

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Eunice Waymon Birthplace

Tryon, Polk County, PL0304, Listed 5/18/2023
Nomination by Michelle Michael
Photographs by Michelle Michael, September 2021



Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. Oblique view of North corner, front (northwest) and northeast side elevation looking south.



Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. View of rear elevation.

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Waymon, Eunice, Birthplace
Other names/site number: Simone, Nina, Birthplace
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

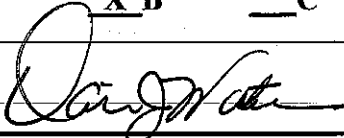
Street & number: 30 East Livingston Street
City or town: Tryon State: NC County: Polk
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

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 forth 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 at the following
level(s) of significance:

national statewide local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

 Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	<u>4/6/23</u> Date
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In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official: <hr/>	Date <hr/>
Title: <u>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</u>	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Single Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not in Use

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: Brick
Walls: Weatherboard
Roof: metal

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Located in Tryon, Polk County, North Carolina, the Eunice Waymon Birthplace—the first home of legendary pianist, composer, singer, and Civil Rights Activist Nina Simone (1933-2003)—is a frame dwelling located in an historically working-class African American neighborhood roughly one-half mile northeast of downtown Tryon. Sited atop a low hill, south of a sharp bend in Livingston Street, the circa 1918 dwelling faces northwest toward a large town cemetery of roughly five-and-a-half acres. While largely residential, with houses constructed primarily from the 1920s through the 1960s, the neighborhood that surrounds B.L. Ballenger’s Subdivision, known as the “Historic East Side” includes St. Luke’s C.M.E. Church, Garrison Chapel Baptist Church, and the African American Masonic Lodge. The Eunice Waymon Birthplace is a one-story, weatherboard-clad frame dwelling of vernacular form and construction with no ornament. Capped by a front-gabled roof, the twenty-four-foot by twenty-six-foot house contains only three rooms accessed via a small inset porch. By the early twenty-first century, the house was in a deteriorated state following a period of vacancy when private efforts to save the building saw introduction of a new brick pier foundation, installation of wood replacement windows, installation of a standing-seam metal roof over the original pressed metal shingle roof, and in-kind replacement of some exterior siding and interior wall cladding. Essentially mothballing the house, this work had no negative impact on the historic character of the property, particularly as it embodies the historic

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significance of Nina Simone's early childhood experiences in Tryon. The house retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity to its Period of Significance from 1933 to circa 1947 when Eunice left Tryon to attend school in Asheville.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Eunice Waymon Birthplace, also known as the Nina Simone Birthplace, sits on a .21-acre parcel at the south corner created by a 90-degree turn in East Livingston Street in the heart of Tryon's historically African American neighborhood northeast of the downtown commercial district. The house is located on the northern-most parcel in a seven-parcel subdivision platted in 1912 and later bisected by a short road ending in a cul-de-sac. It is a 2.2-acre island of land between East Livingston Street to the northwest and northeast and Markham Road to the south. Fred Lyle Circle, which originates from a T intersection with the northwest portion of East Living Street and extends to the southeast, terminates in a cul-de-sac, and forms the spine of the subdivision. The parcel on which the Eunice Waymon Birthplace sits is thus bordered by East Livingston Street to the northwest and northeast and Fred Lyle Circle to the southwest. A .21-acre parcel occupied by a house constructed in the 1920s lies immediately southwest. The other houses in the area date predominantly from the 1920s through the 1960s. Across East Livingston Street to the west/northwest of the subject property is a Tryon cemetery accessible from Markham Road. The topography of the neighborhood is characterized by gentle hills and irregular road network that follows the topography and uneven terrain. The Waymon Birthplace parcel features no hardscape features such as walkways or other paving. Neither does it have any ornamental shrubbery. The yard surrounding the house is primarily grassy with a few mature trees, including a magnolia at the north corner of the lot. The yard drops off sharply at the northeast and northwest edges toward Livingston Street. Looking from the front yard to the west, the circa 1968 St. Luke's CME Church building is visible in the next block across Markham Road.

Exterior

The Eunice Waymon Birthplace has undergone some alteration throughout its history. Most recently a 2007 partial rehabilitation was begun but not completed. This project included replacing clapboards in kind, reconstruction of the front porch and stair, restored floor structure (new beams, bricks, piers, and supports), shortening the brick chimney and parging it, and the installation of 5V metal roof over the original metal shingle roof. This project also including installing four-over-one windows and Victorian-era five-panel doors. In 2019, the National Trust for Historic Preservation hosted

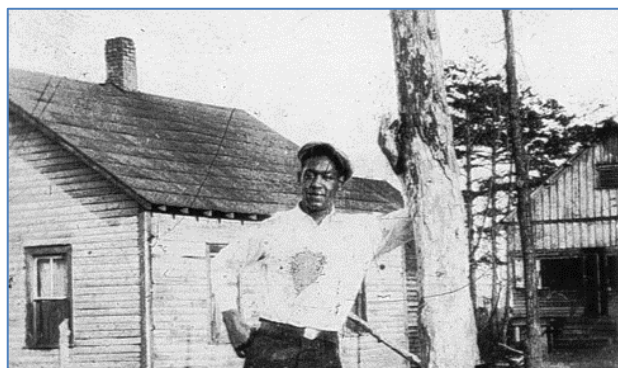


Figure 1: Unidentified relative in front of the former Waymon home (left), circa 1940. Photo courtesy of the Nina Simone Project, Tryon.

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a Hope Crew that completed some projects at the house. Replacing additional wood clapboards in kind with pine clapboard and painting the siding, porch, and porch ceiling.¹

The Eunice Waymon Birthplace is a one-story, wood-frame building set today on a modern, mortared brick pier foundation that replaces the log post foundation depicted in an historic photo dated circa 1940 (Figure 1). Due to the gently sloping grade of the .21-acre property, the house ranges from two feet off the ground at the south corner to four feet off the ground at the north corner, with an exposed crawl space between the piers. The house features wood clapboard siding with square-edged cornerboards and trim and a front-gabled roof with exposed rafter tails and flat fascia boards below the original/historic pressed metal roof that is irregularly covered with modern 5V metal. The house was historically clad in clapboard, and restoration work that occurred circa 2007 replaced deteriorated boards in-kind with like materials salvaged from another property and completed the foundation work. The exterior wood finishes were painted in 2019. All windows contain true-divided-light, four-over-one, double-hung wood replacement sash with wood surrounds and sills of square-edged boards. Figure one shows the windows in 1940 as two-over-one windows. The house faces northwest.

An inset porch that is roughly five feet deep occupies the north half of the façade, or northwest elevation. The wooden porch posts are square with a flat-rail balustrade composed of four evenly spaced horizontal wood boards, with a square-edged handrail. The porch floor is finished with tongue-and-groove boards with a simple flat skirtboard. The porch ceiling is finished with narrow beaded board. The entrance to the porch is slightly north of center on the façade, and the six stairs leading from the yard to the porch are made of wood with two end posts at the bottom. The National Trust for Historic Preservation conducted a project in 2019 that installed a simple wooden handrail for safety and recreated the original stairs which were replaced with poured concrete steps during the second half of the twentieth century. The porch posts and balustrade were replaced during the 2007 rehabilitation effort but are sympathetically designed to be compatible with the character of the historic building. On the interior of the porch, the main entrance to the house is located just north of center and features a replacement single-leaf, five-panel, wood door salvaged from another building in 2007. To the north of the door is a single, four-over-one, single-hung, wood-sash window. The single bay to the south of the porch is pierced by a single, four-over-one, single-hung, wood-sash window that opens into the west/front room (Room 2 on the floorplan). A double-louvered wood attic vent with square-edged surrounds and sill is in the gable peak.²

The inset porch occupies the northern one-third of the northeast elevation. The remaining two thirds of this elevation, which forms the north wall of the main room (Room 1 on the floorplan), is pierced by two, four-over-one, single-hung, wood-sash windows. The southeast elevation, or rear of the dwelling, is marked by a double-louvered wood attic vent with square-edged surrounds and sill in the gable peak. Directly below the vent are two single-leaf, five-panel, wood doors with

¹ Mathews Architecture, P.A., *Nina Simone Childhood Home Exterior Stabilization Recommendations*, Asheville, NC: July 28, 2019, p. 3.

² Tolbert, Tiffany, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Email correspondence with author to confirm changes to house during 2007 and 2019, April 15, 2022.

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square-edged surrounds. The north door opens into the living room, depicted on the accompanying floorplan as Room 1, while the south door opens into the southeast/back bedroom (Room 3). To the south of the doors is a single window opening into the bedroom. Only two, four-over-one, windows pierce the southwest elevation, each of which is centered in its respective bay, with the east window opening into the back bedroom and the west window into the front bedroom (Room 2). A concrete block footing is evident projecting approximately five feet, six inches from the rear corner of the house. It extends parallel with the rear wall approximately ten feet then an additional four feet composed of two courses of concrete block. This is likely the remains of the circa 1940s bathroom addition that was subsequently removed in 2007.

Interior

The interior of the three-room dwelling has original or historic tongue-and-groove wood floorboards and narrow beaded board walls and ceiling throughout. The doorways and windows do not feature interior trim. It appears that the doors, windows, and door and window surrounds were removed during previous renovations. It is also not known what original fabric remained before the 2007 changes.

The front door opens into the living room (Room 1)—the largest room in the house—which may have doubled as a sleeping area. The door opening on the southeast wall of the living room may have accessed a rear porch or the bathroom addition that was removed during the earlier rehabilitation attempt. Doorways on the southwest wall of the living room open into the front and back bedrooms. In the living room, to the left (southeast) of the opening into the front bedroom are two square cuts—roughly one square foot in size—in the beaded board wall cladding. They are aligned vertically and indicate openings into the brick flue exposed within the back bedroom. The first opening is approximately eighteen inches below the ceiling. Here, the thimble in the flue has been removed and the opening in the brick parged over and painted to match the rest of the room. Below it is an extant thimble, with the brick surface smoothly parged around it. Projecting from the thimble is the elbow portion of a stove pipe. Two rooms make up the southwest portion of the house. The brick flue project slightly in the corners of the two southwest rooms. The flue is parged brick in the northeast room and exposed brick with extant thimble in the southeast room. It appears that a portion of the wall was opened between these two rooms and recently covered with plywood.

Integrity Assessment

The Eunice Waymon Birthplace retains integrity of location, setting, and feeling, and sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and association to convey its significance as the birthplace of Eunice Waymon and the property that best embodies her formative years in Tryon and Polk County.

The dwelling remains in its original location in an historically African American neighborhood, with the Tryon Cemetery across East Livingston Street and St. Luke's CME Church in view of the

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property. The house retains a substantial degree of integrity of feeling and association, through its overall character and relationship to its surroundings.

A one-story, one-bay extension was located on the southeast (rear) elevation, but it is believed added after the Waymon family lived in the home and subsequently removed in 2007. The replacement of the windows and loss of some historic materials does not diminish integrity of design, workmanship, or materials. The dwelling's overall design remains intact. The modest one-story building retains its overall form, massing, location and size of openings and other features, interior circulation patterns, and most of its interior finishes. The interior and exterior material changes have mostly been in-kind with like materials that replicate the composition, size, and details of the original. The exception is the windows and doors. The documentary photograph illustrates two-over-one windows and the replacement windows are four-over-one wood sash. It is not known what the original doors were but the extant five-panel doors that were salvaged from another building are typically found in late nineteenth or early twentieth century in North Carolina. This change, though, is nominal and does not detract from the character of the property. Though changes to the design and materials have occurred, integrity is workmanship is not entirely diminished, for some original or historic materials remain intact.

Statement of Archaeological Potential –The Waymon Birthplace is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological deposits, such as subsurface features associated with the house and outbuildings, accumulated domestic debris, planting beds, paths, and drainage features, and other remains which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the property. Information concerning social standing and mobility in Tryon's African American community, the character of daily life during Nina Simone's early years, as well as structural details and use of yard space, can be obtained from the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the property. At this time, no investigation has been done to document these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage – African American

Performing Arts

Period of Significance

1933-1947

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Waymon, Eunice K. a.k.a. Simone, Nina

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Born Eunice Waymon in 1933, Nina Simone is a figure of outstanding historic and cultural significance during the second half of the twentieth century. Her rise to international fame as a musician, composer, singer, and Civil Rights activist was rooted in her early childhood experience in the small town of Tryon, North Carolina, during the Jim Crow era. Humming hymns before she was one, Eunice was playing the organ and considered a musical prodigy by the age of three. She learned rhythm from her gospel roots and became aware that playing the piano gave her power to change the mood of the congregation at a very early age, combined with classical piano training she took those fundamental lessons with her throughout her musical life. Although Eunice was celebrated by both the Black and white community, she and her family were still subjected to racism and discrimination. As an eleven year old during a performance she stopped and refused to play until her parents were moved to the front row instead of the back row. This and other discriminatory experience planted a seed of injustice that stayed with her throughout her life and fed her passion for Civil Rights. While Nina Simone lived and traveled around the world as an adult, her life began and was shaped as a musical prodigy in the town of Tryon, North Carolina. The three-room house at 30 East Livingston Street—where she was born and was first introduced to music and learned to play the organ and piano—embodies her significant experiences as a Black girl of substantial musical talent in a well-regarded, working-class African American family. The Eunice Waymon Birthplace meets Criterion B for eligibility in the National Register of Historic Places, locally significant in the area of African American Ethnic Heritage and Performing Arts for its association with Eunice Waymon’s early life and influence of her experience in Tryon on her later musical career and Civil Rights activism.

Simone’s complex Tryon roots as Eunice Waymon in the Jim Crow Era provided a foundation in musical instruction and racial justice for her later career as a musician and activist during the Civil Rights Movement. As a child growing up the small, affluent resort town, Eunice was afforded many opportunities not available to most African American children in the south, yet still faced racial discrimination. After learning to play gospel music on the piano and organ at her home and at St. Luke C.M.E. Church, Eunice took classical piano lessons from white instructors and was recognized locally for her extraordinary musical talent, but she and her family continued to experience racism and segregation. Both this early musical education and the hardships Eunice faced during her formative years in Tryon directly impacted her rise to prominence as Nina Simone, a world renown pianist, composer, and singer, and Civil Rights Activist. She went on to write and perform music that blended her gospel roots and classical piano training with jazz, blues, folk, and pop music, while becoming a leading voice in the Civil Rights Movement with songs that both highlighted the struggles of African Americans as they sought equity in a racially segregated society and celebrated being Black. The Eunice Waymon Birthplace, also known as Nina Simone’s Birthplace, embodies her early life and experiences in this affluent resort town and is **locally** significant under **criterion B** in the areas of African American Ethnic Heritage and Performing Arts for its association with the artist during her formative years.

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National Register Criterion B states that a birthplace can be eligible for listing if no other property is extant to illustrate the significant person's productive life. In the case of Eunice Waymon aka Nina Simone, she lived in multiple states and countries during her productive life as a musician, composer, and civil rights activist. It could be argued that all the U.S. places may be eligible for listing in the National Register based on their context and due to her far-reaching success. Each of those buildings will have to be assessed within the context of her life and each location. However, there is only one birthplace, it is the house at 30 E. Livingston Street and is the place that the Town of Tryon, State of North Carolina, and National Trust for Historic Preservation recognizes and has chosen to represent and celebrate her childhood.

Since Eunice Waymon was born in the house, the National Register requires that the house also meet Criterion Consideration C as a birthplace. National Register Bulletin 15, page 13 states, "A birthplace of a historical figure is eligible if the person is of outstanding importance and there is no other appropriate site or building associated with his or her productive life." The house at 30 East Livingston Street meets Criterion Consideration C because there are no other appropriate sites or buildings in Tryon, North Carolina, that are more closely associated to her productive life. In addition to the place of her birth, it is the building most directly associated with the uniquely complex childhood and young life of Eunice Waymon, in Tryon, North Carolina. Eunice's parents, John D., and Mary Kate Waymon did not own property while they raised their children in western North Carolina during the 1920s, 30s and 40s. They, like many African American families of the time across western North Carolina, moved frequently and rented their homes. While the family lived in several homes in Tryon and nearby Lynn, all have been either lost, altered, or the association or timeline is not clear. During her productive life, Nina Simone lived in multiple locations both nationally and internationally. The house at 30 E. Livingston is eligible for the National Register at the local level as it embodies her early life, community prodigy, challenges and triumphs of being "young, gifted, and Black" in Tryon, North Carolina. This is the only property that tells that story of Eunice Waymon known as Nina Simone.

The Period of Significance for the property is 1933 to 1947, encompassing the period beginning in the year of Eunice's birth to the year that she left Tryon to attend the Allen School in Asheville, North Carolina. The house retains a high degree of integrity regarding location, setting, association, feeling, and sufficient integrity of design, workmanship, and materials to convey its significance under Criterion B during the time that Eunice Waymon was born and lived in the home.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

African American Ethnic Heritage and Performing Arts Context

African American Life in Tryon, North Carolina

Tryon, located in Polk County, North Carolina, is a small community in the western North Carolina foothills near the South Carolina border. A post office was established here on the Howard Gap

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Road in 1839 and was named Tryon. At that time, the community consisted of farmers and homesteaders. As with most of the south, the railroad would prove pivotal in the establishment of commerce in western North Carolina and Tryon. Although the railroad had been the topic of conversation for decades, it finally arrived in by way of the Asheville-Spartanburg Railway Company in 1877. Tryon became a destination for those seeking a temperate climate to ease the effects of tuberculosis not long after the railroad was established. Asheville, located forty miles west, had long been the home of tuberculosis sanitoriums but the weather could be unpredictable in the Blue Ridge Mountains and Tryon, located in a thermal belt with mostly temperate climate, became a viable alternative for visitors.³

Tryon was incorporated in 1885 and the town laid out in a half-mile perimeter around the train depot. The main commercial street is Trade Street which runs loosely parallel with the railroad tracks. Pacolet Street is perpendicular to Main Street, intersecting near the depot. Outside of the downtown commercial core, most of the streets follow the rolling, hilly Piedmont topography rather than a standard grid pattern found in many North Carolina towns. This layout is also due in part to the organic development of the town over time, particularly outside the upper-middle-class neighborhoods of the late 1800s and early 1900s.⁴

By the publication of the *1890 Branson's Business Directory* the population of Polk County was 5,063 with 3,920 being white and 1,143 being African American. There were two African American churches listed in the directory; Nelson's Chapel in Mill Spring (nine miles from Tryon) and St. Paul's in Columbus (five miles from Tryon). St. Paul's was a Methodist Church and is known as the "Mother Church" of St. Luke's C.M.E. Church later established in Tryon. In 1890, there were no African American churches listed in Tryon. Other listings in the directory indicate the area was ideal for tourists including a few boarding houses, Ballenger and Turner Boarding Houses were in Tryon and two other boarding houses, Halbert and Pace, in nearby Lynn, a community between Tryon and Columbus. Three hotels were in the county, two in Columbus and the well-established McAboy House in Lynn.⁵

African American life in Tryon at the turn of the twentieth century was like other towns and cities in North Carolina and the south. In the late 19th century, an African American neighborhood formed in east Tryon along Markham Road. This neighborhood remains but there was not a "white" section" and "Black" section as the town developed during the early twentieth century. There were white and Black businesses on Trade Street and white and Black households throughout the town. According to Nadine Cohodas, "rather the two races lived near each other in

³ D. William Bennett, ed., Polk County, North Carolina History, Polk County Historical Association. (Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company Publishers, 1999), p. 75.

⁴ Ibid, p. 75-77.

⁵ Branson, Levi, Branson's North Carolina Business Directory. Raleigh, NC: 1890, p. 537-538.

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checkerboard clusters, an arrangement that fostered, depending on one's viewpoint, an inchoate integration or imperfect segregation.”⁶

Regardless of denomination, the church played a key role in the establishment and growth of the African American community in Tryon and Polk County. The earliest church, not listed in Branson's Directory, located near Tryon was Garrison Chapel Baptist established in 1877 on Highway 108 (Lynn Road), near McFarland Road. In 1925, Garrison Chapel moved to its current location on Markham Road. The second African American Church was closer to Columbus, St. Paul's Methodist Church. Membership at St. Paul's began to wane after the turn of the century and the church built a log structure closer to Tryon at a site known as Huckleberry Hill. Ralph Erskine, a local white businessman, made a deal with the church to acquire their land at Huckleberry Hill. In exchange, he agreed to build a new church and parsonage nearby between Tryon and Lynn on Wilderness Road. The congregation continued to grow at Wilderness Road and the membership chose to move closer to Tryon. At around the same time, an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church building on Markham Road became available.⁷ The Methodist Church moved into the frame, Gothic Revival-style AME building, and St. Luke's CME Church in Tryon was born. The location of both Garrison Chapel and St. Luke's on Markham Road is significant as these churches were the center of African American life in Tryon.⁸

In 1912, engineer, W.E. Strong drew a plat map for B.L. Ballenger's Subdivision on Cleveland Road in the eastern part of Tryon and in the heart of African American neighborhood along Markham Road. The small, wedge-shaped subdivision consisted of twenty-two lots framed by Cleveland Road. Many lots on the map have names scribbled on them including Minnie Johnson on Lot 3, Miller King on Lot 4, and Fred Lyles on both Lots 8 and 9. The name "Littlejohn" is handwritten on Lot Number 7, the lot that is now known as 30 E. Livingston Street. The Polk County Deed records show that Lot 7 was sold to Will and Bertha Littlejohn on September 18, 1918, for \$775.00.⁹

⁶ Bishir, Catherine M., et. al. A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC: 1999, p. 190; Cohodas, Nadine. Princess Noire: The Tumultuous Reign of Nina Simone. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC: 2010, p 9.

⁷ The road names have changed over time so that Markham is now the main road connecting this area but historically parts of it was Cleveland Road as well as Markham.

⁸ D. William Bennett, ed., Polk County, North Carolina History, p. 108; St. Luke Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Anniversary Booklet, p.1-2

⁹ Strong, W. E. Plat of Ballenger's Subdivision on Cleveland Road, 1912; U.S. Federal Census, 1930. The 1930 Census shows Minnie Johnson, Miller King and Fred Lyles all living on Cleveland Road. They are all African American and all own their property. Fred Lyles, a waiter in a dining car, his wife Blanche is a clerk at their grocery store, and they have four children. They have property valued at \$1,000, substantially higher than the neighbors. The Lyle's name is on lots 8 and 9 on the original plat and it is likely that this was a house and store. The 1930 U.S. Census also tells us that Minnie Johnson is divorced and the head of her household with her thirteen-year-old son. She is a cook in a private home and her property is valued at \$100. The King family is next door to Minnie Johnson. Miller King is a laborer at a

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A notice of foreclosure appeared in the *Polk County News* on November 11, 1921. B.L. Ballenger was listed as the Mortgagee and the Bertha and Will Littlejohn had defaulted on their loan. Subsequent newspapers did not provide additional information on the sale. In 1920, the Littlejohn's were listed as African American in Tryon living on Cleveland Road, across from the King's, with eight children.¹⁰ The census records also provide that they owned their home without a mortgage. Therefore, it is possible that they had taken a second mortgage or loan and used the house as collateral which would explain why it was being foreclosed on in 1921. The 1930 census shows that the house was being rented by an African American widow named Patterson Hagen. She was a cook at a restaurant and paid \$8 per month rent. The small, gable-front frame structure that is now at 30 E. Livingston, formerly Lot 7, is a typical gable-front house form constructed between 1910 and 1940 in North Carolina and was built between 1912 and 1920. For the purposes of National Register nomination, the circa 1920 date is being used based on the 1920 census showing the original owners, the Littlejohn family lived in the house.¹¹

Although Tryon was considered progressive by North Carolina standards due to the number of northern transplants, artists, and musicians within the Town's white population, they could not escape the laws of the Jim Crow south. Although less stringent than in many towns and cities, segregation existed in Tryon as it did everywhere in North Carolina and South Carolina. White children went to white schools and Black children went to Black schools, churches were segregated, and businesses were segregated but both Black and white businesses co-existed on Trade Street.¹²

Tryon's patterns of segregation were inconsistent. Some neighborhoods reflected an intermingling of Black and white residents while others were strictly segregated. Even though there were pockets of both races co-existing in the town, there were also separate areas specifically for either race. One company in Tryon was promoting the housing market during the post-Depression by targeting African Americans to buy in an African American neighborhood. The advertisement appeared in *Polk County News* on December 9, 1937, from the Ballenger Company and stated:

ATTENTION: COLORED PEOPLE!

Everyone should own a home, if possible. You are apt to take more interest in your community!

lumber yard, he lives with his wife, Alma and four-year old daughter Ruth, their property is valued at \$200; Bryan, Chris, et.al. *Childhood Home of Nina Simone*, Initial Opportunities Assessment, University of Maryland, 2017, p. 9.

¹⁰ Though no documentation yet substantiates a construction date for the house at 30 East Livingston Street, given the size of the dwelling and its construction features, along with the facts that the Littlejohn family acquired the property in September 1918 and were living on the property in 1920, it is reasonable to conclude that the house was completed in late 1918.

¹¹ *Polk County News*, Columbus, North Carolina, November 11, 1921; US Federal Census for Tryon, Polk County, North Carolina, 1920.

¹² Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary. *I Put a Spell on You*. Hachette Books: New York, NY, 2003, p. 4. Cohodas, Nadine, p.9.

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We have ONE HUNDRED LOTS in the colored neighborhood to be sold on a basis of \$1 per week. NO INTEREST!!!

Also, our good houses to be sold at a bargain.

The Ballenger Co., Tryon, NC

Another listing in *The Tryon Daily Bulletin* on March 12, 1929, stated that “W.I. Gaines sold a lot in the colored subdivision to a negro named Ziegler,” indicating that there were areas where whites and Black people lived next to each other but there were also segregated neighborhoods and it was openly acknowledged.¹³

Tryon’s African American community shared similar but separate and not equal experiences to the white community. The *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, known as the “world’s smallest daily newspaper,” was established in 1928 by the printer of the *Polk County News*, Seth M. Vining. Most of the news covered in the *Bulletin* from the late 1920s through the 1940s is focused on the white population of Tryon, however, it does include some news and events of the African American community. Issues from the 1930s and 1940s share a glimpse of African American life under the heading of “Colored News.” In one example from 1929, the paper reported that a new baseball field, to be called Riverside Park, would be constructed near Leonard’s Store in the valley for use by the negro baseball team.¹⁴ Later, following the late-1920s grant-funded construction of a recreation facility for white residents called Harmon Field, Tryon citizens provided for a recreation center called Laurel Park for Black citizens. It was erected with funds raised by residents of both races. The facility finally opened in 1940, more than ten years after the dedication of Harmon Field. The following year, a concrete block building including assembly room, library, kitchen, office, and bathrooms was constructed for the site and called Roseland Community House.¹⁵

Although there were opportunities for the African American community, inequity between the races was evident within the newspaper pages. In one example an article entitled “A Plea” points out that there are twenty busses for Polk County’s white school children and lays out the case for funding assistance for the African American Parents Teachers Association (PTA) to acquire a single bus for the rest of the year. In another example, an article of April 6, 1940, states that balcony seats at the local theater will be made available for “colored” patrons for the 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm shows of “Gone with the Wind.” The most extreme result of frustration caused by the inequity is recorded by the actions of the Tryon Colored School principal who, after years of asking for school repairs and maintenance and a new school, was reduced to hiring two people to burn the school down.¹⁶

¹³ *Polk County News*, December 9, 1937; *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, March 12, 1929; *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, January 16, 1937.

¹⁴ D. William Bennett, ed., *Polk County, North Carolina History*, p. 77, the author believes that Leonard’s Store is in the valley near today’s Harmon Field. *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, March 22, 1929.

¹⁵ *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, March 21, 1935; July 3, 1940, July 11, 1940; D. William Bennett, ed., *Polk County, North Carolina History*, p.90.

¹⁶ *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, January 16, 1937; *The Tryon Daily Bulletin*, April 6, 1940.

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The pages of the *Tryon Daily Bulletin* illustrate Christmas as the time when the entire community is united for events to celebrate the season. For example, on Christmas Eve 1941, the “Bulletin” announced Community Singing from 8:00 – 9:00 at the park near the Depot. The Town Christmas Tree would be illuminated, white and Black, old, and young would be present. The choir set to perform was composed of members from St. Luke’s and Garrison Chapel, as well as other churches, civic organizations, Boy Scout and Girl Scouts and the Tryon High School Glee Club. Another example during Christmas is the annual “Christmas Tree” party for the African American children. Members of the white community raised money by requesting donations in the 1939, 1940, and 1941 “Bulletin”.¹⁷

Two events reported in 1944 illustrate unity and advancement in the Tryon Community. In November, the Charter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) would be unveiled at St. Luke’s CME Church. Two months earlier on August 11, 1944, there was an announcement for “Special Services at Methodist Church Here on Sunday”. The event was hosted at the Tryon Methodist Church, but the singing was going to be led by the choir of St. Luke’s Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. The article continues,

The white Methodists and Colored Methodists have cooperated with each other since the formation of the colored church in 1870. Although meeting in separate churches the leaders have always sought to promote good will and through the years have cooperated on certain projects. The offering Sunday night will go to the support of Payne College, an institution of higher learning for Negroes at Augusta, GA.¹⁸

Into this segregated community moved John D. and Mary Kate Waymon and their small family during the 1920s.

Eunice’s Life and Musical Education in Tryon

John Divine (J.D.) Waymon and Mary Kate (Kate) Irwin were married in South Carolina in 1920. The couple lived in Pendleton, SC, with John’s mother, for a little while before settling in Mary Kate’s hometown, Inman, SC. John was a musician but took a job in a dry-cleaning plant to support his young family. John was a talented man both as a musician and in business, he was a pragmatist with a good sense for business and enterprise. Tryon, NC is less than twenty miles from Inman, SC. It is not clear when J.D. and Kate Waymon first arrived in Tryon, but John began serving St. Luke’s Church in 1927, according to the commemorative Anniversary Bulletin for the church compiled in 1987. Local sources indicate that the Waymon’s first house in Tryon was at 230 Depot

¹⁷ Tryon Daily Bulletin, December 24, 1941.

¹⁸ Tryon Daily Bulletin, August 11, 1944.

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Street. ¹⁹ A newspaper advertisement for John D. Waymon's, "dry cleaning and pressing services" in the March 7, 1929, issue of the *Tryon Daily Bulletin* further substantiates this timeline. ²⁰

The 1930 U.S. Census lists John D. Waymon, a Dry Cleaner, and his wife, Mary K. and their five children (John, male age 8; Lucille, female age 7; Harold, male age 4; Carol, male age 4; Dorothy, female age 1) living on Howard Street and paying \$8 per month in rent. The census also provides that both Waymon's and their four oldest children were born in South Carolina. Dorothy is the only child listed as born in North Carolina by 1930 further substantiating that the family moved to Tryon around 1927 after Harold's birth. By April 1931, fire had destroyed the Howard Street house and the family moved to a three-room frame house on East Livingston Street. The house, constructed in 1920, occupied a lot created in 1912 by B.L. Ballenger, who subdivided his property on Cleveland Road in the heart of Tryon's African American neighborhood on Markham Road. The small, wedge-shaped subdivision consisted of twenty-two lots framed by Cleveland Road. ²¹

An advertisement for personal services in the *Tryon Daily Bulletin* on April 17, 1931, supports the timeline, "Hair washed, scalp treatments, Dreamland System, Wednesday, and Friday of each week. Kate Waymon, Cemetery Hill, Prices Reasonable." ²² The Livingston Street house is surrounded by a large yard for a garden and for playing. It was also within sight and less than a block from St. Luke's CME at the intersection of Markham Street and East Livingston Street. This location enabled the family to continue and enhance their involvement in the church. On the morning of February 20, 1933, Eunice, the sixth of the Waymon's eight children, was born in the house at 30 East Livingston Street. Her birth certificate states that she was born at home at 6:00 am, no address listed, with midwife, Lucinda Suber. Her father's occupation is a barber, and her mother is a housekeeper. ²³

¹⁹ The house at 230 Depot Street is extant on a 4-acre lot at the end of Depot Street. It is a frame, gable-front, one-story house with a basement and attached front porch.

²⁰ Cohodas, Nadine, p. 7. St. Luke's CME Church Anniversary Bulletin 1987. Email correspondence between the author and Annie L. McDonald, Preservation Specialist, NCDRCR, on June 18, 2018, regarding Waymon Family Residences and timeline. *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, March 7, 1929.

²¹ U.S. Federal Census, 1930; Strong, W. E. Plat of Ballenger's Subdivision on Cleveland Road, 1912.

²² East Livingston Street is on a hill overlooking the town cemetery substantiating the location described in the newspaper advertisement.

²³ US Federal Census, Tryon, Polk County, North Carolina, 1930; Cohodas, Nadine, p. 19; Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary, p. 16; Cohodas, Nadine, p. 15; Polk County Certificate of Birth, Polk County Register of Deeds Office, Columbus, Polk County, NC.

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When the Waymon's moved to Tryon, J.D. opened his own business named "Waymon's Pressing Club." J.D. Waymon was the proprietor, and also had a phone indicating a degree of success. Advertisements for the business were found in the *Tryon Daily Bulletin* from 1929 to 1931.



Figure 2: Former St. Luke's C.M.E. Church on Markham Road. Photo courtesy of the Nina Simone Project, Tryon.

Located on the Town's main street, Trade Street, J.D. offered Dry Cleaning, Pressing, custom tailoring and delivery. His ingenuity and determination paid off. He began a barber business in the shop's spare room. It was not long before he had to hire another barber to help him with the business. Both J.D. and Kate were musically talented. J. D. knew how to play several instruments including harmonica, guitar, and banjo. Kate played organ and piano. Both could sing. J.D. sang in a quartet known as "The Simpson Quartet" along with Bossy Lee Simpson. The Waymon's were active members of St. Luke C.M.E. Church (Figure 2). Mary Kate was an ordained minister and both she and her husband served as Deacons.²⁴

Eunice's musical ability was identified early in her young life. Eunice's mother, Kate, stated that when she was eight months old Eunice was able to hum two hymns, "Down by the Riverside" and "Jesus Loves Me." Music was part of life for the Waymon's, but Kate was firm that music should be based on the church and not "real" music. All the children attended church at St. Luke's, and parishioners commented that Eunice as a baby clapped in time to the music. Before she was three, the family knew she was a prodigy as she could already play "God Be with You till We Meet Again" on the organ. By the age of four, Eunice was accompanying her mother when she ministered throughout the surrounding community. Eunice, dressed in her Sunday best, would open the events by playing the piano. Eunice's musical ability and early identification as a prodigy coincides with her early years when the family was living at 30 E. Livingston Street.²⁵

Nina echoes these early experiences in her autobiography, *I Put A Spell On You*, where she says that music was part of every aspect of her life. When she was two and a half, she played "God Be with You 'Til We Meet Again," on the organ in their home. A year later at the age of three- and one-half years old, even though her feet couldn't reach the piano pedals, she was playing at churches where her mother was visiting as a guest preacher. She states of her mother, "She knew what a sensation her tiny girl caused with congregations that had never seen me play before, and it was a good way of catching people's attention before she started preaching." Eunice was the regular pianist at her home church by the time she was six years old.²⁶ Also in her autobiography,

²⁴ Cohodas, Nadine, pp. 6-7, p. 12.

²⁵ Ibid, p.16-17

²⁶ Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary, *I Put A Spell On You*, Hachette Books, New York, NY: 2020, p.14-15. Ibid, page 16. Ibid, page 17.

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she credits church for teaching her rhythm, and especially appreciated the Holiness church music for its rhythm, saying, “The music that went along with it (Holiness Services) had an incredible rhythm, it sounded like it came straight out of Africa, and I took to going to the Holiness services every week just to get that beat.”²⁷ Her later work was often described as a blending of her classical training and ability to improvise that set her apart especially on stage. She said:

[G]ospel taught me about improvisation, how to shape music in response to an audience and then how to shape the mood of the audience in response to my music. When I played I could take a congregation where I wanted – calm them down or lift them up until they became completely lost in the music and atmosphere. Of course God, the church and His ministers provided the spiritual inspiration, but the music was part of it too. At that time I learned valuable lessons in musical technique that had nothing to do with all the classical training that was to come. Over the years those lessons slipped into my blood and became part of me. A time would come when I would start to look for my own musical voice, and the lessons I learned from gospel music would help me find it.²⁸

It is estimated that the family moved from E. Livingston Street either late in 1937 or early in 1938, around the time that Eunice turned five years old.²⁹ J.D. had suffered an illness that prohibited him for working for an extended time and the family was forced to move to a smaller house nearby. Young Eunice (Figure 3) tended to her father during this illness as she was the only child not in school and old enough to do the work. A fire destroyed that house within a year and, though the house was destroyed, the family and the pump organ were saved. Good Shepherd Episcopal Church provided shelter for the family for a brief time and then they moved to the nearby community of Lynn. The Waymon’s welcomed baby Frances Lucinda on April 9, 1941, her birth certificate lists Lynn as the family’s place of residence. Three years later Samuel was born on August 15, 1944, and the family is listed living in Tryon. When



Figure 3: Eunice Waymon, aged 8, sitting atop the retaining wall bordering the cemetery. Photo courtesy of the Nina Simone Project, Tryon.

²⁷ Ibid, page 17.

²⁸ Ibid, page 19.

²⁹ The 1940 Census record for the Waymon family includes seven-year-old Eunice. The census taker did not include an associated street on the 1940 census. However, there is a question on the census regarding where the person lived on April 1, 1935, the optional responses were “same house” or “same place”. The Waymon’s responded that they lived in the “same place.” This meaning they lived in the same town but not the same house. Which tells us they had moved again between 1935 and 1940.

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the family returned to Tryon between 1941 and 1944, they lived at 260 Jackson Street (no longer extant), close to the house at 30 E. Livingston Street.³⁰

In the biography, Princess Noire: The Tumultuous Reign of Nina Simone, the family moved from East Livingston Street around 1937 to a smaller house about one-half mile to the north. This residency was very short-lived as fire again took the Waymon Home and they were forced to move quickly. Under the “Curb Reporter” section of the *Tryon Daily Bulletin* on June 28, 1937, John Waymon thanked everyone who had helped since the family lost their house to fire and asked for an ice box and some chairs.³¹

Throughout the turmoil of moving and losing a home, the Waymon’s remained active in the community. The December 1, 1937, edition of *The Tryon Daily Bulletin*, we learn that there is an African American Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and Eunice’s father, John serves on the ground’s beautification committee. The Waymon’s eldest son, John I., is listed receiving Boy Scout honors in 1937 for carpentry and hiking while Carrol was promoted to first class rank in 1939. Monetary contributions to the community are also captured as in an article with the headline, “Colored Citizens Donate Generously to Hospital” include the name of Kate Waymon on the list of many who contributed to an overall donation of \$80 to St. Luke’s Hospital.³²

In the late 1930s, Mary Kate, took a job as a maid for Mrs. George B. Miller (Katharine) in the affluent Gillette Woods neighborhood in Tryon. Mr. Miller, a printer, from Rochester, New York died 1938. His widow Katharine remained in Tryon after his death. Kate had spoken to Ms. Miller about Eunice’s ability on the piano. At some point Mrs. Miller heard Eunice for herself, likely when she played with Lucille and Dorothy as the Waymon Sisters. It was Katharine Miller who offered to pay for Eunice’s piano lessons with Muriel Mazzanovich, who also lived in Gillette Woods. Muriel Mazzanovich was from England and married to Larry Mazzanovich, a celebrated artist in Tryon.³³

In the 1940 Federal Census for Tryon, John is still listed as a Dry Cleaner, his wife Mary Kate is a maid in a private home, and their oldest son, John I., is working as a laborer for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The African American community and relationships expanded beyond the boundaries of Tryon. One example in the paper on November 25, 1940, “Rev. Katie Waymon of Tryon will deliver the sermon.” This sermon was to be held at the Stoney Hill Library, Librarian Della H. Davenport is the contact, and the event is open to the public. Stoney Hill, located in Mill Spring, is approximately eight miles northwest from Tryon in Polk County.³⁴

³⁰ Cohodas, Nadine, p. 21; Polk County Birth Certificates, Polk County Register of Deeds Office, Columbus, NC.

³¹ US Federal Census, Tryon, Polk County, NC 1940; Cohodas, Nadine, p. 21.

³² Tryon Daily Bulletin, Tryon, NC, December 1, 1937; Cohodas, Nadine, p. 21; Tryon Daily Bulletin, May 9, 1944.

³³ Cohodas, Nadine, p. 31.

³⁴ U.S. Federal Census, Tryon, NC, 1940; Tryon Daily Bulletin, Tryon, NC, November 25, 1940.

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Although there were separate schools for white and Black children, the accomplishments of all children were captured in the *Tryon Daily Bulletin*. The Waymon children and their achievements were lauded in the newspaper pages. On February 8th and March 18, 1941, the honor roll for the Tryon Colored School reported that Eunice was on the roll for the second grade; Dorothy for the sixth grade; and Carrol for the ninth grade. The two youngest Waymon children were born in the 1940s. Frances Lucinda arrived on April 9, 1941. She was born at the home of Alma Fant in Tryon, but the family's home is listed as Lynn, NC. John is listed as a Presser at a Dry-Cleaning Plant and Kate is listed as housewife. The baby of the family was born three years later August 15, 1944. Samuel's birth certificate provides that he was born at St. Luke's Hospital. The family is living in Tryon, John is listed as a handyman and Kate is a housewife ³⁵

Eunice's childhood in Tryon was complicated and shaped her future as a musician and civil rights activist. Newspaper clippings in the *Tryon Daily Bulletin* from the 1940s suggest Eunice Waymon's status as a locally celebrated pianist, even as a young girl, but her status as an African American in a wealthy southern resort town caused conflict. Mrs. Miller, and other white patrons, provided financial support for her musical studies. She was afforded the opportunity to take piano lessons from an affluent white woman named Muriel Mazzanovich, but she was subject to the same racial divide as other African Americans in the Jim Crow-era south. Eunice walked through town to Mrs. Mazzanovich's (Eunice called her Miss Mazzy) house for her lessons. Sometimes she stopped at Owen's pharmacy for a sandwich, and she would have to eat her sandwich outside because Black people were not allowed to eat inside with the white customers. Another family experience is offered when Eunice's brother Carrol was nine years old and was refused the opportunity to check a book out from the local library. The Lanier Library, established in 1889 serving as the cultural center of Tryon from the last decades of the nineteenth century, throughout most of the twentieth century and continues to operate today, may have been the library in Carrol's experience. He wrote this poem to express his disappointment:

They said the library was for everybody,
I thought that meant me, too – I was a body-
It was the Tryon town Public Library –
I lived in Tryon town, too – I was a public –
They said they wanted all the kids to come
I thought that meant me, too – I was a kid –
Cause I didn't know what they meant when
They told me what they said....³⁶

This is likely one of many instances of racial discrimination the Waymon children experienced, growing up in Tryon. One story told throughout her lifetime is of Eunice's piano recital in Tryon when she was eleven years old where her parents were ushered from their front row seats to the back of the audience to make room for a white couple. According to the anecdote, Eunice refused to play until her parents could return to the front. There are two different locations associated with

³⁵ *Tryon Daily Bulletin*. February 8, 1941, and March 18, 1941; Polk County Birth Certificates, Polk County Register of Deeds Office, Columbus, NC.

³⁶ Cohodas, Nadine. 10.

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this incident, one names the location as Town Hall and the other is the Lanier Library. In her autobiography, Nina recounts the event at the “Town Hall” and that her parents were embarrassed. This event was a turning point for Eunice and her understanding of discrimination. She says in her autobiography,

All of a sudden it seemed a different world, and nothing was easy anymore. I really had thought that all white people were like Miz Massy and Mrs. Miller, All kind and elegant, all polite. I had not reason to think otherwise: they were the only white people I had ever talked to for any length of time. But now prejudice had been made real for me and it was like switching on a light.”³⁷

Eunice would have been eleven in 1944 but an advertisement for Eunice playing a recital in 1944 was not found in *The Tryon Daily Bulletin*. It is possible that the event did take place in 1944 at the Town Hall or Tryon Theater or even the Lanier Library but not advertised in the local newspaper. The only listing found during the research for this nomination is for Eunice Waymon playing at the Lanier Library was in the *Tryon Daily Bulletin* on July 27, 1949. The concert was open to the public and planned for Sunday at 4:00 pm featuring compositions by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, Shubert, and Debussy. At that time Eunice was between her junior and senior years at the Allen School. She may have come back to play for her sponsors to show her progress and accept donations for her continued education. These types of events were not unusual in the south, but for a young African American girl who had a white benefactor and white piano teacher, but experienced discrimination from other white people, these experiences were foundational for young Eunice.³⁸

Tryon Properties Associated with the Childhood of Eunice Waymon

The Waymon family lived in several properties during Eunice Waymon’s young life in Tryon which warrant contextual evaluation. The house at 30 E Livingston is the birthplace and therefore the first house to consider for its association Eunice’s young life. The home of Muriel Mazzanovich, Eunice’s piano teacher was located at 222 Glengarnock Road in Gillette Woods. The home is extant but has been substantially altered and is no longer recognizable as the Mazzanovich home. The Waymon family lived at several different locations including at 20 Elm Street. The one-story, three-bay, gable-front house with attached hip-roof Craftsman-style porch is extant. It has received minor alterations to include a rear/side addition and vinyl siding. The date of the Waymon’s residency here is unknown. However, it is believed to be the second to the last place the family lived before moving to Philadelphia. Therefore, it is possible that Eunice was living in Asheville attending the Allen School and did not actually live in this home. The same is true for 260 Jackson Street the last home the family lived in before moving out of state, but this home is no longer extant. The 1950 Federal Census for Tryon, NC lists John D. Waymon as the

³⁷ Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary, 26.

³⁸ Cohodas, Nadine, p. 31; Ibid, p. 10; (Cohodas states the Lanier Library was the location while the Auto Biography and You Put a Spell on Me state that Town Hall was the location); Tryon Daily Bulletin, “Piano Recital by Eunice Waymon at Lanier Library”, July 27, 1949

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head of household, living with his wife, Mary Kate, son Harold, daughter Frances, son Samuel, daughter Lucille Waddell and three grandchildren. The address is described by the census taker as “Cemetery Street turn right just beyond Kings Store joining Howard Street”. Today’s Jackson Street borders a cemetery and is in the vicinity of Howard Street. Eunice is not listed in the Waymon’s residence in 1950. She was not located in the 1950 census, possibly because she was a student at the Allen School.³⁹ The house at 260 Jackson Street today was constructed in 1969 and therefore would not be associated with the Waymons. The Lanier Library is believed associated with an unfortunate incident that impacted Eunice’s view of her world in Tryon. It also illustrates her experience with receiving professional piano lessons and the receipt of white philanthropy that influenced her education. The library building has also been altered since 1944. Eunice’s childhood was centered around St. Luke’s CME Church. The family was completely involved in the activities of the church. The church is extant standing at the same location that it stood when Eunice and the Waymon family were in attendance, however, the old frame Gothic Revival-style building was replaced in 1967 by a mid-century modern church building and therefore is not eligible for its association from 1933 to 1947. Therefore, the house at 30 E. Livingston Street meets Criterion Consideration B as the building most strongly associated with the young life of Eunice Waymon, also known as Nina Simone in Tryon, North Carolina. The experiences she encountered while growing up in this affluent southern town are evident in her later life as a person of outstanding significance.

Eunice’s Education at Asheville’s Allen Home School

When it was time for Eunice to advance to high school another opportunity found its way to her. It is likely that Ms. Mazzy suggested she be allowed to attend the Allen School in Asheville for High School to continue to nurture her talents. The Allen School was founded as a small private school by Dr. and Mrs. L.M. Pease of New York City. The Pease’s had come to western North Carolina as missionaries and started the school as a reaction to the lack of opportunity afforded young African American girls in western North Carolina. In 1887, they donated the property to the Women’s Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It began as an elementary school and by 1924 expanded to include a high school with three buildings and in 1934 the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction accredited the school. By 1942, the school continued to grow and rented a house located at 9 Furman Avenue (no longer extant), just blocks from the main campus, to house two teachers and eleven high school girls.⁴⁰

³⁹ U.S. Federal Census, Tryon, NC, 1950.

⁴⁰ Asheville Citizen-Times, “Allen School will Observe 55th Birthday”, November 21, 1942.

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In September of 1947, at the age of fourteen, Eunice Waymon began her studies at the prestigious Allen Home School. Her home address on her report card is listed as PO Box 703, Tryon, North Carolina. This mailing address is associated with the Waymon's throughout their time in or near Tryon. The three key women in her life, her mother, Miz Mazzy, and Mrs. Miller, were in favor of her attending the Allen School. "So Miz Mazzy wanted me to have the best music tuition possible, Momma wanted me to receive the social training a black pioneer would need in order not to let down her race, and Mrs. Miller wanted me to have a normal life that offered a chance of person happiness. The answer they decided on was fifty miles from Tryon in Asheville: the Allen High School for girls."⁴¹



Figure 4: Eunice Waymon, aged 16, at the Allen Home School in Asheville.

Although her parents could not afford to send her away to school, it is likely that they gave their consent, and that Katherine Miller and Esther Moore paid her tuition. She lived in the main dormitory at the school, sharing a room with two roommates. There she continued to study piano and woke up early to practice in the auditorium before breakfast began at 7:00 AM. The school staff became quickly aware that Eunice was more advanced than the school could offer for her music. Mrs. Mazzanovich arranged private lessons with a local internationally known pianist named Grace Carroll. Mrs. Carroll was the wife of local psychiatrist Dr. Robert S. Carroll. Dr. Carroll's Sanatorium known as Highland Hospital was located, in the Montford Area of Asheville, north of downtown. The Carroll's home, known as "Homewood," was located at 19 Zillicoa Street (extant and contributing to the Montford Area Historic District, NR 1977). Mrs. Grace Potter Carroll operated a music school from their home, teaching lessons, and holding concerts.⁴²

In addition to Mrs. Carroll, Eunice was taking lessons from a pianist named Clemens Sandresky. A native of Buffalo, New York, Sandresky came to Asheville in 1947. The earliest article relating to Sandresky in Asheville is dated that year announcing that he would be playing a concert at "Homewood" on Zirconia Street in Asheville sponsored by the Philomousos Music Society of Asheville-Biltmore College.⁴³

⁴¹ Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary, p. 32.

⁴² Cohodas, Nadine, p. 42-43; National Park Service, Highland House, National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/asheville/hig.htm>;

⁴³ Eldridge, Ron. For Seniors Only, "Clemens Sandresky: An Inspirational Force Behind Eunice Waymon aka Nina Simone, and Her Musical Journey" May 3, 2016. Asheville Citizen Times, December 2, 1947.

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Clemens Sandresky was born on May 30, 1916, the youngest of three sons born to German Lutheran Ministers who had immigrated from Brazil, South America to New York in the 1890s. Clemens received his A.B. degree in Music with honors from Dartmouth College. He continued his education pursuing his Master's in music from Harvard University. He studied under Dr. Oswald Jonas, a German scholar and expert in the Schenkerian Analysis method of understanding music. Although his study at Harvard was interrupted by four years of service in the Army during World War II, he completed his graduate degree in 1952. He came to Asheville after the war, around 1947, and set up a small studio to teach lessons. While in Asheville he also worked at All Soul's Episcopal Church in Biltmore Village as Organist and Choir Director. In nearby Brevard in Transylvania County, he taught and was a piano soloist at the Transylvania Music Camp. He lived in Weaverville for a time and had a music studio on the second floor of the Smith Building at 1 ½ Biltmore Avenue and later lived in and had his studio in Apartment 1 at Albemarle Park. In 1952, he left Asheville for Winston-Salem and became the Dean of Music at Salem College, a post he maintained for the rest of his career.⁴⁴

Eunice took lessons from Sandresky during her time at the Allen School in Asheville. In an article about Sandresky, it states that he held her recital in his small apartment. Sandresky also recommended Eunice go to Julliard School of Music. Eunice's talent was not limited to the piano, she was an excellent student and involved in many school activities. She served as the president of the eleventh grade, president of the dramatics class, Treasurer of the Allen School Chapter of the NAACP, and accompanied the Glee Club at their performances within the community. During her junior year with the NAACP, she helped organize a visit from Langston Hughes. Hughes gave a presentation to the local African American students. Eunice's experience as a student at Allen was well-rounded with piano, academia, and organizational civic membership and leadership. On May 30, 1950, Eunice graduated top of her class of twenty-five from the Allen School. As part of the commencement activities, Eunice performed a piano recital and she and other members of the senior class took part in a presentation entitled, "One World."⁴⁵

Throughout her young life, Eunice was promoted and celebrated by the affluent white community. From her childhood in Tryon and the support of Mrs. Miller and the piano mentorship of Mrs. Mazzanovich. While in high school in Asheville she was taught and mentored by Grace Potter Carroll and Clemmons Sandresky. Although Eunice was treated well by some in the white community, it was her determination and ambition and the support of her family that led her to success. Her family worked hard and raised their children well. Eunice knew her life goals revolved around her gift to play the piano but her involvement in community activities illustrated her priorities and her ideals. In her own words:

⁴⁴ Obituary for Clemens Harold Sandresky, Winston-Salem Journal via Legacy.com at <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/winstonsalem/name/clemens-harold-sandresky-obituary?n=clemens-harold-sandresky&pid=128962770> accessed on 10/31/2020; Miller's Asheville (Buncombe County, NC) City Directory: 1950, 1951.

⁴⁵ Eldridge, Ron. *For Seniors Only*, Cohodas, Nadine, p. 44; Asheville Citizen Times, "Allen High Finals Set for May 30". May 14, 1950, p. 9.

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I was born into a small community that saw me as an infant and predicted great things. I was raised in a family that watched me perform prodigious musical feats and told me to be thankful that I had been chosen as special by God. I was taken up by strangers – black and white – adopted as their own. The direction of my life was determined by their ambitions and their money and I was promised a future I had no part in choosing. In return for this great act of faith by everyone I ever knew I applied myself with dedication and turned my back on everything but the fulfillment of our destiny. It was the only thing I knew how to do.⁴⁶

Tryon and her family provided Eunice with a strong foundation centered around family, church, and piano. In Asheville her talent was nurtured and she became more active in student life. Both her musical and life experience was shaped by African American and white mentors alike. These experiences of her childhood and teen years in western North Carolina were the foundation that would guide her towards her goals and throughout her life.⁴⁷

Scholarship Beyond Western North Carolina

The time between the Allen School and her audition for entry to the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia was spent at the well-known Juilliard School of Music in New York. Clemons Sandresky may have had a hand in that decision, but Mrs. Mazzanovich had ensured that Eunice received a scholarship to attend for the summer session at Juilliard. She thought that it would be the best way to prepare for the audition at the Curtis Institute. Kate was able to use her church connections to secure Eunice an apartment on 145th Street in Harlem to be close to Juilliard. The summer session began on June 29, 1950, with Eunice scheduled to take three classes, Piano 250, Fundamentals of Piano Practice, and Repertoire. The teacher of the Fundamentals class was Luisa Stejskal, a pianist from Peru who was also the widow of Polish composer Sigmond Stowjowski. Eunice's primary instructor was Carl Friedberg. Following his 1892 debut in Vienna, Friedberg enjoyed a long career as a successful pianist and well-loved teacher, first in Europe and then the U.S., following his move to the country in 1914. He became a teacher at Juilliard in 1923 and retired in 1946 but stayed on during the summer session and taught private lessons. Both Stowjowski and Friedberg put Eunice at ease and provided guidance with similar style as Mrs. Mazzanovich. Friedberg's instruction challenged Eunice and she decided to continue taking private lessons from Friedberg after the summer session closed. In addition to her studies with Friedberg, Eunice also traveled back to North Carolina and worked with Mrs. Mazzanovich and Ms. Carroll in preparation for her audition and potential acceptance into the Curtis Institute to study classical piano and become a world class concert pianist.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary, p. 41.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Cohodas, Nadine., pps.47, 49-50; Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary p. 41.

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The Curtis Institute, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was founded in 1926 by Louise Curtis Bok (August 6, 1876 – January 4, 1970). Heiress of the Curtis Publishing fortune. Bok's work at South Philadelphia's Settlement Music School inspired her to start the Curtis Institute. In South Philadelphia, Bok worked with musically gifted students who lacked the financial means to pursue a musical education. Her goal with the Curtis Institute was to provide a world class musical education to a small student body and provide full scholarships to all students. Bok's dream was realized in 1928 and continues today, students accepted to Curtis are on scholarship so that they can focus entirely on their music. The intent was to keep enrollment low so that everyone would receive the needed financial assistance.⁴⁹

The Curtis Institute received over seventy applications in the spring of 1951, with only three openings available for enrollment. Eunice had staked all her hopes and aspirations on acceptance into Curtis to reach her goal as a world class classical concert pianist. Her audition was on April 7, 1951. It was a devastating blow to learn she was not one of the three accepted into the institute for that term. Nina said the following about her memory in her autobiography.

When I was rejected by the Curtis Institute it was as if all the promises ever made to me by God, my family, and my community were broken and I had been lied to all my life. I just couldn't believe it had happened, and all I could think about was what I had given up over the years to get to where I was the day, I heard Curtis didn't want me, which was nowhere. It was so hard to understand.⁵⁰

She had been told her entire life by Black and white supporters that she had a gift from God. If she worked hard, she would accomplish her (and their) dreams. The disappointment must have been monumental. In her mind there was only one thing to do: work even harder and audition again next year. That thinking was short-lived as people she and her family respected began telling her that the reason she was not admitted was because she was black.⁵¹ After the audition, Eunice was offered private lessons by Curtis' Vladimir Sokoloff. "Vladimir Sokoloff became her teacher, following a pattern that continues at the school today. When a promising musician fails to get into Curtis, but a teacher believes acceptance is within striking distance, that teacher sometimes agrees to

⁴⁹ Curtis Institute Website <https://www.curtis.edu/about/history/>, accessed August 20, 2020; Dobrin, Peter. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, "Curtis Institute and the Case of Nina Simone," August 14, 2015.

⁵⁰ Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary, p. 41

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 42. Eunice carried that idea with her throughout her life. It may have been true but is counterintuitive to the mission of the institute's founding. The first African American to attend Curtis, a pianist named Russell Johnson, graduated in 1928. A young African American woman named Blanche Burton-Lyles was admitted into the piano department in 1944 at the age of eleven and graduated in 1954. The competition was incredible, three openings for over seventy applicants, it is entirely possible that Eunice placed fourth or fifth which is exceptional.

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private lessons to prepare for another audition.”⁵² Eunice studied with Sokoloff for many years but never auditioned a second time for entry into the Curtis Institute.⁵³

Nina Simone – Pianist, Composer, Musician, Civil Rights Activist

Between the 1951 audition at the Curtis Institute and Nina’s death in 2003, Eunice Waymon grew from the small prodigy in Tryon, NC to Nina Simone, a force for women, music, and civil rights. Her childhood was the foundation that carried her through life. Faith that had been taught by her parents, family and church community. The promotion and celebration by many in the white community provided confusion when she was not treated the same way by all white people. She fought that injustice throughout her life using her natural talent as a musician and the gospel music lessons of rhythm and improvisation ingrained in her to create her own unique musical style and activism, as a composer, writer, and musician. In the 2015 documentary *Nina Simone and Me with Laura Mvula*, Mvula summarizes Simone’s talent and impact by saying, “she opened the door for the black female songstress and voice. Here is an artist that used the broadest palette, gospel, blues, classical, and pop. She created a musical style to express political anger, personal pain, and her desire for freedom.”⁵⁴

The Waymon family moved to Philadelphia in 1950 in support of Eunice. Nobody missed a beat when she was not accepted at Curtis, it was just assumed she would find a job and move on. Eunice mostly internalized her struggle for understanding what her life would look like without a profession in classical music. She found work in a photographer’s studio and later worked as a piano accompanist for a voice teacher in a studio, eventually teaching her own classes. She continued to take private lessons from Sokoloff but at the age of twenty-one, she was no longer eligible to reapply at the Curtis Institute. She used her time teaching to learn more about popular music while keeping her love in the classics. Eunice’s brother Carol was working at a hotel in Atlantic City and had told Eunice about the area. Her students had also told her about the music scene in Atlantic City, including one student who was making more money playing in a club than Eunice made teaching him. That was enough to convince her to look beyond teaching as a profession. She hired an agent and was booked at a place called the Midtown Lounge on Pacific Avenue in June of 1954. When asked what name to use on the billing Eunice responded, “Nina Simone,” for fear that her mother would not approve of the music or the venue. She created the name by combining the name Nina meaning little one in Spanish, a nickname given to her by a boyfriend and Simone for an actress she admired, Simone Signoret. It was not long before word was out about her piano and singing talent. Nina was able to blend her abilities as a classically trained pianist with the popular music of the day and her rich vocals to forge her own style.⁵⁵ At

⁵² Curtis Institute Website <https://www.curtis.edu/about/history/>, accessed August 20, 2020; Simone with Cleary, p. 41-42; Cohodas, Nadine, p. 52; Dobrin, Peter. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, “Curtis Institute and the Case of Nina Simone,” August 14, 2015.

⁵³ Cohodas, Nadine, p. 69.

⁵⁴ BBC Arts, *Nina Simone and Me with Laura Mvula*. May 2015. Accessed on YouTube February 21, 2023, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLTf9_srKFs

⁵⁵ Cohodas, Nadine, p.53. Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary, pp. 44-50. Cohodas, Nadine, p. 61.

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this point in her life, she became Nina Simone and will also be referred to as Nina for the remainder of this nomination.

Nina worked summers at Atlantic City and returned to Philadelphia for the rest of the year. She continued teaching at her studio and studying with Sokoloff. Her plan was to book additional performances to save more money for a return to Juilliard. A friend introduced her to the Billie Holiday song, 'I Loves You, Porgy' from *Porgy and Bess*. She practiced the song and blended it with her piano to make it her own before performing it at the Midtown Lounge, the crowd loved it and it became a signature song during her shows. In addition to her summers at the Midtown, Nina began booking performances at supper clubs and events in Philadelphia which paid more and provided more exposure than the Midtown. In 1956 she returned to the Midtown for the summer and met an easy-going, white, beatnik-type named Don Ross. Although she had no desire to be famous for popular music and was still studying the classics with Sokoloff, Nina was contacted by Bethlehem Records to record an album. Her first album entitled *Little Girl Blue* as recorded in 1957 but it was not released until February 1959 due to issues within the record company. She married Don Ross in 1958 in Philadelphia and they moved to an apartment on 101st Street in Central Park West in New York City. Beyond being married to someone successful, Ross' ambition seemed limited, and the marriage ended just a year later. About the same time, *Little Girl Blue* was finally released, and Nina Simone's popularity gradually reached beyond her New York, Philadelphia, and New Jersey fans. After promotion by local disk jockeys, and prodding by Nina, Bethlehem finally released "I Loves You, Porgy" as a single which registered as high as number fifteen on the Billboard charts. Not long after, Nina signed a new agent and a new contract with the Colpix label, all still while privately planning a future in classical music.⁵⁶

In 1960, Eunice Waymon's life again changed course, taking her away from classical music and toward popular music for the rest of her life. A concert at New York's Town Hall, just off Times Square, was the first of a whirlwind of performances, press, and recordings. Under the Colpix label, the albums *The Amazing Nina Simone* and *Nina Simone at Town Hall* were released. Her television debut was on the NBC Today Show on March 24, 1960, and she played "Just in Time" and "Time after Time". In June she performed at the Newport Jazz Festival and spent July booked at New York's Village Gate. A second single release, "Nobody Knows You," registered on the Billboard Charts at number ninety-three. Ed Sullivan introduced his television audience to Nina Simone on September 11th as, "the winner of all the polls this season for the most promising young recording star is a girl from North Carolina via Philadelphia, let's have a big hand for Nina Simone."⁵⁷ The year ended with an event that illustrated the person she was and provided a glimpse into her role as an activist. Nina took a public step into the cause of social justice by joining a lawsuit to overturn New York City's cabaret card regulations which required police identity cards for all persons including performers who work in the city's cabarets. She signed a very public letter stating this practice was a violation of her constitutional rights. Nina and her role were celebrated

⁵⁶ Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary, pp. 53-55, 60, 65. Cohodas, Nadine, p. 85.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 101.

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by her old friend Langston Hughes who wrote about her as a fan in his weekly column “Week by Week” which was first published on November 12, 1960, in the *Chicago Tribune*.⁵⁸

Nina was booked in concerts from the Apollo Theater in Harlem to Memorial Hall at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1961. By this time, Nina’s patience with a disrespectful audience had run dry. Her classical training taught her that audiences should be respectful and listen to the musicians. In concert halls, that was expected, but in clubs and taverns, it was not always the case. Her impatience was at a boiling point during a performance at the “Roundtable” in Manhattan and she walked off the stage and took her band with her. The news of her behavior made it to the pages of *Variety* magazine. Her impatience and unpredictable temperament would stay with her throughout her career. She returned to her fans at the Village Gate in the early spring to play and record another live album for Colpix. By this time, her album, *Nina Simone at Newport* had been released and had registered number twenty-three on the Billboard charts.⁵⁹

On May 21, 1961, Nina was honored to headline at Carnegie Hall. She shared the stage with a South African musician named Miriam Makeba. It was an opportunity and a milestone and would not be her only visit to the legendary venue. She also formed a lasting friendship with Makeba. Late in 1961, Nina married her second husband, a police detective named Andy Stroud. Stroud had been married previously and had two sons from that marriage. Not long after the ceremony, Nina was off for her first overseas booking, a two-day conference in Nigeria sponsored by the American Society of African Culture. A few of the people who were part of the trip included Langston Hughes, Odetta, and classical pianist Natalie Hinderas. She returned to New York’s Carnegie Hall at the end of December to participate in an all-star cast including John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and Sonny Rollins, for a New Year’s Eve performance. Upon her return, she and Andy purchased a home at 406 Nuber Avenue in Mount Vernon, New York, north of New York City.⁶⁰ She stated in her biography that “there were trees everywhere, like in Tryon”. On September 12, 1962, Nina Simone gave birth to her first and only child, Lisa Celeste Stroud.⁶¹

One of Nina’s closest friends and her daughter’s godmother was acclaimed writer Lorraine Hansbury. Hansbury was the first African American to have a play on Broadway. *Raisin in the Sun*, which premiered in 1959, was critically acclaimed and received best play of the year by the New York Drama Critics’ Circle and marked a milestone in African American history. Named for a line in the poem “Harlem” by Langston Hughes, *A Raisin in the Sun* was a glimpse into the lives of African Americans and their struggles for equality. Hansbury’s work educated and spread

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 92, 97-99, 101, 106.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 108-109, 111-112.

⁶⁰ The property currently addressed as 406 Nuber Avenue features an extant house dating to circa 1910 according to tax records. The two-story, vinyl-clad frame dwelling features an asymmetrically front-gabled roof with jerkinhead, double-hung one-over-one vinyl replacement windows, and an enclosed front porch. Though the property boasts a well-landscaped and manicured yard, the exterior of the house, itself, suggests substantial alterations have occurred over the past fifty years.

⁶¹ Cohodas, Nadine. 120,122,125; Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary, p. 81.

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awareness of issues and injustices of the time. She was critical of African American artists who did not have a role in the Civil Rights movement and challenged Nina about her place in the movement. Nina had been socially engaged with intellectuals of the time like Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansbury, and James Baldwin, but she had not been actively engaged in the civil rights movement. In her autobiography, I Put a Spell On You, Nina states that Lorraine provided her a political education and that “through her I started thinking about myself as a Black person in a country run by white people and a woman in a world run by men.”⁶²

At the same time, I started to pay closer attention to what was happening in my country, especially to the advances my own people were making with the civil rights movement. I had not made a connection between the fights I had and any wider struggle for justice because of how I was raised: the Waymon way was to turn away from prejudice and to live your life as best you could, as if acknowledging the existence of racism was in itself a kind of defeat. Of course, I knew discrimination existed, but I didn’t allow myself to admit it had any effect on me.⁶³

The year following the birth of her daughter in 1962 continued Nina’s climb towards professional success. By this time, Nina Simone was more than just a performer; people relied on her to make their living and in turn she relied on them so she could make a living. It was a steady progression, but for her, she was moving day by day and before she knew it her life was on a path that she had not planned. It was the path of Nina Simone, successful singer, and performer, instead of Eunice Waymon, classical pianist. In Nina’s own words:

Then my rise to stardom came along almost by accident, and as I acquired fame and money those early goals, I had chased so hard slowly slipped away. Classical music became a part of my past almost without my realizing it: there just wasn’t the time to practice any more, or the motivation. That intense young black girl who once burned with an ambition to play in front of an orchestra at Carnegie Hall was now a wife and mother with a career to take care of and employees and their families to support. People relied on me: if I quit whenever I felt like it then my musicians and staff, many of them good friends would suffer.⁶⁴

Her husband and manager, Andy Stroud, worked with Colpix to present Nina at Carnegie Hall on April 12, 1963, on her own. The event was recorded and released by Colpix as the album *Nina Simone at Carnegie Hall*. Though not on the album the song list included “Blackbird” a song about the struggle for civil rights:

⁶² Ibid, p. 87.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 86.; Cohodas, Nadine, p. 137.

⁶⁴ Simone, Nina with Stephen Cleary, p. 85.

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Why you want to fly Blackbird you ain't ever gonna fly
Why you want to fly Blackbird you ain't ever gonna fly
No place big enough for holding all the tears you're gonna cry
'cause your mama's name was lonely and your daddy's name was pain
And they call you little sorrow 'cause you'll never love again
So why you want to fly Blackbird you ain't ever gonna fly
Why you want to fly Blackbird you ain't ever gonna fly
You ain't got no one to hold you ain't got no one to care
If you'd only understand dear nobody wants you anywhere
So why you want to fly Blackbird you ain't ever gonna fly
Why you want to fly Blackbird you ain't ever gonna fly.⁶⁵

While Nina was preparing for Carnegie Hall, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) were preparing to protest segregation policy in Birmingham, Alabama.⁶⁶

Nina's Carnegie Hall concert was on Good Friday of 1963, the same day that Dr. King wrote his letter from jail in Birmingham. The next day, her friend Lorraine Hansbury called her to ask her what she was going to do to further the Civil Rights movement. Other entertainers and celebrities were taking part in the movement including Sammy Davis, Jr., considered one of the greatest entertainers of his time; Lena Horne, performer turned actress; Harry Belafonte, musician, and actor; folk singer Odetta; Ossie Davis, writer, actor, director, playwright; musician, Louis Armstrong; and Ruby Dee, actress, playwright, screenwriter, journalist, and wife of Ossie Davis. Lorraine wanted to know what Nina would contribute. That summer Nina began to be more deliberate in her performances and headlined in New York City for an NAACP benefit. Several significant events happened during that time beginning with President Kennedy announcing the Civil Rights Bill on June 11th, the following day, June 12th, NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers was shot and killed in his driveway. Nina stated in her autobiography, "What I didn't appreciate was that, while Medgar Evers' murder was not the final straw for me, it was the match that lit the fuse."⁶⁷

The American Guild of Variety Artists (AGVA) planned to host a "Salute to Freedom '63" on August 5th and bring the first integrated variety show to Birmingham, Alabama. The line-up included headliners Ray Charles, Johnny Mathis, Nina Simone, and Ella Fitzgerald with Billy Taylor, Clyde McPhatter, and boxing champion Joe Lewis, the Shirrelles and the integrated band from the Apollo. Everything that could be done to stop the show was attempted including making the venue unavailable and not being able to secure transportation to the event since white taxi drivers refused to transport the entertainers to the hotels or show. Reverend A.D. King organized

⁶⁵ Simone, Nina and Herb Sacker, Blackbird, Colpix Records, New York, NY: 1963.

⁶⁶ Cohodas, Nadine, pp. 135-136; Simone, Nina, and Stephen Cleary, p. 85; Lyrics to "Blackbird" written by Herbert Sacker and Nina Simone.

⁶⁷ Cohodas, Nadine, p 138, 136; Simone, Nina and Stephen Cleary, p.89.

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transportation to ensure the group was able to get to the venue and protected during the trip. Nina's set included her reading "Brown Baby" by Oscar Brown. The crowd loved it.⁶⁸

That fuse from the murder of Medgar Evers continued to burn slowly but the final straw came on September 15, 1963. Nina was at home in Mount Vernon, New York preparing for concerts in Los Angeles, when she heard the news of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama on the radio. A children's bible study class was in the church and four little girls, Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins were all killed from the blast. During the rioting that followed the bombing, police killed one Black man, and another was beaten to death by a white mob. Nina stated in I Put a Spell on You, "I suddenly realized what it was to be black in America in 1963, but it wasn't an intellectual connection of the type of Lorraine had been repeating to me over and over – it came as a rush of fury, hatred, and determination."⁶⁹ The fury overtook Nina and she looked to meet violence with violence. Andy's response to her rage, "Nina, you don't know anything about killing. The only thing you've got is music."⁷⁰ The result of her fury was written in one hour and entitled, "Mississippi Goddam". In that moment, she became determined to dedicate herself to the struggle for black equality under the law.⁷¹

"Mississippi Goddam" was a controversial title on a variety of levels. If her commitment had seemed hesitant previously, this single song committed Nina to the cause of Civil Rights and equality not just for African Americans, but for women. The conviction to speak out so strongly through her music as a Black woman was revolutionary. For any woman to curse in public, for a Black woman who was raised in the south, with a church-centered upbringing, to say God's name in vain, much less write it down, sing it, and record it was revolutionary and a huge risk. Many radio stations stopped playing her music. Some southern stations returned the albums to the record label but only after they had been broken in two. Eunice Waymon had found her voice as Nina Simone, and after decades of weaving in and out of white America, Nina Simone was speaking aloud for everyone to hear. The first time she played the song for a live audience was in Los Angeles, the week after it was written. Nina was on tour non-stop during this time, she had regular shows at the Village Gate but was also performing at festivals, benefit concerts for Civil Rights organizations and with other artists on tour.⁷²

Nina's friend, Lorraine Hansbury died of cancer on January 12, 1965, at the age of thirty-four. Heartbroken by the loss of her friend, Nina promised that she would follow Lorraine's example and continue to use her art to spread the work of the movement. Three days later, she was scheduled to perform at Carnegie Hall. The first set would be with her regular group, but the second set would be with a thirty-five-piece orchestra. She was mourning for Lorraine but was excited about performing with an orchestra which reminded her of her childhood aspirations but also because her parents and Mrs. Mazzanovich would be in the audience. After the concert, her father beamed with pride and expressed how proud he was of his daughter but sadly her mother did not openly

⁶⁸ Cohodas, Nadine, p. 139-141

⁶⁹ Simone, Nina and Stephen Cleary, p. 89.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Cohodas, Nadine. 144; Simone, Nina and Stephen Cleary, pp. 89-90.

⁷² Cohodas, Nadine, p. 145-146.

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express her feelings about the performance. Afterward, Miss Mazzy told Nina that her mother was proud of her. The next day, Nina performed for Lorraine's funeral.⁷³

The following month on February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was murdered. The losses of Lorraine and Malcolm X only strengthened Nina's conviction to be an outspoken activist for equal rights. One month following Malcolm X's murder, on March 21, the march from Selma to Montgomery began. The intention was for an all-star concert to perform in Montgomery in celebration of the march and the marchers. Nina would be there. She was booked at the Village Gate, but the show was cancelled so she, her husband Andy Stroud, musician Al Schackman and the Village Gate's Art Dolgoff could fly to Montgomery. Harry Belafonte had arranged the show with both black and white performers including Sammy Davis, Jr; Odetta; Shelley Winters; Tony Bennett; Tony Perkins; Billy Eckstine; Nipsy Russell, Dick Gregory, and Alan King. Nina performed the song "Mississippi Goddam" and changed a line from "Alabama's made me lose my rest" to "Selma made me lose my rest."⁷⁴

Nina's writing and performances conveyed her feelings during the Civil Rights movement. "Backlash Blues," a poem by Langston Hughes that Nina set to music debuted in 1966. Her song "Four Women" is the story of strength, survival, resilience, and power through oppression and racism in the history of African American women through the voices of four women; Aunt Sarah, the "Mammy;" Sephronia, the "Mulatto;" Sweet Thing, the "Prostitute;" and Peaches, the "tough street girl". Nina was surprised when this song also garnered controversy from both white and Black audiences. Cohodas explains on page 188 and 189 that two radio stations (one white and one Black) had stopped playing the song. Black listeners did not like "Peaches" last line "I'll kill the first mother I see," others complained about the reference to "Sweet Thing" as a prostitute. White listeners were offended by the mixed-race "Sephronia" and her line "My father was rich, and white/He forced my mother late one night." However, supporters of Nina and Civil Rights countered, and the song was returned to the radio stations that previously removed the song. After a lengthy illness, Langston Hughes died on May 22, 1967, and again, Nina had lost a dear friend and champion. Nina was performing at the Newport Jazz Festival and dedicated her performance to Langston and played "Backlash Blues" and "Four Women."⁷⁵

On April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Nina was devastated but not surprised. She said in her autobiography, "It was the traditional white American tactic for getting rid of Black leaders it couldn't suppress in any other way." She continued, "It was also stupid because non-violence is what died with King." Nina was in Westbury, Long Island for a concert. She dedicated the performance to the memory of King and sang three songs for him and his loss, "Sunday in Savannah," "Why? (The King of Love is Dead)," and "Mississippi

⁷³ Cohodas, Nadine, p. 165-166; Simone, Nina, and Stephen Cleary, 103-104.

⁷⁴ Cohodas, Nadine, pp. 171-172. Video of Nina Simone performing Mississippi Goddam in Montgomery, You Tube accessed through Bing Video on January 10, 2021
atwww.bing.com/videos/search?q=nina+simone+Mississippi+goddam+at+march.com

⁷⁵ Cohodas, Nadine, p. 180-181, 188-189, 200.

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Goddam". The song "Why?" had been written the day before by Gene Taylor. A few months later, another great leader of Civil Rights, Robert Kennedy, was assassinated on June 6, 1968.⁷⁶

The last year of the 1960s started with Nina and Andy separating on January 31, 1969. Despite personal turmoil, Nina's year consisted of over fifty performances nationally and internationally, including a European tour, and the release of three albums. In 1970 and 71 she continued and performed fifteen concerts, released four albums, interviewed for *Essence*, *Redbook*, and *Life* magazines, and received a Grammy award nomination for best female R & B vocal performance. She also renewed her contractual relationship with RCA in 1971.⁷⁷

Lorraine Hansbury was working on a new play when she died, entitled, "To Be Young, Gifted and Black." Nina in turn wrote a song about Lorraine with that title.

*To be young, gifted, and black
Oh, what a lovely precious dream.
To be young, gifted, and black
Open your heart to what I mean.
In the whole world you know
There are a billion boys and girls
Who are young, gifted, and black,
And that's a fact!*⁷⁸

This song became an anthem, not only for the student movements of the Civil Rights era but for all Black children. Nina sang this song on children's television program Sesame Street on February 18, 1972.⁷⁹

Between 1958 and 1974 Nina Simone released thirty-three albums under various labels. The highest she reached on the charts was with "I Loves You Porgy" which reached number 18 on the Billboard Chart and number 2 on the R & B Billboard Chart. This was also her first hit. She charted again but never again made it that high in the United States, she did chart higher in the United Kingdom. She was just over five years into her professional career when she started writing and performing with a message for equality, which may have hindered her mainstream popularity. This, paired with her on-stage temperament and anger made her unpredictable and worrisome for promoters. Even with the controversy, she still garnered an audience everywhere she went.

Nina Simone honestly expressed her true self and her beliefs through her music. Beginning with her childhood in Tryon, her life experiences, including the impact of a country that did not treat her or her people equally and the loss of friends and heroes, helped shape her music and her art. Cohodas cites on page 180 that Nina said, "The first thing I saw in the morning when I woke up

⁷⁶ Simone, Nina and Stephen Cleary, p. 114; Cohodas, Nadine, p. 211.

⁷⁷ The Nina Simone Database, [The Nina Simone Database - Timeline \(boscarol.com\)](http://TheNinaSimoneDatabase-Timeline(boscarol.com)), accessed on January 10, 2021.

⁷⁸ Simone, Nina, and Weldon Irvine, *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black*, 1969

⁷⁹ Simone, Nina and Stephen Cleary, p. 88.

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was my black face in the bathroom mirror and that fixed the way I felt about myself for the rest of the day, that I was a black-skinned woman in a country where you could be killed because of that fact.” Nina Simone left the United States in 1974 after fighting for Civil Rights and speaking out for a decade with no acceptable result, for the fight for racial justice was increasingly overshadowed by the Vietnam War. Although she continued to perform in the U.S., she spent most of the rest of her life living outside of her country of birth. During the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, Nina faced financial challenges but persevered and continued to create and perform.⁸⁰

Nina’s father, J.D. died in 1974. Her mother, Kate Waymon passed away on April 4, 2001, in Tryon. Devastated by her loss, Nina returned to North Carolina for her mother’s funeral. Upon her return to France after the funeral, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Nina responded to her illness and her treatment as if it were just part of her life that must continue. She returned to the United States and performed at Carnegie Hall two more times, once in 2001 and again in 2002 for a brief appearance at a benefit. Her health continued to decline, and she died on April 20, 2003, at the age of seventy in France. A month after her death she was given an honorary degree from the Curtis Institute. Nina’s passing marked the end of her life but not the end of her voice or Eunice’s voice. Her voice, her beliefs, her strength, her courage, her brilliance are heard in the words of her songs. She lived by her words, “You can't help it. An artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times.”⁸¹

The house at 30 E. Livingston Street in Tryon has been vacant for over 20 years. It had fallen into disrepair due to neglect when it was acquired by Kevin McIntyre in 2005. His intention was to restore the home as a museum to Nina Simone and over the course of his ownership he replaced the Masonite siding with salvaged pine, removed the concrete foundation restored the brick piers, reframed the porch, removed the bathroom addition from the back of the house and installed custom windows. Unfortunately, McIntyre was unable to complete the project and the house was once again on the market in 2010. It was sold but again it was on the market in 2015.⁸²

In 2017, four prominent, New York City based African American artists, Adam Pendelton, Ellen Gallagher, Julie Mehretu, and Rashid Johnson formed Daydream Therapy, LLC and purchased the property at 30 E. Livingston Street for \$95,000. In 2018, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) named the house a National Treasure and repaired exterior siding and painted the exterior of the home. The NTHP is currently exploring options for the home and assessing the rehabilitation needs of the property. According to the National Trust website, the Trust is “developing a rehabilitation plan that aligns with [the home’s potential future use](#); identifies future ownership and stewardship models for the site; and creates additional protections to ensure that this symbol of Simone’s early life and legacy will endure for

⁸⁰ Cohodas, Nadine, p. 180.

⁸¹ Ibid, 370-374. Nina Simone You Tube Channel, [Nina Simone: An Artist's Duty - YouTube](#), accessed January 11, 2021.

⁸² Bryan, Chris; Schindler, Kelly; Tai, Daniela; *Childhood Home of Nina Simone: Initial Opportunities Assessment*. Completed as a course requirement for Preservation Economics HISP680 (Professor Brent Leggs), University of Maryland, School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation 2017, p. 11.

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generations to come.⁸³ The preservation of the home as the birthplace of Eunice Waymon, an African American girl, nurtured by a strong family with a foundation in the church, who grew up to become Nina Simone, the “high priestess of soul” and an uncompromising voice in the Civil Rights movement. A preservation easement held by the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina (Preservation North Carolina) was placed on the property in 2020 and will protect the house in perpetuity. The house at 30 E. Livingston Street, the birthplace of Eunice Waymon, later known as Nina Simone will continue to tell the story of an extraordinary child who grew up in a small southern town under extraordinary circumstances. Shaped by the experiences as a child in Tryon, North Carolina, Eunice Waymon grew up to merge her foundation of faith and classical piano training with jazz, blues, and folk music to speak out for racial injustice and inequality as Nina Simone, a voice unlike anyone else of the time.⁸⁴

In the words of Nina Simone, “My music was dedicated to a purpose more important than classical music’s pursuit of excellence; it was dedicated to the fight for freedom and the historical destiny of my people. I felt a fierce pride when I thought about what we were all doing together. So if the movement gave me nothing else, it gave me self respect”.⁸⁵

⁸³ The National Trust for Historic Preservation Website, [Nina Simone Childhood Home | National Trust for Historic Preservation \(savingplaces.org\)](https://www.nationaltrustforhistoricpreservation.org/childhood-home/nina-simone), accessed February 5, 2023.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 8.

⁸⁵ Simone, Nina and Stephen Cleary, p. 91.

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): PL0304

9. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property .21 +/- acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 35.213890 Longitude: - 82.232113

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2. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____
3. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____
4. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Due to slight discrepancies between the current tax parcel and the property description in the most recent deed conveying the property to the current owner, which is dated February 28, 2017 and recorded in Polk County Deed Book 425/Page 571, the National Register Boundary of the Eunice Waymon Birthplace is depicted on the accompanying National Register of Historic Places Boundary Map which was created August 15, 2021, and is described herein: The southeast edge of the nominated property corresponds to the southeast line of Polk County tax parcel T4-C3 and extends northeast to where it intersects the edge-of-pavement along East Livingston Street at the east corner and southwest to where it meets the edge-of-pavement along Fred Lyle Circle at the south corner. The southwest boundary of the nominated property extends to the northwest and follows the edge-of-pavement on Fred Lyle Circle to its intersection with East Livingston Street. The northwest and northeast boundaries of the nominated property follow the edge-of-pavement along East Livingston Street.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary described above encompasses the land associated with the home at 30 East Livingston Street since it was initially developed and when Eunice Waymon was born and lived there between 1933 and 1937. The nominated property includes the house as well as all the remaining yard that was historically associated with the property to the edge-of-pavement along Fred Lyle Circle and East Livingston Street, where the property descends to meet the road to the northwest and northeast with no evidence of a retaining wall or other structural features surrounding the property.

10. Form Prepared By

name/title: Michelle A. Michael with Annie McDonald
organization: N/A
street & number: 204 Woodburn Road
city or town: Raleigh state: NC zip code: 27605
e-mail historybydesign1@gmail.com
telephone: 910-257-3047
date: January 4, 2021

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

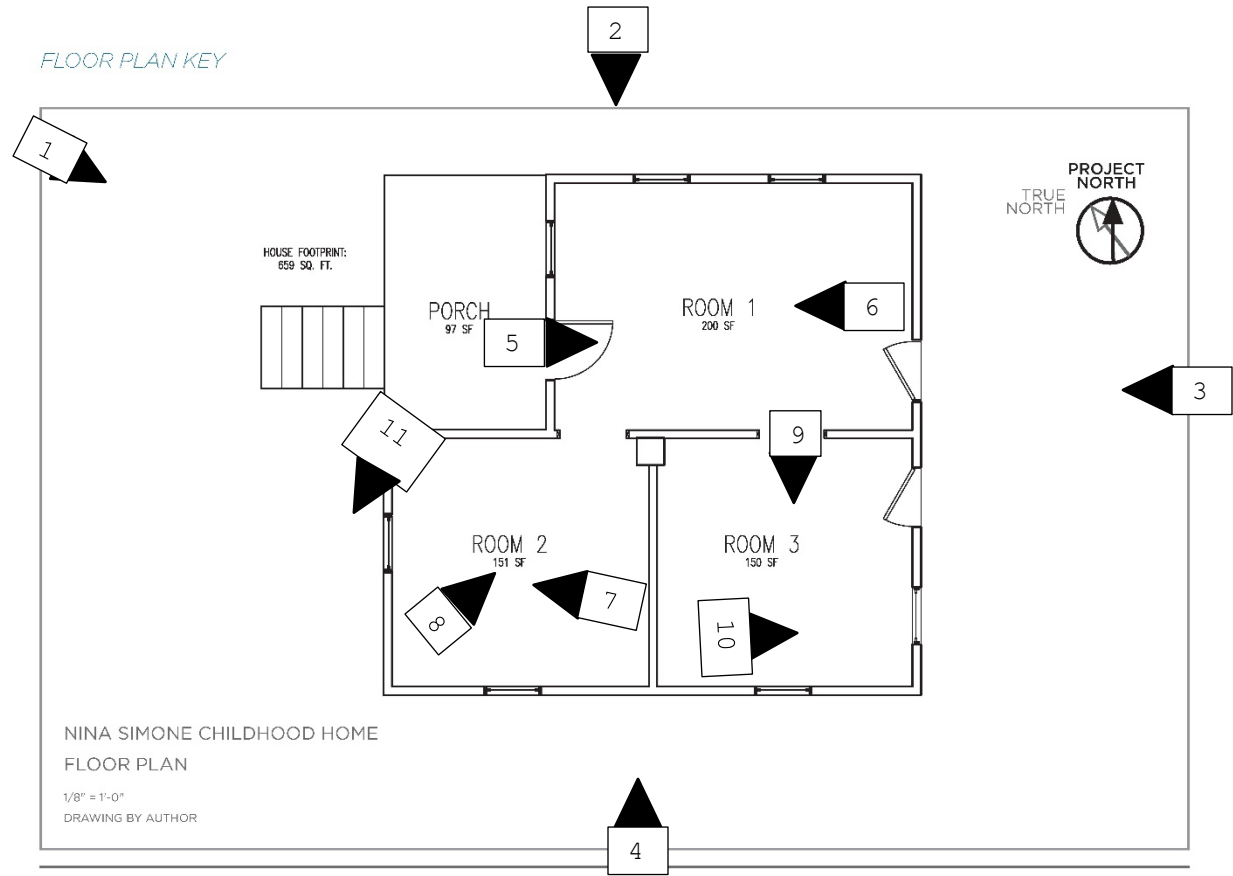
- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5- or 15-minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Floor Plan and Photo Key - Courtesy The National Trust for Historic Preservation

FLOOR PLAN KEY



BUILDING CONDITION ASSESSMENT

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered, and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and does not need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Eunice Waymon Birthplace

City or Vicinity: Tryon

County: Polk State: NC

Photographer: Exterior Photographs, Michelle Michael

Date Photographed: September 4, 2021, Interior Photographs taken May 1, 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. Oblique view of North corner, front (northwest) and northeast side elevation looking south.



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2 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. View of northeast elevation looking southwest.



3 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. View of rear elevation.



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4 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. Southwest side elevation looking northeast.



5 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. Interior view Room 1 from front entrance looking toward the back of the house.



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6 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. Interior view of Room 1 looking northwest toward front of house and front entrance.



7 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. Interior view of Room 2 looking toward front of house.



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8 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. Interior view of Room 2 looking toward Room 1.



9 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. Interior view of Room 3 looking toward south.



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10 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. Interior view of Room 3 looking toward rear of house.



11 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. Room 3 looking south toward St. Luke's CME Church.



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12 of 12 Eunice Waymon Birthplace, 30 E. Livingston Street, Tryon, NC. View from St. Luke's CME Church toward the Eunice Waymon Birthplace.



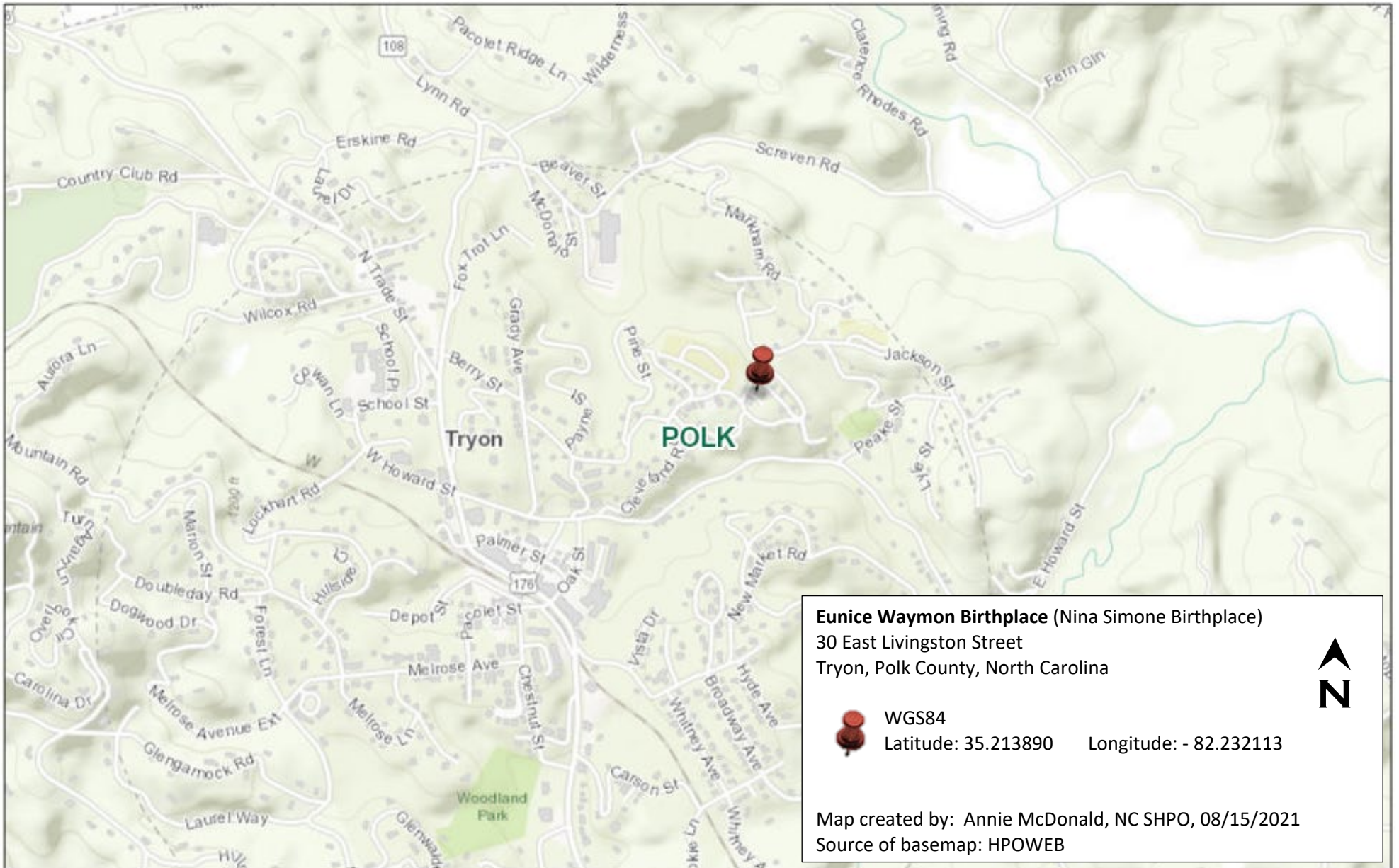
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct, or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

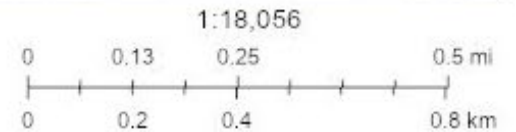
The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering, and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

National Register of Historic Places Location Map



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 Counties (outline)



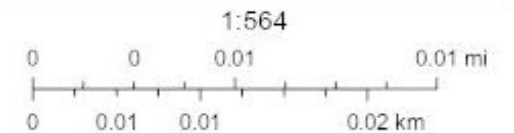
City of Greenville, State of North Carolina DOT, Tennessee STS GIS, Esri,

National Register of Historic Places Boundary Map



8/15/2021 4:26:25 PM

Parcels



Participating NC Counties, NCCGIA, NC OneMap, US EPA, NC CGIA,

North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office
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