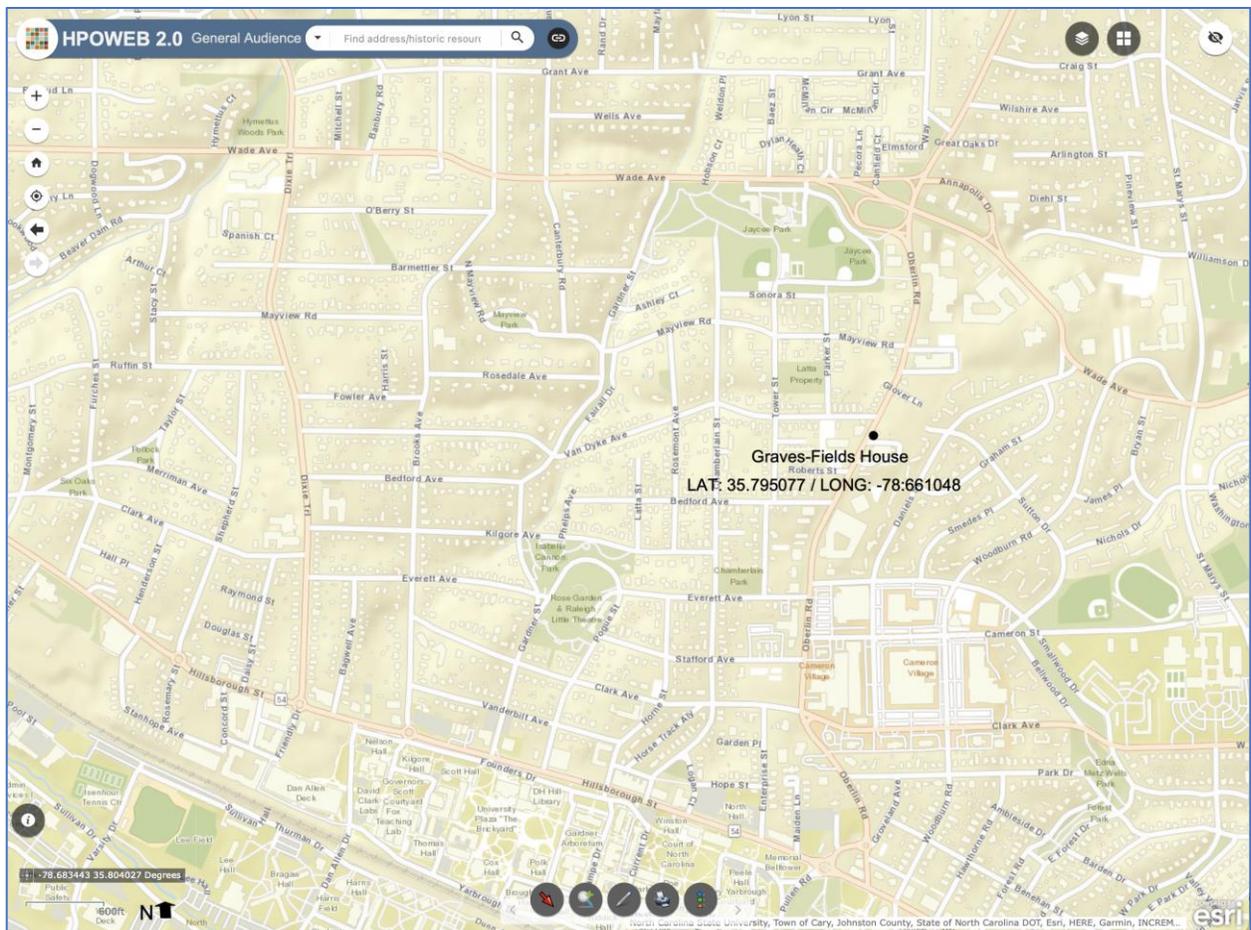
Archaeological Study Summary

Before a need to move the house had arisen, Environmental Services, Inc. conducted an archaeological survey of the parcels at 812 and 814 Oberlin Road (Russ 2015). The investigation sought to determine if a proposed new location of the Plummer T. Hall House would adversely affect significant archaeological deposits that may exist on the two parcels.

The work included visual inspection and close-interval shovel testing of the entirety of both parcels. The investigation resulted in the identification of archaeological site 31WA1952, which is associated with the historic occupation of the Plummer T. Hall House by Reverend Hall and his family. Aspects of site 31WA1952 documented by the survey include structural debris associated with outbuildings and an artifact-rich sheet midden. The variety and density of artifacts in the northern and eastern portions of the property suggests these areas have high potential for intact subsurface deposits or features.

Since artifact density was relatively light in the western portion of the property, the project archaeologist concluded that moving the Plummer T. Hall House to its present location would not adversely affect site 31WA1952. However, it was recommended that archaeological monitoring take place during any initial clearing and grading of the eastern portion of the property to document cultural features, such as privies or wells, that might be present.

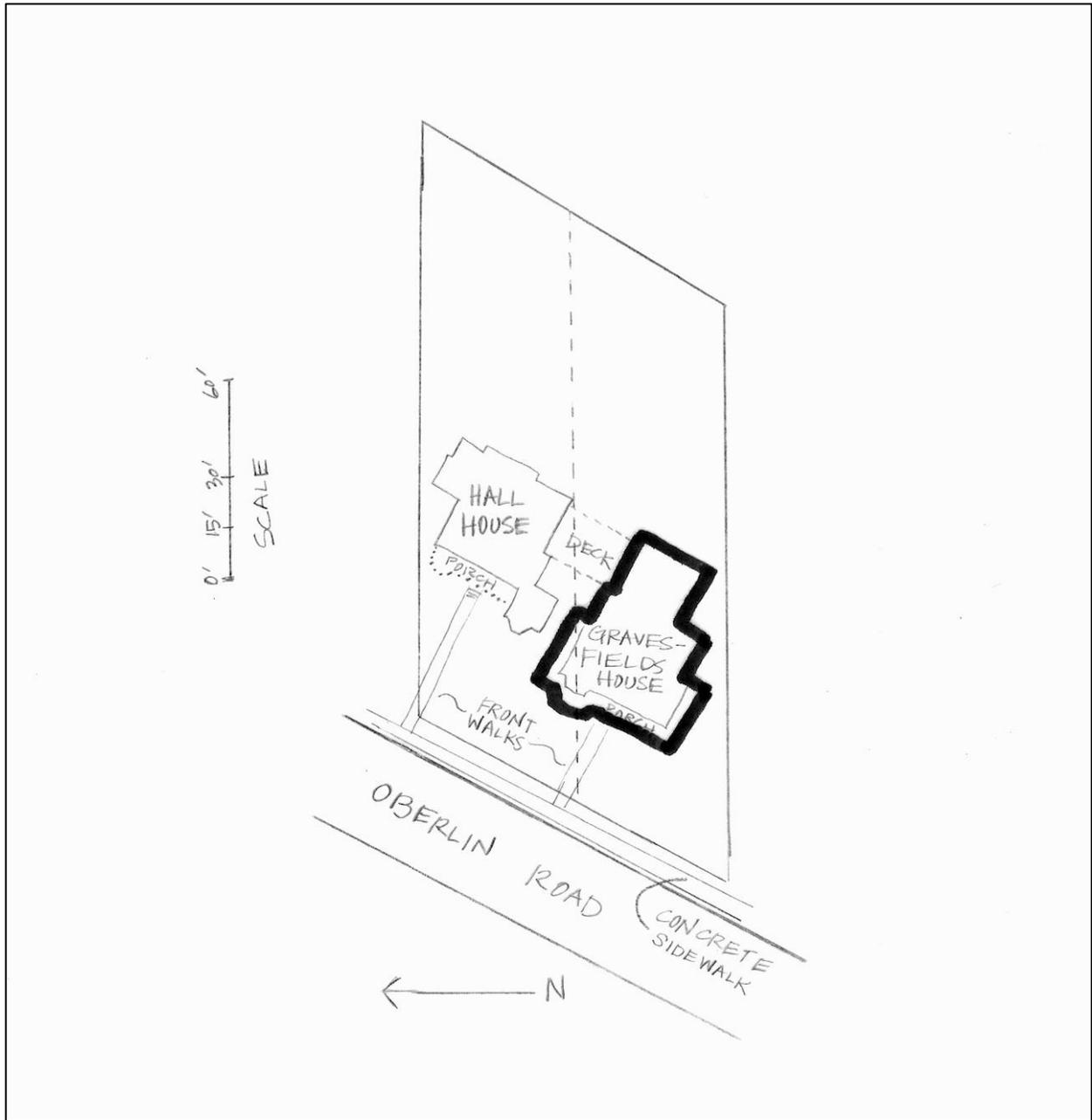
In determining a new site for the Graves-Fields House, Preservation North Carolina took care to situate the dwelling in the western portion of the parcels at 812 and 814 Oberlin Road, thereby ensuring that relocation would not adversely impact site 31WA1952. Ground-disturbing activities associated with building the rear addition to the Hall House and the Graves-Fields House were conducted without archaeological monitoring, so the effect of these activities on site 31WA1952 is unknown.



Graves-Fields House, 814 Oberlin Road, Raleigh, Wake County, NC
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Location Map

Map created by Cynthia de Miranda using NC HPO Web, June 2021



Graves-Fields House, 814 Oberlin Road, Raleigh, Wake County, NC
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Boundary Map

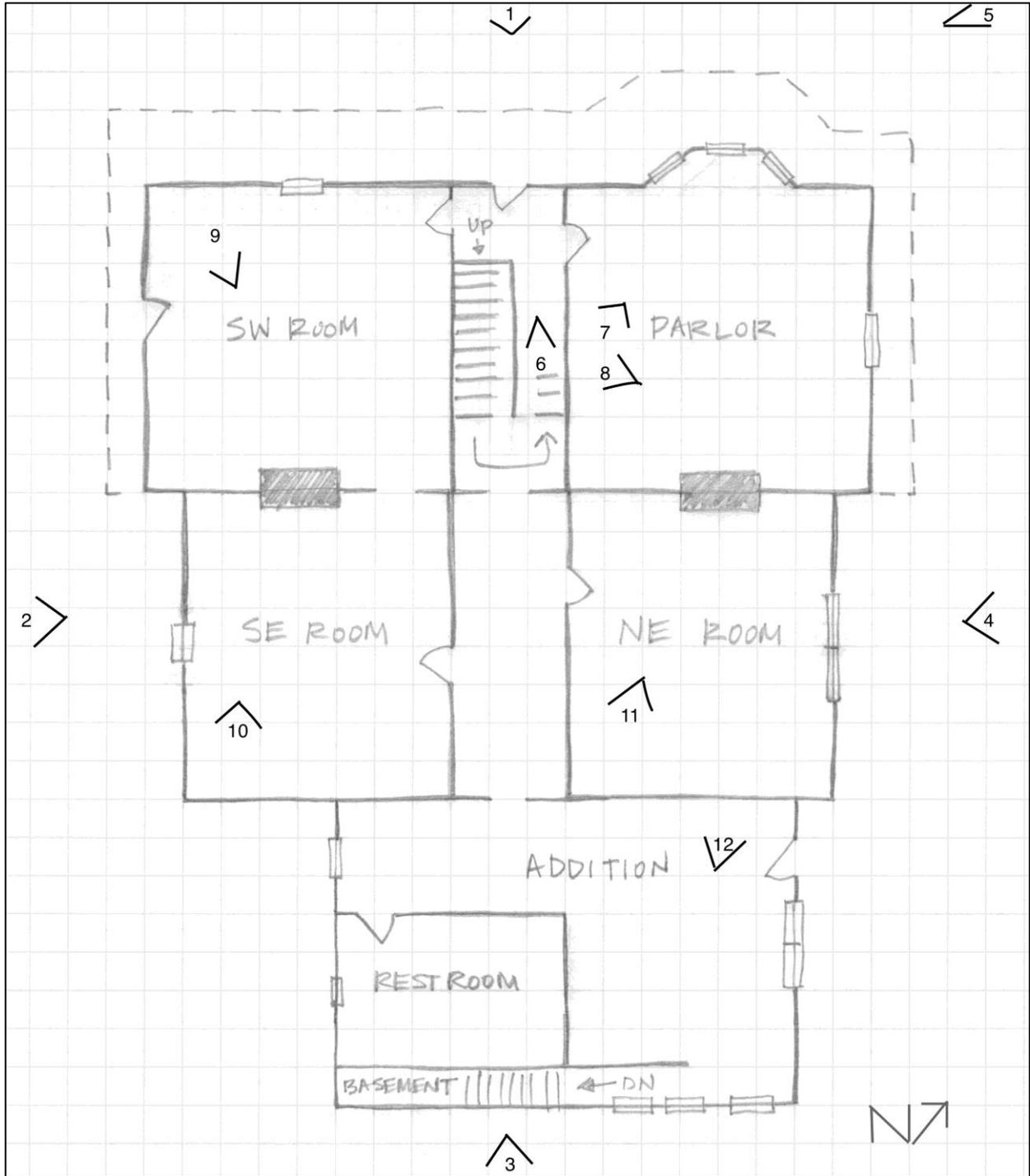
Lat: 35.795077 / Long: -78.661048

NR Boundary is heavy line of the Graves-Fields House footprint.

Vertical dashed line is old parcel line;

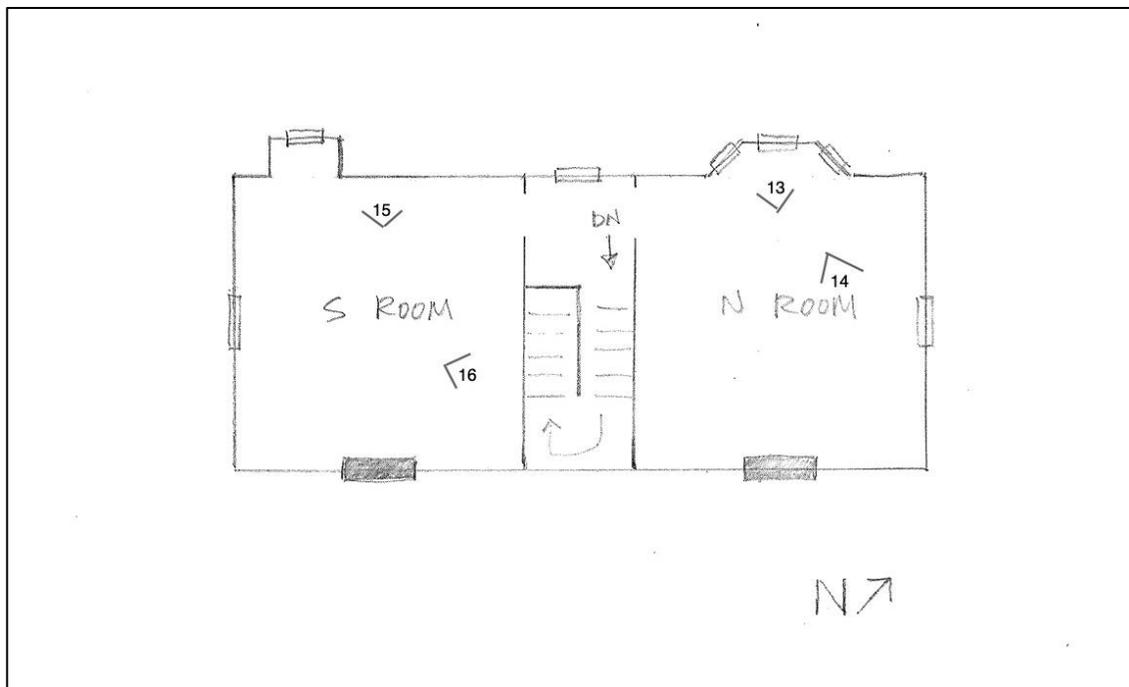
rest of the parallelogram is current parcel line.

Map created by Cynthia de Miranda based on data from 2019 survey by Turning Point Survey for PNC.



Graves-Fields House, 814 Oberlin Road, Raleigh, Wake County, NC
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First Floor Plan and Photo Key, Photos 1 through 12, not to scale



Graves-Fields House, 814 Oberlin Road, Raleigh, Wake County, NC
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Second Floor Plan and Photo Key, Photos 13 through 16, not to scale