

ORDINANCE NO. 2020 - 161

AN ORDINANCE DESIGNATING THE **HILLCREST CEMETERY** IN THE PLANNING JURISDICTION OF THE CITY OF RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, A HISTORIC LANDMARK

**WHEREAS**, the property located at 1905 Garner Road, Raleigh, NC, is owned by Marguerite Massey Lightner Living Trust; and

**WHEREAS**, the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina authorized the creation of the Raleigh Historic Development Commission for the City of Raleigh and otherwise provided for the preservation of certain historic sites and buildings by the passage of Part 4, Chapter 160D, Article 9 of the North Carolina General Statutes; and

**WHEREAS**, the Raleigh Historic Development Commission has made an investigation and recommended the following property be designated a historic landmark; and

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources has made an analysis and recommendation regarding the proposed historic landmark; and

**WHEREAS**, on the 4th day of November 2020, a joint public hearing was held before the City Council of the City of Raleigh and the Raleigh Historic Development Commission to determine whether the hereinafter described property should be designated a historic landmark; and

**WHEREAS**, all requirements of Part 4, Chapter 160D, Article 9 of the North Carolina General Statutes, preceding the adoption of this ordinance, have been complied with.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA THAT:**

**Section 1.** The property designated as Hillcrest Cemetery, in the planning jurisdiction of the City of Raleigh, North Carolina, be and is declared a Raleigh Historic Landmark. Said property being more particularly described as follows:

The property located at 1905 Garner Road, Raleigh, NC, owned by Marguerite Massey Lightner Living Trust, that property described in deed book 13258, page 0215 recorded in Wake County Registry, comprising approximately 3.09 acres.

**Section 2.** Those elements of the property that are integral to its historical, prehistorical, architectural, archaeological and/or cultural significance or any combination thereof are as follows:

Hillcrest Cemetery is a planned, twentieth-century cemetery that served Raleigh's African American community during the racially segregated Jim Crow era through the present. The cemetery is historically significant as the city's only known private cemetery that was developed and managed by African American entrepreneurs. Specifically, it associated with the Lightner family and Calvin E. (C.E.) Lightner, one of Raleigh's most prominent business and community leaders of the early twentieth century.

Hillcrest Cemetery was formally established in 1926 by brothers C.E. and R.H. Lightner, although grave inscriptions indicate the land had been in use as a burial place since at least 1920. The cemetery was established as a related venture to their Lightner Funeral Home, which the family had operated since 1911. Hillcrest Cemetery was established as a place for elaborate yet affordable burials for Raleigh's black middle class. It retains a high degree of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and historical associations with Raleigh's African American community.

The parcel is bordered on the west by Garner Road. A chain link fence encloses the cemetery along its north, south, and west sides. Access to the cemetery is provided by a gravel loop driveway off Garner Road and a concrete sidewalk on the east side of Garner Road. The landscape of Hillcrest Cemetery is level, open, and grassy. A large magnolia at the center of the cemetery is the only mature tree on the property.

The cemetery has approximately 500 marked graves arranged in a linear fashion from north to south with burials oriented east-to-west. The markers are reflective of the types found in African American cemeteries throughout North Carolina including pedestal tombs, die-on-base, tab-in-socket, military service markers, commercial concrete markers, folk concrete markers, and lawn-style markers. The markers are crafted of marble, concrete, and granite. One notable and prevalent type is a large cast concrete slab flush with the ground with a small concrete or marble tablet bearing the attributes of the deceased at the head of the slab. Some of the slabs have been painted white and decorated with simple culturally representative motifs.

A detailed architectural description and history is found in the 2020 Raleigh Historic Landmark Designation application and report and is hereby referenced.

**Section 3.** No portion of the exterior features of any building, site, structure, or object (including windows, doors, walls, fences, light fixtures, signs, steps, pavement, paths, or any other appurtenant features), trees, nor above ground utility structure located on the hereinbefore described property that is designated in this ordinance may be altered, restored, moved, remodeled, or reconstructed so that a change in design, material or outer appearance occurs unless and until a certificate of appropriateness is obtained from the Raleigh Historic Development Commission or its successors; provided however that the Raleigh Planning Director or designee may approve certificates of appropriateness for minor works as listed in the Bylaws and Rules of Procedure of the Raleigh Historic Development Commission.

**Section 4.** No building, site, structure, or object (including windows, doors, walls, fences, light fixtures, steps, pavement, paths, signs, or any other appurtenant features), trees, nor above ground utility structure located on the hereinbefore described property that is designated in this ordinance may be demolished unless and until either approval of demolition is obtained from the Raleigh Historic Development Commission or a period of three hundred sixty-five (365) days has elapsed following final review by the Commission of a request for demolition (or any longer period of time required by N.C.G.S. 160D-949 as it may be amended hereafter); provided however, that demolition may be denied by the Raleigh Historic Development Commission in the event that the State Historic Preservation Officer determines that the building, site, or structure has statewide significance as provided by N.C.G.S. 160D-949.

**Section 5.** The Raleigh Historic Development Commission shall have no jurisdiction over the interior features of the property.

**Section 6.** All owners and occupants of the property hereinabove described, whose identity and addresses can be ascertained by the exercise of due diligence shall be sent by certified mail a copy of this ordinance.

**Section 7.** This ordinance shall be indexed after the property owner's name in the grantor and grantee indexes in the Office of the Register of Deeds of Wake County.

**Section 8.** City administration and the Raleigh Historic Development Commission are hereby authorized and directed to have erected an appropriate sign on the site hereinabove described setting forth the fact that said site has been designated a historic landmark by action of the Raleigh Historic Development Commission and the City Council of the City of Raleigh provided, should the owners of the hereinabove described property not consent to the erection of said sign on the described premises, City administration and the Raleigh Historic Development Commission are hereby authorized and directed to have said sign located on the public right-of-way adjacent to said property.

**Section 9.** In the event any building, site, structure, or object designated by this ordinance is demolished in accordance with the ordinances of the City of Raleigh, this ordinance shall automatically be null and void.

**Section 10.** Any violation of this ordinance shall be unlawful as by law provided.

**Section 11.** This ordinance has been provided to the North Carolina Capital Commission as required by law.

**Adopted: December 1, 2020**

**Effective: December 1, 2020**

Distribution: Department of Planning and Development  
Raleigh Historic Development Commission  
Wake County Tax Assessor  
Property Owner and Occupant (if not the owner)  
Registrar of Deeds

# RALEIGH HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION



## HILLCREST CEMETERY 1905 Garner Road, Raleigh, North Carolina

### PREPARED FOR:

Tania Tully  
Senior Preservation Planner  
Raleigh Urban Design Center  
One Exchange Plaza, Suite 300  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

January 2020; Revised November 2020



RICHARD  
GRUBB &  
ASSOCIATES

# RALEIGH HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION

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## HILLCREST CEMETERY 1905 Garner Road, Raleigh, North Carolina

**Principal Investigator and Author:**  
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**Co-Author:**  
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Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

**Date:**  
January 6, 2020; Revised November 11, 2020

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**1.0 FORM**

**SECTION 1.0**

Raleigh Department of City Planning  
One Exchange Plaza  
3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
Raleigh, NC 27602  
919-516-2626

www.raleighnc.gov/planning

Fee	_____
Amt Paid	_____
Check #	_____
Rec'd Date:	_____
Rec'd By:	_____
Completion Date:	_____

**(Processing Fee: \$266.00 - valid until June 30, 2011 - Checks payable to the City of Raleigh.)**

**RALEIGH HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION**

This application initiates consideration of a property for designation as a Raleigh Historic Landmark by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission (RHDC) and the Raleigh City Council. It enables evaluation of the resource to determine if it qualifies for designation. The evaluation is made by the Research Committee of the RHDC, which makes its recommendation to the full commission which in turn makes its recommendation to the City Council. Procedures for administration by the RHDC are outlined in the Raleigh City Code, Section 10-1053.

Please type if possible. Use 8-1/2" x 11" paper for supporting documentation and if additional space is needed. All materials submitted become the property of the RHDC and cannot be returned. Return completed application to the RHDC office at One Exchange Plaza, Suite 300, Raleigh or mail to:

Raleigh Historic Districts Commission  
PO Box 829 Century Station  
Raleigh, NC 27602

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

Historic Name: Hillcrest Cemetery  
Current Name: Hillcrest Cemetery

2. Location:

Street Address: 1905 Garner Road, Raleigh, NC  
NC PIN No.: 1702995855

(Can be obtained from <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>)

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

Name: Marguerite Massey Lightner Living Trust c/o Bruce E. Lightner  
Address: 312 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.  
City: Raleigh State: NC Zip: 27601-2360  
Telephone No: ( ) ( )-( ) Fax No. ( ) ( )-( )  
E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name: Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc./Jason Harpe  
Address: 525 Wait Avenue  
City: Wake Forest State: NC Zip: 27587  
Telephone No: (704) (477)-(987) Fax No. ( ) ( )-( )  
E-Mail: jharpe@rgaincorporated.com

5. General Data/Site Information:

Date of Construction and major additions/alterations: ca. 1920

Number, type, and date of construction of outbuildings: N/A

Approximate lot size or acreage: 3.09 acres

Architect, builder, carpenter, and/or mason: N/A

Original Use: Cemetery

Present Use: Cemetery

6. Classification:

A. Category (check all that apply):

Building(s)       Structure       Object       Site

B. Ownership

Private       Public       Local       State       Federal

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

	Contributing	Noncontributing
Buildings		
Structures		
Objects		

D. Previous field documentation (when and by whom): N/A

E. National Register of Historic Places Status: N/A

Check One:

Entered <input type="checkbox"/> Date:	Nominated <input type="checkbox"/>
Determined Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Date:	Determined Not Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Date:
Nomination Not Requested <input type="checkbox"/>	Removed <input type="checkbox"/> Date:
Significant changes in integrity since listing should be noted in section 10.C. below.	

7. Reason for Request: To recognize the cemetery's local significance and provide future protection for the cemetery.

8. Is the property income producing? Yes  No

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

10. Supporting Documentation (Attach to application on separate sheets. Please type or print):

A. Photographs/Slides:

At least *two sets of current exterior archival-grade photographic prints* (minimum print size 5"x7") of all facades of the building and at least one photo of all other contributing and non-contributing resources. If interior spaces of the property are being considered for designation, please include two sets of photos for these features. Prints may be created by using archival-grade black and white film photography and processing or digital photography. The minimum standard for a digital print is 5x7 at a resolution of 300 pixels per inch (ppi). This translates into a pixel dimension of 1950 x 1350. Digital images must be printed with an acceptable ink and paper combination as determined by the National Park Service Go to: <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/photopolicy/index.htm>. All photographs must be labeled with the name of the structure, address and date the photograph was taken with pencil or archival-approved photo pen. In addition to prints, all digital images should be submitted on a CD-R in TIF format. Any additional exterior or interior views and views of other structures on the property (color, black and white, or slides) will be helpful.

B. Boundary Map:

Please include a map showing the location of the property. A sketch map is acceptable, but please note street names and number. Any other structures on the property should also be shown. Please include a "North" arrow. Map should be no larger than 11" x 17". A tax map with boundaries marked is preferred, which can be found at: <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>.

C. Architectural Significance:

Describe the property, including exterior architectural features, additions, remodelings, and alterations. Also describe significant outbuildings and landscape features. If the owner is including interior features in the nomination for the purpose of design review protection; describe them in detail and note their locations. Include a statement regarding the architectural significance of the property.

D. Historic Significance:

Note any significant events, people, and/or families associated with the property. Include all major owners. Note if the property has ever been recorded during a historic building survey by the City of Raleigh or by the NC State Historic Preservation Office. If so, who and when? (See application item 6.D.) Please include a bibliography of sources. Information regarding prior designations can be found by contacting the Survey and Planning Branch of the NC State Historic Preservation Office (NCSHPO) at 919-807-6570, 919-807-6573 or at: <http://www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us/spbranch.htm>.

E. Special Significance Summary:

Include a one to two paragraph summary of those elements of the property that are integral to its historical, prehistorical, architectural, archaeological, and/or cultural importance.

## 2.0 ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

### Setting

Hillcrest Cemetery is a planned, active African American community cemetery located at 1905 Garner Road in Raleigh, Wake County, North Carolina (Figure 1). The cemetery is situated on an irregularly shaped 3.09-acre lot approximately 1.5 miles south of downtown Raleigh. The parcel is bordered on the west by Garner Road. A chain link fence encloses the cemetery along its north, south, and west sides and trees buffer it from the Rochester Heights Historic District, a district listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2011, which wraps around the cemetery's south and east sides. Access to the cemetery is provided by a gravel loop driveway off Garner Road and a concrete sidewalk on the east side of Garner Road. The landscape of Hillcrest Cemetery is level, open, and grassy. A large magnolia at the center of the cemetery is the only mature tree on the property.

### Cemetery

The cemetery has approximately 500 marked graves arranged in a linear fashion from north to south with burials oriented east-to-west (Plates 1-28). The markers are reflective of the types found in African American cemeteries throughout North Carolina including pedestal tombs, die-on-base, tab-in-socket, military service markers, commercial concrete markers, folk concrete markers, and lawn-style markers. The markers are crafted of marble, concrete, and granite. One notable and prevalent type is a large cast concrete slab flush with the ground with a small concrete or marble tablet bearing the attributes of the deceased at the head of the slab. Some of the slabs have been painted white and decorated with simple culturally representative motifs.

Marked burials date from 1920 to 2014. There are no burial records for Hillcrest Cemetery, but members of the Friends of Hillcrest Cemetery believe that some of unmarked burials predate 1920. Both marked and unmarked burials have left slight depressions caused by shallow burial shafts and deteriorated wooden caskets. Efforts such as a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey have not been undertaken to identify and map the cemetery's unmarked burials.

Hillcrest Cemetery has not been recorded as part of historic resources surveys conducted by the City of Raleigh or the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. A partial inventory of Hillcrest Cemetery is available at [www.FindAGrave.com](http://www.FindAGrave.com). This landmark designation applies to all the cemetery's grave markers and, as such, any work proposed for the repair of damaged grave markers should be submitted in a Certificate of Appropriateness to the Raleigh Historic Development Commission.



Figure 1: Aerial map showing the recommended landmark boundary for the Hillcrest Cemetery, 1905 Garner Road, Raleigh (World Imagery, ESRI 2009).



Plate 1: View of stone columns flanking driveway.

Photo view: East

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 2: View of Garner Road.

Photo view: North

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 3: View of Garner Road.

Photo view: South

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 4: View of gravemarkers.

Photo view: Southeast

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 5: View of stone columns and driveway.

Photo view: East

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 6: View of gravemarkers.

Photo view: Northwest

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 7: View of gravemarkers.

Photo view: West

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019

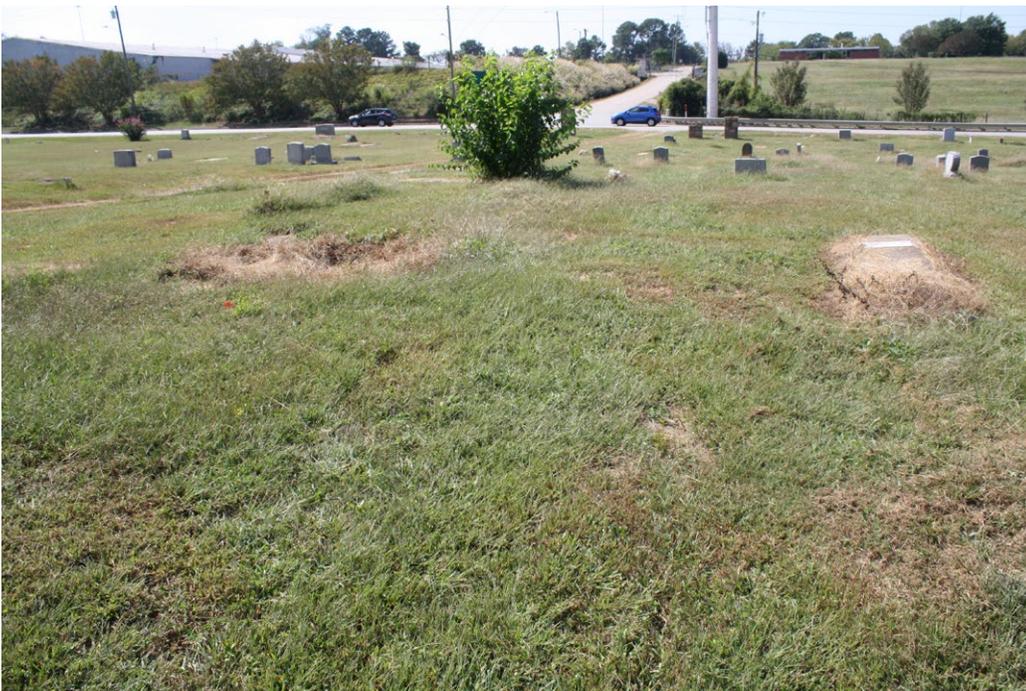


Plate 8: View of gravemarkers.

Photo view: West

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 9: View of gravemarkers.

Photo view: North

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 10: View of gravemarkers.

Photo view: Northeast

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 11: View of gravemarkers.

Photo view: East

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 12: View of driveway and gravemarkers.

Photo view: South

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 13: View of driveway and adjoining property.

Photo view: South

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 14: View of driveway and adjacent houses.

Photo view: Southeast

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 15: View of driveway and gravemarkers.

Photo view: North

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 16: View of gravemarkers.

Photo view: Northwest

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 17: View of driveway and gravemarkers.

Photo view: West

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 18: View of driveway and gravemarkers.

Photo view: West

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 19: View of gravemarkers.

Photo view: Northeast

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019

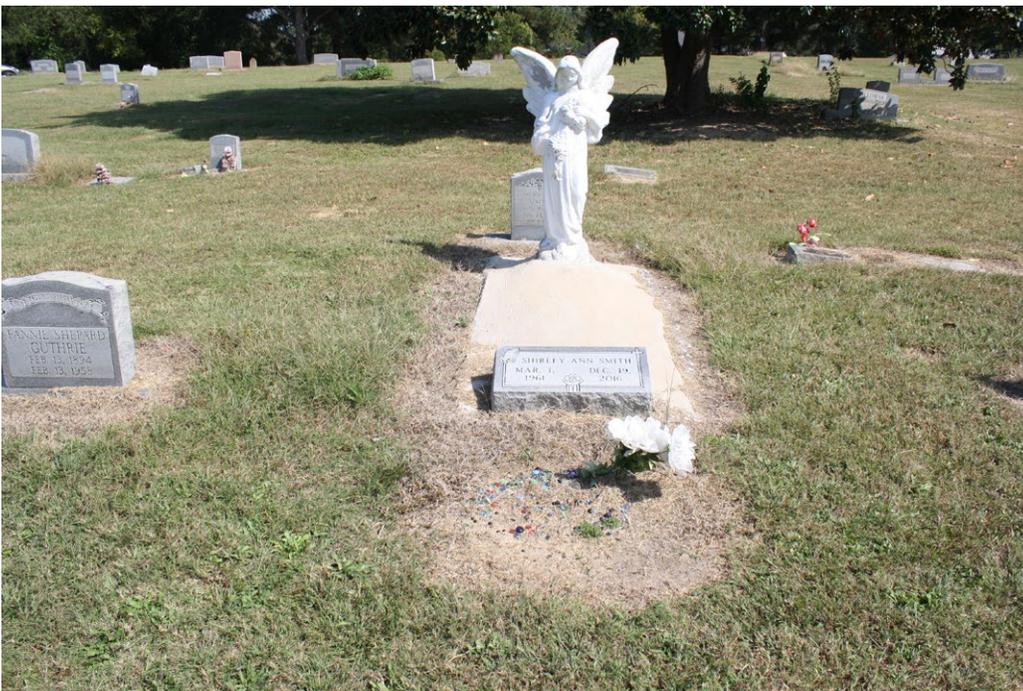


Plate 20: Shirley Ann Smith (1961-2016) monument.

Photo view: East

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 21: Esther Boyd (1903-1967) gravemarker.

Photo view: West

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 22: Mozell Farley (1922-1971) gravemarker.

Photo view: West

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 23: James Henderson gravemarker.

Photo view: East

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 24: Unmarked concrete and stone gravemarker.

Photo view: East

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 25: William Scott (1943-1969) pedestal tomb.

Photo view: East

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 26: James Kearney (1927-1981) military marker.

Photo view: East

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 27: Hubert Williams (1895-1947) lawn style marker.

Photo view: East

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019



Plate 28: View of granite die on base gravemarkers.

Photo view: East

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe

Date: September 26, 2019

### 3.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT FOR THE LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HILLCREST CEMETERY

Calvin Esau (C.E.) Lightner and his brother Rayford H. (R.H.) Lightner established the Lightner Funeral Home in 1908 as the first African American funeral home in Raleigh.<sup>1</sup> The business did not receive its charter from the state until 1911, a delay attributable to white city leaders' belief that an African American-owned business in downtown Raleigh would erode the city's image (Bunch-Lyons 2015: 62-63). The Lightner funeral home was located in a frame building on Hargett Street until the brothers built the Lightner Office Building at 125 Hargett Street around 1913 (Bunch-Lyons 2015: 59).<sup>2</sup>

African American entrepreneurs established funeral homes to ensure African Americans were laid to rest with respect and dignity. From the end of the Civil War through the 1890s, most burials were handled by white-owned funeral homes because of the lack of African American-owned funeral homes in most towns and cities. Elijah Cook of Montgomery, Alabama started a funeral home at the end of the Civil War after watching African American corpses being thrown into old wagons for transport to the cemetery for burial (Bunch-Lyons 2015: 60-61). Almost 50 years later, C.E. Lightner had a similar experience in Raleigh. Lightner, working as a builder, was constructing a house behind the Fayetteville Street Baptist Church when a white funeral home director asked if he would help unload six bodies of African Americans and carry them into the church. Lightner observed that the bodies were transported in a one-horse wagon with chairs for mourners to sit in. The next time Lightner saw the funeral home leading a procession it was for a white family who were transported in large, fine, horse-drawn coaches. Lightner was troubled by the disparity between the funeral services available to white and African American people. Lightner recognized that Raleigh needed a funeral home run by and for the black community. Lightner's entrepreneurial spirit led to the establishment of the Lightner Funeral Home (Simmons-Henry and Edmisten 1993: 63). Lightner's philosophy was consistent with Booker T. Washington's thoughts on the matter. According to Washington, African American funeral homes were able to provide for their communities a service "which the white business men could not or were not able to properly provide for" (Bunch-Lyons 2015: 59).

During the Jim Crow era, African American funeral home owners often pursued other related sources of income, such as selling burial and life insurance policies and working in construction or land development. The Lightner family was typical in this way. The family ran the C.E. Lightner and Brothers construction company, the Progressive Real Estate Company, and the Lightner Mutual Burial Insurance Company. C.E. Lightner also was a wood dealer (Ancestry 2011). Hillcrest Cemetery was developed by the Lightners as a black-owned and managed private cemetery that was part of an array of funerary services offered to the black community. At the writing of this landmark designation, no other Raleigh cemeteries that were developed, owned, and operated by African Americans have been identified.

In 1917, C.E. and R.H. Lightner purchased a 94-acre tract of farmland from Willis Smith on Walnut Creek one-mile south of the city (Wake County Deed Book [WCDB] 313, p. 339). At the time of purchase, there was one house on the farm. The Lightner brothers added a four-room house, tobacco barns, and a packhouse between 1917 and 1926. Neither C.E. nor R.H. lived at the farmhouse, and no extant records document who occupied it. C.E. Lightner lived at 419 South East Street and R.H. Lightner lived at his brother's residence before relocating to 125 East Hargett Street.

In 1919, C.E. Lightner ran an advertisement in the *News and Observer* seeking 25 cows to graze on the farm's 35-acre pasture with their 12 horses (Anon 1919). On the farm the Lightners cut hay and hauled sand from the creek to sell to the City of Raleigh. The brothers purchased

1 Charles Albert Haywood Sr. opened Raleigh's second African American funeral home in 1914.

2 The 1913 Raleigh City Directory list the offices of C.E. Lightner and Bros. and Progressive Real Estate Company at 125 Hargett Street. Various online sources have the date of completion at 1915.

a 60.8-acre parcel adjacent to the farm from R.D. and Maggie Atkins in 1926 (WCDB 486, p. 97) and converted the two parcels, now totaling 155 acres, into a dairy farm. The Lightners erected an additional building and built a silo and concrete dam on a tributary of Walnut Creek. The dairy operation was discontinued in 1929, when a city sewer main that emptied into Walnut Creek contaminated the land. The city had been disposing of trash on the north side of Walnut Creek, creating a manmade dike that diverted water, sand, and sewage onto the Lightner's property (North Carolina Supreme Court 1934).

The Lightners established the Hillcrest Cemetery on a portion of the 60.8-acre Garner Road tract that they had acquired in 1926. The cemetery was a place where African Americans could be laid to rest among members of their own community in a respectful yet affordable manner (Campbell 2014). The earliest engraved grave marker dates from 1920, which means the land was used for burials prior to the Lightner's purchase of it in 1926. While there are marked burials with death dates from the 1930s and early 1940s, it was not until 1947 that a Wake County deed references the official development of Hillcrest Cemetery. On June 2, 1947, Lawrence Eugene Lightner, son of C.E. Lightner, borrowed \$4,500 from the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company to pay off a Deed of Trust held on the cemetery property by the State Capital Life Insurance Company of Raleigh (WCBD 976, p. 107). The deed states that L.E. Lightner "is now developing a cemetery on said property, the same known as Hillcrest Cemetery." Four-and-one-half acres of the property was surveyed and divided into four lots to be sold for burials. L.E. Lightner could sell the cemetery plots and for each lot sold \$100 was applied to his debt.

In 1933, C.E., Lightner, his wife Mamie A., and their son Calvin Nicholas Lightner created the Wake County Burial League (Wake County Corporations Book [WCCB] G, p. 314). In 1938, they changed the name of the corporation to Lightner's Mutual Burial Association, Inc. (WCCB G, p. 315). The objectives for which the association was formed in 1933 did not change with the re-naming of the corporation in 1938. The objectives of the association were:

- 1) To operate a business on a Mutual Plan, in Wake and Johnston Counties, for the purpose of assuring the members of said association a decent burial and the said burial or any benefit derived because of such membership in this association shall not exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00).
- 2) And in order to further prosecute the objectives and purpose set forth, the association shall have authority to buy, sell, and make burial goods of all kind. To purchase, lease, acquire, hold, mortgage and convey real property, in Wake and Johnston Counties, for assembly halls, and cemeteries to bury its members.

The Lightners advertised the benefits of their mutual burial association as "as a superior burial at a minimal cost" (Anon 1946). Burial Associations provided insurance that covered funeral costs and ensured that the association's members received "the pomp and ceremony critical to the occasion" such as badges, gloves, special collars, and aprons (Holloway 2002: 33). Authors of the graveyard ethnography *Lay Down Body* suggest that the desire for elaborate ceremonial displays stemmed from the belief that "the soul of an African American would eventually return to the mother continent – but only if the body was given a proper and respectful send-off" (Wright and Hughes 1996: 268).

Calvin E. Lightner's son Lawrence E. Lightner, occasionally referenced in primary and secondary sources as L.T. Lighter, assumed management of Lightner Funeral Home in 1941.<sup>3</sup> By 1941, the Lightners had expanded the business, opening funeral homes in both Sanford and Goldsboro (Anon 1940). In 1946, the Lightners advertised lots at Hillcrest Cemetery "as the most beautiful cemetery tract in the South." Staff of the Lightner Funeral Home, Raleigh Funeral Home, and Capital Funeral Home were the cemetery's sales representatives. These advertisements continued to be published in *The Carolinian* into the 1950s and 1960s. The Hillcrest Cemetery office was located at 312 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, in Raleigh. Also in 1946, the Lightner Funeral Home began advertising a 24-hour ambulance service that carried "ill and injured to and from the hospitals in a modern

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3 These sources include deeds and newspaper articles.

and comfortable ambulance” (Anon 1946). *The Carolinian* noted in 1959 (February 7) that Lawrence Lightner “is credited with giving a family the entire funeral without charge, buying groceries for needy families, and during big snows transporting people in his automobile when buses and most modes of transportation were at a standstill, or cabs hard to get” (Anon 1959).

On November 8, 1954, Lawrence E. Lightner and his wife Anna Roberta Lightner sold their Garner Road tract, minus the Hillcrest Cemetery, to M.C. Garner of the Phillips Building Corporation (WCDB 1169, p. 166). A plat map made for the parcel shows it extending from modern day Interstate-40 northeast to Rock Quarry Road (Figure 2). This tract, excepting the cemetery, would become the Rochester Heights subdivision. On April 2, 1956, C.E. Lightner sold all his interest in Lightner Funeral Home to his sons Lawrence and Clarence Lightner (WCDB 1233, p. 208). Lawrence E. Lightner passed away on January 28, 1959 (Jones 1959).

On December 20, 1966, Anna Roberta Lightner granted the cemetery deed to her brother-in-law, Clarence E. Lightner (WCDB 1748, p. 80). Clarence E. Lightner died on July 8, 2002. A quitclaim deed was executed on September 2, 2008 transferring interest in the Hillcrest Cemetery from Clarence E. Lightner’s wife Marguerite M. Lightner, to the Marguerite Massey Lightner Living Trust, the current owner (WCDB 13258, p. 215).

The Hillcrest Cemetery is the final resting place of many working and middle-class African Americans, as well as wealthy and socially prominent African Americans. Two of these prominent African Americans are William Lawrence Greene and George R. Greene. William L. Greene received a master’s degree from Cornell University in 1929 and was the executive director of the North Carolina Teacher’s Association. George R. Greene was elected as Wake County’s first African American judge in 1974.

#### Calvin Esau (C.E.) Lightner (1878-1960)

Prolific African American architectural designer, builder, and civic leader, C.E. (Calvin Esau) Lightner (March 31, 1878 - May 21, 1960) exemplifies the enterprising black builders who pursued education and economic success during the Jim Crow era in the South. A native of South Carolina and the son of a formerly enslaved carpenter, he moved to Raleigh in 1898 to attend college and soon became one of the capital’s leading builders as well as a community leader. His best-known works include the Lightner Arcade and Davie Street Presbyterian Church. Despite the breadth of his work, the majority of his buildings have been destroyed, with the Davie Street Presbyterian Church and the Capehart-Lightner House the only known surviving examples of his work. The Hillcrest Cemetery is an important extant resource that reflects Lightner’s business interests in Raleigh.

C.E. Lightner was greatly influenced by his upbringing in South Carolina. A son of Frank Lightner and Daphney (Daphine) Thompson Lightner, he was born in Winnsboro, South Carolina (Figure 3).<sup>4</sup> He likely learned the building trade from his father, who was born into slavery in 1847 and after emancipation supported his family through farming and carpentry, building houses in Chester, South Carolina. Calvin’s mother Daphney was born free to Joseph and Millie Thompson. The family witnessed the importance of political activity, including her father’s service in the South Carolina State Legislature during Reconstruction (Wilson 2004:360). The 1880 U.S. Census of Fairfield County, South Carolina, listed Frank Lightner as a farmer and a black man, while his wife Daphney and their children were noted as mulatto. In 1900 and 1910, the censuses of Chester County, South Carolina listed Frank Lightner’s occupation as carpenter, and the 1910 census further identified him as engaged in housebuilding (Ancestry 2006). Census records show that Frank was illiterate and Daphney was literate.

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4 Daphine Thompson Lightner, the daughter of Joseph and Millie Stephens Thompson, both of Fairfield County, South Carolina, was born on January 26, 1853, and died on January 9, 1924. She is buried at Mt. Hope Cemetery in Raleigh, North Carolina. North Carolina State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics. *North Carolina Death Certificates*. Microfilm S.123. Rolls 19-242, 280, 313-682, 1040-1297. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. Daphine is also listed as Daphney in various historical records.

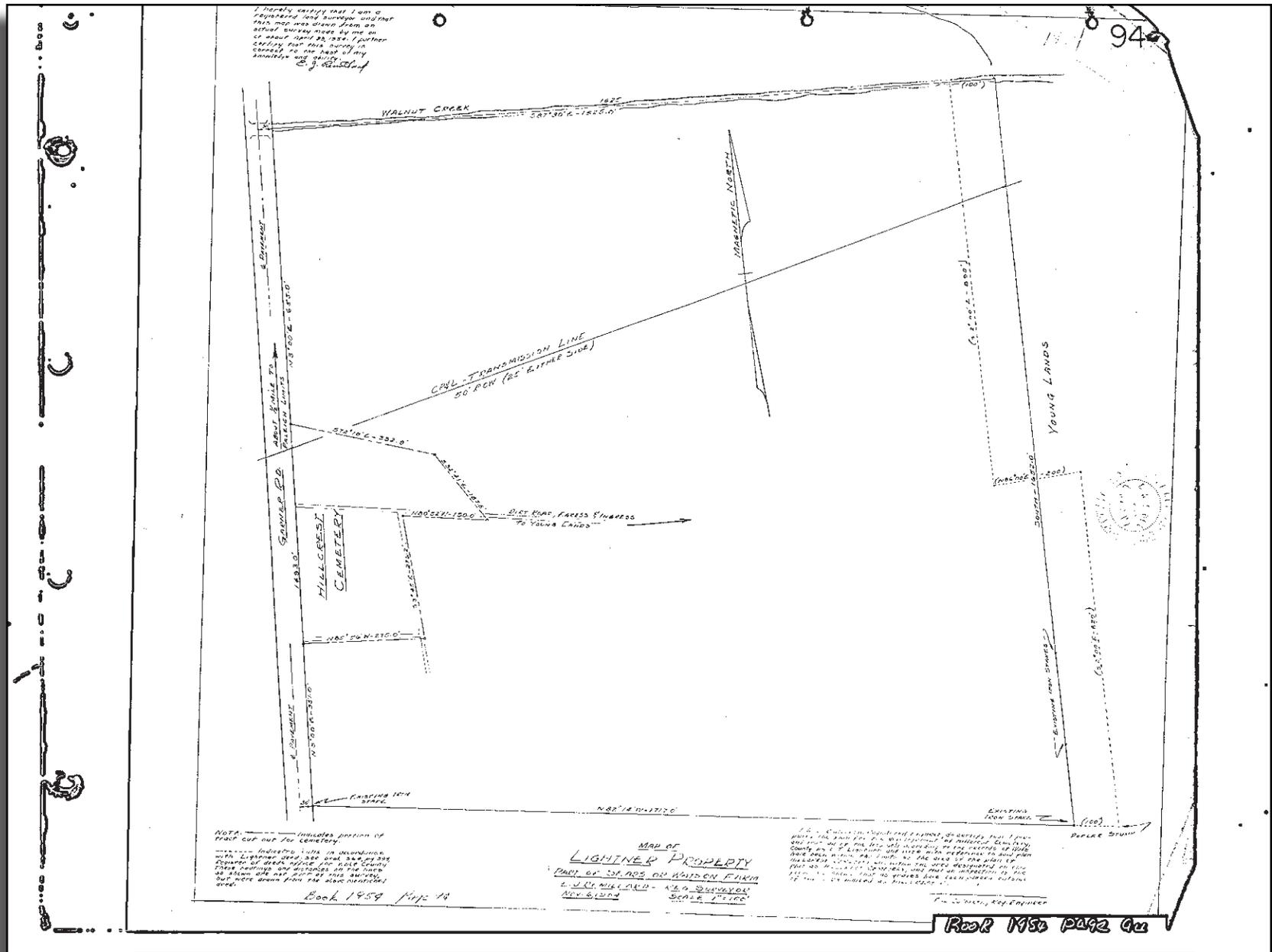


Figure 2: Plat of Lightner Farm and Hillcrest Cemetery, November 6, 1954  
(Wake County Register of Deeds, Wake County, North Carolina).



Figure 3: Frank and Daphney Lighter Family  
(*Who Do You Think You Are?: Digging for Your Family Roots*).

By 1900, Calvin E. Lightner had left his parents' household to embark on his new life in Raleigh. The 1900s and 1910s were busy decades for the young man as he simultaneously completed his education, started a family, and established several businesses that would serve Raleigh's African American community. He had moved to Raleigh in 1898 to attend Shaw University, from which he received a Bachelor of Science degree in either 1907 or 1908. He was one of many African Americans for whom Shaw and other colleges for blacks opened the door to opportunities far beyond those their parents and grandparents had.<sup>5</sup> At Shaw, Lightner would have studied with Gaston Alonzo Edwards, who taught building trades classes at the school and later became the first black architect licensed in North Carolina. From Edwards, Lightner likely learned architectural skills as well as the construction knowledge he acquired as an apprentice with his father. By 1906, while still in school, Lightner established the construction company of C.E. Lightner and Brothers in Raleigh with his brother Rayford H. Lightner (Anon 1909). Upon graduation from Shaw in 1908, C.E. served as an assistant teacher in Shaw's industrial shop for a year (Anon 1910).

In 1909, the *Raleigh Times* (August 5, 1909) described C.E. Lightner and Brothers as "Contractors and Architects" and noted that as "architects," they took "commissions for the furnishing of plans for all kinds of buildings charging a very moderate rate of commission for a high class service" (Anon 1910). In this period, the distinction between architects and builders was less rigid than later in the century. And as noted, C.E. Lightner had probably developed architectural skills during his study at Shaw with architect Edwards. Various sources state that Lightner did all his own drawings and blueprints for both commercial and residential projects. C.E. Lightner and Brothers was also known for its use of wooden trusses instead of steel in their buildings (Wilson 2004: 361).

Lightner expanded his education with industrial courses at Hampton Institute where he likely met Mamie A. Blackmon (Anon 1950). The couple married on July 7, 1909 in Wake County (Ancestry.com 2015). Mamie was educated at both Hampton Institute and Fayetteville State Normal School and was a home economics teacher in the Raleigh public school system (Wilson 2004: 361). Calvin and Mamie became the parents of Calvin Nicholas, Lawrence Eugene, Clarence Everett (the first African American mayor of Raleigh), and Margaret Lightner Hayes.

Further diversifying his skills, in 1909 the enterprising Lightner also finished embalming school in Nashville, Tennessee, becoming the first licensed African American mortician in Raleigh. It was not uncommon for carpenters to engage in the funeral business, a practice that began because carpenters often made wooden coffins as well as engaging in construction. In 1911, Lightner established the Lightner Funeral Home at 127-129 East Hargett Street. Funeral homes operated by black owners for black clients were a vital part of the community, as they offered important and dignified services for their clientele not always available otherwise. Later, in 1941, Lawrence E. Lightner and his wife Roberta purchased the Neoclassical Capehart-Lightner House at 312 Smithfield Street from Dr. Lovelace B. Capehart, an African American physician (WCDB 871, p. 276). The Lightner Funeral Home still operates at this location, with the address now 312 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

The locations of Lightner's construction projects and other enterprises in Raleigh reflect that during the early twentieth century, if not before, the city's social geography displayed a trend prevalent in many southern (and northern) towns—a shift toward greater racial segregation in residential and commercial uses. Although people of both races had once lived in various sectors, in this period the north and west sections of Raleigh became increasingly white, and the southeastern and southern areas became increasingly black, a pattern encouraged in part by the presence of key black schools such as Shaw University at the south end of downtown and St. Augustine's to the east.

Lightner took a major role in the upbuilding of Raleigh's black neighborhoods and commercial sectors. Identified as the first house that Lightner built in Raleigh, his 1907 family home is a modified Craftsman house at 419 South East Street in the heart of southeast Raleigh (Simmons and Edmisten

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<sup>5</sup> Various sources state that Lightner played on Shaw University's first football team in 1906 and graduated the following year. Other sources state that he graduated in 1908.

1993: 63). This house was demolished in 1990. Lightner also designed and built key buildings that helped establish East Hargett Street as Raleigh's African American business district—an example of the “black main streets” that developed in many communities during the early twentieth century. During the 1910s, Calvin and his brother Rayford, a talented mechanic, owned and operated Lightner Garage (auto repairs) at 129 East Hargett Street (Ancestry.com 2011). Continuing to develop the East Hargett Street business district, in 1919, C.E. Lightner and Brothers designed and built the Lightner Office Building at 125 East Hargett Street, which housed essential businesses that served a predominantly black clientele, such as dental and medical offices, apartments, beauty salons, a barber shop, and tailoring and cleaning businesses. An especially important building episode, in 1921, the company built the imposing Lightner Arcade and Hotel at 122 East Hargett Street (Figures 4 and 5). The Lightner Arcade and Hotel, a landmark famed for miles around, was a brick, two-part commercial building that also contained dental and medical offices and a barber shop, plus a drugstore, an amusement emporium, the offices of the African American newspaper *The Carolinian*, the Harris Barber College, a haberdashery, a store, a ballroom, and meeting spaces and hotel rooms. When built, it was one of only two hotels in Raleigh that served African Americans. Along with the Lewis Hotel at 220 East Cabarrus Street, the Lightner Arcade and Hotel was included in *The Negro Motorist Green Book* 1947. Celebrities such as Cab Calloway, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington stayed at the Lightner hotel and performed in the building's upstairs ballroom, giving the hotel a valued role in enabling celebrities to stay at the same prestigious location where they performed.<sup>6</sup>

The North Carolina Homemakers Association acquired the Lightner Arcade from Lightner during the 1940s. They changed the name of the building to the Home Eckers Hotel. The Peebles Hotel occupied the building until the building was destroyed by fire in 1970.<sup>7</sup> In 1921, C.E. Lightner and Brothers erected a new, Classical Revival-style headquarters for the Mechanics and Farmers Bank at 114 Parrish Street in Durham. The bank is the state's oldest black-owned bank, established in 1908. The building also served as the headquarters for the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, a mutual benefit association affiliated with the bank, which became the largest black-owned insurance business in the nation. The Lightner Arcade was destroyed by fire in 1970, but the Mechanics and Farmers Bank remains extant.

According to Raleigh's African American newspaper *The Carolinian*, C.E. Lightner and Brothers built homes for many prominent African Americans in Raleigh, including the Professor Gaston A. Edwards House at 318 South Street (ca. 1908) for the state's first black licensed architect, who was a teacher at Shaw; the Captain James E. Hamlin House at 730 Fayetteville Street (ca. 1908); the Dr. and Mrs. Lewyn Eugene and Mamie Roberts McCauley House (ca. 1910) at 8 North Tarboro Road; the Professor W. H. Fuller house (ca. 1910) on 20 or 21 Worth Street near the Raleigh Memorial Auditorium; and the John H. Branch House (ca. 1914) at 237 West Worth Street for the former principal of Washington High School in Raleigh, one of the first public high schools for black students in the state (Anon 1950). The Lightner brothers also built residences for the Rev. George W. Moore (ca. 1918) at 748 Fayetteville Street, for Dr. Lovelace B. Capehart (1925) on Davie Street; and for Rev. Moses Williams House at 739 South Fayetteville Street.<sup>8</sup> While residences designed and built by C.E. Lightner and Brothers were mainly for African Americans, the company is known to have constructed at least one house for a white client (Anon 1909). Between 1903 and 1909, they built a home for William W. Robbins at 232 Boylan Avenue in Raleigh's Boylan Heights, a new subdivision which was restricted by deed to white residents as was typical at the time. Robbins was an engineer with the Wake Water Works Company, Inc. (Ancestry.com 2011).

The Lightner company constructed religious and institutional buildings. The firm is credited with designing and building the parsonage for Raleigh's African American Congregational Church. The company also built the Mary B. Talbert Home on East Davie Street. Clarence Lightner's wife, Mamie, was one of the founders of the Talbert Home in 1939, an organization named for an African American woman from Oberlin, Ohio who was an educator and activist who fought for civil rights,

6 <https://www.visitraleigh.com/listing/former-lightner-arcade/57882/>.

7 <https://blogs.lib.unc.edu/nmc/index.php/2010/05/05/home-eckers-trade-school-raleigh-nc/comment-page-1/>.

8 Dr. Lovelace B. Capehart was a prominent Raleigh African American physician.



Figure 4: Lightner Arcade and Hotel, 122 East Hargett Street, Raleigh, 1921  
(General Negatives Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC).



Figure 5: 1926 View of E. Hargett Street looking east in 100 block. Lightner Arcade is visible at the right (General Negatives Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC).

women's suffrage, anti-lynching laws, and international human rights. Also attributed to C.E. Lightner and Brothers is the original YWCA building for black girls and women that stood on East Hargett Street. Only one of Lightner's institutional buildings is known to survive, which is the Davie Street Presbyterian Church (ca. 1925), a substantial brick edifice of Gothic Revival style, located at 300 E. Davie Street in Raleigh.

From his early adulthood onward, C.E. Lightner held a variety of leadership positions. He was elected president of the statewide professional association of African American undertakers in 1912, and his brother R.H. Lightner was elected as a board member (Anon 1912). C.E. was a stockholder in the Peoples Investment Company and chartered the Progressive Real Estate Company in March 1913 (Anon 1901 and 1913). In 1925, the *Raleigh Times* (November 11, 1925) described the Progressive Real Estate Company as "the chief agency for realty transfers and building" in the African American business district of East Hargett Street (Bushong and Brown 1982, 8:6). In the 1920s, C.E. Lightner established the private Hillcrest Cemetery for the city's black residents on the Lightner Farm property on Garner Road in Raleigh.

Despite the disfranchisement of most black men in the first half of the twentieth century, C.E. Lightner took a role in local politics, perhaps remembering his maternal grandfather's legislative service and surely serving as a model for his son Clarence's future role as Raleigh's first black mayor. In 1919, C.E. Lightner was part of a ticket of candidates nominated by the "Twentieth Century Voters Club, a colored organization," which offered Dr. M.T. Pope for mayor, Lt. L.B. Capehart, Jr., as commissioner for public safety; and C.E. Lightner as commissioner of public works. The president of the voters' club acknowledged that the "negro ticket" would be "eliminated in the primary," but stated that "the action was taken" to express the "feeling of the negroes of the city that they ought to have greater rights than are accorded them." The club insisted that since the black people paid taxes, they should have some positions at city hall" (*News and Observer*, March 25, 1919). Lt. Capehart had recently returned from military service overseas during World War I, and he was part of a broader movement among returning black soldiers who sought greater opportunity for members of their race.

Lightner continued his local leadership for many years and was awarded a number of community honors, including a citation by Washington High School's Diversified Occupations class during Vocational Opportunity Week on March 17, 1949. He was a member of Davie Street Presbyterian Church and served on the church's board of trustees for 62 years. He was also a Mason, a Grand Master of the Internal Order of the Odd Fellows and served as the president of the Shaw University Alumni Association for 17 years.

C.E. Lightner died on May 21, 1960. He and his wife Mamie Lightner, who died in 1924, are buried at Mount Hope Cemetery in Raleigh.

### Cemetery Context

Hillcrest Cemetery is one of four African American cemeteries near downtown Raleigh but is the only one established and continuously operated by an African American funeral home. Raleigh's other African American cemeteries include Mount Hope Cemetery southeast of downtown Raleigh, and Oberlin Cemetery and Oak Grove Cemetery in the Oberlin and Method Freedman's communities.

Mount Hope Cemetery is a large municipal cemetery located on 34.3 acres south of downtown Raleigh. Mount Hope was created by the City of Raleigh in 1872 exclusively for the burial of African Americans. Before Mount Hope Cemetery was established, African Americans were buried in a segregated area in the southeast section of the Raleigh City Cemetery, which was established in 1798. By 1871, no plots remained for the burial of African American citizens. To address this issue, the city appointed three prominent African American leaders to locate suitable land for a municipal cemetery strictly for the burial of African Americans. Mount Hope Cemetery was professionally designed as a picturesque garden cemetery modeled in a very similar style to the 1869 Oakwood Cemetery, the burial place for Raleigh's white residents. The cemetery was integrated into its hilly site and was laid out using a variety of curvilinear drives that divided the large lot into sections with an emphasis on curbed family plots.

Oak Grove Cemetery and Oberlin Cemetery are community cemeteries located in more distant parts of the city historically associated with post-Civil War rural African American Freedman's communities. Both cemeteries are currently under pressure due to commercial and residential development. The Oak Grove Cemetery was established by the Oak Grove Baptist Church circa 1873, but by 1937 members of the Method community established the Method Civic League and changed the cemetery from a church cemetery to a community cemetery. Like Oak Grove, the Oberlin Cemetery serves a traditionally African American community with roots in the years just following the Civil War. The Oberlin Cemetery was deeded to trustees of the Oberlin community in 1873 by white landowners that included Lewis W. Peck and Timothy F. Lee (Little 2008, 8:9). Peck and Lee subdivided land on Oberlin Road and sold lots to the newly freed African Americans. Years of commercial and residential development in the Oberlin community fundamentally altered its historic character. Oberlin Cemetery survives intact but is now surrounded by large recently constructed buildings. The cemetery's individual grave markers and family plots are laid out in a grid pattern. Out of the 600 burials that are believed to be in the cemetery, there are 139 grave markers. These grave markers are fashioned from stone and concrete. At least one wood grave marker survives.

Hillcrest Cemetery is unique among the three cemeteries noted in this section of the landmark designation report. Mount Hope Cemetery is clearly steeped in the "cemetery-park" design philosophy of the late nineteenth century. Many of the grave markers, monuments, and mausoleums at Mount Hope reflect the social and economic status of the city's African American elite. Oberlin Cemetery and Oak Grove Cemetery are unplanned folk cemeteries that developed organically over time and feature vernacular markers. Hillcrest Cemetery is a twentieth-century cemetery and its linear order, the abundance of commercially made markers, and highly visible site off busy Garner Road, attest to its roots as a later generation of private African American cemeteries that primarily served the city's black middle class.

## 4.0 SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

### Statement of Significance

Hillcrest Cemetery is a planned, twentieth-century cemetery that served Raleigh's African American community during the racially segregated Jim Crow era through the present. The cemetery is historically significant at the local level as the city's only known private cemetery that was developed and managed by African American entrepreneurs.

Hillcrest Cemetery was formally established in 1926 when brothers C.E. and Rayford H. (R.H.) Lightner purchased 60.8 acres on Walnut Creek, although grave inscriptions indicate the land had been in use as a burial place since at least 1920. The cemetery was established by the Lightner family as a related venture to their Lightner Funeral Home, which the family had operated since 1911. The Lightners established Hillcrest Cemetery as a place for elaborate yet affordable burials for Raleigh's black middle class. In 1933, the Lightners continued to expand their funeral services with the establishment of the Wake County Burial League, later known as Lightner's Mutual Burial Association. The Lightners sold burial insurance in part to ensure that burials continued at Hillcrest Cemetery.

The Lightners were prominent, influential, and respected business and community leaders that believed in civic engagement. Brothers C.E. Lightner and Rayford H. Lightner started the Lightner Funeral Home and Hillcrest Cemetery when funeral options for Raleigh's African American community were limited. Calvin E. Lightner was a prominent entrepreneur during the early twentieth century who is credited with developing East Hargett Street as Raleigh's African American business district. He ran for public office in 1919 during Jim Crow and held leadership positions in a number of benevolent organizations. Calvin Lightner's sons, Lawrence E. and Clarence C. Lightner, were the second generation to run both the funeral home and cemetery.

### Integrity

Hillcrest Cemetery retains a high degree of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and historical associations with Raleigh's African American community. The cemetery is sited on 3.09 acres that were formally cut off from the Lightner family farm when L. E. and Anna Roberta Lightner sold the property in 1954, although the cemetery had been in use since the 1920s. Its original setting was altered between 1954 and 1964 when nearly 57 acres of the 60.8-acre farm was sold and developed as the Rochester Heights subdivision. However, a chain link fence along the cemetery's north, south, and west sides and trees along the east side block the neighborhood from view. Garner Road, at the cemetery's west side, is a heavily traveled roadway that was laid out prior to the cemetery's development. The presence of the neighborhood and Garner Road do not adversely affect the cemetery's tranquil setting and restful feeling. The cemetery's overall layout and design remain intact and the newer grave markers are aligned according to the original layout.

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