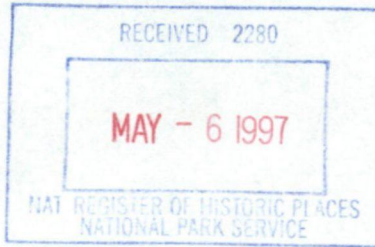


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**



549

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Cyrus, Ben C. and Jenetter, House
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 325 E. 35th
CITY OR TOWN: Houston
STATE: Texas **CODE:** TX **COUNTY:** Harris **CODE:** 201
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A
ZIP CODE: 77022

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

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

Laurie J. Russell
Signature of certifying official

4-29-97
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action
6.4.97

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

| NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY: | CONTRIBUTING | NONCONTRIBUTING |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| | <u> 1 </u> | <u> </u> BUILDINGS |
| | <u> </u> | <u> </u> SITES |
| | <u> </u> | <u> </u> STRUCTURES |
| | <u> </u> | <u> </u> OBJECTS |
| | <u> 1 </u> | <u> </u> TOTAL |

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: Historic and Architectural Resources of Independence Heights, Houston, Harris County, Texas

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: OTHER: Vernacular Center-Passage

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
 WALLS WOOD: Weatherboard
 ROOF ASPHALT
 OTHER CONCRETE

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Cyrus, Ben C. and Jenetter, House
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Description

The Ben C. and Jenetter Cyrus House (c. 1915) faces south on the corner of 35th and North Main in an area of mixed institutional, commercial, and residential uses near the center of Independence Heights. The vernacular 1-story center-passage house rests on concrete piers and is covered by a large hipped roof. The house is set back approximately ten feet from the street and accessed only by a concrete sidewalk to the front door. A hipped roof porch extends almost the full width of the house with the lower half enclosed with horizontal siding and the upper half screened. The lot is enclosed with a chain link fence partially hidden by mature shrubs.

The Ben C. and Jenetter Cyrus House, constructed c. 1915, faces 35th Street at the intersection of North Main. As is typical of Independence Heights, the house is set back approximately ten feet from the street and surrounded by mature, but modest, amounts of landscaping. A gravel driveway abuts the eastern side of the house and is directly accessed from the street. Although this street is paved with curb and gutters, there are no sidewalks or separate pedestrian paths. A 4-foot chain link fence defines the perimeter of the property with evergreen shrubs partially screening on the interior. No outbuildings are noted on the property.

The 1-story Cyrus House follows a center-passage vernacular form set on concrete piers and covered with a large hipped roof of asphalt shingles. The main block of the 5-bay house is sheathed in 6-inch horizontal siding with little architectural detailing. An almost full-width porch with hipped roof follows the form with a center screen door flanked by 8-inch horizontal siding on the lower half and screen on the upper half.

The Cyrus House reflects an architectural form typical of the early 20th century. Although modified on the porch, it otherwise retains its principal architectural features.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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 VALUE, 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Ethnic Heritage: Black

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: c. 1915-1947

SIGNIFICANT DATES: c. 1915

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Unknown

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-6).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see context statement).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 6

Cyrus, Ben C. and Jenetter, House
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Statement of Significance

The Ben C. and Jenetter Cyrus House (c. 1915) is typical of the housing for many of the middle-class residents of Independence Heights. Ben Cyrus operated a jitney service in downtown Houston from about 1915 to the early 1920s. Jitneys provided a basic form of mass transportation in a number of major cities during this period and competed with electric streetcars. Black jitneys served a special role for the African American population as an alternative to other segregated forms of transportation. The City of Houston banned by ordinance all black owned jitneys in 1922-24 at the insistence of the Houston Electric Company, operators of the streetcar line and developing motor bus transportation. The property is eligible under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage (black).

The Ben C. and Jenetter Cyrus House was constructed about 1915 near the center of the platted Independence Heights. Although modest in detailing, the house is typical of forms constructed in the city in the mid 1910s. The Cyrus House served as a domestic space for the family but also a headquarters for his jitney service in Houston.

Jitneys are defined in a City of Houston ordinance of 1915 as "regular transportation... that travel up and down the streets soliciting patronage and for a certain fee demanded by those in charge... persons are carried to and from destinations and over routes designated and fixed by owners, managers and drivers of such vehicles." (Dressman in *Black Dixie*, p. 118) Most jitneys were modified automobiles that provided quick and convenient service at the same price as the streetcars. By 1915, many cities experienced a large number of independent and corporate jitney operations with wide variation in service and passenger accommodations. The increasing competition with established streetcar companies led to political efforts to license or ban jitney service in many cities.

Jitneys proved especially popular for African American patrons as they allowed unrestricted service and an alternative to segregated public transportation. A number of jitneys operated in and around the City of Houston with nine company lines supporting approximately 200 drivers in 1923-24. This number is a decrease from the estimated 300 jitneys on the streets in 1918. (Dressman in *Black Dixie*, p. 116) Black-owned jitney services typically catered to an all black clientele and provided a necessary service. As is common with black owned businesses, jitneys required small capital investments and could function profitably as a small business. At the same time, jitneys were highly visible within the African American as well as white communities. Thus, on some occasions, black leaders encouraged jitney owners to improve their appearance and operations. (Ibid, p. 119)

Black jitneys grew popular with the community and competed effectively with the dominate streetcar lines of the period. This popularity, however, led the Houston Electric Company to agitate for regulations on jitneys. By the early 1920s, the City of Houston voted to restrict jitney service, primarily black-owned lines. Gradually, city officers passed more and more restrictive measures before eliminating the lines about 1922-23. In January 1923, the City of Houston abolished all black-owned jitneys and continued efforts to eliminate all other jitney lines. At

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National Park Service

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Section 8 Page 7

Cyrus, Ben C. and Jenetter, House
Houston, Harris County, Texas

the same time, the agreement allowed more motor buses to be added to handle the African American local transportation needs. These, however, were slow to come and came only with strong segregated restrictions. (Ibid)

Ben Cyrus participated as a jitney operator during the height of the jitney-streetcar conflict. His business, as did other jitney drivers, suffered from the increasing urbanization of Houston, improved vehicular transportation, and complex race relations that characterize the period.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| UTM REFERENCES | Zone Easting | Northing | Zone Easting | Northing |
| | 1 15 268780 | 3300840 | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Independence Heights, Block 33, Lot7.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION Boundary encompasses all resources historically associated with the nominated property.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Vivian Seals with assistance from Dwayne Jones, Texas Historical Commission

ORGANIZATION Independence Heights Neighborhood Council **DATE:** 1/97

STREET & NUMBER: 3714 Yosemite **TELEPHONE** (713) 747-9989

CITY OR TOWN Houston **STATE:** TX **ZIP CODE:** 77021

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see USGS map # 4)

PHOTOGRAPHS

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Ben and Jenetter Cyrus

STREET & NUMBER: 525 E. 35th **TELEPHONE** N/A

CITY OR TOWN Houston **STATE:** TX **ZIP CODE:** 77022

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Cyrus, Ben C. and Jenetter, House

MULTIPLE NAME: Independence Heights MPS

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Harris

DATE RECEIVED: 5/06/97 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/19/97
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/04/97 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/20/97
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 97000549

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 6-4-97 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



CYRUS, BEN C. & JENETTER, HOUSE
325 E. 35TH
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO, TEXAS
VIVIAN SEALS PHOTOGRAPHER
FALL 1996, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION, NEG.
CAMERA FACING NORTH
PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 1

Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64500641