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National Park Service**

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Property Name: Choptank (J. Clayton, 1868)

Location and Verbal Boundary Description:

Choptank or the J. Clayton Farm is situated on the east side of route 435, .65 miles south of its intersection with route 432. The house and related outbuildings stand amidst cultivated fields at the end of drive extending 400 feet east of route 435. The nominated area extends along the drive from route 435 in a rectangle back to a pond at the rear of the property, and from 200 feet north of the barn to 200 feet south of the main house. The total acreage is approximately acres.

Owner: Francis Rhoades

Box 513, Choptank Road.

Middletown, Delaware

Description:

The Thomas Clayton farmhouse facing Route 435 is a three story low-hip, roofed dwelling built circa 1850. It is of timber frame construction and is sheathed in sawn, horizontal weatherboard, which is now covered by white aluminum siding. The surrounding fields are currently under cultivation as working farmland and a large pond exists east of the house on a small tributary stream.

The structure's brick foundation of stretcher bond measures 42'6" by 43', but the main block of the house is only 26' x 43' with an attached kitchen wing on the northeast corner measuring 15'1" x 16'2". An 8' ceiled basement runs the entire area under the main block of the house with a slightly more shallow crawl-space under the kitchen. The walls of the basement are in stretcher bond brick

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which has been covered with concrete stucco to halt advancing moisture intrusion. In the basement, there are four large (2'6" and 5' x 8' tall) brick piers, also with mechanical bond, that support the floor joists and the rest of the house.

The first floor has 10' ceilings and is divided by a central entry hall, with a parlor and pantry on the south side and a large living area on the north. The kitchen opens onto the back of the living area. The entry hall houses a large staircase that reaches all the way to the third floor, doubling around a central axis.

The second floor is also divided in two by the central stairs. The master bedroom encompasses the entire south side of this floor, covering both the parlor and pantry. The north side of the floor is equally divided into two subordinate bedrooms. Over the kitchen, are two small rooms that were servant quarters, accessed by a steep and turning stair from the kitchen. During restoration, these stairs were removed due to their disintegrated condition and were not replaced. All ceilings are 8' high.

The third and uppermost floor is, like the others, divided by the central stairs into north and south sides. These are each equally divided into two subordinate bedrooms, and a pair of small rooms forward and back of the central stairs. All the ceilings on this floor are 6'6".

The front facade is divided into five bays and the sides are divided into two. The first and second story windows are six-over-six lights double hung sash type, third floor are three-over-three lights double hung sash. All windows have wooden, ornamental louvered shutters. The roof is tin sheet, painted green.

The farm structures on the site all date with the house, although not all have survived. Those remaining are a large main barn (64'6" x 20'2"), a corn crib (30'5" x 28'6"), and a small shed (18'3" x 15'6:). All are of timber frame construction and covered with vertical planking. The barn and corn crib are roofed in corrugated sheet metal and the shed is done in tar paper.

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Historical Background and Structure:

When the farm was begun in the 1850-1860 era, the agricultural census showed 240 acres planted primarily in corn, oats and wheat with a cash value of \$18,000.00 for the farm. Ten years later, in 1870, the farm's value had jumped to \$25,000.00 and it comprised only 190 acres with grain production much lower than in the previous decade. The large crop that seems to have boosted this farm's value was a peach orchard which had produced \$2,500.00 of income in 1869. But the peach industry of this area was doomed and this farm like many others, was to suffer. The agricultural census for 1880 shows a marked drop in farm cash value to \$15,000.00 and overall farm production was down to \$2,569.00 with a 2,900 peach tree orchard on the farm. The orchard was not making money and a shift to livestock, specifically milk cows and feed grains seemed to have bailed the farm out of its economic troubles. This property remained in the Clayton family until 1952, when the present owners purchased it from Elizabeth Clayton.

Nomination by Richard Lush



CHAPMAN
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