NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>historic name</th>
<th>Lawrence, Dr. Elmo N., House</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>other names/site number</td>
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### 2. Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>street &amp; number</th>
<th>2121 Lake Wheeler Road</th>
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<tr>
<td>city or town</td>
<td>Raleigh</td>
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<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
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### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility 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 does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [ ] entered in the National Register.
- [ ] determined eligible for the National Register.
- [ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
- [ ] removed from the National Register.
- [ ] other, explain:

[Signature of the Keeper]

Date of Action
**Lawrence, Dr. Elmo N., House**

**Name of Property**

**Wake County, NC**

**County and State**

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### 5. Classification

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<td>□ object</td>
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**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

Wake County MPS

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

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### 6. Function or Use

<table>
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### 7. Description

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**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: n/a

☐ 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. 1922

Significant Dates
Ca. 1922

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

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:
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  2.6 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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<td>3958820</td>
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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 Jennifer Martin
organization Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc.
date December 1, 2004
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 Linda and Rufus Edmisten
street & number 2121 Lake Wheeler Road
city or town Raleigh
state NC
zip code 27603

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.
The ca. 1922 Dr. Elmo N. Lawrence House stands on a 2.6-acre tract on the southeast side of Lake Wheeler Road (SR 1009) to the south-southwest of downtown Raleigh. Interstate 40, running roughly west-east, is less than one mile to the northeast. Suburban housing built within the last twenty years surrounds the house on the east, west, and south. With the thoughtful planting of hundreds of varieties of shrubs and trees on the two-and-half-acre parcel, the Lawrence House remains shielded both visually and aurally from nearby densely developed neighborhoods and traffic along busy Lake Wheeler Road. The 1901 Lawrence House, built by Dr. E.N. Lawrence’s brother, stands immediately to the north on an adjacent parcel. Another brother’s house, built in 1915, once stood to the immediate south, but was demolished to make way for modern housing.

A one-lane gravel and dirt drive leads from the east side of Lake Wheeler Road to the front of the house. The lane gradually drops down as it leaves the paved road and winds through dense vegetation and an iron gate, then up a slight incline in the home’s front yard. Flora Lawrence, Dr. Lawrence’s wife and a member of the Raleigh Garden Club, laid out the driveway that forms a circle around the house. Mrs. Lawrence was also responsible for many of the ornamental trees and shrubs that enhance the house site. The current owners continue to tend Mrs. Lawrence’s plantings and over the years have added additional plants and gardens to the property. A carpet of mature grass grows over a large percentage of the yard.

The Dr. Elmo N. Lawrence House faces northwest and stands near the center of the rear half of the rectangular 2.6-acre parcel. The one-and-a-half story Craftsman bungalow is built of 12 ½-inch-by-5-inch tooled-face (scored with vertical lines) concrete blocks sheathed in cement stucco. The cement stucco has always covered the blocks, was not applied after initial construction, and provides a finished look to the house. Asphalt shingles cover the side-gabled roof and shed dormers punctuate the center of both the front and rear roof slopes. Triangular knee braces occur along the eaves of the side gables and the sides of the dormers. Rafter tails punctuate the overhanging shed roofs of the dormers.

The symmetrical, five-bay front elevation displays a partial-width terrace and a single-leaf, partially-glazed front door. Single five-over-one double-hung sash windows flank each side of the...
door, while a pair of smaller, four-over-one sash pierce the façade on the outside of each central window.

The south-facing side elevation features the south end of the sun porch, as well as three, four-over-one windows on the first level and one set of paired four-over-four windows on the upper level. One smaller four-over-four window illuminating the bathroom pierces the exterior to the right of (or east of) the upper story paired windows. A small lunette window nestled in the space just below the roof’s ridge crowns this elevation.

The east or rear elevation features a glass-enclosed sunroom added around 1960 that extends along approximately two-thirds of the elevation. A small utility room extension with a shed roof projects out from the northern third of this elevation. This modest addition was built in 2002. A pair of four-over-four sash is located immediately north of the utility room.

The north-facing side elevation features two doors—one leading to the rear shed room and the other positioned just west of the center of this side of the house and leading to a small foyer. A small hipped roof entry porch with triangular knee braces shields the rear shed door, while a front gabled entry porch with the same knee braces shelters the more forward door. A single four-over-four window is to the left of (or east of) the rear door. A set of paired four-over-four windows that illuminate the kitchen are to the left of (or east of) the more forward door. A single-shouldered chimney flanked by tall and narrow windows and added in the 1990s is positioned on the right side (or northwest side) of the elevation. Originally, a large window occupied the space on the first floor from where the chimney now rises. A pair of four-over-four windows occupies the center of the upper level. A lunette window, identical to the one on the south elevation, crowns this elevation.

The exterior changes—most notably the rear shed expansion and the addition of the north elevation chimney—do not detract from the overall setting, feeling, design, materials, and workmanship of the Lawrence House. The dwelling retains the characteristics that epitomize the Craftsman style from the early 1920s in Raleigh and Wake County. Its overall form, materials, and features remain intact.

The Lawrence House’s interior remains intact overall. Alterations to the dwelling’s interior include the addition of the sunroom and expansion of the kitchen to include a breakfast room and bathroom, with both alterations occurring in the 1960s; the addition of the chimney and mantel to the north elevation in the 1990s; and the addition of the rear elevation small utility/laundry room in 2002. Where changes have been made, they have been carried out with the utmost respect to the dwelling’s original form, finishes, and style, and therefore do not compromise the house’s overall interior integrity. All of the walls are plaster, the doors and windows are original, and the original hardware remains in place.
The dwelling follows an irregular plan typical in bungalows and centered on a parlor that is the hearth of the house. Heated by a large projecting fireplace enhanced by a formal paneled skirt, the parlor is roughly rectangular in shape with doors positioned on each wall. A single-leaf paneled door on the south wall of the parlor leads to a smaller hall that provides access to two bedrooms and a bath. French doors on the west end of the parlor’s north wall lead to a den occupied by a recently-added period mantel that blends harmoniously with the dwelling’s Craftsman features. Another set of French doors, these in the center of the east wall, lead to a small dining room. In 1960, the kitchen was extended to the rear to accommodate a breakfast room and small bathroom. In 2002, a shed-roofed addition was made to the bathroom to accommodate utility space. The sun porch, dating from around 1960, is reached from a door on the southern side of the breakfast room.

A staircase located in a foyer positioned between the den and kitchen on the north side of the interior provides access to the upper level. The foyer also provides access to a closet. The upper level contains a spacious common area, three bedrooms—one of which has been converted to an office—four closets, and a bathroom. Like the first floor, all of the original finishes remain intact.

Garage
Ca. 1922
Contributing Building

A hipped-roof garage constructed of exposed tooled-face concrete block stands off the northeast side of the house. Unlike the house, this building was never sheathed in stucco. Facing toward the house, the garage features exposed rafter tails on its side elevations and double doors on its front elevation. A small window pierces the east elevation, while a door and a large window covered with boards occupy the western elevation. In the early 1940s, a stone addition was made to the rear to provide living space to the property’s caretaker. The stone addition is flush with the west elevation, but extends a few feet beyond the east elevation. A stone chimney provided heat to the occupants. An African American named Isaac (called “Uncle Isaac” by Irvin Lawrence) first occupied the addition. He worked as a caretaker and yardman for the family. Later, a couple named Robert and Florence lived there. A cousin later lived there.
8. **Significance**

**Summary**

The Dr. Elmo N. Lawrence House—constructed circa 1922—is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an intact and rare-surviving example of a Craftsman bungalow built of hollow-core, tooled-face concrete block that was covered with stucco at the time of its construction. Although factory-produced concrete block was a popular building material in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, buildings constructed of handmade concrete blocks, such as the Lawrence House, are much rarer in Raleigh. Constructed for a long-time Raleigh dentist and orthodontist, the Lawrence House stands as a well-preserved example of a concrete block house with a cement stucco exterior, a house type widely espoused by Gustav Stickley’s *Craftsman* magazine for its inexpensiveness, ease of construction, and stylishness. Concrete block played a significant role in construction in the early twentieth century by employing new technology that allowed builders to construct substantial houses with relatively inexpensive and widely available material. The open plan of the Lawrence House is based on Stickley’s Greek cross-plan in which the stair occupies the center of the house thereby allowing light and outside air into the rooms that surround it. Although magazines and builders’ catalogs of the 1920s disseminated ideas about concrete block construction for domestic buildings, block dwellings in the Craftsman style are rare in Raleigh and its vicinity, where only one other example from the period has been identified.

Historic context for the Lawrence House is discussed in the multiple property documentation form, “Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina (circa 1770 to 1941)” under Context 4: “Boom, Bust, and Recovery between the World Wars (1919 to 1941).” Craftsman-style houses are discussed in Property Type 3C: “Twentieth Century Popular House Types (circa 1910 to 1941).” The multiple property documentation form notes the predominance of frame Craftsman houses as well as brick and stone examples, but does not include a discussion of concrete block Craftsman houses suggesting their rarity in Wake County. The Lawrence House meets the Registration Requirements for historic and architectural integrity for this property type as an intact house that is not at the center of a farm complex.

**Architectural Context**

*Concrete Block as a Building Material*

Concrete’s history as a building material dates back to the Romans who used it to build the Pantheon (118-128 AD). Once Portland cement began to be used on a wide scale in the 1880s, concrete construction became more practical and more popular. By using mold plates, plain
The heyday of concrete block—especially those blocks cast in decorative forms—occurred from the late nineteenth century through the 1930s. The construction of a stucco-sheathed, concrete block and Portland cement model home across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House in 1923 symbolized the material’s renown during the early twentieth century. Concrete block enjoyed popularity because of its cost-effectiveness, strength, and convenience and because it could be adapted to the popular house styles of the period—namely the bungalow and Colonial Revival styles. Although local contractors and building supply companies typically provided blocks for projects, Sears, Roebuck, and Company sold a large number of block-making machines and related supplies and hardware during the early twentieth century. Well into the twentieth century, refinements in block making machines attracted many homeowners who made their own blocks to build dwellings and outbuildings.

Gustav Stickley, editor of Craftsman magazine from 1901 to 1916, widely espoused the use of concrete block as a way to bring the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement to the larger population. He called for simple styles of building without the excess decoration that had plagued earlier Victorian houses. Although he rejected machine-made ornament for dwellings, he supported machines as a useful tool for the worker and builder. In his magazine, he published designs for concrete block houses—especially those built of plainface blocks that could be stuccoed. Stickley’s magazine also featured concrete houses built on an open plan—more specifically the Greek cross-plan in which the stair was placed in the center of the house to allow for each room to receive natural light and air from the outside. The Lawrence house closely follows this plan with the stair to the second floor ascending from the vestibule at the center of the north elevation. With the stair occupying the windowless core of the house, the outlying rooms benefit from the free movement of air and light encouraged by the abundance of windows on each elevation.

Architectural historian Pamela Simpson identifies the period from around 1900 to 1920 as the backyard phase of concrete block making. During this period, building contractors and sometimes homeowners made blocks using the widely available block-making machines. It was not uncommon for a builder to construct several buildings using one or more block machines. In 1905, C. K. Harvey of Smithfield, Virginia purchased a block-making machine from Sears to build his own house. Pleased with the results, he started a contracting business. He later relocated to Murfreesboro, North Carolina where he constructed forty-nine concrete-block homes, churches, and commercial buildings before he died in 1936.5

By the 1910s, concrete-block-making businesses had been established across the country. In 1921, H.B. Leonard started a block-making plant on Brushy Fork Creek in Davidson County, North Carolina. He not only sold the block, but also built many block houses in the Piedmont, specifically around Winston-Salem, High Point, and Lexington.6

In the 1920s, the development of new aggregates led to the introduction of cinder block. These strong, yet lightweight blocks proved easier to work with than concrete blocks. They could also be veneered with brick. During this period, builders did not abandon concrete block entirely, and improvements were even made to them. Early concrete block varied in size making it difficult for architects and builders to make construction plans. In 1924, concrete block trade industries agreed that block size needed to be standardized and settled on eight-by-eight-by-sixteen-inch as the dimensions for concrete blocks. By the 1930s however, new lightweight aggregates that were being introduced to improve cinder blocks coupled with homeowners’ changing tastes led to the decline in the popularity of traditional concrete blocks.7

Concrete Block Houses in Raleigh and Vicinity

The 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for Raleigh are color-coded for construction material. The location in the city of wood frame, brick, brick tile, stone-faced, and concrete and cinder block houses are indicated on the maps. Over time the maps were updated to reflect new construction and the addition of streets to the area covered by the maps. These updates occurred into the 1950s and even later in some areas of Raleigh covered by the maps. A careful review of the maps indicates that only a handful of concrete block houses were built before 1930. Follow-up field work and research in the city directories shows that of those noted on the Sanborn maps, only one pre-1930 concrete block house survives in Raleigh. The Walton House at 415 Calvin Street dates

5 Simpson, Cheap, Quick, and Easy, 14-16.
6 Simpson, Cheap, Quick, and Easy, 17.
to around 1926 and is a two-story, Craftsman Foursquare with stucco sheathing. Pharmacist Russell Walton, owner of Walton’s Pharmacy, likely built the house. A concrete block house dating from the same period stood at 705 Brooks Street, but was replaced sometime in the 1970s or 1980s by an apartment building. 8

The Lawrence House, although now in the Raleigh city limits, was in Raleigh’s rural environs in the 1914-1950s era represented on the Sanborn map. The number of early twentieth-century concrete block houses in rural Wake County is unknown, but this type appears to have been quite rare until the 1940s. Those houses built in the 1940s and later were most likely constructed of mass-produced cinder block, which was widely available during the period.

Historic context for the Lawrence House is discussed in the multiple property documentation form, “Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina (circa 1770 to 1941)” under Context 4: “Boom, Bust, and Recovery between the World Wars (1919 to 1941).” Craftsman-style houses are discussed in Property Type 3C: “Twentieth Century Popular House Types (circa 1910 to 1941).” The multiple property documentation form notes the predominance of frame Craftsman houses as well as brick and stone examples, but does not include a discussion of concrete block Craftsman houses suggesting their rarity in Wake County. The Lawrence House meets the Registration Requirements for historic and architectural integrity for this property type as an intact house that is not at the center of a farm complex.

The Sanborn maps reveal the location of several later concrete and/or cinder block houses, commercial buildings, and institutional buildings. A cursory survey of neighborhoods inside the I-440 beltline indicates that several block houses from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s remain standing. Among those are Colonial Revival houses at 1659 Oberlin Road and 1009 Gardner Street, both dating from the 1930s or 1940s. More common are post-World War II cinder block dwellings including a duplex at 1430 Duplin Road, a stylish modernist ranch house on Gardner Street just south of Wade Avenue, and a duplex at 2615 Wade Avenue that appears to date to the late 1940s.

The Lawrence House stands as a rare early example of a hollow-core concrete block bungalow in Raleigh. Much more common are later houses and buildings constructed during the 1930s through 1950s when manufacturing concerns mass-produced concrete and cinder blocks. One of the largest makers of concrete blocks in the 1950s was Standard Concrete Products, which had a plant near the junction of North Dawson and McDowell streets in the 1950s. 9 Because of the

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popularity of block-making machines from 1900 to 1930, it is most likely that the Lawrence House and its attendant garage were built of blocks made on site.

**Historical Background**

Elmo N. Lawrence was born on June 14, 1881 in northern Wake County near the Granville County line. As a child, he was educated by tutors, and then studied at Mars Hill College in Madison County. He completed academic degrees at Campbell College and North Carolina State University and received his degree in dentistry from the University of Maryland at Baltimore. He attended the Dewey School of Orthodontia in New York, which had been established in 1911, for specialized training. At the time, the Dewey School, like the other two schools that provided orthodontist training in the United States, offered a six-week training program. Dr. Lawrence married Flora Louis of Louisburg and the couple had one child, Mary Flora, who was born in 1914. The couple later divorced and he remarried.

Dr. Lawrence first practiced in Statesville in Iredell County. In the 1910s he and his family lived on East Bell Street and he kept an office at 540 ½ Center Street. At the time he practiced in Statesville, four other dentists served the town.

E.N. Lawrence opened a dental office at 5 West Hargett Street in Raleigh around 1920. Lawrence was one of fourteen dentists practicing in Raleigh and the majority had offices on West Hargett Street or Fayetteville Street. At the time, Lawrence and his wife lived at 540 North Blount Street with their daughter. By 1922, Dr. Lawrence had moved his office to 120 Fayetteville Street. In 1922 he was residing on Dix Hill Road, a reference to present-day Lake Wheeler Road, although the property where he built his house in the early 1920s was not officially transferred by deed from his brother, Irvin Lawrence, to him until October 7, 1935. The next year his office was at 230 ½ Fayetteville Street where it remained until 1925 when he established a practice at 19 West Hargett Street. By this time, twenty-one other dentists were practicing in Raleigh.

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11 Letter, from Irvin Lawrence to Linda Harris Edmisten, 17 July 1995.
1926 until his death in 1959, Lawrence operated his dental practice from an office in the Professional Building at 123 West Hargett Street.\textsuperscript{17}

Dr. Lawrence practiced dentistry for fifty years. He received a certificate of distinction from the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery and the Dental School of the University of Maryland. In 1956 he was awarded a certificate of appreciation from the Raleigh Dental Society.\textsuperscript{18} For many years he traveled to Kinston on Tuesdays to provide services in a dental office. Lawrence died on October 18, 1959 and was buried in Montlawn cemetery.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Raleigh City Directories, 1926 through 1959 (Richmond: Hill Directory, Company, Inc.), passim.
\textsuperscript{18} The News and Observer, October 19, 1959.
\textsuperscript{19} The News and Observer, October 19, 1959.
9. Bibliography

Buckthal, Dr. James. Email Correspondence with Jennifer Martin, December 11, 2001.


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number  9   Page  11   Dr. Elmo N. Lawrence House
              Wake County, NC

Wake County Deed Book 871, page 26. October 7, 1935. Wake County Register of Deeds Office,
Raleigh, North Carolina.
10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the Dr. Elmo N. Lawrence House is indicated by the dark line on the accompanying tax map, parcel 0792884355, which is drawn at a scale of 1” = 200’.

Boundary Justification

The boundary for the Dr. Elmo N. Lawrence House is the 2.6-acre parcel historically associated with the property.