

**HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY**  
**BUILDING AND STRUCTURES**

HIST-6 NEW 5 77

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
**CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
 59 SOUTH PROSPECT STREET, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106  
 (203) 566-3005

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	
Town No. _____	Site No. 41
UTM :	
QUAD: _____	
DISTRICT <input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> NR	IF NR SPECIFY <input type="checkbox"/> Actual <input type="checkbox"/> Potential

IDENTIFICATION	1. BUILDING NAME (Common) _____ (Historic) Curtiss, James, House	
	2. TOWN CITY Durham	COUNTY Middlesex
	3. STREET AND NUMBER (and or location) Maiden Lane, south side, .3 m east of Main Street	
	4. OWNER(S) Frank and Helen Mildeberger <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	
	5. USE (Present) _____ (Historic) Residence	
DESCRIPTION	6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No EXTERIOR VISIBLE FROM PUBLIC ROAD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No INTERIOR ACCESSIBLE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No IF YES EXPLAIN with permission	
	7. STYLE OF BUILDING Colonial DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1737-1761	
	8. MATERIAL(S) (Indicate use or location when appropriate) <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding <input type="checkbox"/> Brick <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco <input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Type: _____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cut stone Type: sandstone foundation	
	9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wood frame <input type="checkbox"/> Post and beam <input type="checkbox"/> balloon <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Load bearing masonry <input type="checkbox"/> Structural iron or steel	
	10. ROOF (Type) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gable <input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Mansard <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor <input type="checkbox"/> sawtooth <input type="checkbox"/> Gambrel <input type="checkbox"/> Shed <input type="checkbox"/> Hip <input type="checkbox"/> Round <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ (Material) <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle <input type="checkbox"/> Roll Asphalt <input type="checkbox"/> Tin <input type="checkbox"/> Slate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Asphalt shingle <input type="checkbox"/> Built up <input type="checkbox"/> Tile <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____	
	11. NUMBER OF STORIES 2½ APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS Main block: 30 x 38; rear additions: 24 x 35	
	12. CONDITION (Structural) _____ (Exterior) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	
	13. INTEGRITY (Location) _____ WHEN? _____ (Alterations) _____ IF YES EXPLAIN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On original site <input type="checkbox"/> Moved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No shed-roofed additions to southwest rear	
	14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES <input type="checkbox"/> Barn <input type="checkbox"/> Shed <input type="checkbox"/> Garage <input type="checkbox"/> Other landscape features or buildings (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Carriage house <input type="checkbox"/> Shop <input type="checkbox"/> Garden	
	15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT <input type="checkbox"/> Open land <input type="checkbox"/> Wood-land <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Residential <input type="checkbox"/> Scattered buildings visible from site <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Indus-trial <input type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> High building density	
16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS The James Curtiss House is situated on a steep bank overlooking Maiden Lane as it slopes eastward towards Hersig Brook.		

**17 OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior)**

**DESCRIPTIVE (Continued)**

The James Curtiss House is a three-bay, central-chimney, colonial structure. It stands on a cut sandstone foundation which is exposed on its east side, revealing a shop door dating from the eighteenth century. The main entry is original and contains a two-leafed six-panelled doorway. The only remaining original fenestration is on the second story of the facade, which contains eight-over-twelve sash. A shed-roofed addition dating from the nineteenth century has been constructed on the southwest corner of the house.

**18 ARCHITECT** \_\_\_\_\_ **BUILDER** \_\_\_\_\_

**19 HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE**

**SIGNIFICANCE**

In 1722 James Curtiss, the son of one of Durham's original proprietors, purchased a five-acre section of the "Governor's Farm" from Samuel Pickett for 77 pounds. At that time no structure stood upon the property. In 1761 Curtiss, "for the love and affection which I bear towards my son," deeded half the house, barn, and other buildings on the property (which had now grown to 20 acres in size) to his son, Nathan Curtiss (1734-1776). The house was built at some point between 1737 and 1761.

James Curtiss was one of the town's leaders. As his epitaph in the Old Cemetery noted "Capt. James Curtiss/ Deacon of this Church/ who having been exemplary/ for piety, peace, and order/ from his Youth/ and useful in various Offices/ of civil and sacred trust/ through life/ resigned his breath/ Jany. 13th A.D. 1790/ The hoary Head of the righteous is a Crown of Glory." James Curtiss outlived his son Nathan who, as one of the early enthusiastic supporters of American independence, marched off with the militia to Westchester County, New York, where he was killed on September 21, 1776. He left a widow, Anna, and a son, James (1763-1806). James was an enterprising man. In addition to his farm he operated a mill for manufacturing gunpowder. He was killed in an explosion of his factory in February of 1806. James Curtiss's children all went West, to Michigan and New York. His widow lived in the house until 1819. She died leaving her estate divided into 70 shares. In the 1820s William H. Walkley bought out the shares of the various Curtiss legatees. (The records of these transactions provide a fascinating glimpse into the migration pattern of Durhamites during the early nineteenth century.) He sold the property (SEE CONT. SHEET)

**SOURCES**

Durham Land Records; Durham Vital Records; Middletown Probate Records; Federal Census of 1820, 1850, 1880; Beers, J. B., History of Middlesex County, Connecticut (New York: J. B. Beers & Co., 1884); Durham History Committee, Durham, CT, 1866-1980: Century of Change (Durham: 1980); Fowler, William C., History of Durham (Durham: W. C. Fowler, 1866); Whited, Milton, Durham's Heritage (Durham: 1976); 1859 Walling Map; 1874 Beers Atlas.

<b>PHOTO</b>	<b>PHOTOGRAPHER</b> P. D. Hall	<b>DATE</b> 7/5/83
	<b>VIEW</b> North & east elev	<b>NEGATIVE ON FILE</b> 1:17
<b>COMPILED BY</b>	<b>NAME</b> P. D. Hall	<b>DATE</b> 5/15/84
	<b>ORGANIZATION</b> Greater Middletown Preservation Trust	
	<b>ADDRESS</b> 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT 06457	



**20 SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS**

**THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE**

None known   
  Highways   
  Vandalism   
  Developers   
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal   
  Private   
  Deterioration   
  Zoning   
  Explanation \_\_\_\_\_

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM  
For Buildings and Structures

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY			
TOWN NO.:		SITE NO.:	
UTM: 18	/	4	/ 1
QUAD:			
DISTRICT:	S	NR:	ACTUAL POTENTIAL

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item number: 19 Date: 5/15/84

JAMES CURTISS HOUSE, Durham

19 (cont'd)

in 1868 to Samuel G. Camp. It remained in the Camp family until 1908 and was purchased by its present owners in 1962.

This house is architecturally significant as a fine example of the saltbox structures favored by Durham's early settlers. It is notable for its integrity both as a structure and for its site, which has changed little since the eighteenth century. Historically it is significant for its association with the Curtisses, one of Durham's most prominent eighteenth-century families, active in ecclesiastical, political, and economic affairs.