

CARY HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION

Preparing Your Application:

Please type if possible. Use paper no larger than 11" x 17" for the required supporting information. Staff is available to advise on the preparation of applications.

Filing Your Application:

When completed, the attached application will initiate consideration of a property for designation as a local historic landmark. The application will enable the Town of Cary Historic Preservation Commission (CHPC) to determine whether the property qualifies for designation. The CHPC will make its recommendation to the Cary Town Council.

Mail the application to Town of Cary Planning Department, PO Box 8005, Cary, NC, 27512. Submitted materials become the property of the Town of Cary and will not be returned. Incomplete applications may be returned to the applicant for revision. Staff will contact applicants after receiving an application to discuss the next steps of the designation process. Please contact staff with any questions at (919) 469-4084, or at anna.readling@townofcary.org.

1. Name of Property (if historic name is unknown, give current name or street address)

Historic Name: _____ John L. and Henrie G. Sears House _____

Current Name: _____

2. Location

Please include the full street address of the property, including its local planning jurisdiction. Wake County Property Identification (PIN) and Real Estate Identification (REID) Numbers can be found at the Wake County property information website at <http://services.wakegov.com/realestate/> or by contacting the Town of Cary Planning Department.

Street Address: _____ 5104 Sears Farm Road, Cary, NC 27519 _____

PIN Number: ___0734565079_____ Real Estate ID Number: ___0439463_____

Deed Book/PG Number: Book _17008_ Page: _1922_ Appraised Value: ___\$184,864.00_____

3. Legal Owner of Property (If more than one, list primary contact)

Name: _____ Zach and Stephanie Johnson _____

Address: _____ 5104 Sears Farm Road _____

City: _____ Cary _____ State: ___NC___ Zip: ___27519_____

Phone: _____ 319-270-9888 _____

Email: _____ zajohnson@gmail.com _____

Ownership: Private Public: Local State Federal

4. Applicant/Contact Person (If other than the owner)

Name: _____ Cynthia de Miranda, MdM Historical Consultants for Town of Cary _____

Address: _____ PO Box 1399 _____

City: _____ Durham _____ State: ___NC___ Zip: ___27702_____

Phone: ___919-906-3136_____ Email: _____ cynthia@mdmhc.com _____

5. General Data/Site Information

Date of Construction and major alterations and additions:

Ca. 1915, addition and porch enclosure ca. 1960, other alterations ca. 1992
 moved 2017, rehabilitated 2018

Number, type, and date of construction of outbuildings:

n/a

Approximate lot size or acreage: .35 acres

Architect, builder, carpenter, and/or mason: unknown

Original Use: dwelling

Present Use: dwelling

7. Classification

A. Category (check all that apply):

- Building** – created principally to shelter any form of human activity (i.e. house, barn/stable, hotel, church, school, theater, etc.)
- Structure** - constructed usually for purposes other than creating human shelter (i.e. tunnel, bridge, highway, silo, etc.)
- Object** - constructions that are primarily artistic in nature. Although movable by nature or design, an object is typically associated with a specific setting or environment (i.e. monument, fountain, etc.)
- Site** - the location of a historic event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archeological value, regardless of the value of any existing structure (i.e. battlefields, cemeteries, designed landscapes, etc.)

B. Number of Contributing and non-contributing resources on the property:

A contributing building, site, structure, or object adds to the historic associations, historic architectural qualities, or archeological values for which a property is significant because it was present during the period of significance, relates to the documented significance of the property, and possesses historic integrity or is capable of yielding important information about the period.

	No. of Contributing	No. of Noncontributing
Buildings	1	0
Sites	0	0
Structures	0	0
Objects	0	0

C. Previous field documentation -- when and by whom. (Contact staff to determine whether the property has been included in a previous survey):

Architectural Survey 1989-1990, Kelly Lally

D. National Register of Historic Places status:

✓	Status	Date
	Entered	
	Nominated	
	Nominated and Determined Eligible	
	Nominated and Determined Not Eligible	
	Removed	
Significant changes in integrity since listing should be noted in section 11.F.		

8. Reason for Request:

To document and recognize the building and to encourage its preservation.

9. Is the property income producing? Yes No

10. Are any interior spaces being included for designation? Yes No

Signatures

I have read the general information on landmark designation provided by the Cary Historic Preservation Commission and affirm that I support landmark designation of the property defined herein.

Owner: _____ Date: _____
 Owner: _____ Date: _____
 Owner: _____ Date: _____
 Owner: _____ Date: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY: Fee: _____ Amt Paid: _____ Check #: _____
Rec'd by: _____ Rec'd Date: _____
Completion Date: _____

11. Supporting Documentation (Please type or print and attach to application on separate sheets. Please check box when item is complete.)

A. Photographs/Slides:

Please attach printed color photographs (two 4X6 prints per page) that clearly show the overall property:

- For buildings and structures, include exterior photos of all elevations of the primary resource and any other contributing and non-contributing resources. For objects, include a view of the object within its setting, as well as a variety of representative views. For sites, include overall views and any significant details.
- Include photos of details of significant exterior features, such as notable trim; photos of the main building or structure within its setting; photos of each significant landscape feature; and photos of notable interior spaces, significant trim and other features.

All photographs are also required to be submitted in **JPEG (.jpg) format on a CD or DVD**. Please note the following requirements:

- Minimum Standard: 6.5" x 4.5" at a resolution of 300ppi (a pixel dimension of **1950 x 1350**)
- Naming Images: Please label image files for the Local Designation Application as follows: LM_PropertyName Description.jpg
Example: LM__Smith House_front façade.jpg)

B. Floor Plan (for buildings and structures)

Please include a floor plan showing the original layout, approximate dimensions of all rooms, and any additions (with dates) to the building or structure. Drawings do not have to be professionally produced nor do they need to be to exact scale, but should accurately depict the layout of the property. (Building sketches from the Wake County property information website are not acceptable.)

C. Maps

Include two (2) maps: one (1) clearly indicating the location of the property in relation to nearby streets and other buildings, and one (1) showing the proposed landmark boundary of the property and all significant resources. Tax maps with the boundaries of the property are preferred, but survey or sketch maps are acceptable. Please show street names and numbers and all structures on the property.

D. Physical Description Narrative of All Resources on the Site

For primary resource, describe overall form, number of stories, construction materials, roof shape, porches, windows, doors, chimney, important decorative elements, and significant interior features whether or not the interior is being proposed for designation. Provide number, type and location of outbuildings, with an entry on each that includes construction date and brief description. Provide description of landscape and setting of all buildings, structures, etc. on the property.

E. Historical Background Narrative ■

Chronology of the property and its owners, including any historical events or historic persons associated with the property, presented in paragraph form.

F. Significance Statement ■

In a clear, concise statement tell why the property meets the criteria for local designation. Please refer to pages 47-48 in *The Handbook for Historic Preservation Commissions in North Carolina* when preparing statement of significance. A link to the Handbook can be found on the SHPO website site at <http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/commhome.htm>. Specifically refer to the Criteria for Significance and Aspects of Integrity. Also state if the property rises to the level of significance needed for designation when compared with all others of its style, type and period in the county, town or city. For example, a building or structure might be a community's only surviving examples of Greek Revival architecture or it may be a unique local interpretation of the Arts and Crafts movement.

G. Landmark Boundary ■

Describe the land area to be designated, address any prominent landscape features. Clearly explain the significance of the land area proposed for designation and its historical relationship to the building(s), structure(s) or object(s) located within the property boundary or, in the case of sites, the historical event or events that make the land area significant. For buildings and structures, the designated land area may represent part of or the entire original parcel boundaries, or may encompass vegetative buffers or important outbuildings. For objects, the designated land area may continue to provide the object's historic context (i.e., a statue's historic park setting). For sites, the designated area may encompass a landscape that retains its historic integrity (i.e. a battlefield encompassing undisturbed historic view sheds).

H. Bibliography ■

Bibliography of sources consulted.

11A. Photographs



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, overall site, view E



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, overall site, view NE



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, overall site, view W



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, façade, view E



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, S elevation, view N



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, rear elevation, view W



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, N elevation, view SW



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, porch posts and brackets, viewNE



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, detail at cornerboard, view NE



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, front hall room, view S



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, stair hall showing reeded stair newel, view NE



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, dining room mantel, view SW



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, parlor mantel, view E



Mantel No. 281M from reprint edition of *Sears, Roebuck Home Builder's Catalog: The Complete Illustrated 1910 Edition*.



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, parlor, view S



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, first floor bedroom, view SW



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, upstairs mantel, view SW



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, kitchen, view SW

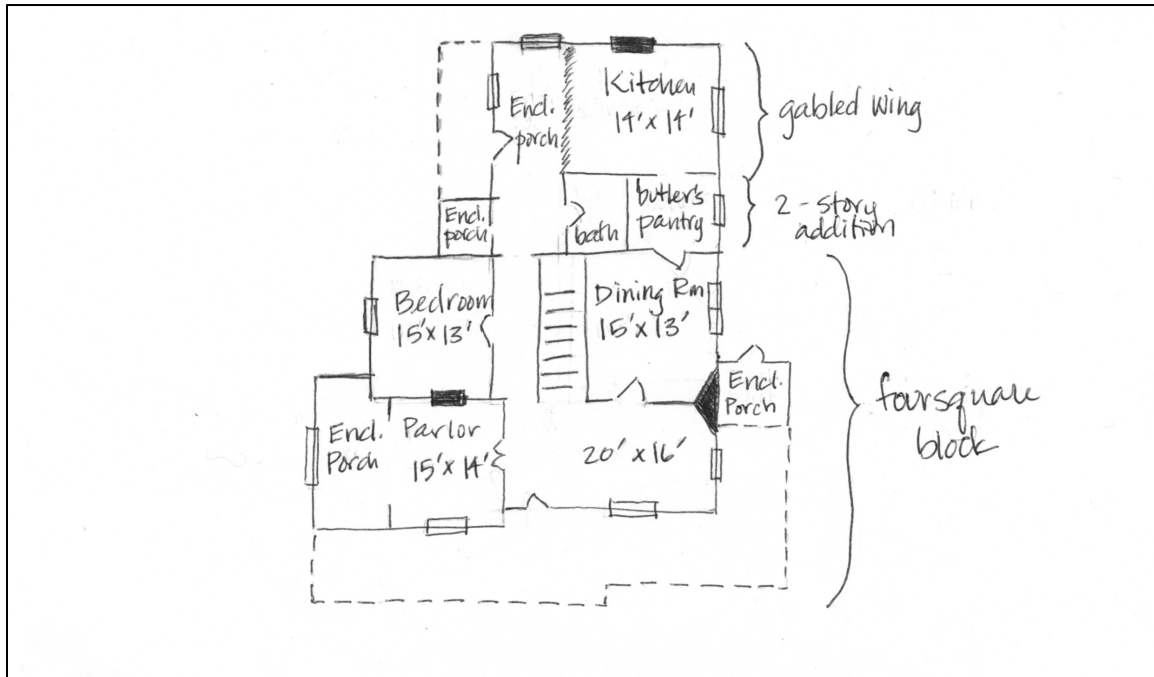


John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, butler's pantry, view SW



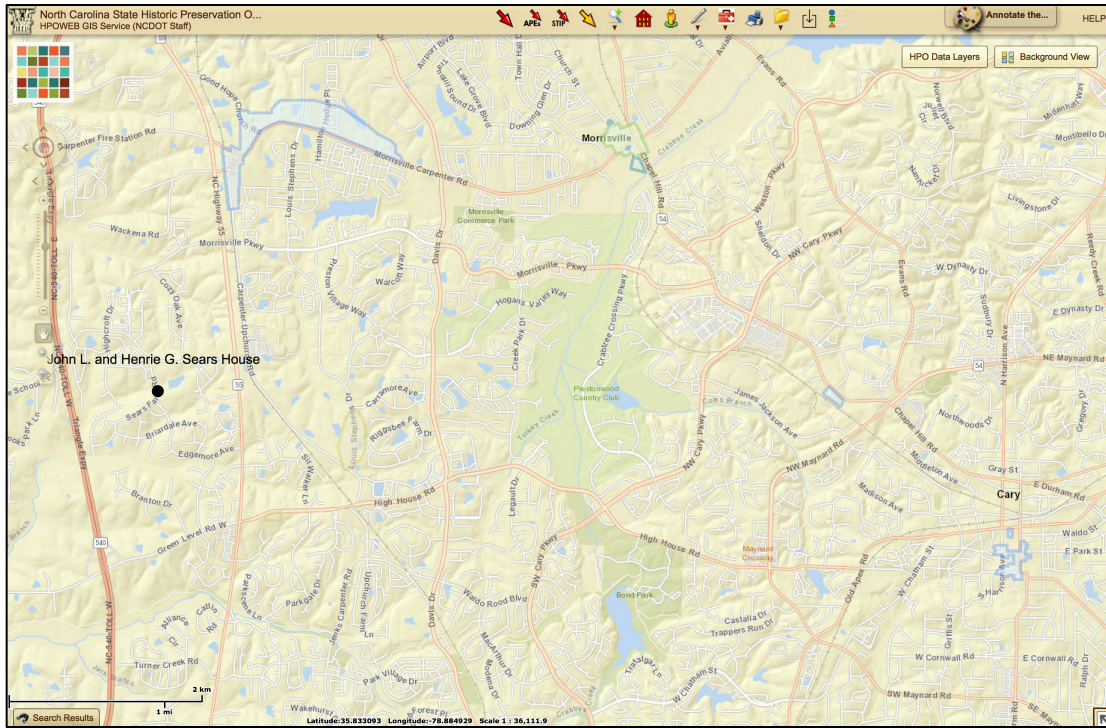
John L. and Henrie G. Sears House, stair balusters, view W

Section 11B: Floor Plan

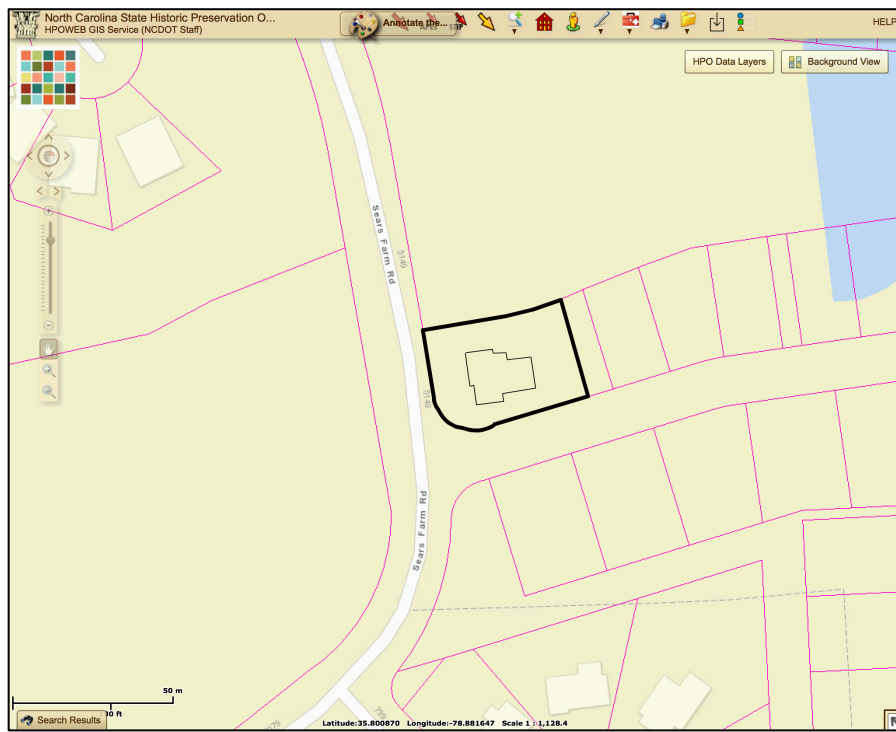


John L. and Henrie G. Sears House First Floor Plan
(not to scale, dimensions approximate)

Section 11C: Location and Boundary Maps



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House Location Map
5104 Sears Farm Road, Cary



John L. and Henrie G. Sears House Landmark Boundary Map

Section 11D: Physical Description Narrative

The John L. and Henrie G. Sears House in western Wake County is an early twentieth-century foursquare farmhouse that reflects the domestic life of middle-class farmers from that period. The dwelling originally stood on a farm run by John Lee Sears. Sears grew up in the area; his farm was in fact formerly a segment of his father's land. Later owners sold the acreage in 2015 for redevelopment into a subdivision. To accommodate that development, the Sears House was moved elsewhere on the original farm acreage. The current owners purchased the house in 2017 after the relocation and have rehabilitated it, preserving all the surviving original features with minor changes to the floor plan at the second floor.

The Sears House is ca. 1915 frame transitional foursquare with restrained architectural treatment that combines Queen Anne and Craftsman elements. It has a hipped roof, interior brick chimneys, wraparound front porch, and rear additions. The main block is double-pile and three bays at the facade. The north bay and north end of the porch project forward slightly. The back half of the north elevation also juts forward; together, these rooms slightly modify the dwelling's roughly square plan. The projections also break up roof slopes and wall expanses, keeping the foursquare from looking too boxy and alluding to the Queen Anne style previously popular in the area. Other architectural treatments include slightly overhanging boxed eaves and corner boards with quarter-round molding. Windows are one-over-one and occur singly and in pairs. The roofing material is pressed-metal panels with a shingle pattern and metal finials accent the roof's hipped corners. New standing-seam metal roof coverings replaced the pressed-metal roofing at the hipped-roof front porch, the shed-roofed back porch, and the gabled rear. The flat roof at the two-story addition is a new thermoplastic cover. The front porch features a turned balustrade and bracketed square posts with chamfered corners. The porch floor is wood decking and the ceiling is sheets of plywood finished to look like beaded tongue-and-groove boards. Trimwork covers most of the seams between sheets of plywood. A new wood stair with a prefabricated turned balustrade rises at the center of the porch, leading directly to the front entry's single-leaf, partially glazed paneled door.

The wraparound ends of the porch have been enclosed, but the entire expanse across the façade remains open. The enclosed north end is accessible only at the interior, from the parlor. A portion of the original corner board remains at the exterior to mark the original configuration. New one-over-one windows have been installed at the north side of the enclosure, replacing six-over-six windows that had appeared to date to the mid-to-late twentieth century. The porch enclosure at the south end is a windowless storage room accessed through a new exterior paneled door its east side.

Two sections at the back of the house are modified original additions. The first is a single-pile, two-story, flat-roofed block across two-thirds of the rear elevation. The

south side is flush with the south elevation of the house; no vestigial corner boards mark the back corner of the dwelling's main hipped block. A single-story gabled addition is appended to the back of this two-story section, also continuous with the south wall and lacking corner board seams. The gabled addition has an exterior end chimney of brick and a partially enclosed shed-roofed porch with wood decking and beaded plywood ceiling across its north side. The porch has a balustrade with square pickets and plain square posts; the owners plan to convert it from an open to a screened porch. New one-over-one wood windows have also been installed at the previously heavily renovated gabled addition, also replacing mid-to-late twentieth-century six-over-six windows.

The interior of the main block of the Sears House retains a majority of original finishes and architectural features, which reflect its middle-class farmhouse character. Finishes are consistent from room to room. Floors are heart pine, ceilings are beaded tongue-and-groove, and walls are plaster with beaded tongue-and-groove wainscot and molded chair rails. Walls have floor molding and crown molding as well. Doors are solid wood with six raised horizontal panels. Architraves at the first floor have concave verticals on high plinths under lintels finished with simple molding; at the second story, the verticals are flat.

The five fireplace mantels include one with Colonial Revival character, two Craftsman examples, and two simplified Craftsman versions. The four at the first floor all have mirrored overmantels. The Colonial Revival-style mantel in the parlor has a thick shelf on deep ogee-molding supported by round columns with simple capitals and bases on high plinths. A molded lintel caps the overmantel. Glazed tile surrounds the firebox and lines the hearth; the mantel itself is painted white. The two Craftsman mantels share the south chimney and are each set into a corner of their respective rooms—the front room that is open to the foyer and the dining room behind it. Both mantels are currently unpainted but had been painted earlier in the twentieth century.¹ The mantel in the front room has plain, bracketed shelves over the mirror and the glazed-tile firebox. Battered pilasters are layered over a flat surround finished at the top shelf with a plain lintel. The ends of faux pegged beams protrude through the pilasters, and a small carved wood cartouche is centered under the lower shelf. There is glazed tile at the hearth as well. The dining room mantel has plain pilasters at the firebox and squared columns at the lower bracketed shelf to support the upper shelf. A cabinet with leaded glass doors sits between the shelves. The fourth mantel at the first-floor bedroom shares the north chimney with the parlor mantel and simply has bracketed shelves. Directly above, the only upstairs bedroom mantel resembles that in the bedroom below but with just a single shelf. Both are painted white.

¹ The current owners report that the previous owner described how meticulously his mother, the second owner, removed the paint from these two mantels.

The modified foursquare floor plan of the double-pile hipped block is largely intact. The plan features a center stair hall with stair rising from front to back and an entry foyer integrated into the front room the southwest corner. A half-glazed paneled door to the right of the stair leads from the front room to the dining room. From the north side of the foyer, a wide set of double-leaf paneled doors open into parlor; the additional space formed from the porch enclosure extends this room with a wide opening between the two spaces. A hallway alongside the stair leads to the first floor bedroom, a closet under the stair, and into the additions. The two-story rear section holds a bathroom and butler's pantry at the ground floor and two bathrooms at the second story. The gabled rear addition houses a kitchen with eat-in dining area and a laundry room in the enclosed section of its side porch. The kitchen is also reached through the butler's pantry at the south side of the house and behind the dining room.

The main feature of the center hall is a closed-stringer stair rising from the front to a landing about three-quarters of the way to the second floor. The stair makes a full turn to complete the rise to the second story. Access to a bathroom is from the first landing. The stair has turned balusters and a substantial square newel with a tall plain base, reeded panels, and a square cap. Smaller versions are at the two landings.

Changes since construction

In its new location, the house faces west, overlooking Sears Farm Road from a parcel that slopes down toward the street. A new continuous brick foundation supports the house but the porch is set on brick piers. The change in grade makes the foundation higher at the front than at the back, and the house stands much taller here than at its flatter original location. The land surrounding the dwelling has been developed into a subdivision, although the dwelling's siting at northeast corner of Sears Farm Road and Cozy Oak Avenue give it a little more space. Additionally, a wooded stream buffer lies to the north. The dwelling's back is to the subdivision and a park is directly across the street. At the original location, on the same land but facing Green Hope School Road, there was a small, early twentieth-century farmstead and a large farm pond behind the house.

The Sears House appears to have originally included single-story rear rooms, likely under a shed roof, that housed the butler's pantry and first-floor bathroom. The gabled building appended to the back of that section was probably an older dwelling or farm building on the land, repurposed as the kitchen at the time of construction. This accounts for the continuous weatherboards on the south wall. Also, the roof of the gabled kitchen and the front porch were originally the same pressed tin seen at the main block of the house. The current metal roofing at the kitchen and porch were installed after the move, in 2018. A vestigial cornerboard at the rear elevation of the kitchen marks the original width of that structure, which may have been intact when the house was built. If so, it likely had an open porch on its north side, making the doorway from the back of the stair hall a back door that opened directly

onto the original porch. According to the current owners, the back wall of the downstairs bedroom, now partially behind the enclosed end of the new back porch, had a window. It was revealed in recent work but was sealed up again behind the west wall of the laundry room.

A few alterations were made between construction and the time the house was first documented in 1989. Work includes the front porch enclosures; addition of a second story to the connection between the house and kitchen; and possibly enclosure of the first kitchen porch and construction of a new porch. While finishes from this period were removed in the 2018 rehabilitation, they had appeared to date to the late 1960s and/or 1970s. That period coincides with the first time the property changed hands.

A number of things make it likely that all the work was done at the same time. Windows in the gabled kitchen wing and the front porch enclosure were of the same six-over-six type and scale, common to the late 1960s. If the kitchen was indeed originally smaller, the enclosure of its first porch to make a larger kitchen would likely prompt the replacement of all the windows in into the space. Alternatively, some of the enlargements of interior space may have come earlier and the spaces remodeled in the late 1960s or early 1970s. The cornerboard treatment shown in the illustration was reproduced at the porch enclosures and at the second story of the addition, perhaps an indication that those projects were completed by the original owners.

Photographs from previous Wake County architectural surveys can help date a few changes. Today's chamfered-edge square porch posts and brackets appear to be faithful reproductions of common historic types. The front porch posts were missing altogether in architectural survey photos from 1989. Notes on the form from that survey report that the "porch is being repaired—will have square posts." Square posts were in place by 1992, but railings and brackets came later. Shutters at the façade windows were likewise added between 1989 and 1992. A greenhouse appended to the back of the kitchen at some point before 1989 was removed before the relocation.

The current owners undertook a rehabilitation in 2018. Floors were refinished and walls were repaired and repainted. A cased opening was cut between the bedrooms on the south side of the second story and a closet installed in what had been the southwest bedroom. This created a master suite that spans the entire south side of the second floor. The most substantive work was the complete remodel of the bathrooms and kitchen. Flooring salvaged from houses that were being demolished on Maiden Lane in Raleigh was installed in the kitchen and butler's pantry and salvaged floor joists were remade into shelving installed in those spaces. New cabinetry and counters were put in the butler's pantry as well, but the original walls remain. Walls in the gabled kitchen were resurfaced after the removal of a faux-brick treatment. The mid-twentieth-century six-over-six windows in the gabled

section were replaced with wood one-over-one windows to be consistent with the original windows at the main block of the house. Similar windows in the enclosed north end of the front porch replaced the six-over-six sash there.

Section 11E: Historical Background Narrative

John Lee Sears (1889-1955), a son of notable Green Level farmer Albert Selvia Sears (1854-1921), purchased 81 acres of farmland from his father in 1915. The elder Sears had acquired nearly 430 acres on both sides of today's Green Hope School Road between NC 55 on the east and NC 540 on the west. John Lee Sears's parcel included land his father had acquired around the turn of the twentieth century in two purchases, one from S. R. Horne, known as the "Sam Crabtree" land, and another from Robert Crabtree. John's 81-acre-tract was generally on the south side what became Green Hope School Road. Over time, John Sears acquired more of his father's land, purchasing parcels north of the road and immediately adjacent to his own from his siblings' inheritances.²

John Sears had married Henrie Guilda Tisdale (1890-1968) of Wakefield in 1914, and the couple built a farmhouse on the 81-acre tract. An accompanying farmstead included a number of frame outbuildings: three gabled barns; a long, gabled shed; a chicken house; and a gabled garage. None are extant, although several survived into the twenty-first century. Sears also maintained a farm pond created by damming the creek behind his house.³

The development of John Sears's farm coincided with the period of increasing tobacco cultivation in Wake County's White Oak Township. The bacterial disease that ruined Granville County tobacco crops in the 1880s, known as the Granville wilt, prompted farmers to move east where good tobacco-growing land was available. Even farmers already established in White Oak began switching from cotton to tobacco, thanks to the knowledgeable Granville County transplants who introduced them to the golden leaf. Tobacco was more labor-intensive but needed less acreage than cotton, so farms in the area began shrinking in these decades. Sears was likely a tobacco farmer; his initial farm was much smaller than his father's. By 1928, however, he had a 214-acre farm worth \$4,200. In 1934, it was smaller but valued at \$9,900.⁴

² Ancestry.com, *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012); Ancestry.com, *1860 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009); *Durham Morning Herald*, June 21, 1921; Albert Selvia Sears and wife Annie E. to John L. Sears, January 7, 1915, Wake County Deed Book 298 page 165; M. J. Sears et al to J. L. Sears, October 7, 1922, Wake County Deed Book 486, page 111.

³ *North Carolina Marriage Records; Kinston Daily Free Press*, May 12, 1914; WA0978 Sears House Survey File, Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh.

⁴ Kelly Lally, *Historic Architecture of Wake County, North Carolina* (Raleigh: Wake County Government, 1994), 354; *1928 Directory of Wake County Taxpayers* (Raleigh: Bynum Printing, 1929), 46; *1933 Directory of Wake County Taxpayers* (Raleigh: Mattison Advertising Company, [1934]), n.p.;

John and Henrie had three children and were active in the community, including at the Green Level Baptist Church. A 1920 *News and Observer* article detailed a lawn party that Henrie Sears hosted at the house for her sister-in-law Roselle Sears. Roselle was a Meredith College student, and her college friends from Wake County and beyond were in the area for a weekend house party. “The lawn was very beautifully decorated with various colored lights,” reported the paper. “Ice cream and punch were served by Miss Mary Roselle Sears, a little daughter of the hostess.”⁵

The Sears had a part in the establishment of Green Hope School, which stood west of the farm from 1928 through 1963. A committee of local citizens petitioned the county Board of Education in March 1927 for a new consolidated school for white students in western Wake County. The board approved a new Carpenter-Green Level-Upchurch Consolidated School district, sought and gained voter approval for a special tax to fund a school building, and approved a twelve-classroom school with auditorium and library. Raleigh architect William Henley Dietrick began working on plans that same spring. In May 1927, after visiting multiple sites, the board selected for acquisition the “land offered by Dr. P.L. Pearson and Mr. John Sears.” John and Henrie sold 4.5 acres at the northwest corner of their farm to the Wake County Board of Education in September 1927.⁶

There is an oral tradition that the Green Hope teachers boarded at the Sears House. The story is likely accurate; this was a common practice, the school was very close to the Sears’s home, and the family was obviously willing to enable the establishment of the school. However, no boarders were listed with the family in the 1930 census, the census year in which such an arrangement was most likely. A teacherage was eventually built on the school grounds, and it may have been complete and in use by then.⁷

John Sears died in 1955 and Henrie Sears in 1968; both are buried at Green Level Baptist Church. Between 1969 and 1971, their heirs conveyed their father’s land and some of their grandfather’s land to Ross and Alma Stitt. The Stitts owned and lived in the house into the twenty-first century. In 2015, Alma Stitt sold most of the

Kelly Lally “Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina,” Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), E51.

⁵ Raleigh Baptist Association, *Annual of the Raleigh Baptist Association 1919-1930*, digitized compilation at archive.org, 103, 234, 318, 371, 413, 456; *Raleigh News & Observer*, July 19, 1920.

⁶ Minutes of the Wake County Board of Education, 1919-1959, State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina; J.L. Sears & wf Henrie to Wake County Board of Education, September 19, 1927, Wake County Deed Book 518 page 534.

⁷ Zach and Stephanie Johnson, interview with the author, July 28, 2018; Green Hope School Buildings (WA0979), Architectural Survey File Room, Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh; Kelly Lally, *The Historic Architecture of Wake County, North Carolina* (Raleigh: Wake County Government, 1994), 337; Ancestry.com. *1930 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2002.

original 81-acre parcel to Pulte Home Corporation. The Town of Cary worked with the subdivision developer to relocate the Sears House. The current owners purchased the house in 2017 and have rehabilitated it, preserving surviving original finishes and features at the interior and exterior.⁸

Architectural Context

The foursquare is a perfect farmhouse: simple, practical, and roomy. Rising two to two-and-a-half stories, the double-pile dwelling type features a roughly square footprint with a room in each corner, sometimes with a center hall. A foursquare usually has a hipped or pyramidal roof, very often with one or more dormers, and always has a front porch. It shares similar boxy proportions with Federal-style townhouses of the late eighteenth century and nineteenth-century Italianate dwellings. The foursquare was nationally popular at the turn of the twentieth century and was adaptable to many architectural styles. Pattern books and mail-order building supply and house-kit catalogs featured foursquares as early as 1908, when Chicago's Radford Architectural Company published plans for Prairie Style versions. The 1914 Aladdin catalog presented many foursquare models, most more compact than the Sears House. Use of the type peaked around World War II, but the availability of foursquares in the mail-order house plan catalogs from a number of companies continued into the 1930s.⁹

Such plan books and catalogs helped make the foursquare popular in Wake County in the 1910s and 1920s. Although the type appeared to be more often employed in eastern Wake County, particularly in the towns of Zebulon and Wendell, examples occurred throughout. Kelly Lally, who studied and inventoried the county's historic architecture in the late 1980s, observed hipped foursquares with varying levels of Craftsman-style detailing, most of frame construction. Craftsman-style houses, particularly bungalows, continued to be built in Wake County into the 1930s, overlapping with the rising popularity of the Colonial Revival style and the Tudor-influenced Period Cottage that emerged in the 1920s. The Sears House, however, features a mix of Craftsman style with remnant Queen Anne detailing, showing the influence of vernacular farmhouses in White Oak Township.¹⁰

⁸ Find A Grave Index; Ruth S. Bugg et al to Ross E. Stitt and Alma M. Stitt, February 5, 1969, Wake County Deed Book 1864 page 101; Ruth S. Bugg et al to Ross E. Stitt and Alma M. Stitt, September 1, 1971, Wake County Deed Book 2017 page 533; Stitt Properties LLC and Alma Stitt to Pulte Home Corporation, October 1, 2015, Wake County Deed Book 16170, page 2357.

⁹ Robert Schweitzer and Michael W. R. Davis, *America's Favorite Homes* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 161; Index of Foursquare House Plans, Antique Home Style Website, www.antiquehomestyle.com, viewed July 30, 2018; Daniel D. Reiff, *Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture, 1733-1950: A History and Guide* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 150.

¹⁰ Lally, 156-159; Lally, MPDF, F137-139.

Existing homes in the township at the turn of the twentieth century included a number of two-story, L-plan, frame Queen Anne examples, most of them expressing their architectural style largely through their massing—gabled roofs, projecting rooms, wraparound single-story porches. Some also mixed transitional Colonial Revival details, like Doric or Tuscan porch columns. With a few exceptions, the houses were fairly minimal in their execution of the style. The Rufus Merrimon Upchurch house dates to the late nineteenth century and features a façade with projecting end bay, similar to the Sears House. The Upchurch House, however, had more prominently projecting gabled bays with end returns, pedimented moldings, and Tuscan columns. These elements indicate a different arrangement of interior space as well as more Queen Anne-Colonial Revival transitional influence. The Upchurch House was also moved to make way for subdivisions and now stands on Jenks-Carpenter Road, a short distance from its original location. At Green Level, the Alious Mills House also features a projecting end bay at a three-bay façade. The Mills House has a high hip roof with a cross-gable at the projecting bay and a wraparound porch with Tuscan columns. The lofty proportions, like the other details, speak to the Queen Anne influence, although the house was built around 1916. Other examples have been demolished. The Bailey-Holt House, a vernacular I-house from the early twentieth century, featured four prominent gables with fashionable end returns and a smaller similar gable at the center of the wraparound front porch. It stood south east of the Sears House, west of present-day Davis Drive.¹¹

Mail-order catalogs also sold all manner of component parts: doors, window sash, trim, wainscot, mantels, and hardware. Sears, Roebuck & Company sold residential building supplies from the catalog as early as 1897. In the early twentieth century, the company had expanded the building materials department and published separate “builder’s catalogs” full of millwork, hardware, plumbing supplies, and more—virtually everything to build-out a framed house. The mantel in the parlor of the Sears House was available as Mantel No. 281M published in the company’s 1910 *Home Builder’s Catalog* and 1912 *Building Material and Millwork* catalog. The model included the quarter-sawn oak mantle with beveled mirror in the overmantel; tile for the firebox and hearth were available separately but shown in the illustration. The catalogs also featured six-panel interior doors in varying dimensions and materials; one-over-one window sash with options for trim, including plain as well as molded drip cap; bronze locksets with round knobs and rectangular escutcheons like those in the house; and all types of molding and trim seen throughout the house. Many of these elements were standard, however, and might have been available from other sources as well.¹²

¹¹ Lally, 334-344.

¹² Sears, Roebuck & Company, *Sears, Roebuck Home Builder’s Catalog: The Complete Illustrated 1910 Edition*, reprint (New York: Dover Publishers, 1990), 12-18, 32, 93; Sears, Roebuck & Company, *Building Materials and Millwork* (Chicago: Sears, Roebuck & Co., 1912), 104.

While there is no indication that the Sears House was built from a mail-order plan, such books appear to have had some influence, if only in presenting the foursquare as an option. Examination of mail-order plans from the period show that most feature a single bathroom, generally at the second story. Occasionally, a plan has the single bathroom downstairs or features no bathroom at all. Following this pattern, the Sears House likely had just one bathroom originally, at the first floor in the north end of the one-room-deep addition at the back of the main block. Many examples from plan books lack the center hall at the first floor, fitting the stair into a corner of the largest room and rising to a small hall at the heart of the second floor.¹³

In 1928, the Agriculture Experiment Station at North Carolina State College (now University) made a study of dwellings occupied by white, land-owning farmers in Wake County. Farms in the study averaged 58 acres and 64 percent of the average farmer's income came from the crops he grew, generally cotton, corn, and tobacco. The study found that "the land owner has an amply sized house with ample furniture, but that so far as those modern facilities which would give the home comfort are concerned, they are lacking." Houses of this period generally did not have plumbing either for waste disposal or for delivery of water. While 12 percent of the 292 houses studied had indoor bathtubs and toilets, only 9 percent had running water. The vast majority of homeowners carried water into the house from a well. Only 5 percent had a heat source other than a fireplace. A third of the houses were two stories, and the average area was just over 1,400 square feet. The report summarized that "Heating, lighting, sewage disposal, bath facilities, and equipment for easy performance of household tasks by the wife are missing." The details of the functioning of the Sears House in 1928, unfortunately, is not known. Given that both house and farm was larger than average, it seems likely that the Sears House may have been among the better equipped farmhouses of the period.¹⁴

Section 11F: Significance Statement

The John L. and Henrie G. Sears House is one of a few remaining farmhouses that are testament to the agricultural history of western Wake County. What was formerly farmland in today's Cary municipal limits has been transformed by the suburban development accommodating the exponential population growth in Cary that began in the mid-twentieth century. The Sears House is an excellent example of an early twentieth-century house, influenced in style and plan by surrounding vernacular houses and by dwellings depicted in nationally available planbooks and catalogs.

¹³ Schweitzer and Davis and Daniel Reiff reproduce a number of house kits in their books; many more can be found on the Antique Home Style website.

¹⁴ Anderson, W. A. *Living Conditions Among White Landowner Operators in Wake County* Raleigh, N.C. : Agricultural Experiment Station of the North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering, 1928), 3-5, 12-13, 30-33.

Section 11G: Local Landmark Boundary Description

The boundary includes the entire parcel that the Sears House now occupies, identified by the PIN 0734565079. While this is not the original location of the house, the parcel is part of the original John L. and Henrie G. Sears farm.

Section 11H: Bibliographic Sources

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