

SWEET POTATO HOUSES OF SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE  
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION

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United States Department of the Interior  
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# National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

## A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, Delaware

## B. Associated Historic Contexts

Agricultural Trends of Delaware's Lower Peninsula/Cypress Swamp Zone 1880-1940

## C. Geographical Data

Sussex County, Delaware: Little Creek Hundred  
Broad Creek Hundred

(Though potato houses listed in this nomination are located specifically in Little Creek and Broad Creek Hundreds, examples will likely be found in adjoining areas of Sussex County. For this reason the whole of Sussex County is designated the geographical area for this property type—the sweet potato house.)

☐ See continuation sheet

## D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

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Date

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## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

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Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

### Agricultural Trends of Delaware's Lower Peninsula/Cypress Swamp Zone 1880-1940

As early as 1868, the Delaware State Directory acknowledged the propensity of Sussex County soil for sweet potato cultivation. The directory reported, "the sweet potatoes of Southern Delaware, have a richness and sweetness of flavor, which we do not find in the Carolina potato nor even those grown on the rich fresh soils of Texas. This excellence is due doubtless, to the peculiar character of the soil, and the mildness and uniformity of the climate..." (Hancock, p. 130) The author further elaborated, "Delaware ought to raise one hundred bushels of sweet potatoes, where it now does one; and the farmers of Sussex County, instead of growing a few bushels for their own use...ought to supply in a great measure the markets of Philadelphia and New York..." (Hancock p. 130) These statements would prove prophetic, for at the turn of the century the cultivation of the sweet potato was begun in earnest. It had remained a consistent secondary crop with an annual average of 100,000 bushels throughout the last half of the nineteenth century. However, in the first years of the twentieth century it was produced in unprecedented quantities. Between 1901 and 1920 the average number of bushels grown per annum rose to 440,000, four times the quantity of the preceding decades. Sweet potatoes remained a chief crop of the area until the 1940s when black rot, a highly destructive root disease, and rising labor costs frustrated further attempts at profitable sweet potato cultivation.

Agricultural statistics recorded in Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series, 1866-1974, Bulletin No. 419, track the rise of the sweet potato in Delaware. Between 1868 and 1900 a consistent 2,000 acres of sweet potatoes were harvested yielding an average of 50 bushels per acre, and having an average annual value of production of \$126,000. Beginning in 1901 the acres of sweet potatoes harvested, yield per acre, and value of production steadily rose. Sweet potatoes became a dominant crop between 1901-1940 and experienced a special heyday in the years between 1915 and 1925.

During this period (1901-1940), the acres of sweet potatoes harvested climbed from 2,000 to an average of 6,000 acres per year. The yield per acre rose to as much as 96 bushels in 1922, while the general average was 77 bushels per acre.

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The average value of production jumped from the \$126,000 of 1868-1900, to \$779,000 between 1901 and 1940. These figures are related to corresponding fluctuations of the seasonal price per bushel and the quantity of the crop grown. For example in 1910 a 40% increase in price (\$.84 to \$1.25 per bushel), and 300% increase in units of production are responsible for the 490% increase in the total value of production. Farmers were growing more sweet potatoes and getting a higher price per bushel in 1910 than in 1900. On the other hand, in 1930 one sees a 50% decrease in annual value of production while the price increased 2% from \$2.13 to \$2.18 per bushel. Such a decrease must be due either to the quantity produced or the price received. In this case the price per bushel actually increased. The 50% decrease in annual value must therefore be attributed to a smaller quantity of potatoes grown, and not to a decrease in price. In this year (1930) there was a 51% decline in bushels produced. 592,000 bushels were grown in 1920 and only 287,000 in 1930. This drastic decline may be a result of the devastating stem rot or black rot which would soon wipe out large scale growing in the area. The accompanying graphs reveal these, and other production related statistics in Delaware quite clearly. The most evident trend reflected in the graphs is the emergence of the sweet potato from its status as a minor (but consistent) staple crop in the nineteenth century, to a major cash crop in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

A similar pattern of production is apparent nationwide. Between 1879 and 1909 the national acreage of sweet potatoes increased 44.2 percent while the national number of bushels produced increased 77.5 percent. Statistics of Agriculture in the 12th (1900), 13th (1910), 14th (1920), and 15th (1930) censuses provide a comprehensive picture of the status of the sweet potato crop in the United States. The dominant sweet potato region was the Southern Atlantic States. The 1900 census reported that "the area of its [sweet potato] extensive production is confined mainly to southern

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states". Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, South Carolina, and Texas cultivated 52.6 percent of the sweet potato acreage in 1899. The crops of these five southern states combined with the crops of Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Florida, New Jersey, Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri, and Illinois, comprised 93.1 percent of the country's sweet potato crop. The 25 counties growing the largest quantities of sweet potatoes in 1899 were located in Virginia, New Jersey, North and South Carolina, Maryland, Louisiana, and Alabama.

Delaware's contribution to the national sweet potato crop does not appear too substantial in comparison with the major sweet potato producing areas listed above. In 1920 Delaware was cultivating 9,813 acres of sweet potatoes and producing 1,500,000 bushels while southern states such as Georgia, North Carolina and Alabama were growing well over 50,000 acres and producing over 5,000,000 bushels.

The national rank of Delaware among the 39 sweet potato producing states fluctuated only slightly between 1900-1930. National ranking was as follows; 1900-23rd, 1910-17th, 1920-14th, and 1930-22nd. Delaware, largely by virtue of size, did not make a lasting impact on the national crop, though its rank as the 14th largest sweet potato producing state in 1920 was a significant achievement and is clearly reflected in the accompanying graphs as well as in the number of potato houses built in Delaware around 1920.

The Delaware sweet potato crop should perhaps be considered as a part of the aggregate crop from the Delmarva region. The combined crops of Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware did impact the national market. Virginia was consistently in the top five sweet potato producing states and the combined bushels from the Delmarva Peninsula between 1900-1930 exceeded the crops of all sweet potato producing states except the Carolinas and Georgia.

Though Delaware's contribution to the national sweet potato crop was not

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large, the impact of the sweet potato crop on Delaware was tremendous. A statistical comparison illustrates its impact quite clearly. Between 1900-1910 the national average of sweet potato acreage increased 19.3 percent, the number of bushels produced increased 39.3 percent, and the price per bushel rose 78 percent. In Delaware at the same time, sweet potato acreage increased 150 percent, bushels produced rose 296 percent, and the price 49 percent. The escalated scale of sweet potato production was substantially higher than that found on the national level. The significance of the sweet potato crop to Delaware agricultural history is best understood on a statewide, rather than a nationwide basis. The substantial escalation of sweet potato production in the state impacted the landscape and culture in very tangible ways.

In southwestern Delaware, particularly in Little Creek and Broad Creek hundreds, Sussex County, the economic emergence of the sweet potato led to the development of a corresponding farm building - the potato house. The potato houses are a disappearing property type. No longer representative of a dominant crop they are falling into disrepair and being pulled down. Those which remain have been adapted to contemporary farm use and transformed into barns, storage sheds, stables, and in rare cases into houses. Much of the knowledge and understanding of both the construction and function of the potato house came from numerous interviews with ex-sweet potato farmers, while many architectural details of surviving houses were determined by construction "ghosts" such as nailing patterns and stud markings. Extensive photographs of potato house exteriors revealed typical identifying features including minimal fenestration and chimneys. From the data collected it is possible to reconstruct the architectural and agricultural historic context of sweet potato cultivation and marketing in southwestern Delaware.

A sweet potato house is a tall (two or three story), narrowly proportioned frame building heated with either a coal or wood burning

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stove. The buildings typically present gable-end fronts. Examples range in size from the Stanley Potato House measuring approximately 17 x 23 feet (CRS# 6723) to the Chipman Potato House measuring 24 x 36 feet (CRS # 5873). A main entry and second floor loading door generally occupy the main gable end while a single window on first and second floors may often be found on the rear gable elevation. Loading wagons drew up beneath second floor loading doors and the potatoes were passed into and out of the house in baskets by laborers standing on the wagons. In rare cases such as at the Hitch Potato House (CRS# 5859,) a pulley was rigged above the second floor door while a projecting platform was constructed for workers hoisting potatoes into the second floor. In many houses a small ventilation window was placed in the attic story of the front and rear gables. The Collins (#6754), Rider (#6820), Moore (#6664), Ralph (#6800), and Wright (#6758) potato houses all accord with this description.

Potato houses were designed exclusively for the storage and curing of sweet potatoes. During the months of potato habitation (October-February) the building had to be kept at a constant temperature of 50 degrees fahrenheit. This constant temperature insured the long life of the harvested sweet potato. Much of the building's structural design results from this climatic necessity of temperature control. Floors and ceilings were often slated, and occasionally platforms which Norman Lowe and Marshall Phillips called palettes were installed in the storage bins in order to allow warm air to circulate beneath the bins and to prevent the damp and cold of the ground from seeping in. The Phillips Potato House used palettes (#6786). In addition, a gap of approximately four inches between the side walls and the ceiling is characteristic and further facilitated the circulation of air into the second story. Norman Lowe described a type of false wall installed for the same purpose. The potato house at the Lowe farm (destroyed in the 1960s) employed such a wall which separated exterior wall layers from interior sheathing with three or four inch studs creating

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in effect a hollow wall. This system is still in evidence at the Chipman Potato House (#5873). A final ventilation element is frequently found in the attic floor where a trap door or a sliding panel allows the air from (open) gable end windows to enter the lower floors. The ventilation provided by the trap door was particularly important in the early spring when there was a danger of the house becoming too warm. The Rider Potato House (Cr# 6820) has a good example of this feature.

The wood or coal burning stove was placed towards the center or back of the house and according to Mr. Speare and Mr. Phillips, frequently set about eight inches into the floor (generally cement). A stove pipe often ran through the center of the first floor under the ceiling, while an interior chimney drew warm air up to the second floor. As mentioned above, climate control within the house (maintaining 50 degrees fahrenheit consistently) was a primary concern. One of the chores well remembered by sweet potato farmers is the tending of the stove. After the first frost (generally October) the stove had to be checked and fueled each morning and evening. Pauline Carmean remembers that for her father "the last thing he did before he went to bed was walk down to the potato house and check the stoves." When he was 13 or 14 years old Marshall Phillips was responsible for the stove at his father's house (#6786). He recalls, "It was my duty to walk from the other farm just about a mile, fix the fire (shake the ashes, put the coal on, and set the draft) go back home and walk one and a quarter miles in the other direction to the country school.. every morning and then again in the evening."

Insulation was a primary concern due to the necessity of maintaining a constant temperature. Potato houses have up to three layers of siding, generally weatherboard nailed to diagonal board, nailed again to interior planking. There is evidence that further insulation was found in the use of sawdust, and in a paper known as "red rosin" or "sissle craft". All windows had tightly fitting hatches, while both first and second level



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doors often had an exterior hinged door, and an interior sliding door.

The gable fronted potato house set out on a center aisle plan is the most frequently encountered potato house design. However, within this basic type one discovers subtle variations. The two areas which reflect significant variety are the fenestration and the plan of the building. It has been mentioned that minimal fenestration is characteristic of potato house construction. Blank walls were a sensible means of retaining heat in the house because they presented a unified front against drafts and inclement weather. At the Phillips (#6786) and Chipman (#5873) Potato Houses however, there are an inordinate number of windows on all walls. This approach gives the building a distinctly "house-like" appearance and one wonders if the motivation was one of aesthetics, pride, or model.

Two distinct floor plans emerge in surveys of existing houses. The distinguishing elements of the plans relate to the arrangement of the potato houses' storage bins. Two primary plan types have been recorded in the field. The first plan consists of a central hall flanked by deep, narrow, three-sided bins rising to ceiling height as seen in the Collins (#6754), Chipman (#5873-first and third floors), Wright (#6758) and Hearn (#5761) houses. The second plan placed the narrow, three-sided bins back to back in the center of the house with a two or three foot walkway around the bins providing loading access. This plan was used in the Phillips (#6786) and Chipman (#5873-second floor) houses. Five houses being nominated were found with bins intact, the Hearn (#5761), Chipman (#5873), Collins (#6754), Wright (#6758), E.L. Hitch (#5859) houses.

The architectural origins of the potato house are unclear. Interviews with contemporary farmers reveal that the buildings were frequently copied from farm to farm. Mr. Carl Hastings remembers that his potato house (destroyed in the 1960s), built in the late 1920s was used directly as a model for the Spear Potato House (#7421) which is no longer eligible due to deterioration, is a two-story, gable fronted frame structure with triple

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sheathing and tri-part fenestration on gable ends (including first and second floor loading doors and small gable ventilation windows). Builders were sent to view Mr. Hasting's building in order to replicate it for Mr. Spear. The recollections of Pauline Carmean, whose father Ernest Chipman built the Chipman Potato House (CrS #5873), also reflect that architectural duplication was a common practice. She reported that if a farmer had need of a particular, new building he hired a carpenter and the carpenter built the building according to his own experience or on a model of his or his employer's choice. In the latter case he would "go to get a good look at the building to be copied and proceed." From these and other oral confirmations, it may be assumed that architectural duplication was a building custom common to southwestern Delaware. On the Chipman Farm, Ernest Chipman himself was the carpenter. In building the potato house he hired his friend Alva Hudson who came and stayed on the farm while the house was built. What model was used is unknown, but with its attention to detail both structurally and decoratively (window moldings, 6/6 light windows) the Chipman Potato House, built in 1913, represents a rather high style potato house. According to Mrs. Carmean, her father was extremely proud of this building.

The yearly cycle of "getting out" a sweet potato crop (sprouting, transplanting, harvesting, curing/storing, and marketing) was the lengthiest of any crop of the period. Begun in February, a crop was not completely ready for market until early November. The first step of the cycle was seeding the potato beds in February or early March to produce potato sprouts which would grow to be the final potato plant and fruit. Seed potatoes (the most perfect products from the previous crop) were fragile, and their successful sprouting was necessary to the continuation of the planting process. They were planted in heated potato beds where they remained until late April or early May.

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These potato beds were usually long, narrow, and framed in wood. A width of four feet was common. Norman Lowe explained, "you could have them as long as you wanted- for width the general rule was that you keep your knees out of the bed but could reach to the center, just about four feet".

As in their storage, sweet potatoes required heat during the sprouting process as well. Two systems were employed in heating the beds. The first was water based and involved the laying of terra cotta pipes beneath the bed and supplying heat with a "firebox" built on one end of the bed. The firebox was fueled by slow burning oak wood. Water fed into the pipes was thus heated and circulated. A second procedure was detailed by numerous farmers and involved the generation of heat by compost. A bed was lined with corn shucks and covered with manure. The sandy soil necessary for potato seedlings was then laid on top of the manure, seeded, and covered with eight inches of pine shats (needles). A final measure of insurance in this hothouse system was covering the whole with a muslin tarp treated with linseed oil. Tarps were laid over a wooden tent-like frame running the length of the bed and standing approximately one foot high. The tarp prevented the sprouts from being smothered while containing the heat produced. The beds were closely tended through the early months of spring to insure against freezing and burning.

The beginning of May brought the transplanting season when sprouts were moved (by hand) from the heated beds to larger unsheltered fields. The fields were first laid out with a mule drawn marking machine consisting of a triangular metal frame with adjustable scoring spokes at the base. These spokes, set approximately 32 inches apart for sweet potato fields, delineated the future rows. Transplanting was a long and tiring process. Marshall Phillips recounted his experiences with this stage of sweet potato production. He recalls, "the transplanter that I got familiar with was operated by three men or three persons, sometimes it was women...be two seats down near the earth, riding close to the earth like these race

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cars...one man sitting up on a barrel of water driving horses or mules, in most cases mules". The seats were reserved for the laborers who from their low vantage point planted sprouts every 16 or 17 inches, dousing each with a portion of water from the water barrel. These laborers were generally the lighter and younger members of the work force who even with combined weights would not "be heavy on the mules" which were already pulling a large water barrel and driver. Marshall Phillips, who of his own description was "nothing more than a midget at the time" frequently occupied the left hand seat on the transplanting machine (being also left handed), while a young boy from a neighboring farm occupied the right hand seat. Norman Lowe, who also transplanted from a similar rig pointed out the concentration required and discomfort endured. "You couldn't be looking out and counting the birds flying around while you were doing it [transplanting]," he explained and "if it was awful dry, when you got out nobody knew who you were-the dust just turned you a different color." Throughout the summer months (June-August) the fields were watered and weeded. Pauline Carmean remembers that "digging grass out was a job".

The harvest of the mature sweet potatoes began in early October. The potatoes were loosened by mule drawn plow, "scratched out" (loosened potatoes pulled from soil), piled by hand to the side of the rows, and gathered in 5/8 baskets which were then loaded on a wagon and brought to the potato house. (5/8 baskets were the common basket size at the time and equaled approximately a single 1/2 bushel) "To start with" said Norman Lowe, "you plowed them out". Then it would "take you most time to noon time to scratch 'em out and then after lunch time we'd start picking up in the 5/8 basket and haul them to the house and put them in the potato house". Pauline Carmean relates the same sequence. "We had a plow that went down under them [potato plants] and lifted them up and then somebody went along and pulled these plants up with the potatoes [scratching out], and you picked them up and threw them in a pile and then we'd come along

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with baskets and pick them up". Full baskets were loaded on a wagon which carried the load to the potato house.

At the potato house the potatoes were dumped from 5/8 baskets and kept loose in the house bins. Some bins held as much as 400-450 5/8 baskets (approximately 220 bushels) of loose potatoes. A tag with the potato owner's name was nailed to the appropriate bin along with the number of baskets deposited. On very good years, or in very prosperous potato houses, both upper and lower halls were packed tightly with full 5/8 baskets in addition to the full bins. Once they were dumped in the house's storage bins the process of "kiln-drying" began.

The sweet potato is not edible when it is first harvested. It must be thoroughly dried in order to assure the evaporation of moisture within the potato which will lead to rot if not properly extracted. The ventilation within the house was crucial to the kiln-drying process, as was the careful and continual tending of the stove during the colder months of storage. Before the cold weather set in windows and doors of the house were left open to facilitate air circulation. It was preferable that the kiln-drying process be conducted naturally, however after the first frost, window and door hatches were secured, and the stove in the house was fired up. Marshall Phillips explains; "We kept the house open to dry the potatoes, but after it got so cold, say mid-October early November then you had to close the house and you hoped you had gotten rid of most of the moisture and let nature kiln-dry the potatoes, but after that to keep them from freezing you had to close it and then that's when you built your fire. And that fire was continuous, it didn't go out. When you started say the 20 October, 1 November until April that was a continuous fire".

A kiln-drying period of no less than one month was required. Potatoes were ready for market in late November or early December though frequently parts of the crop remained in the house through March and as Mr. Phillips exclaimed, "The month didn't govern when you sold, the price governed when

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you sold. If you found a ready market in November you sold then".

Before going to market potatoes were dumped on a burlap covered table (to prevent bruising) and sorted. Types of sweet potatoes included the common Big Stem, Up-the-River, and Little Stem varieties used in sweet potato pies, as well as the Nancy Hall, Hayman, and Southern Queen considered too expensive to use in pies and remembered best as big, juicy, baking potatoes. Mr. Phillips favored the Nancy Hall which he described as a "round, reddish juicy potato, and when you put it in the oven and baked it you almost had to clean the oven out cause of the juice-and oh boy was it good!" All of these varieties were grown in southwestern Delaware.

The women of the surrounding farms were often responsible for sorting the potatoes by size and type, packing them in bushel hampers, and "capping" the hampers off. "Capping off" was a term used for making the top "look pretty" as Mrs. Carmean explained and involved a variety of deliberate patterns. (Similar practices are found today in any produce display.) The men helped packing, loaded the wagons, and delivered orders to box cars and barges in Laurel and Seaford.

The economics of sweet potato production varied widely. In gathering oral history it became clear that two levels of collection and distribution were at work in the area. The first was the level of the small farmer who might have a horse, a cow, a single plow, a cultivator, and 30-40 acres. This farmer grew a modest sweet potato crop and rented a storage bin in a nearby potato house. This "small" farmer depended on family and local labor. As Mrs. Carmean recalls both she, and friends spent many hours tending the potato fields (hoeing and weeding) while an older group of hired hands (often the same group year-to-year) were responsible for scratching the potatoes out and transferring them to the house. "A group would come along and scratch them out for so much a basket" she said. Norman Lowe recounts that at his family's potato house (destroyed in 1960s)

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older neighbors were generally hired for the harvest work, but he also did his fair share. "In the fall of the year when they're taking up sweet potatoes you had any number of jobs", Lowe said, "I worked in the field, I helped load them [the potatoes] on the wagon, and I helped bring them up to the house, and helped sometimes hand them into the potato house sometimes didn't, sometimes I was in the potato house putting them in the bins".

There was some of labor trading amongst the local farms as well. One farmer (or family member) would help with a part of the production on a neighboring farm and the favor would be returned in kind. Marshall Phillips recalls that his father traded labor with Reuben Collins, a neighboring farmer. "Gene Gurley worked for Reub Collins, Gene would help us put the plants out [transplanting], then I had to go help Mr. Reuben put his plants out".

Not every farm had a potato house and in many cases running a house depended upon its use by neighboring farmers. Generally, a farmer rented a bin for a season, (2 cents per 5/8 basket during the 1930s) and extracted his crop en masse or piecemeal as markets were located. Occasionally a farmer grew sweets strictly for his own consumption. In such instances he would also rent a bin, but remove potatoes only as his family needed. There were those too, who owned a house but filled it with only their own produce. A case in point is the Phillips Potato House (Cr# 6786) where only Phillips sweet potatoes, or sweet potatoes purchased by Mr. Phillips Sr. were stored and cured. "If we had a vacancy" explained his son "or could see that we had had a poor crop and there were spaces available then my father might go out to some of the local farmers and buy enough potatoes so that at the end of the digging season [harvest] the potato house was full". Massing a quantity of potatoes in this manner was directly related to a second level of collection and distribution which involved the entrepreneurial energies of the hugely successful produce brokers of the region. And indeed Marshall Phillips says that his father and Mr. J. A.

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Morgan (largest produce broker of the era) worked closely together.

Throughout the 1920s and early 30s the dominant figure in the sweet potato market was James A. Morgan of Seaford. As retired farmers remember "Morgan was king." He apparently had an uncanny sense for the most profitable distribution of sweets. He played the market in a very real sense. It is reported that he always knew how large the area's crop was going to be, and speculated with considerable accuracy how best to unload the crop on the market. (For Morgan these markets included Pittsburgh, New York, and Boston, as well as Philadelphia and Baltimore) Many of the farmers worked closely with J. A. Morgan who purchased their harvest in full or in part.

Morgan crews were sent to the various potato houses under the supervision of a crew chief to "pack out" and haul orders to waiting box cars in Laurel or barges on the Nanticoke River in Seaford. A days work for these crews could consist of packing and loading as much as 600 bushels, the amount needed to fill a "D-6" box car. Linwood Hastings of Little Creek Hundred worked on one of Morgan's crews and reports, "There was a crew here, a crew over there, and maybe you worked in different crews every day". There were no set hours for the job. Crews worked until the assigned job was completed. Members of the crew received 10-12 cents per hour. Vic Moore of Seaford, and Harvey Hastings of Laurel were the top produce brokers of the 1930s and early 40s who dealt in sweet potatoes. Indeed Vic Moore ran what Linwood Hastings termed "the biggest potato house in the world". This house still stands on the bank of the Nanticoke River in Seaford but is now transformed into offices and has lost considerable integrity. It is not part of this nomination.

The organized labor force and sophisticated system of collection and distribution represented in the businesses of James Morgan and Vic Moore reflect the establishment of modern agricultural marketing and reveal the development of a production hierarchy within the sweet potato culture. One



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can imagine a hierarchical ladder with farmers producing for their own consumption occupying the bottom rungs, those with modest, saleable crops ranked a bit above, and those with potato houses or large crops at the top of the ladder. Produce brokers headed the hierarchy controlling the ultimate distribution patterns and determining possible profits and risks. Thus the sweet potato culture of southwestern Delaware functioned on both a community and an inter-state level, involving seasonal traditions and practices as well as economic realities based on the new developments in agricultural marketing.

The potato house is a direct reflection of prevalent agricultural trends in southwestern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of agricultural marketing. The transformation of the sweet potato from a local staple to a cash crop created the need for a distinct building type. Special problems of storage and curing, especially ventilation and heating systems, created unique and ingenious elements within that building type.

Distinguishing characteristics of the potato house include double or triple siding, tall and narrow proportions, minimal fenestration (typically on gable ends only), interior chimney, tightly fitting window and door hatches, interior ventilation devices (i.e. trap doors, gaps between walls and floors), and in rare cases evidence of interior potato bins. The building is generally a two story balloon frame structure of dimension cut lumber, sheathed with 6 inch weatherboards.

The potato houses listed in this nomination exhibit a variety of the characteristic elements listed above. Over time, as the function of the potato house became obsolete, alterations were made to the structures to render them useful to the modern farmer. The removal of potato bins and heating unit are the most frequently encountered alterations. Their removal

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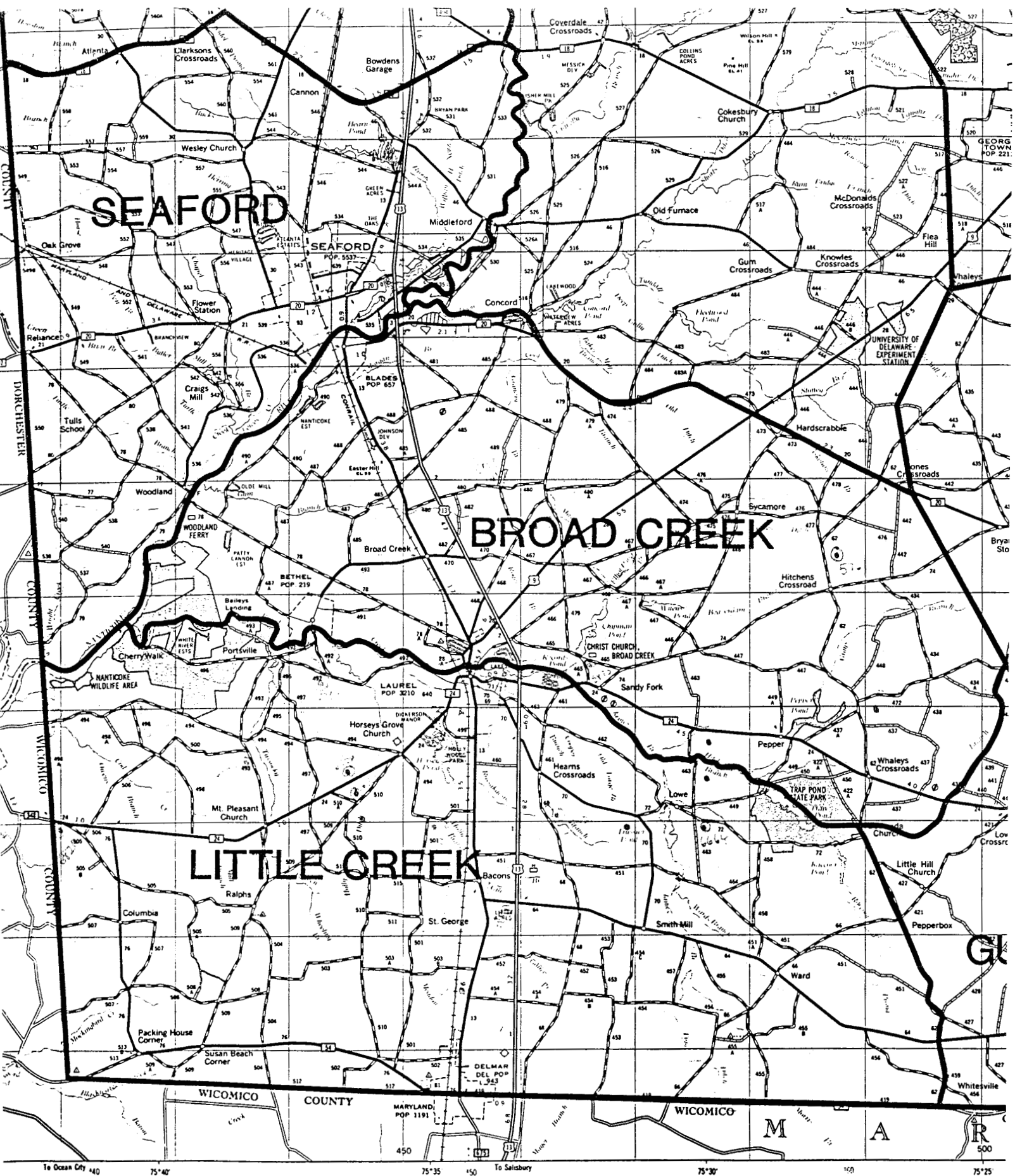
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opens the interior for machine and implement storage. (The most common use of potato houses today) Other alterations include the replacement of the original shingle roof with a metal or asphalt shingle roof, and occasionally the moving of the entire building to a site in closer approximation to other outbuildings. (Crs# 6820-Rider, # 6723-Stanley)

Rarely does one find any structural alterations. As a rule the potato houses continue to exhibit the basic form and appearance (described above) which makes them easily identifiable as a specific property type. Even in the rare instance where additions have been made such as with the Collins (#6754) and Rider (# 6820) houses there are no alterations to the original structural system. Both of these examples have lean-tos added to a lateral side, however, they abut the original structure and are not integrated with it.

The most radical alterations are found in the large houses of the produce brokers in Seaford and Laurel. In Laurel a potato house was converted into a four family housing unit and in Seaford into office headquarters for a local business. Neither of these remodeled potato houses are listed for consideration in this nomination. They stand as good examples of the adaptation of potato houses to modern functions but no longer retain their integrity as potato houses.

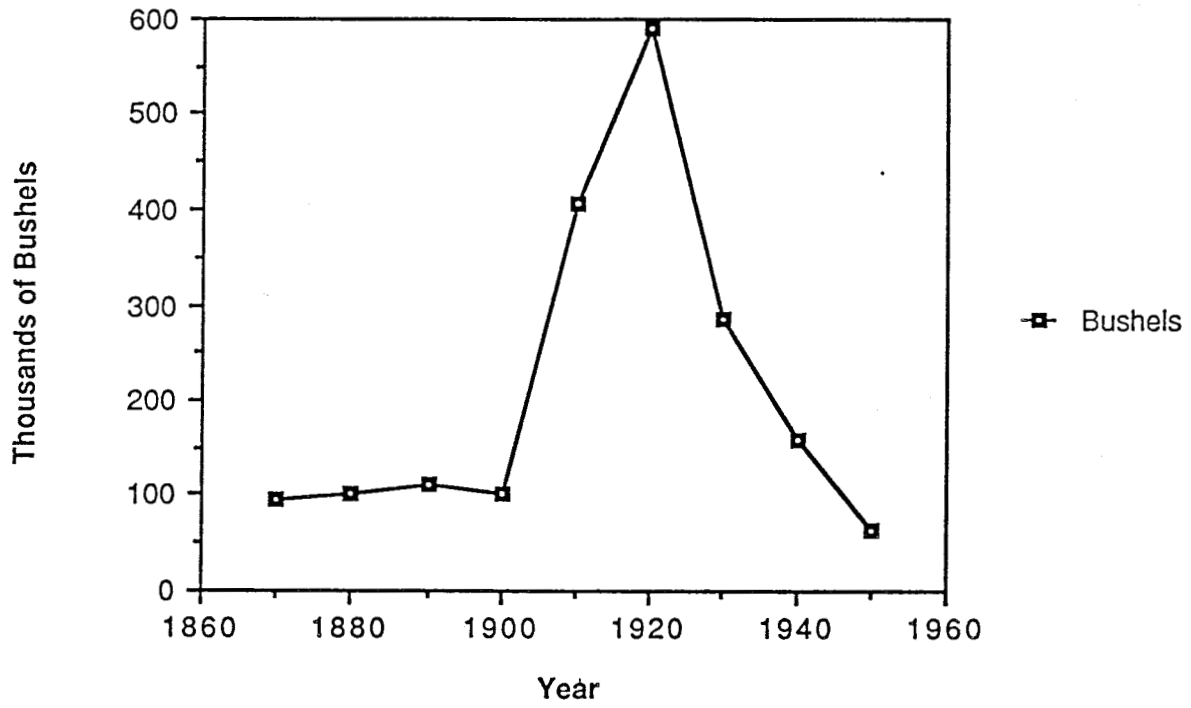
As the inhabitants of Little Creek and Broad Creek Hundreds repeatedly observed during oral history interviews, the potato house was to the landscape of the 1920s and 1930s as the broiler house is to the landscape today. They were everywhere. Norman Lowe explained, "Now the chicken business is carrying the people, then it was the sweet potato". As the only visible reflection of a once dominant form of agriculture, the potato houses of southwestern Delaware are highly significant both as an architectural type and as a vehicle for reconstructing elements of the sweet potato culture in Broad Creek and Little Creek Hundreds.



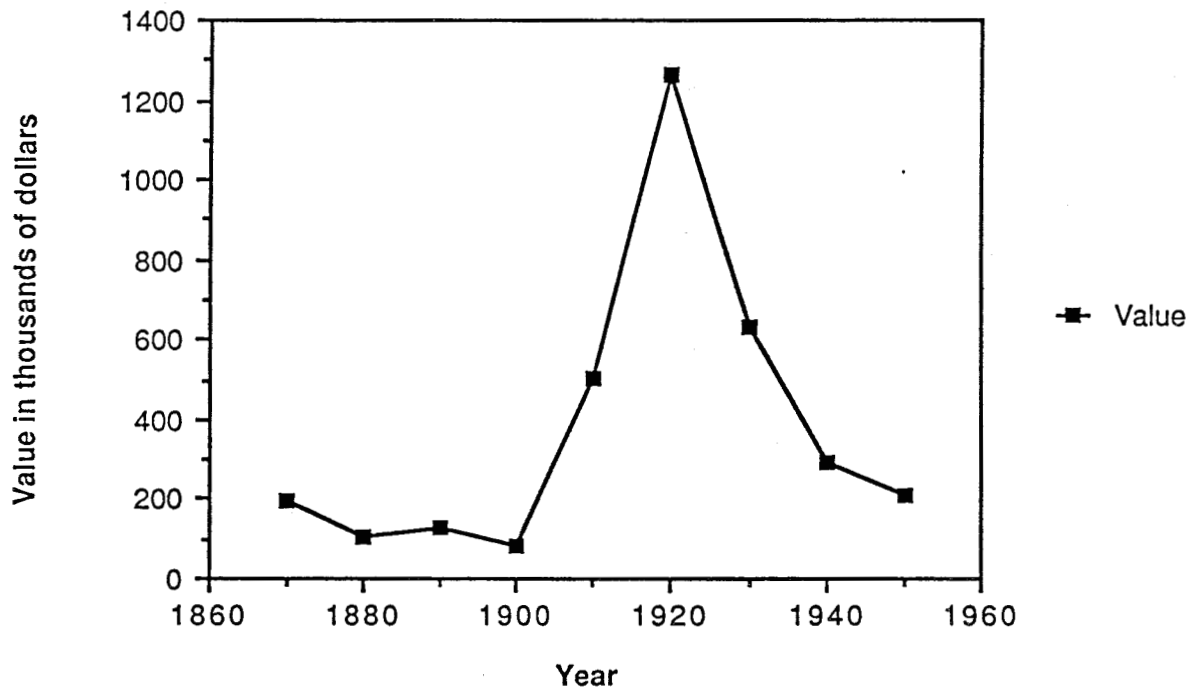
● = Potato House Sites

⊙ = Potato House Sites in this nomination

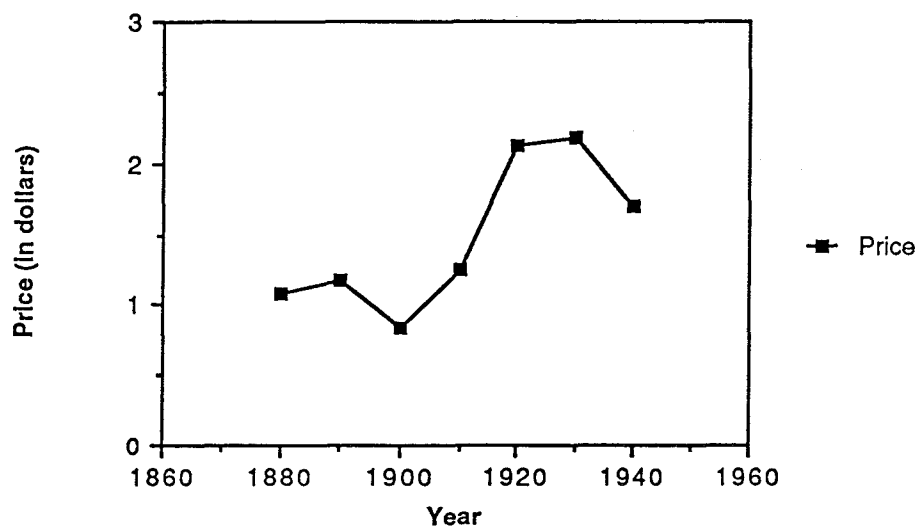
**Bushels Grown Per Year** (Delaware)



# Annual Value of Production (Delaware)

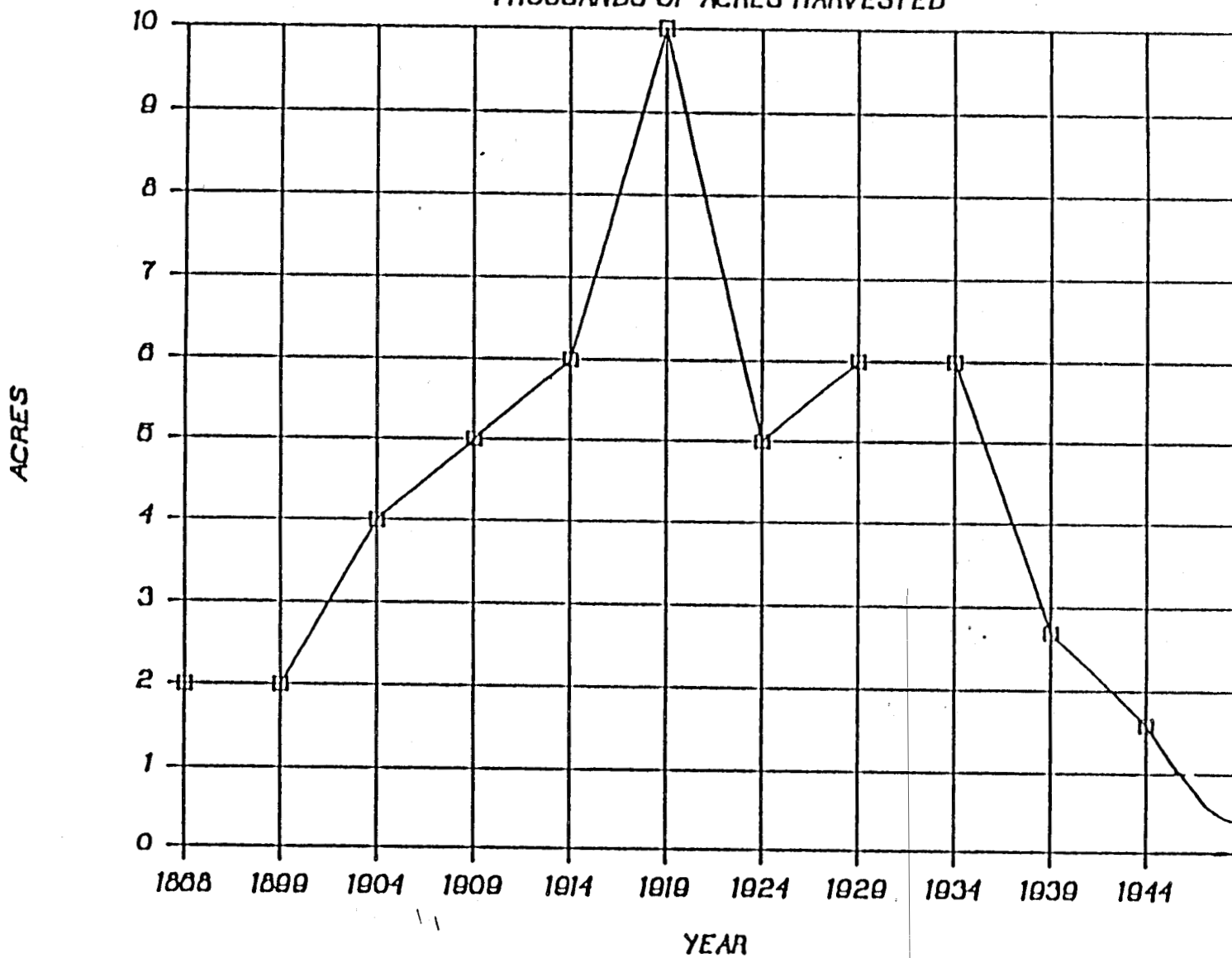


Average Price per Bushel (Delaware)



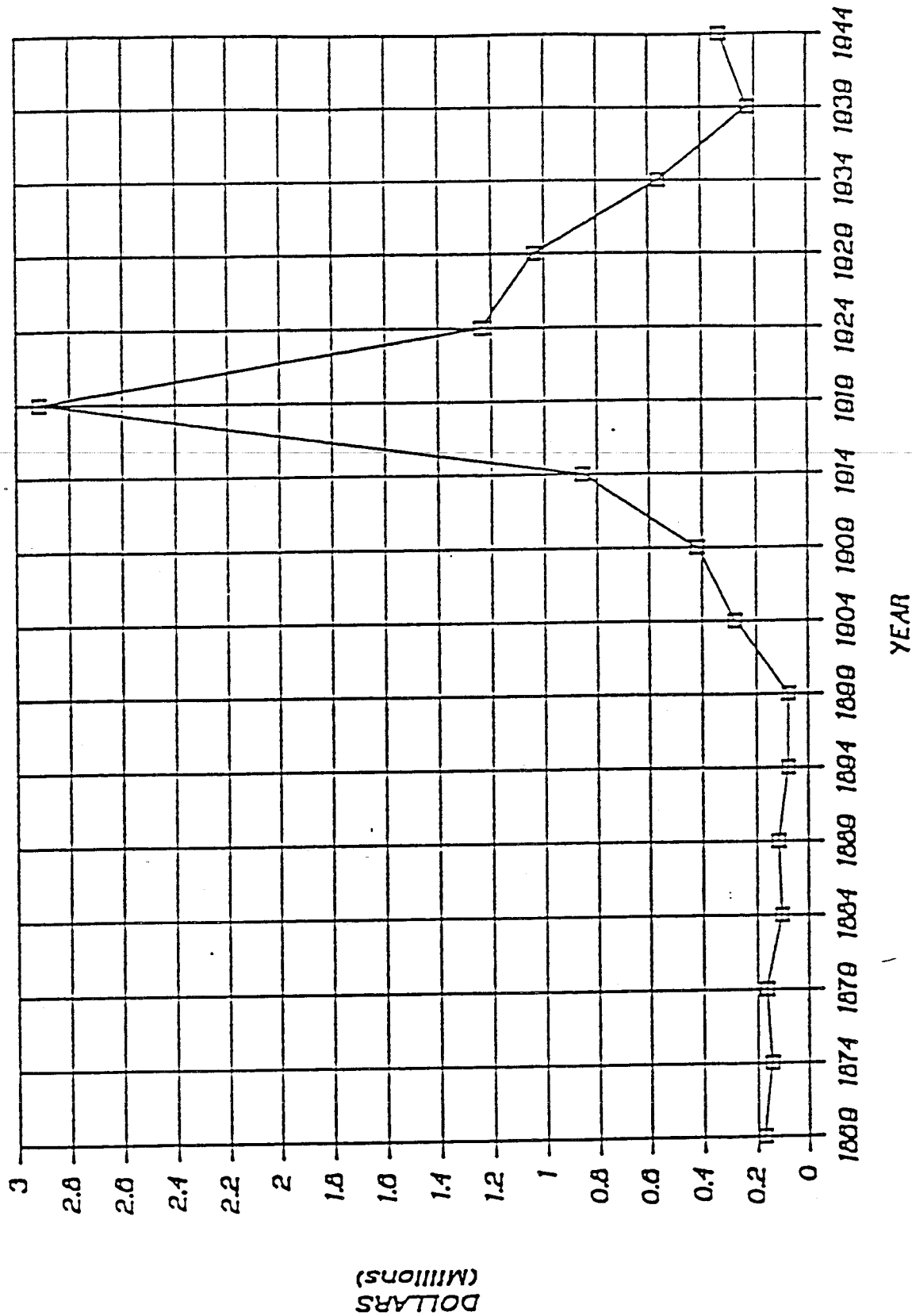
## SWEET POTATO CROP:

THOUSANDS OF ACRES HARVESTED



# SWEET POTATO CROP:

VALUE OF PRODUCTION

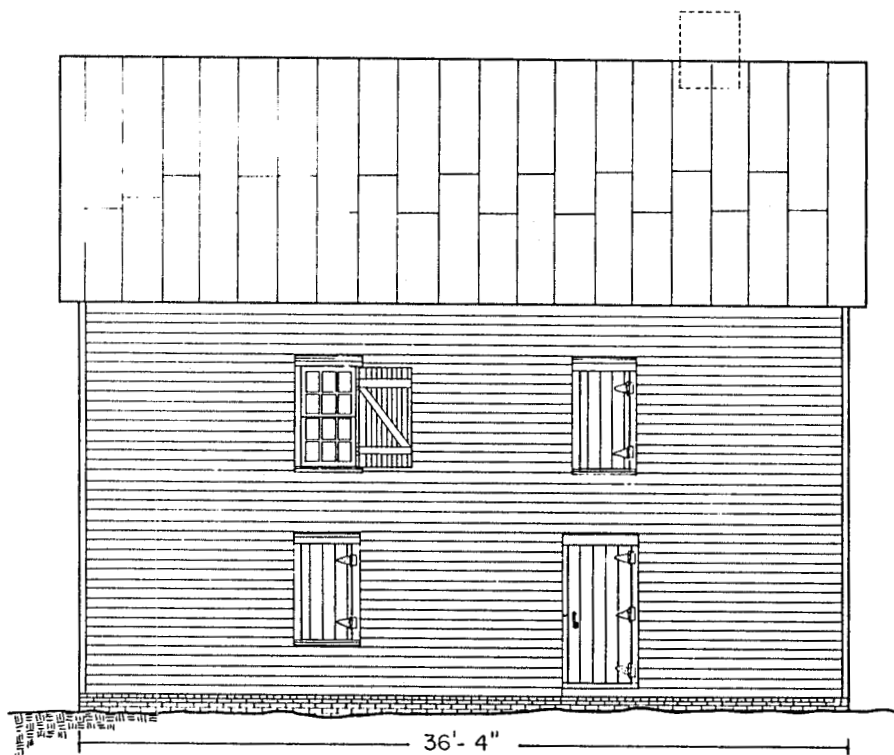
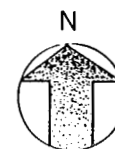




CRS#-5783



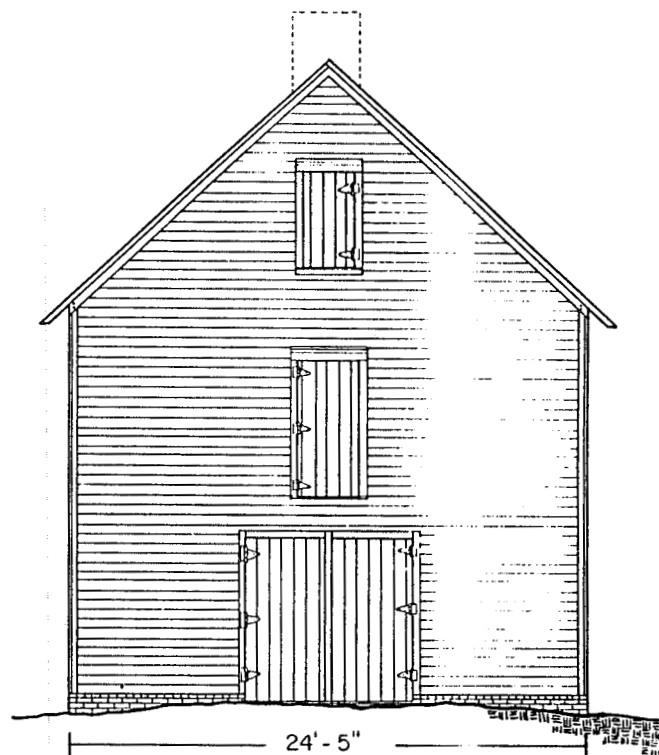
KEY	
	EXISTING
	MISSING
	EARTH



30' - 5"

36' - 4"

EAST ELEVATION



24' - 5"

SOUTH ELEVATION

0 1 2 3 4 5  
SCALE 1/4" = 1' - 0"

DRAWN BY: JUDITH QUINN

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE

CHIPMAN SWEET POTATO HOUSE  
ROAD 465, BROADCREEK HUNDRED, LAUREL VICINITY, SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE

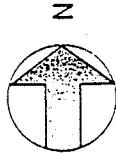
SURVEY NO.

HISTORIC AMERICAN  
BUILDINGS SURVEY  
SHEET OF SHEETS

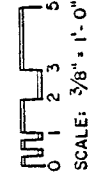
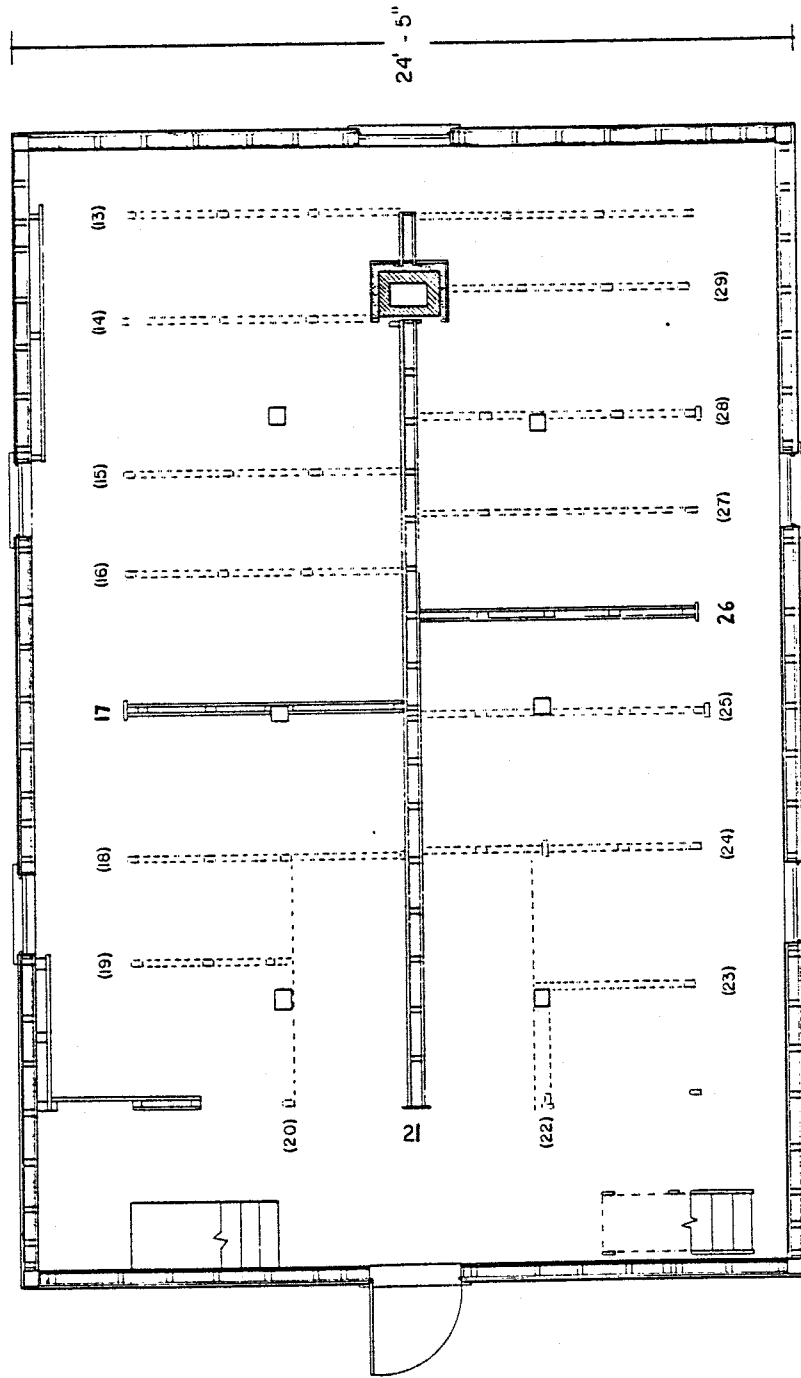
PROPERTY OF CONSERVATION  
HALL NUMBER

IF REPRODUCED, PLEASE CREDIT HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NAME OF DELINEATOR, DATE OF THE DRAWING

TRIM LINE



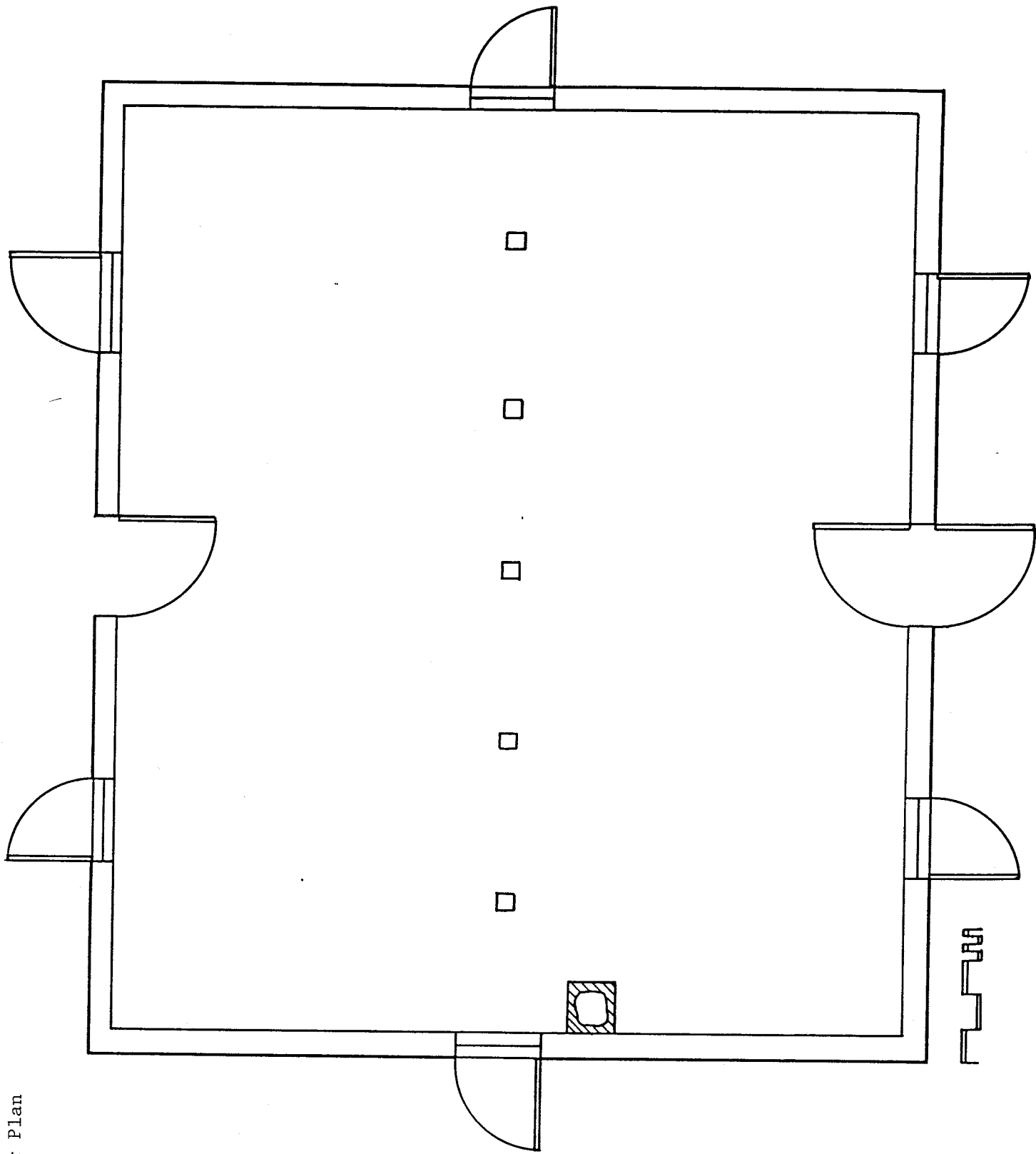
KEY	
— EXISTING	BRICK
— RECONSTRUCTED	21 EXISTING #
— OVERHEAD	(20) RECONSTRUCTED #
— STRAW	



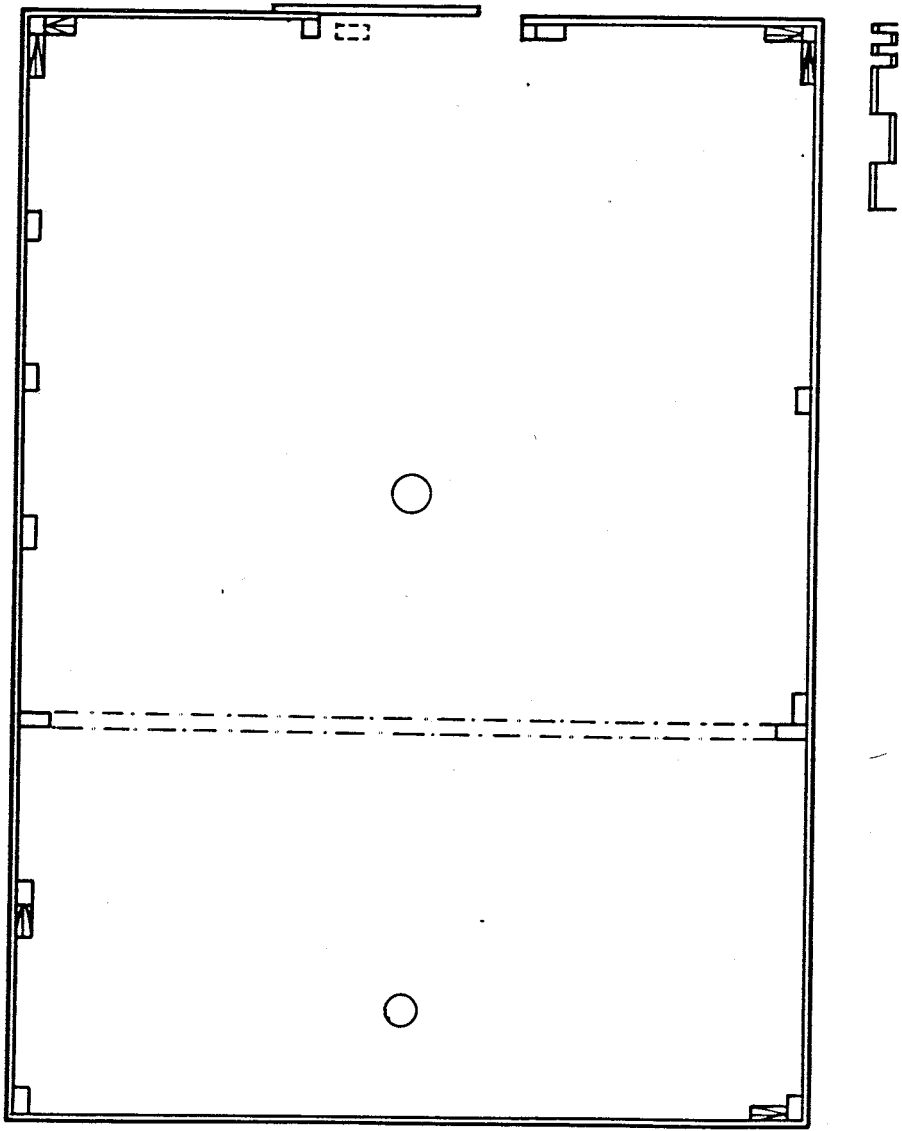
36' - 4"  
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Drawn by: JUDITH QUINN	NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE CHIPMAN SWEET POTATO HOUSE ROAD 465, BROADCREEK HUNDRED, LAUREL VICINITY, SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE	SURVEY NO.	HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY SHEET OF SHEETS
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR			
IF REPRODUCED PLEASE CREDIT HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NAME OF DELINEATOR, DATE OF THE DRAWING			

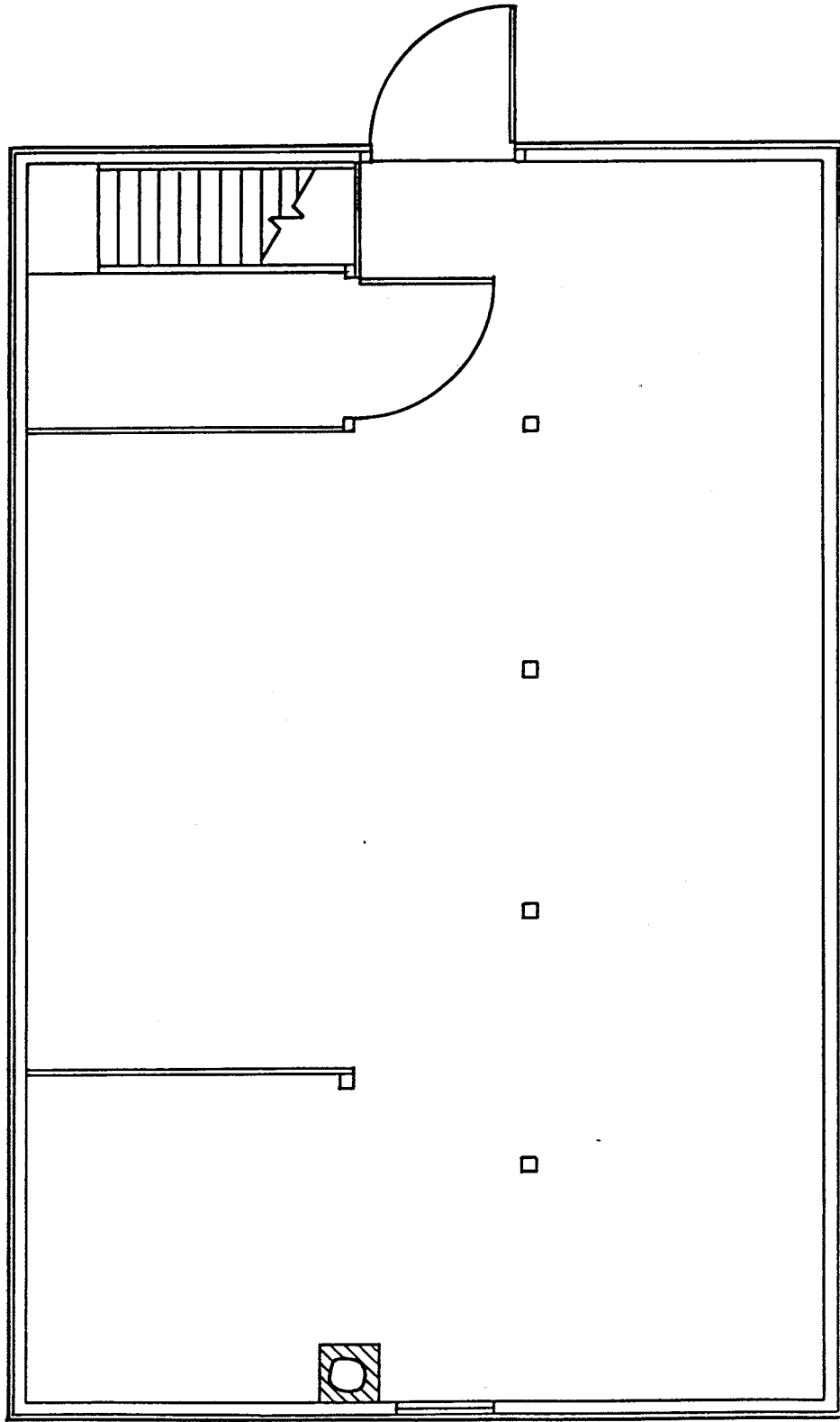
Phillips Potato House  
CRS#-6786  
First Floor Plan



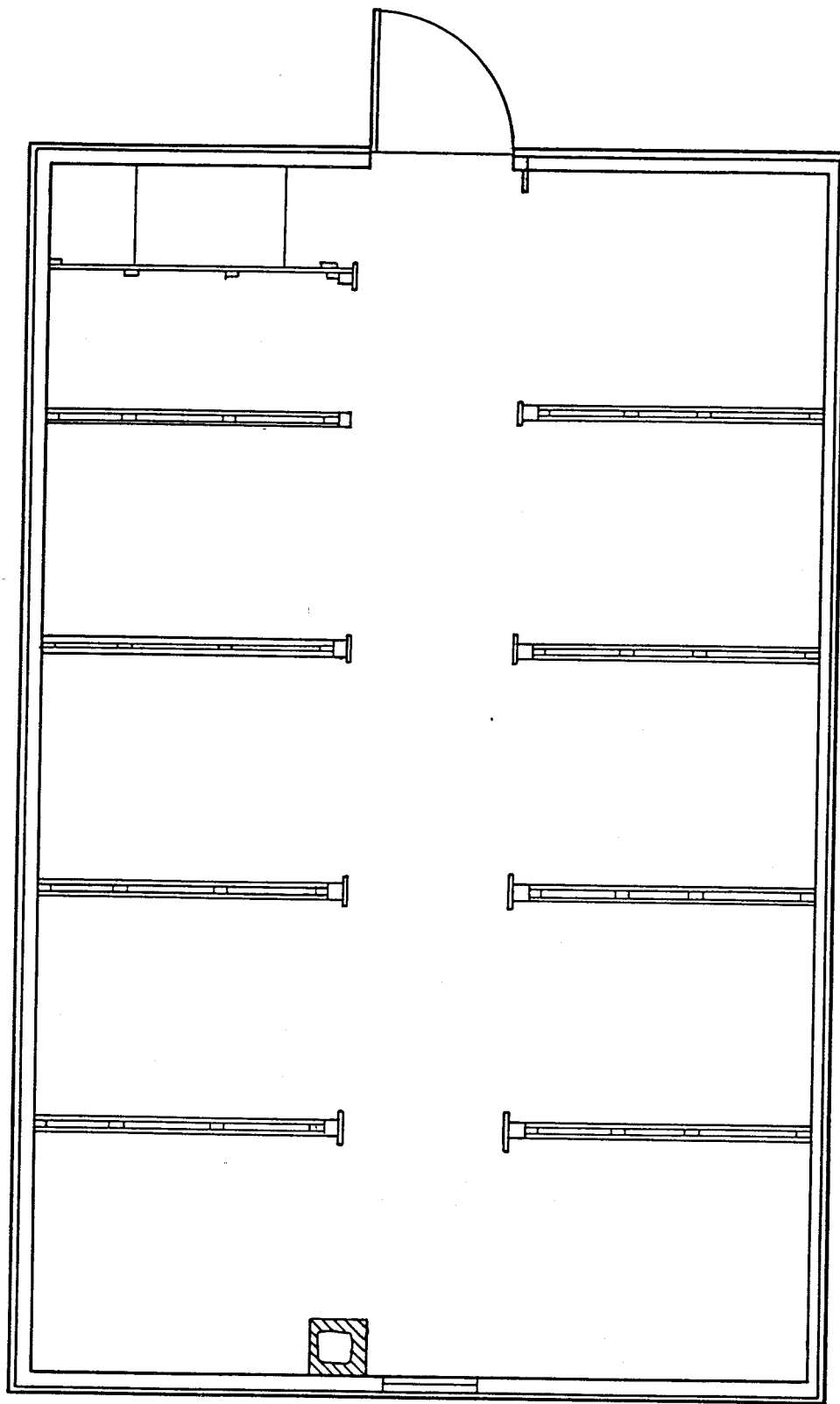
Stanley Potato House  
CRS#-6723  
First Floor Plan



Collins Potato House  
CRS#-6754  
First Floor Plan



Collins Potato House  
CRS#-6754  
Second Floor Plan



## F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type Sweet Potato House

### II. Description

The potato house is a distinct property type exhibiting repeated architectural features. A potato house is generally of tall, narrow proportions. The typical balloon frame construction is frequently oriented on a gable-end to gable-end axis. Building materials are invariably dimension cut lumber. Five inch weatherboards are the common siding material. The houses are from 1 and 1/2 to 3 stories tall with minimal fenestration. Lateral walls are frequently unfenestrated while front and rear gable ends often have a first, second, and attic story opening. All openings (windows and doors) were originally tightly shuttered. All potato houses contained an interior chimney (facilitating a coal or wood stove) as well as slated storage bins. All potato houses were double or triple sided for insulation purposes. Every potato house reflects a preoccupation with ventilation. Ventilation features encountered include large trap doors accessing attics, shuttered openings, slated storage bins,

### III. Significance

The potato houses listed in this nomination are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as excellent examples of buildings reflecting a broad historical trend, and as a significant architectural type. The potato house, as a functional type, relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation in Sussex County was one of the major manifestations of these changes in production practices and crop choices. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend in Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between

### IV. Registration Requirements

Features which make a particular potato house eligible for nomination include minimal fenestration, multiple siding, interior chimney, ventilation features, extant storage bins or evidence of bins, tightly fitting window and door hatches, gable-end to gable-end axis (plan), and triple tier fenestration on gable ends (i.e. first and second floor loading doors or windows and attic ventilation window).

An eligible potato house should have at least three of the above features for consideration. In addition condition of the building must be stable and any alterations must not interfere with the original structural system or significantly change exterior integrity. The potato house has become obsolete as a crop related agricultural building. As a result, building interiors rarely retain their original appearance. The weight of historical and architectural integrity thus must be borne by exterior appearance. Any potato houses which do retain portions of original interiors are invaluable but rare.

Deterioration due to neglect is a common occurrence within this property type and a reasonable amount of loss through deterioration can be sustained. However, if a building appears beyond repair it is not eligible and has not been listed.

☒ See continuation sheet

☐ See continuation sheet for additional property types

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F Page 1

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II. Description continued

and four or five inch gaps between walls and ceilings. The potato house is easily distinguishable from other agricultural outbuildings, appearing quite "house-like" in proportions and architectural features.

III. Significance continued

1910-1940, and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities and was developed as a distinct building type designed to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type. The potato houses listed in this nomination are significant examples of the property type retaining elements characteristic of potato house construction and function.



### G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

The multiple property listing for the Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, Delaware initially includes sweet potato houses in Little Creek and Broad Creek Hundreds, Sussex County. It is based on the Little Creek and Broad Creek architectural surveys and evaluations now located with the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

The typology of significant property types has been based on function and association with the agricultural trends of Sussex County in the period 1880-1940. The property type identified is associated with the context of Agricultural Trends of Delaware's Lower Peninsula/Cypress Swamp Zone 1880-1940 which has been identified in the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan. It was selected for its close association with the theme and its illustration of a structural type and functions relating to important aspects of agricultural developments in Sussex County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The standards of integrity were based on the National Register standards for assessing integrity. Information from research literature, survey data, field work, and oral history interviews was also used to assess the relative condition and scarcity of the property type and to determine the degree to which allowances should be made for alterations and deterioration.

☐ See continuation sheet

### H. Major Bibliographical References

Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900. Washington D.C.: United States Census Office, 1903.

Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1913.

Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922.

Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932.

Delaware Agricultural Statistics. Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419, Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- ☒ State historic preservation office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency

- ☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

### I. Form Prepared By

name/title Judith Quinn  
organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987  
street & number University of Delaware, Urban Affairs telephone 302-451-2394  
city or town Newark state DE zip code 19716

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number H Page 1

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### Bibliography continued

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Dover, Delaware, 1987.

Oral History Interviews. Retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, August 1986. Tapes in the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware 1609-1888. Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co., 1888.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Chipman Potato Houseother names/site number CRS#-5873

## 2. Location

street & number Road 465, Box 264☐ not for publicationcity, town Laurel☒ vicinitystate Delawarecode DEcounty Sussexcode 005zip code 19956

## 3. Classification

## Ownership of Property

☒ private☐ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

## Contributing

1

## Noncontributing

N/A buildings       sites       structures       objects1       Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, DelawareNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0

## 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 5. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls wood/weatherboard

roof tin

other concrete (first floor)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Chipman Potato House is a large, two story, balloon frame structure of tall, narrow proportions measuring 24 feet by 36 feet. It was built in 1913 by Joseph and Ernest Chipman with the help of Alva Hudson of Laurel, Delaware. It is located two miles northeast of Laurel lying on the east side of Road 465A and the south side of Road 465. The surrounding environment consists of cultivated fields of Indian corn, meadows, and small stands of trees. Chipman Pond lies directly to the northwest of the site and buildings in close proximity include the former Chipman Mills, Christ Church, and the former Joseph Chipman farm house. Additional outbuildings have been removed or rebuilt (i.e. cart shed into a garage). Originally the land and outbuildings of Ernest Chipman adjoined the property on the east and the two parcels functioned as one large family farm. There is no such unity today, and the potato house stands as the only remaining structure (with integrity) which reflects the former association of Joseph and Ernest Chipman's association. The farm finally passed from Chipman hands in the 1950s though parts of the adjoining farm of Ernest Chipman are still inhabited by his daughter Pauline Carmean. Crops grown on the Chipman Farm during the heyday of the sweet potato included Indian corn, and produce vegetables such as peas, tomatoes, and cucumbers as well as cantalopes and strawberries.

The Chipman Potato House stands as an exceptional example of potato house construction while representing a variation on the most frequently encountered potato house type. The greatest difference is found in the building's fenestration which has an unusual total of twelve windows as well as a main entry door on the front (south) gable end, and a side entry on the east lateral side of the building. Fenestration is generally limited to doors and windows on only the gable ends of the building. The main entrance at one time had interior

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

CRS#-5873

sliding doors characteristic in potato houses. This door has now been enlarged for tractor access but the sliding doors remain stored in the building. A second and third (attic) story loading door are also placed on the front gable end. Rear gable fenestration consists of first, second and third (attic) story windows. Lateral sides consist of two bays with two windows on first and second floors on the west elevation, and two second floor windows over a single window and side entry door on the east elevation. All windows and doors retain their original hinged shutters/hatches and hardware. In addition, windows on the lateral sides were originally glazed. Their six over six light window frames remain stored in the house. Glazed windows are an extraordinary feature in a potato house.

The building is of balloon frame construction with dimension cut lumber. A unique element in its structural system is the inclusion of four large samson posts which carry the major floor joists of second and third floors. These posts are mill cut posts measuring 6 by 6 (inches) and are capped by a trapezoidal cushion which in turn supports the overhead beam. Samson posts are generally found in more massive structures where additional support is required. Joseph and Ernest Chipman may have been imitating a structural device employed in their grist mill located just north of the potato house. The use of structural elements from the mill must remain purely speculative because the Chipman Mills were destroyed by fire in November, 1986.

The building's original narrow face, milled weatherboards are completely intact. Four layers of horizontal wood planking sheath the building. Insulating paper (red rosin) is still visible between the layers while sawdust and straw are packed around the interior brick chimney.

Like the fenestration, the plan of the Chipman Potato House is unique. The first and second floors do not follow the characteristic center aisle plan. Instead, intersecting partitions divided each (first and second) floors into four quadrants. Each quadrant contained at least three storage bins.

Nailing patterns on overhead beams and floor boards indicate original placement

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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of the bins. A two and one half foot walk space on the inside perimeter of the building provided easy access to all bins. This plan is similar to that found in the Phillips Potato House (CRS# 6786)

The attic story was converted into a third functional storage floor. Its plan is a center aisle plan. The slated bins are intact. Eleven bins flank the west side of the aisle and ten flank the east side. They are narrow and rise to ceiling height. One whole identifying tag listing name of renter, rent charged, and number of bushels stored remains tacked to an attic story bin post. All the bins in the Chipman Potato House were numbered. Surviving numbers painted on bin end posts in the attic story establish that the house originally had fifty bins. The bins generally measure 9 by 3 feet.

The roof is a tin replacment for the original wood shingles. At the time the roof was replaced the exterior chimney stack was removed. The interior section of the chimney still stands in the north end of the building.

Originally the building was heated by two stoves. The main stove stood in the front of the house on the first floor and was connected by a tin stove pipe to the chimney in the opposite gable end. A second stove was located beside the chimney itself and was fired up in very cold weather. One of the original coal stoves survives in the building.

The Chipman complex is today dispersed. Originally it was the farm of the Chipman brothers and was run as a family business which included the farm, the Chipman Mills and a general store. According to Pauline Carmean, surviving daughter of Ernest Chipman, the potato house was largely the responsibility of her father though reportedly everyone was quite proud of building.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1913-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Ernest Chipman

Joseph Chipman

Alva Hudson

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Chipman Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend, and as a significant architectural type. The potato house, as a functional type, relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's study III under the 1880-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation in southern Delaware was one of the major manifestations of these changes in agricultural practices and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of a trend in Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940 and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community of Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities and

☒ See continuation sheet



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

CRS#-5873

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was developed as a distinct building type to provide the functional needs for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type. The Chipman Potato House is an excellent example of the property type retaining elements characteristic of potato house construction and function. These elements include; ~~multiple siding, tall and narrow~~ proportions, interior chimney, window hatches, original coal stove, interior ventilation features, and extant storage bins.

The Chipman Potato House is an extraordinary example of this architectural type. Its exterior and interior conditions are unusually complete and intact. The fenestration of the building is unique while the plan and storage bin placement are likewise unusual. The cast iron stove, wooden bins, and identifying tags are rare manifestations of the overall function and production of the potato house. It is an important reflection of dominant agricultural and cultural trends in southwestern Delaware during the early 1900s, and an excellent example of architectural and aesthetic variation of the building type.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419,  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial  
Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation  
Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic  
Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, August 1986.  
Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co., 1888.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .46 acres (964 square feet)

UTM References

A 18 453193 4267912  
Zone Easting Northing

C                                    

B                                      
Zone Easting Northing

D                                    

Tax Parcel Map #: 2-32-13, 47

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the site is a rectangle extending ten feet from the roof line  
of the building on all sides.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration  
of only the potato house. The property with which the potato house is associated  
is not included in this nomination and therefore a boundary which encompasses  
additional outbuildings/structures is not relevant to this (potato house) nomination.

☐ See continuation sheet

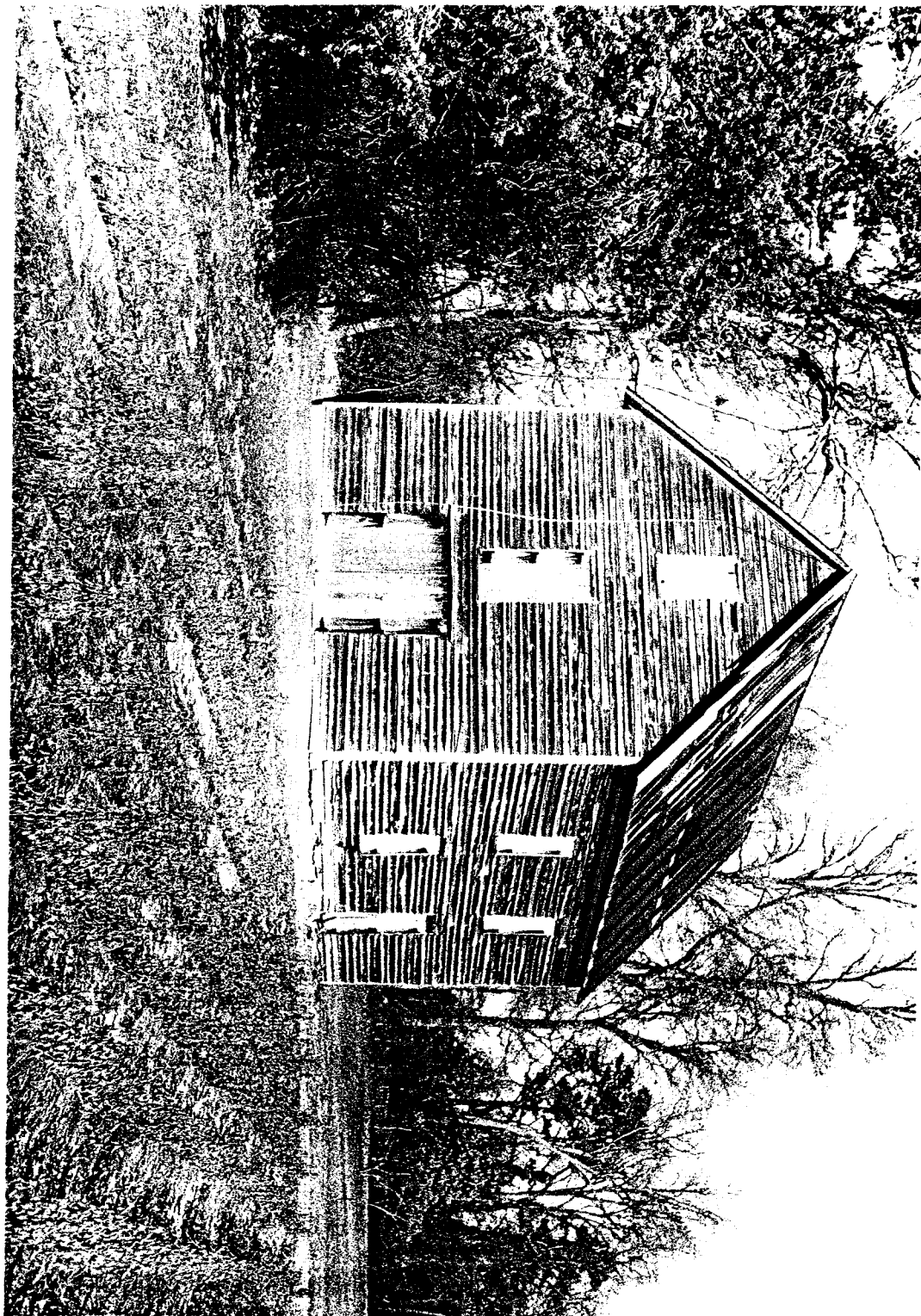
## 11. Form Prepared By

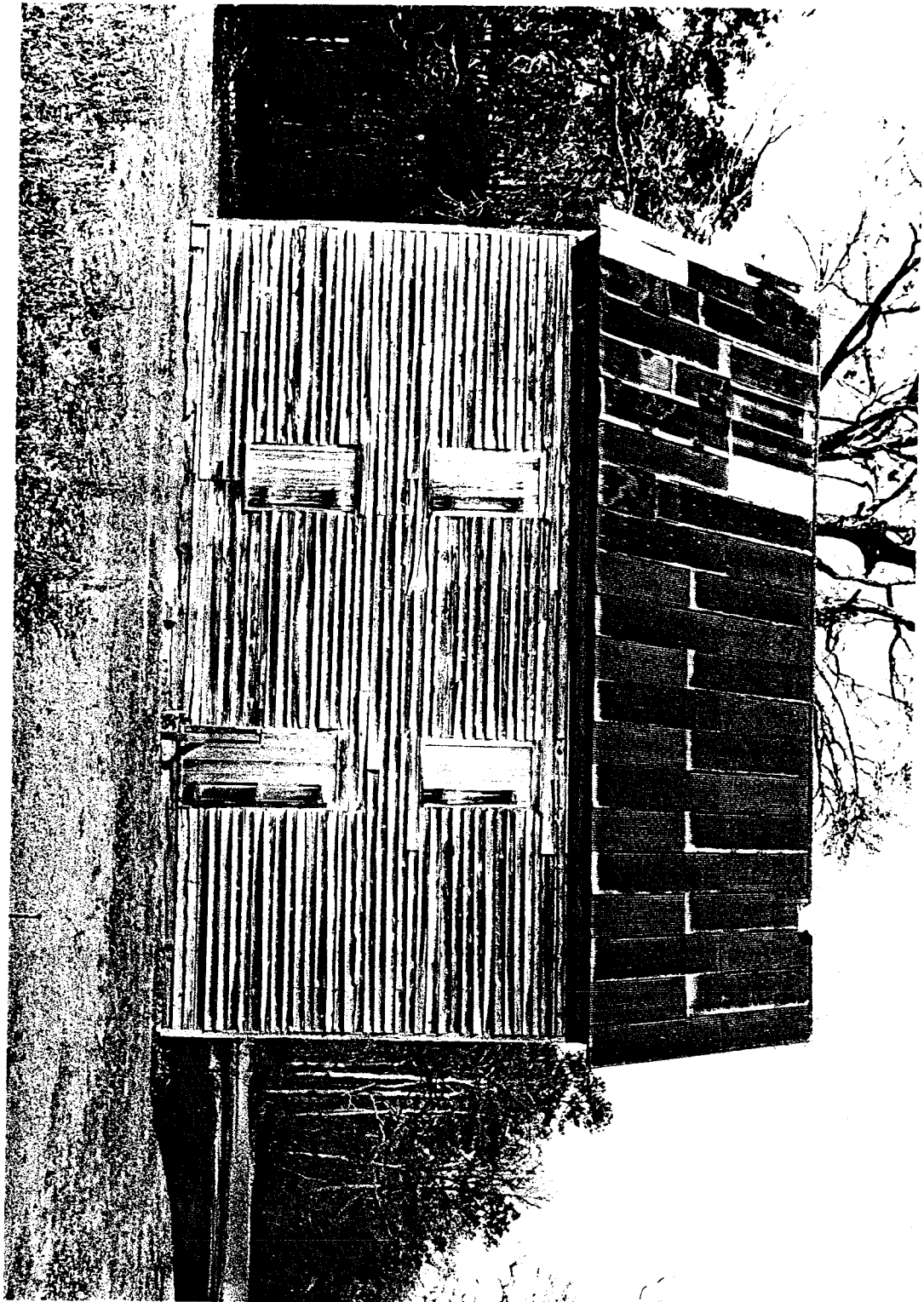
name/title Judith Quinn

organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987

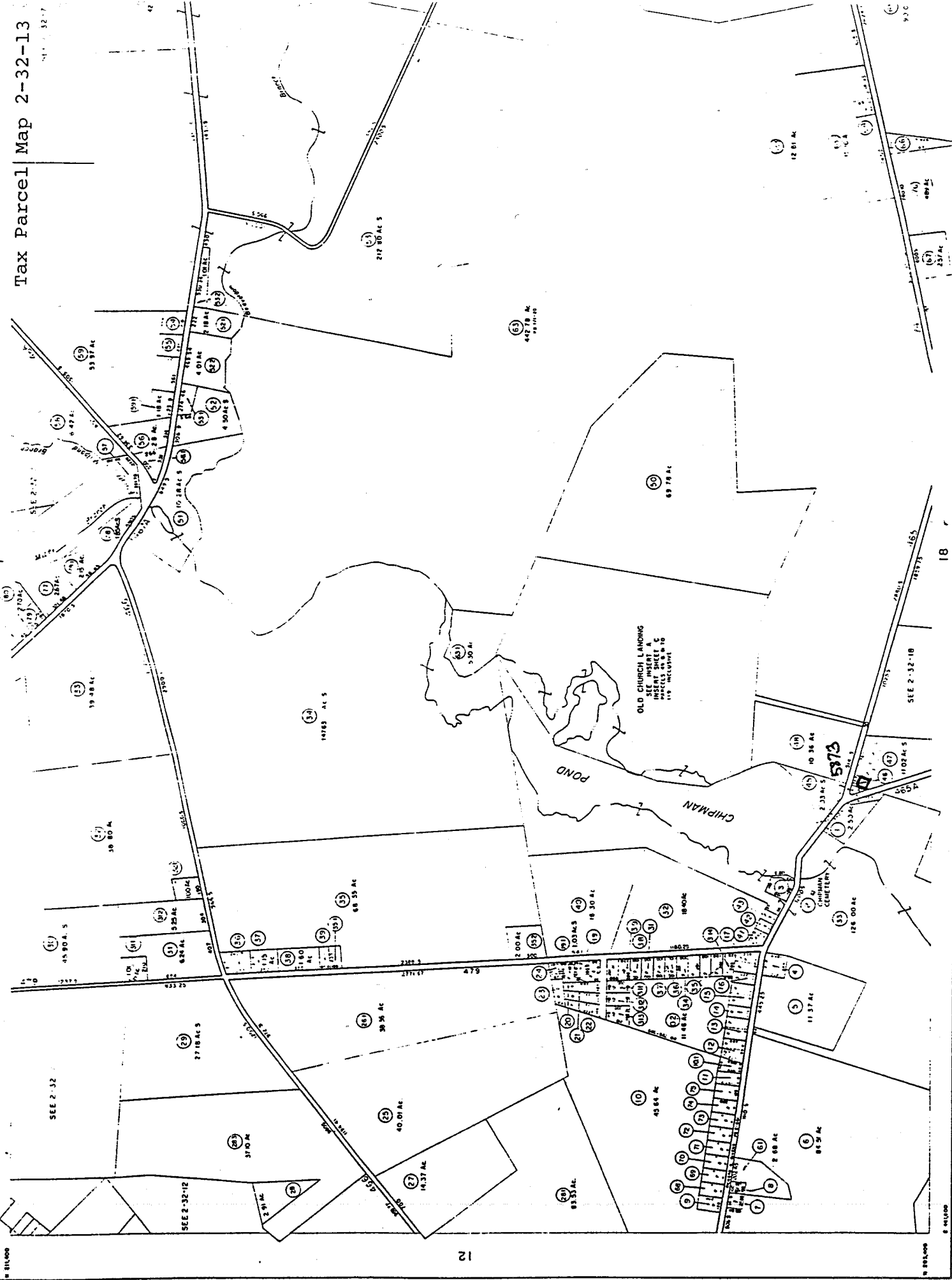
street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394

city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716









SUSSEX COUNTY  
DELAWARE

DATE OF REVISION

AERO SERVICE  
LITTON  
Photography, Pennsylvania 19135

DATE OF COUNTY LITTON MAPS 1979 DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY DECEMBER, 1979  
AERO SERVICE LITTON PHOTOGRAPHY, PENNSYLVANIA 19135

THE INFORMATION ON THIS MAP  
IS FOR GENERAL INFORMATION  
AND DOES NOT CONSTITUTE  
A GUARANTEE OF THE  
ACCURACY OF THE DATA  
PRESENTED. THE USER  
WARRANTS THE USER  
WARRANTS THE USER

LEGEND

Map parcel number	63
Original lot number	17
Map lot number	100%
City or Borough lot	100%
Derivative, where shown	

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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**1. Name of Property**historic name E. L. Hitch Potato Houseother names/site number CRS# 5859**2. Location**street & number RD# 3, Box 146☐ not for publicationcity, town Laurel☒ vicinitystate Delawarecode DEcounty Sussexcode 005zip code 19956**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

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

Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, DelawareNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

foundation brick

walls wood/weatherboard

roof asphalt shingles over wood shingles

other concrete (first floor)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The E. L. Hitch Potato House is a one and one half story, gable fronted, balloon frame structure of dimension cut lumber built circa 1920 and operated until the mid-1940s. In the 1940s the farm turned to poultry raising. Today the farm produces some Indian corn and raises a small number of white leghorns (chickens). Present owners have used the potato house for raising chickens and rabbits. Currently it is a storage building. It is located north of Laurel, Delaware 1 mile east of Route 13 at the junction of Roads 460 and 489 lying on the west side of Road 489. It belongs to a farm complex which is not being considered for nomination. The surrounding environment consists of open fields and scattered stands of trees. The complex's mid-nineteenth century dairy, two twentieth century barns, and a late nineteenth century house with a possible early wing lie in close proximity to the potato house. The complex lies directly on the light duty Road 489 (west side) which features (on the east side) a row of modern factory built (prefabricated) homes.

The overall condition of the potato house is excellent. The triple siding is completely intact consisting of narrow face milled weatherboards on diagonal planking, over interior beaded tongue and groove horizontal planking. Corner boards protect the building's corners.

The roof is a modern replacement of asphalt shingles over original wood shingles. The whole rests upon a brick foundation.

The fenestration is original and characteristic of potato house construction. The front gable end has a main loading door on first and second stories. Both openings have two doors, interior (sliding) and exterior (hinged) doors, for insulation. This type of doubled door is a precaution frequently taken to insure climate control within the building. Braces for a second floor loading platform exist on the front elevation as they do at the Hearn Potato House (CRS# 5761). Both lateral sides contain one first story window.

☒ See continuation sheet



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

CRS#-<sup>5859</sup>~~8788~~

The interior brick chimney is located on the rear wall of the house and survives inside while the exterior stack has been removed. Potato bins arranged on a center aisle plan survive in the second story (six to each side of a center aisle) and slated rear and side wall of a bin still stand in the northwest corner of the first floor. A partition wall with center door of tongue and groove boards divides the first floor space in half. This is a unique feature in potato house construction. Also unique is a crude wooden ventilator shaft which extends from the first floor through the second and attic floors exiting through a metal ventilating pipe in the center of the roof. Additional ventilation features include the characteristic sliding trap door in the second floor ceiling enhancing circulation in the attic.

The E. L. Hitch Potato House is an especially fine example of a complete exterior exhibiting the characteristics associated with potato house construction. These characteristics include; minimal fenestration, triple siding, interior and exterior doors, tightly shuttered windows, interior chimney, and storage bins.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1920-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The E. L. Hitch Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend and as a significant architectural type. The potato house, as a functional type, relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's study unit III under the 1880-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation in southern Delaware was one of the major manifestations of the changes in production practice and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend in Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940, and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

5859  
CRS#-~~8788~~

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and was developed as a distinct building type designed to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type. The E. L. Hitch Potato House is a significant example of the property because it retains an important number of elements characteristic of potato house construction and function and is in excellent condition. These elements include; triple siding, interior chimney, tightly fitting window and door hatches, interior ventilation features, and surviving storage bins on the second story. It is a rare example of an existing potato house in nearly original condition. The E. L. Hitch Potato House has integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419.  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Centennial Committee  
1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation,  
1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, August  
1986. Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University  
of Delaware.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L. J. Richards & Co., 1888.  
☐ See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .034 acres (702 square feet)

### UTM References

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B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D 

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☐ See continuation sheet

Tax Parcel Map #: 1-32-7, 99

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the site is a rectangle surrounding the potato house and extending  
ten feet from theroofline of the building on all sides.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of only  
the potato house. The property and additional non-contributing structures  
associated with the site are not included in this nomination.

☐ See continuation sheet

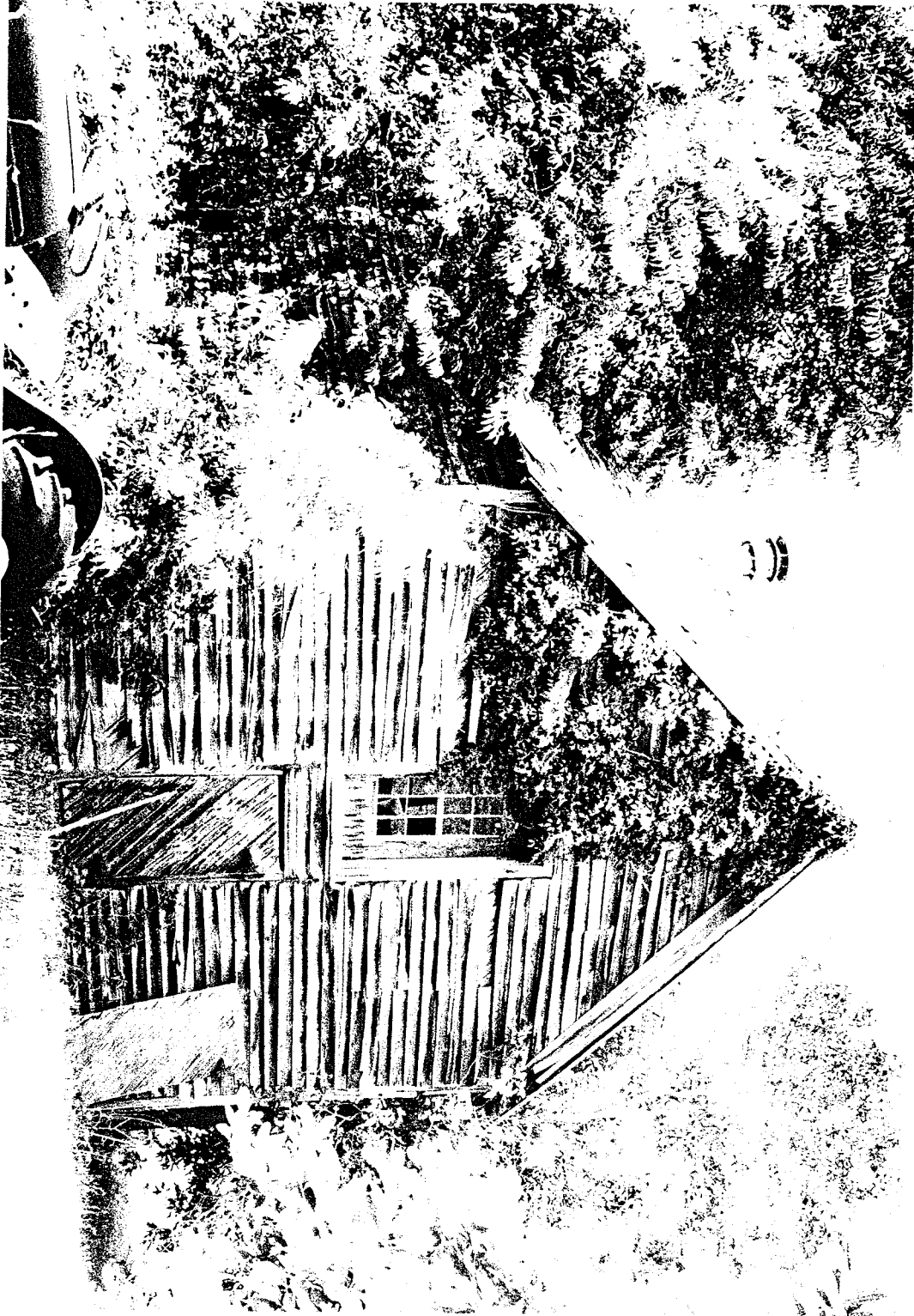
## 11. Form Prepared By

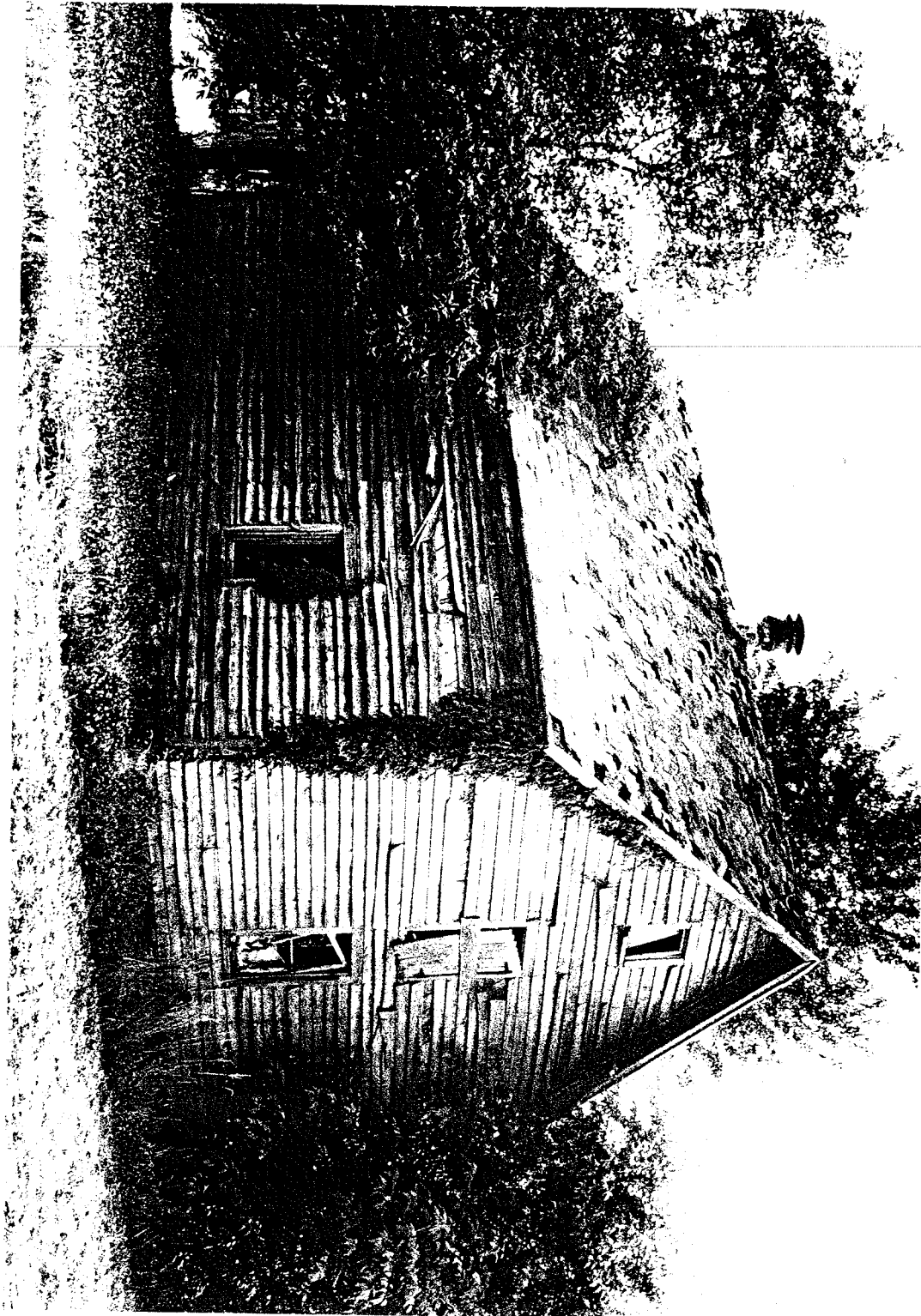
name/title Judith Quinn

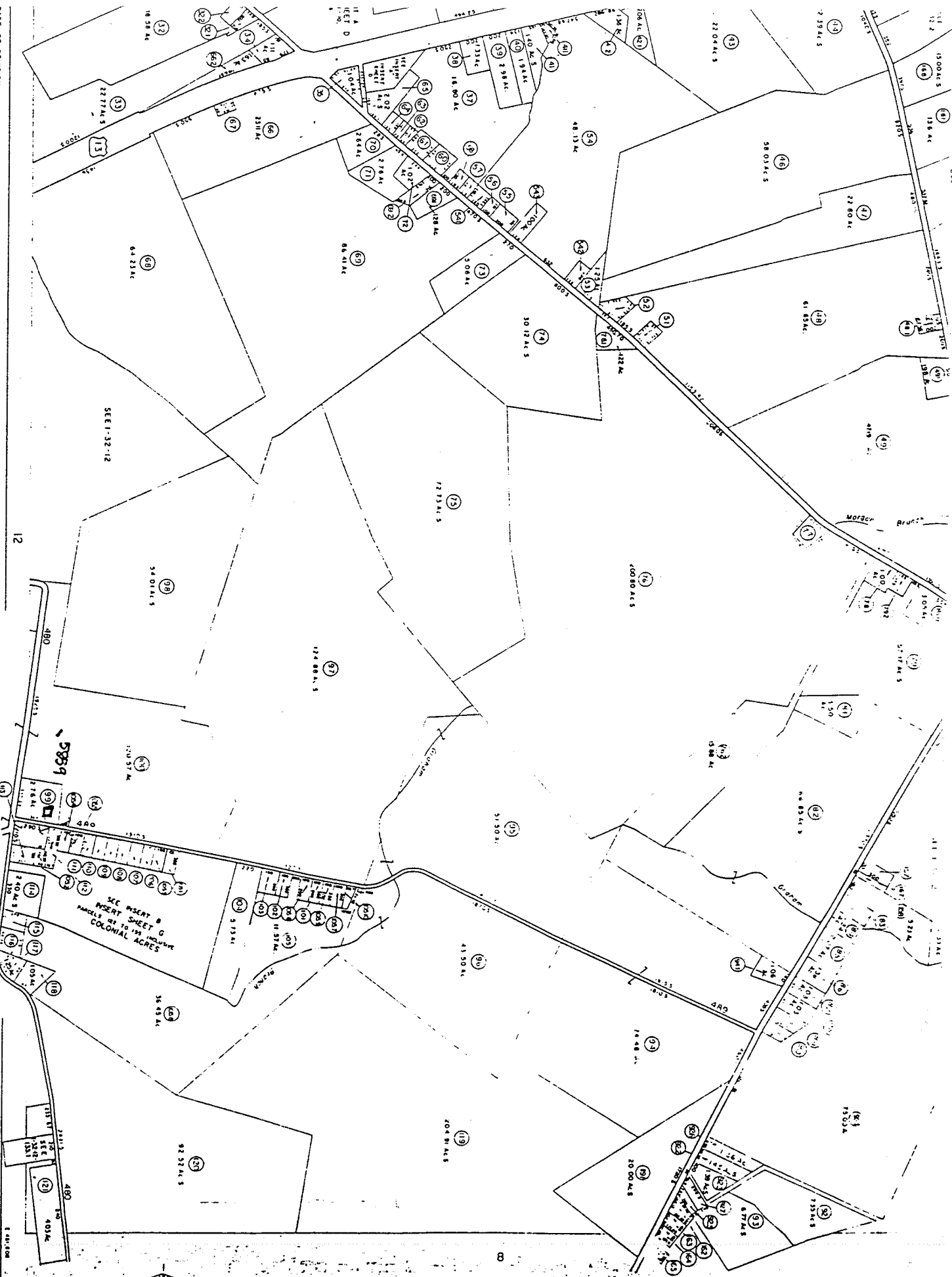
organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987

street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394

city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716





DATE OF REVISION 4

DATE OF COMPLETION

DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH

PROPERTY DATA FROM FIELD RESEARCH, FIELD RECONNAISSANCE AND RECORDED PLANS

ENTER LABOUR BASIS ON THE FOLLOWING STATE PLANS CORRESPONDING SYSTEM

[illegible]

SUSSEX COUNTY  
DELAWARE

SECRET - CONFIDENTIAL

12

5859

SEE INSERT B  
INSERT SHEET G  
PARCELS 92 TO 139 INCLUSIVE  
COLONIAL ACRES

**LEGEND**

Handset line	12	Original lot number
District line	1001	Map related identifier
City or Borough line	7	Denotes some number
All Purpose line		
Original lot line		
Property line		

All Dimensions Shown in Feet

Tax Parcel

MAP 1-32-7

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Hearn Potato Houseother names/site number CRS#-5761**2. Location**street & number Route 1, Box 157☐ not for publicationcity, town Laurel☒ vicinitystate Delawarecode DEcounty Sussexcode 005zip code 19956**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

## Contributing

1

## Noncontributing

N/A buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, DE

Number of contributing resources previously

listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/ storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

foundation brick

walls wood/weatherboard

roof wood shingle

other brick (chimney)

concrete (first floor)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Hearn Potato House is a one and one half story, gable fronted, balloon frame structure resting on a brick foundation and built circa 1900. It is located in Broad Creek Hundred northeast of Laurel, .6 miles north of Hitchens Crossroads (roads 74 and 62), lying at the end of a .3 mile light duty road on the east side of Road 62. The building is part of an agricultural complex which is not being considered for nomination. It measures 18 feet 3 inches by 28 feet 3 inches. The surrounding environment includes a rectangular farm courtyard and cultivated (Indian corn) fields. The potato house is located on the southeast perimeter of the farm yard beside an early (nineteenth century) corn crib and facing a frame barn, cart shed, and farm house. Today the potato house is a storage building, but was used for raising chickens after its function as a potato house became obsolete in the 1940s. During the sweet potato era, the Hearn Farm grew Indian corn, and produce vegetables such as peas, tomatoes and cucumbers as well as apples and pears.

The overall condition of the building is excellent.

Fenestration is original and consists of first floor loading door on the front elevation and second floor loading doors on front and rear gable elevations. Doors retain their interior sliding, and exterior hinged doors. Braces for a second floor loading platform may still be seen on the front elevation.

North lateral side of the building exhibits a centered, second floor loading door, above a six over six light window. South lateral side has extensive fenestration including center hinged loading doors on first and second floor levels each flanked by six over six light windows. Window hatches are currently on only the doors and one window of the south lateral side, and on only the second floor loading door of the north lateral side. The remainder of the hatches are stored in the potato house.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

CRS#-5761

All hardware including hinges, latches, and shutter holders are original.

Triple siding is intact. Layering consists of exterior vertical weatherboards over horizontal planking, insulating paper, studs, and interior horizontal planking.

The plan of the Hearn Potato House is laid out on a center aisle orientation. The interior brick chimney still stands in the southeast corner of the building approximately three feet from the front gable wall. Stairs accessing the second floor are tucked into the southeast corner of the building between chimney and front gable wall. Three samson posts set into the concrete floor and running the length of the house supplement the balloon framing on the first floor.

Bins have been removed on both first and second floors. Bins remain on the attic level which is accessed by a ladder on the rear gable wall of the second floor. The tall, narrow, slated bins are arranged on a center aisle plan, six on each side. Tags identifying renter's name and bushels of potatoes stored are still nailed to most of the bins' end posts. There are no gable end windows at this level and ventilation was provided by a fully slated floor. Air from the second floor thus flowed freely up to attic story bins. Though reported in oral interviews, this feature was found only in one additional potato house.

An additional unique feature are hinged vents in the attic story ceiling which (like the typical sliding trap door) opened to the space just under the peak of the roof. The two hinged vents in the Hearn Potato House measure three feet in length and are a six inch board in width. Each swing up, opening a long, narrow channel for air passage.

The roof is of original wood shingles.

The Hearn Potato House remains an excellent example of the potato house in details of both construction and function.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1900-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Hearn Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend and as a significant architectural type. The potato house, as a functional type, relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation in Sussex County was one of the major manifestations of these changes in production practices and crop choices. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend in Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940, and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

CRS#-5761

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and was developed as a distinct building type designed to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type. The Hearn Potato House is a significant example of the building type because it retains an important number of elements characteristic of potato house construction and function. These elements include; tall, narrow proportions, triple sheathing, hatched windows, interior chimney, storage bins, ventilation features, and gable front orientation.

It is also one of the older (ca. 1900) and most complete examples of the type and includes unique design elements in its ventilation system (slated floors and ceiling vents) and surviving evidence of the people who used the potato house (identifying tags on bin posts). The Hearn Potato House has integrity of design, materials, location, workmanship, and association.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul 419.  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Centennial Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, August, 1986. Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware.

Scharf, Thomas. The History of Delaware, 1609-1888. Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co., 1888.  
☐ See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .03 acres (604.75 square feet)

### UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing  
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Zone Easting Northing  
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Tax Parcel Map#: 2-32-9, 15

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the site is a rectangle surrounding the potato house and extending ten feet from the roofline of the building on all sides.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of only the potato house. The property and additional non-contributing structures associated with the site are not included in this nomination.

☐ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Judith Quinn  
organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987  
street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 032-451-2394  
city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716

Tax Parcel Map  
2-32-9

Branch

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DATE OF REVISION

DATE OF REVISION 5761 DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY DECEMBER 1971  
PROPERTY DATA FROM DEED RESEARCH FILE RECONNAISSANCE AND RECORDED PLAT  
SHEET LAYOUT BASED ON THE DELAWARE STATE PLANE COORDINATE SYSTEM

**AERO SERVICE**  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19135

PREPARED FOR THE SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL, DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE, SOLE AGENCY FOR THE SALE AND DISTRIBUTION OF PROPERTY MAPS.

SUSSEX COUNTY  
DELAWARE

SCALE 1 INCH = 400 FEET



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Wright Potato Houseother names/site number CRS#-6758**2. Location**street & number Route 24☐ not for publicationcity, town Laurel☒ vicinitystate Delaware

code

DE

county

Sussex

code

005zip code 19556**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

## Contributing

1

## Noncontributing

N/A buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, Delaware

Number of contributing resources previously

listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls asphalt shingle w/weatherboard in situ

roof asphalt w/wood shingles in situ

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Wright Potato House is a one and one half story, gable fronted structure of small dimensions (20 feet 2 inches by 30 feet 3 inches) built circa 1910. It is located 7/10 of a mile southwest of the junction of Route 24 and Road 510 lying on the north side of Route 24. The potato house belongs to a farm complex which is not being considered for nomination. The surrounding environment includes cultivated (corn, soy bean) and uncultivated fields. The building stands at a considerable distance from the complex's other buildings which include a gambrel roof barn and late nineteenth century farm house. The land is very flat and is graced by very few trees.

The building is in good condition resting on a brick and concrete block foundation. First and second story loading doors and a small, square, two-over-two light gable window comprise the front gable elevation. First and second floor loading doors retain both their interior sliding doors and their exterior hinged doors. All hardware (hinges and latches) is original.

Rear gable elevation includes a first floor three over three light window, a second story six over six light window and a two over two light gable window. Original wooden hatches and hinges remain on the front elevation. Glazing remains in all rear elevation windows but not in the gable window of the front elevation. Lateral sides of the building have no fenestration.

Original mill-sawn weatherboards remain in situ beneath modern asphalt shingles. The characteristic triple sheathing is discernible where the modern shingles have broken away. Sheathing consists of exterior weatherboards, diagonal boards, studs with straw insulation visible, and interior horizontal, six inch tongue and groove beaded panels.

The original wood shingle roof remains in situ beneath modern asphalt shingles.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

CRS#-6758

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The interior brick chimney stands in the rear (northeast) end of the building though the exterior stack has been removed. Stairs to the second floor stand inside the entrance door. The plan is arranged with a center aisle orientation. On the first floor, seven narrow, slated storage bins remain. One bin on the left of the center aisle and six bins on the right. Bins on the second floor have been removed though a few end posts remain standing. The second floor walls and ceiling are carefully finished exhibiting beaded tongue and groove paneling nailed to studs, rafters, and collars. Similar treatment is found in the Rider Potato House (CRS# 6820).

A typical sliding trap door is located in the second floor ceiling providing access to ventilation from attic, gable end windows.

The farm is not presently inhabited and exact use of the farm during the sweet potato era is unknown. One could safely assume that the Wright Farm followed a similar pattern of land use found in neighboring farms growing Indian corn and produce vegetables such as peas, cucumbers, tomatoes, and melons. The small size of this potato house suggests that it was used only for the owner's crop and not for speculative renting.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1910-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Wright Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend and as a significant architectural type. The potato house, as a functional type, relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's study unit III under the 1880-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation was one of the major manifestations of these changes in production practice and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend in Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years 1910-1940, and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities and was developed as a distinct building type to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop.

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

CRS#-6758

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Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type. The Wright Potato House is a significant example of the property type because it retains an important number of elements characteristic of potato house construction and function. These elements include; minimal fenestration, gable front orientation, gable end loading doors, double sheathing, storage bins, and ventilation features.

The excellent and nearly original condition of the building is its most valuable asset. Extant bins on the first floor create the rare example of a complete interior and the finished treatment of second floor walls reflect the builder's attention to design details. The curing and storage functions of the building are clearly evident in bins, chimney, and insulation features. The Wright Potato House has integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419,  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, August 1986. Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L. J. Richards & Co., 1888.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .034 acres (700.5 square feet)

### UTM References

A 18 446856 4264869  
Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

☐ See continuation sheet

Tax Parcel Map #: 4-32-11, 5

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the site is a rectangle surrounding the potato house and extending ten feet from the roof line of the building on all sides.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of only the potato house. The property and additional non-contributing structures associated with the site are not included in this nomination.

☐ See continuation sheet

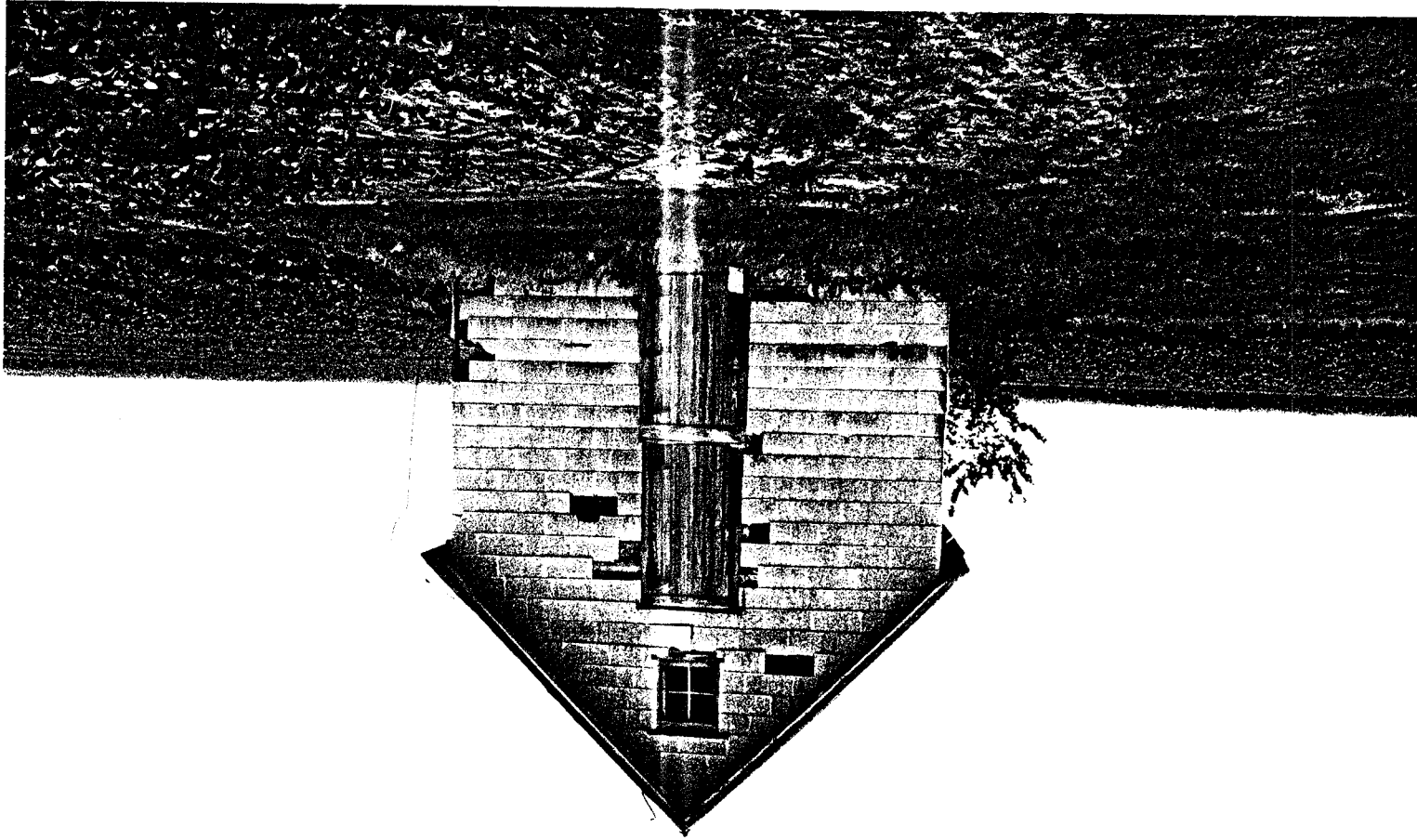
## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Judith Quinn

organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987

street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394

city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716







United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Ralph Potato House  
other names/site number CRS#-6800

## 2. Location

street & number Road 493, Box 324 ☐ not for publication  
city, town Laurel ☒ vicinity  
state Delaware code DE county Sussex code 005 zip code 19956

## 3. Classification

## Ownership of Property

☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

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

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, Delaware

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0

## 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 5. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

foundation brick

walls wood shingle & circular sawn board

roof asphalt (wood shingle in situ)

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Ralph Potato House is a one and one half story, gable fronted, balloon frame structure built circa 1915 of dimension cut lumber. It is located southwest of Portsville, Delaware .3 miles southeast of the intersection of Roads 493 and 494 lying on the west side of Road 493. It belongs to a farm complex which is not being considered for nomination. The surrounding environment consists of cultivated (Indian corn) fields and uncultivated meadows and woodlands. Outbuildings including a granary and stable lie in close proximity to the potato house. During the heyday of the sweet potato the Ralph Farm grew Indian corn and produce vegetables such as peas, cucumbers, and tomatoes. The potato house was in use until the early 1940s when black rot and intensive labor costs made sweet potato production unprofitable.

The building is insulated with double sheathing having exterior wood shingles and interior planking and is oriented on a gable-to-gable end axis. An off-center double door, capped by a large second/attic story loading window and a small slated window in the gable comprise the front fenestration, while one large second story loading window and small slated gable window comprises the rear gable fenestration. Loading windows and entrance are carefully covered by hinged doors. The fenestration is original. The roof is modern asphalt shingles over original wood shingles. The general condition of the building is excellent. The whole rests upon a brick foundation.

The interior has been stripped of its storage bins and is now a storage building. However, the side walls on the ground floor show the clear demarcation of where its tall, narrow bins once stood. A discoloration of the walls indicate placement of bin end posts. With the evidence described above it may be deduced that the Ralph Potato House originally had a center aisle flanked by five bins on the right and four bins on the left sides.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

CRS#-6800

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The interior, brick chimney still stands at the rear end of the house.  
The ladder stairs accessing the second story remain inside the main entrance.

As with most potato houses the construction is solid, the plan simple, and the elevations plain. The manipulation of air circultaion necessary during the months of curing and storing (November-February) is evident in shuttered openings, double sheathing, and gaps between walls and floorboards.

A corrugated aluminum and cedar post cart shed now adjoins the potato house on the north side. It does not however, mar or interfere with the structural integrity of the potato house.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1915-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Ralph Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend and as a significant architectural type. The potato house, as a functional type, relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's study unit III under the 1880-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing.

The growth of sweet potato cultivation in southern Delaware was one of the major manifestations of the changes in production practices and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend in Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940 and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

CRS#-6800

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The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities and was developed as a distinct building type to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type.

In form and materials the Ralph Potato House is a significant example of architectural responses to agricultural patterns. The building remains virtually unchanged, retaining not only very evident characteristics of potato house construction; chimney, ventilation features, minimal fenestration, and tightly fitting door hatches but clear markings of potato bin placement as well. The ghosts of bin placement are a rare element and combined with the building's excellent structural condition and function related details makes the Ralph Potato House a highly significant example of the property type. The Ralph Potato House has integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419,  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial  
Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation  
Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic  
Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, August 1986.  
Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering, University of Delaware.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co., 1888.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .046 (967.3 square feet)

### UTM References

A 

1	8	4	4	4	3	4	2	4	2	6	5	4	4	1
Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Tax Parcel Map #: 4-32-10, 5

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the site is a rectangle surrounding potato house and adjoining  
lean-to addition and extending ten feet from respective roof lines on each side of  
that rectangle.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of only  
the potato house. The property and additional structures associated with the  
site are not included in this nomination. Lean-to addition is included within the  
boundary description only because it is inseparable from the potato house.

☐ See continuation sheet

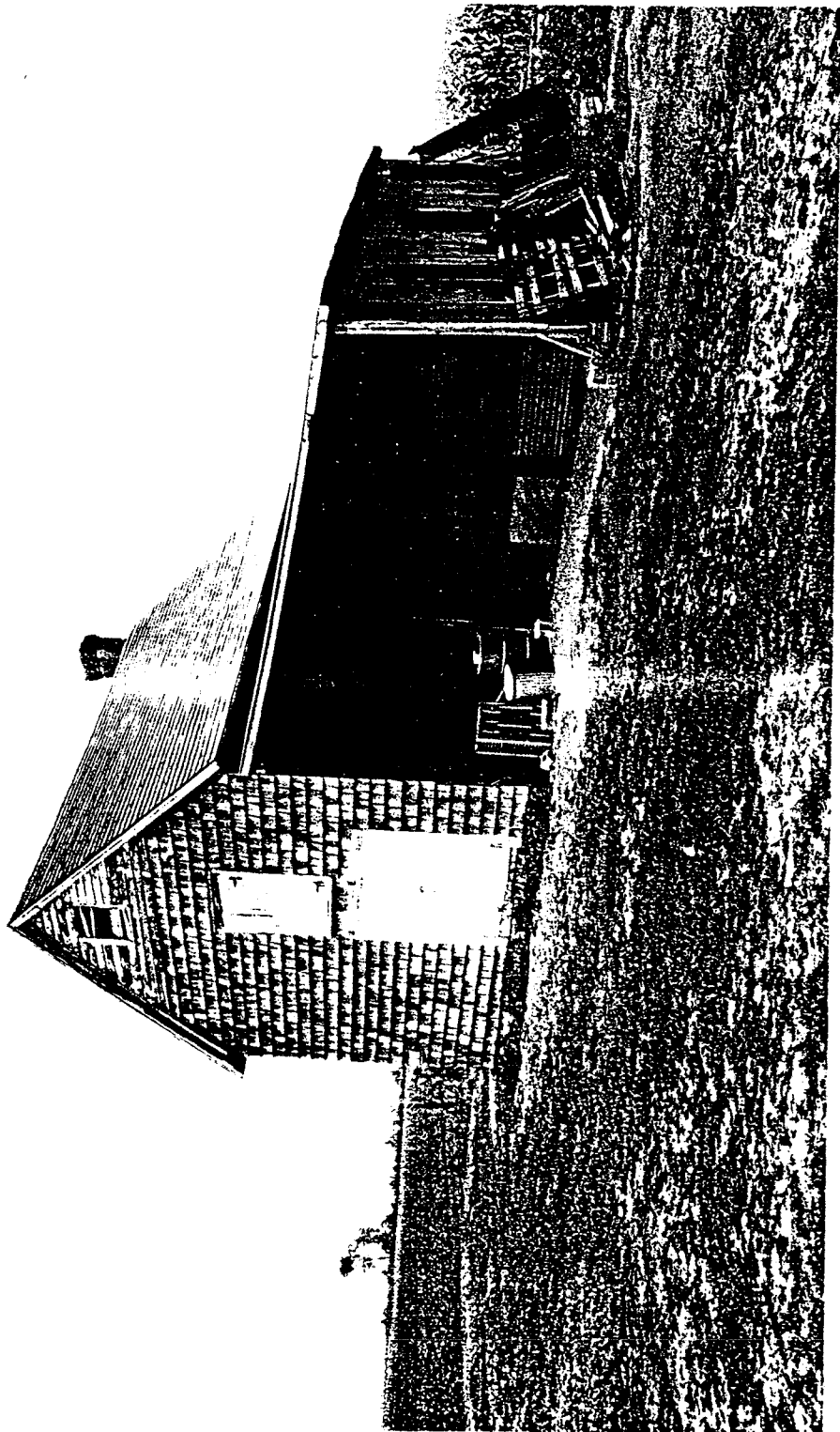
## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Judith Quinn

organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987

street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394

city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716









United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Rider Potato Houseother names/site number CRS# 6820

## 2. Location

street & number Route 3 ☐ not for publication  
city, town Laurel ☒ vicinity  
state Delaware code DE county Sussex code 005 zip code 19956

## 3. Classification

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>N/A</u> buildings
	_____ sites
	_____ structures
	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	_____ Total

## Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, DelawareNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0

## 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls wood shingle

roof corrugated aluminum

other brick (chimney)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Rider Potato House is a one and one half story, gable fronted, balloon frame structure built circa 1920 of dimension cut lumber. It is located south/southwest of Laurel, Delaware, .3 miles southeast of the junction of Roads 506 and 505 lying on the south side of Road 505. It belongs to a farm complex which is not being considered for nomination and measures 18 feet 5 inches by 24 feet 5 inches. The surrounding environment consists of open fields and scattered stands of various trees as well as seven agricultural outbuildings which lie in close proximity to the potato house. Broiler houses and the cultivation of Indian corn are the major operations on the Rider Farm today though in the heyday of the sweet potato the farm grew Indian corn and produce vegetables such as peas, tomatoes, and cucumbers as well as cantalopes and strawberries.

The potato house is set out on the typical center aisle plan and is double sheathed with exterior wood shingles over interior planking. Red Rosin (insulating paper) was used for additional protection between shingles and planks. The building was moved from its original site approximately 500 feet northwest of present site in 1950 and currently rests on a concrete foundation.

Fenestration is minimal and typical of potato houses with gable end orientation. Front gable end consists of a first floor entry and second floor loading door. Rear gable end consists of a first and second floor window. All windows and doors are fitted with tight hatches. The main entry door on the front gable end retains original sliding interior and exterior doors.

The interior chimney stands in the rear end of the building while the stove was located in the center of the ground floor. A four inch ventilation gap runs the length of the interior on both sides between walls and ceiling facilitating circulation of air between floors and around storage bins.

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

CRS#-6820

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Storage bins have been removed. Original stairs in the southeast corner provide access to the second/attic story.

The second/attic story is well finished. Horizontal wood panelling is nailed to studs, rafters, and collars leaving no exposed framing members. The finished treatment reflects the value of, and care taken in the construction of the building. Similar treatment of the upper story is found in the Wright Potato House (CRS#6758).

A sliding trap door is found in the second floor ceiling. It would have been opened to contribute an additional passage for ventilation on warm days in the house. Similar sliding trap doors have been found in a number of potato houses.

In recent years a modern, vinyl sided lean-to shed has been added to the north (lateral) side of the building. There is however, no alteration to the construction of the potato house other than the clipping of the eaves approximately eight inches to accommodate the new addition which lies flush against the north side. The potato house remains a separate building visually and structurally. The dimensions of the building including the shed are 24 feet 5 inches by 36 feet 8 inches.

Despite modern alterations the Rider Potato House remains a significant example of the property type. The interior and exterior retain complete architectural integrity. Though lacking its potato bins, it remains one of the most complete examples of a potato house extant today. The excellent condition of the shingled exterior, the quality of second floor panelled interior, ventilation features, and original sliding doors mark the Rider Potato House as an especially important example of the building type.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. No. 419,  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial  
Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation  
Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic  
Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, August 1986.  
Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of DE.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co., 1888.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .064 acres (1332.3 square feet)

### UTM References

A 18 453193 42679112  
Zone Easting Northing

C                                    

B                                      
Zone Easting Northing

D                                    

Tax Parcel Map #: 5-32-1, 2.1

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the site is a rectangle surrounding potato house and adjoining  
addition and extending ten feet from respective roof lines on each side of  
that rectangle.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this asks for the consideration of only the potato  
house. The property and additional structures associated with the site are not included  
in this nomination. Shed addition is included within the boundary description  
only because it is inseparable from the potato house.

☐ See continuation sheet

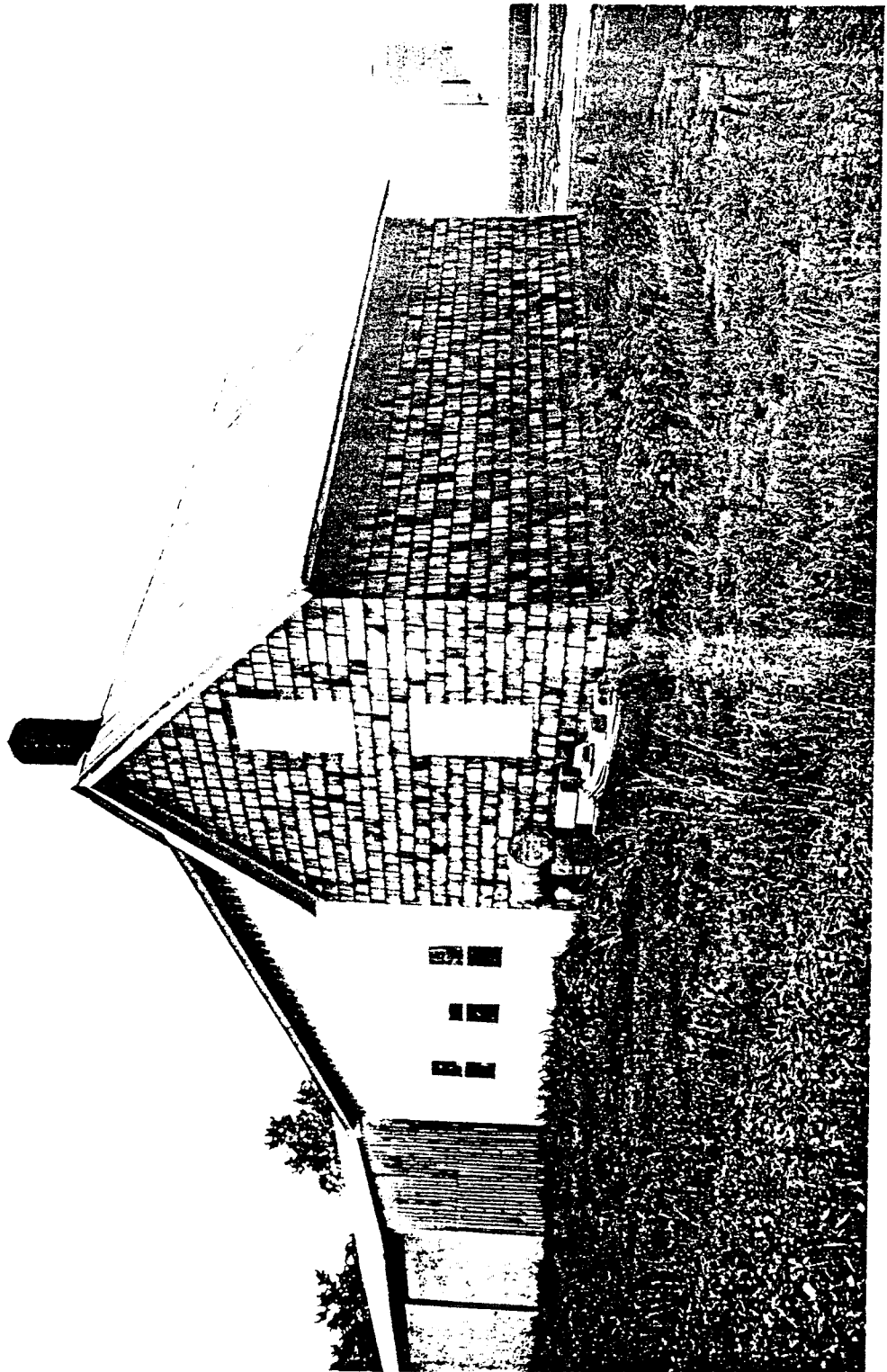
## 11. Form Prepared By

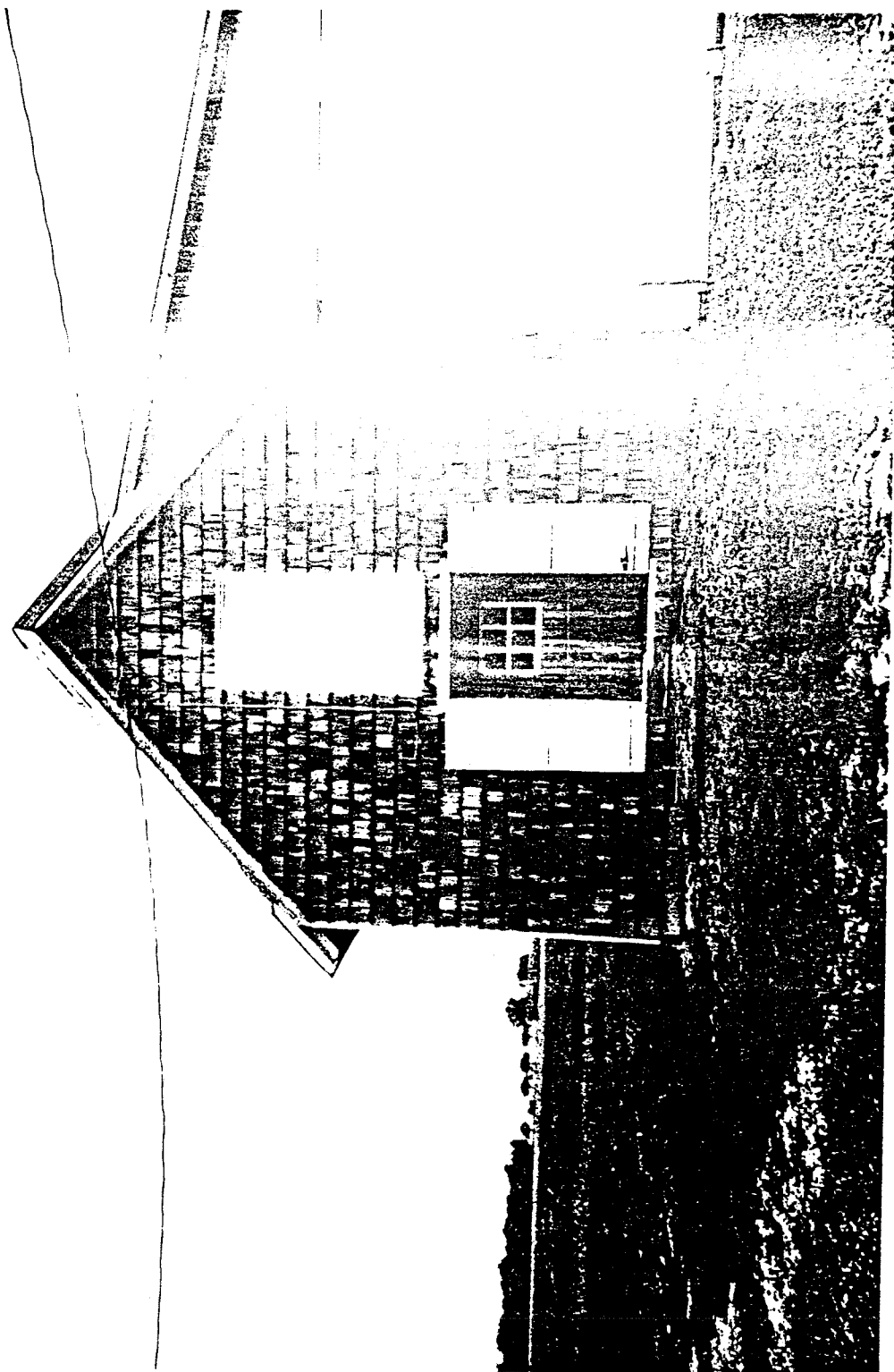
name/title Judith Quinn

organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987

street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394

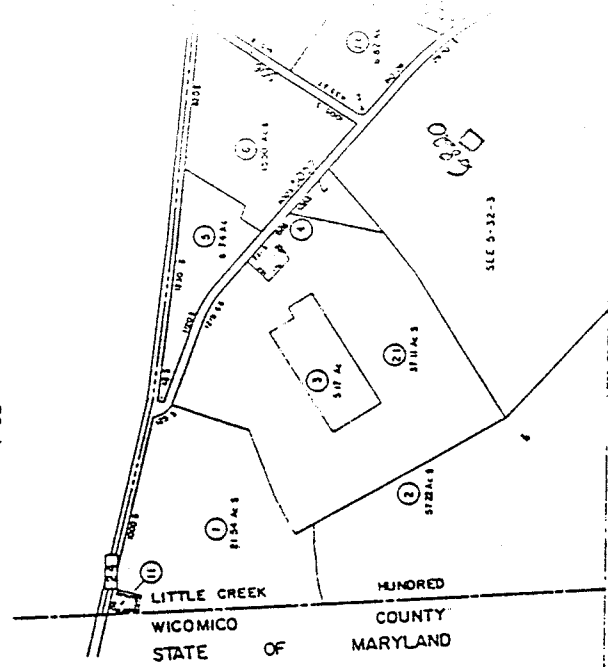
city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716





4-32

4-32



LEGEND

County line	County line
City or town line	City or town line
City or borough line	City or borough line
City or village line	City or village line
City or hamlet line	City or hamlet line
City or neighborhood line	City or neighborhood line
City or district line	City or district line
City or precinct line	City or precinct line
City or ward line	City or ward line
City or block line	City or block line
City or lot line	City or lot line
City or parcel line	City or parcel line
City or tract line	City or tract line
City or subdivision line	City or subdivision line
City or section line	City or section line
City or township line	City or township line
City or range line	City or range line
City or county line	City or county line
City or state line	City or state line
City or federal line	City or federal line
City or international line	City or international line

SUSSEX COUNTY  
DELAWARE

DATE OF REVISION

Map of Sussex County, Delaware, showing the location of the Little Creek area. The map is a reproduction of a map published by the Delaware Department of Transportation in 1980. The map shows the Little Creek area, which is located in the northwestern part of Sussex County. The map also shows the location of the Little Creek area in relation to the surrounding areas, including the Delaware River and the Maryland border. The map is a detailed map of the Little Creek area, showing the location of the Little Creek area in relation to the surrounding areas, including the Delaware River and the Maryland border. The map is a detailed map of the Little Creek area, showing the location of the Little Creek area in relation to the surrounding areas, including the Delaware River and the Maryland border.

Tax Parcel  
MAP 5-32-1

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name West Potato Houseother names/site number CRS#-6617**2. Location**street & number Route 2☐ not for publicationcity, town Delmar☒ vicinitystate Delawarecode DEcounty Sussexcode 005zip code 19940**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

## Contributing

1

## Noncontributing

N/A buildings       sites       structures       objects1 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, DelawareNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation rock face concrete block

walls wood/weatherboard

roof asphalt shingle w/wood shingle in situ

other brick (chimney)

concrete (cellar floor)

Other: Potato House

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The West Potato House is a one and one half story, balloon frame structure of tall, narrow proportions built circa 1925 of dimension cut lumber. It is located in Little Creek Hundred, 1/10 of a mile north of Road 454A on the west side of Route 13. The building belongs to a complex which is not being considered for nomination. The surrounding environment includes uncultivated fields and meadows and stands of trees. In close proximity to the building are a barn, a garage, and a house. In 1977 the complex stopped functioning as a farm, though during the sweet potato era the farm was known as the George Culver Farm. It is reported that at one time this complex was the largest farm in the area. The major occupation of the current inhabitants is running a garage and auto parts business. The potato house is strictly a storage building.

The potato house is oriented in typical fashion on a gable end to gable end axis and rests on a six course foundation of rock face concrete block. It measures 37 feet 6 inches by 13 feet 9 inches.

A unique element of the building is a concrete lined cellar. No other potato house found in Delaware contains a cellar. The inclusion of a cellar suggests that the building was used for the storage of additional produce making the building a combination potato house/root cellar.

Fenestration is minimal. Front and rear gable elevations contain one centered second story window and one very small slated, rectangular, ventilation opening in the gable. A centered first story door on the gable front of the building provides access. A modern, gable roof shed has been added to this entryway.

Lateral walls are unfenestrated though two half windows (three lights each) are set into the foundation and light the cellar on lateral sides of the building.

The roof is modern asphalt shingles over original wood shingles.

The original mill sawn weatherboards and corner boards remain intact. Potato bins have been removed. The overall condition of the building is excellent.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

Significant Person

N/A

Period of Significance

1925-1937

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Significant Dates

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The West Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend, and as a significant architectural type. The potato house, as a functional type, relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's study unit III under the 1880-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation was one of the major manifestations of these changes in production practice and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend of Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940, and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities and was developed as a distinct building type to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

CRS#-6617

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property type. The West Potato House is a significant example of the property type because it retains an important number of elements characteristic of potato house construction and function, and is in excellent condition. These elements include; tall, narrow proportions, minimal fenestration, ventilation features, and tightly fitting door hatches. The structural integrity of the West Potato House contributes substantially to the importance of this building. It shows no signs of deterioration. The concrete cellar is a unique feature in the existing survey of Delaware potato houses and its large size attests to the impact of the sweet potato culture on the George Culver Farm during the 1920s and 1930s. The West Potato House has integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419,  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial Committee,  
1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation  
Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic  
Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County. August 1986.  
Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L. J. Richards & Co., 1888.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .024 acres (506.5 square feet)

UTM References

A 

1	8
---	---

4	5	0	1	3	7
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4	2	5	9	0	2	2
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting

Northing

C 

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--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting

Northing

D 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

☐ See continuation sheet

Tax Parcel Map#: 5-32-13,9.5

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the site is a rectangle surrounding the potato house and extending  
five feet from the roof line of the building on all sides.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of only  
the potato house. The property and additional structures associated with  
the site are not included in this nomination.

☐ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

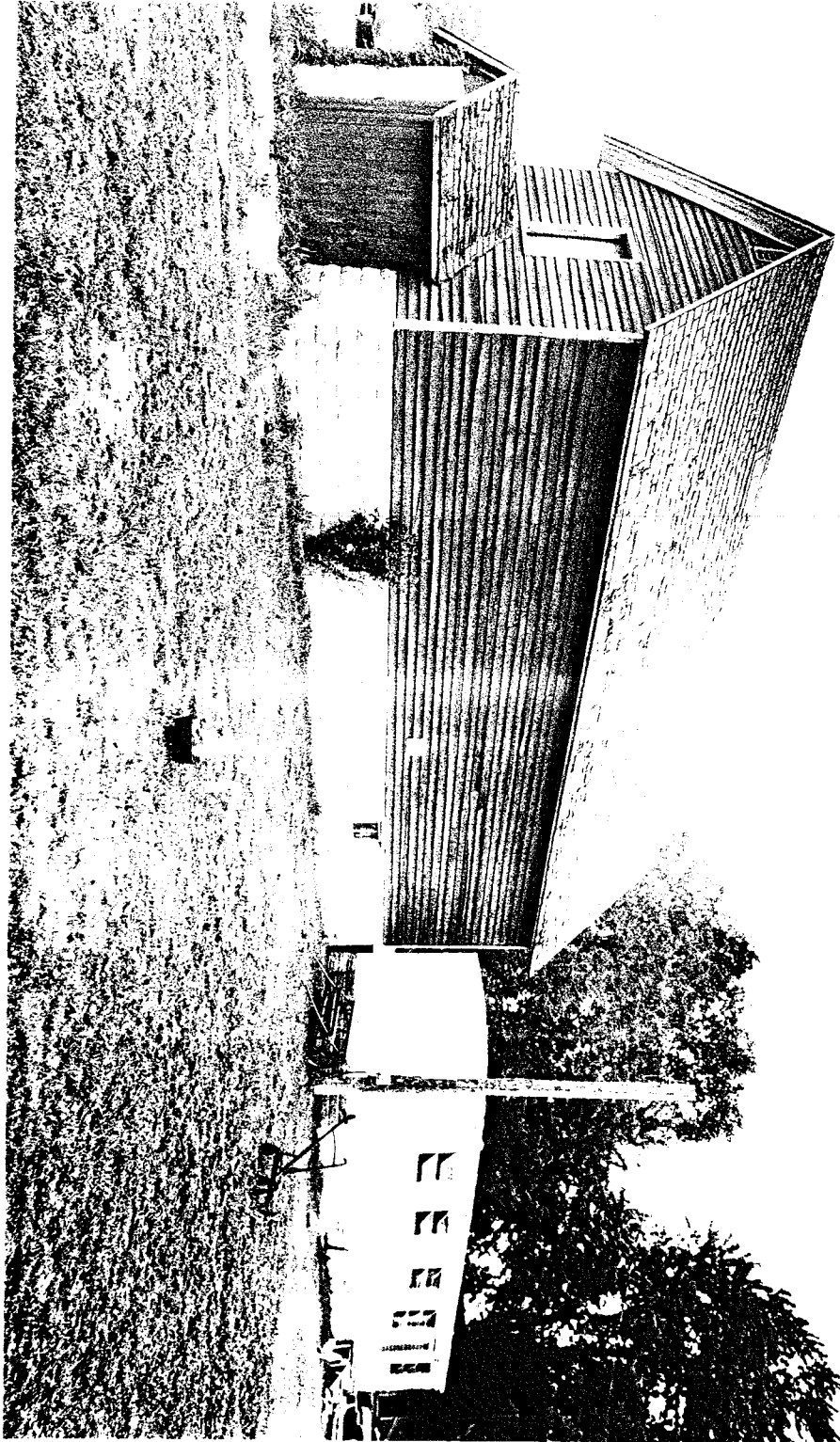
name/title Judith Quinn

organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987

street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394

city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716







List of Photography Occasions 1971

WILLIAM J. BURGESS, JR., 1000 N. 10th St., Suite 100, Minneapolis, Minn. 55401, is a member of the American Society of Professional Journalists.

SUSSEX COUNTY  
DELAWARE

County line	Handred line	District line	Map parcel number	Original lot number
1	2	3	4	5

Tax Parcel 5-32-15  
Map - - - -

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Phillips Potato Houseother names/site number CRS#-6786**2. Location**street & number RD 3, Box 358☐ not for publicationcity, town Laurel☒ vicinitystate Delaware

code De

county Sussexcode 005zip code 19956**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>N/A</u> buildings
	_____ sites
	_____ structures
	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato House of Sussex County, DelawareNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls asbestos shingle w/ weatherboard in situ

roof tin (wood shingles in situ)

other brick (chimney), concrete (first floor)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Phillips Potato House is a two story, balloon frame structure built circa 1900 and measuring 24 feet by 29 feet. it is located .2 miles southwest of the junction of Roads 492 and 492A, and 1 mile south of Bethel lying on the west side of an unimproved dirt road which is located on the south side of Road 492. The potato house is part of a working farm complex which features a 1940s gambrel roof barn and early 1900s cartshed. The farm complex is not being considered for nomination. Outbuildings lie in close proximity to the potato house. Today the major crop of the farm is Indian corn sold largely for chicken feed to local granaries. The surrounding environment includes cultivated (Indian corn and soy bean) and uncultivated fields and scattered stands of trees. During the heyday of the sweet potato the Phillips Farm grew Indian corn and produce vegetables such as peas, tomatoes, and cucumbers. The sweet potato house functioned until the 1940s when black rot and intensive labor costs made sweet potato production unprofitable.

The building rests upon a concrete foundation. Exterior fabric is green asbestos shingles over original weatherboards. A modern tin roof covers the original wood shingles (in situ). Interior brick chimney remains in the south gable end of the building.

The present owner, Mr. Marshall Phillips, worked side by side with his father and grandfather in this potato house and remembers many of its functional details. He reports that the wood for the building was bought from a mill not far from the building site (mill no longer standing). He also reports that this potato house held up to 6,000 bushels of sweet potatoes which were stored in slightly elevated bins and heated with a coal stove.

The plan represents a less frequently encountered arrangement in surviving

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

CRS#-6786

examples. Instead of the typical gable end entrance, loading access was provided by doors on east and west lateral sides of the building. Bins were placed back to back in the center of the floor. Bins facing west were loaded through the west door and bins facing east through the east door. A narrow (two foot) path encircled the bins providing limited access for tending purposes. Loading access for second floor bins was through a second floor door on the south gable end of the building. The arrangement of the second floor bins is unknown.

Tightly fitting window hatches, and triple sheathing, both in evidence today, insulated the potato house against winter cold and early spring warmth. First floor entrance doors exhibit exterior hinged doors and interior sliding doors. Doubled doors were an added insulating safeguard found in many houses.

The fenestration of the Phillips Potato House is uncharacteristic. Because of insulating concerns one generally finds minimal fenestration. Here, the gable ends contain the expected first, second, and attic story windows. In addition however, the lateral sides contain not only centrally placed entry doors but one large window flanking both sides of the entries. The total number of doors and windows is twelve. The symmetrical arrangement of doors and windows creates a striking "house-like" appearance. A similar number and arrangement of openings is found at the Chipman Potato House (CRS# 5873) Each opening is carefully covered with a tightly fitting door or hatch.

The Phillips Potato House is in excellent condition and is currently used for storage.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1900-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Phillips Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend and as a significant architectural type. The potato house as a functional type relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's study III under the 1800-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation in southern Delaware was one of the major manifestations of the changes in production practices and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend of Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940, and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

CRS#-6786

to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities and was developed as a distinct building type to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type. The Phillips Potato House is a significant example of the property type because it retains an important number of elements characteristic of potato house construction and function. These elements include; triple siding, interior chimney, tightly fitting window hatches, interior ventilation features, and doubled doors at primary entrances.

The Phillips Potato House stands as a wonderful reflection of agricultural and cultural trends in early twentieth century Little Creek Hundred. The building itself, and Mr. Phillips accompanying oral history provide a rare opportunity to understand first hand some of the changes, emphases, and practices of the sweet potato culture. It is one of the most complete examples of the property type surviving today. In addition, this potato house was a strictly commercial venture. Marshall Phillips recalls the close relationship between his father and J. A. Morgan the largest produce broker throughout the 1920s and 1930s. James Morgan dealt largely in sweet potatoes and the Phillips potato house was a large supplier for Morgan's market.

The Phillips Potato House has integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship and association.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419,  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial  
Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation  
Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic  
Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, August 1986.  
Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering, University of Delaware.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co., 1888.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .039 acres (796 square feet)

### UTM References

A 18 446292 4267431  
Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

☐ See continuation sheet

Tax Parcel Map #- 4-32-7, 10

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the site is a rectangle surrounding the potato house and  
extending ten feet from the roof line on all sides.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of  
only the potato house. The property and additional structures associated  
with the site are not included in this nomination.

☐ See continuation sheet

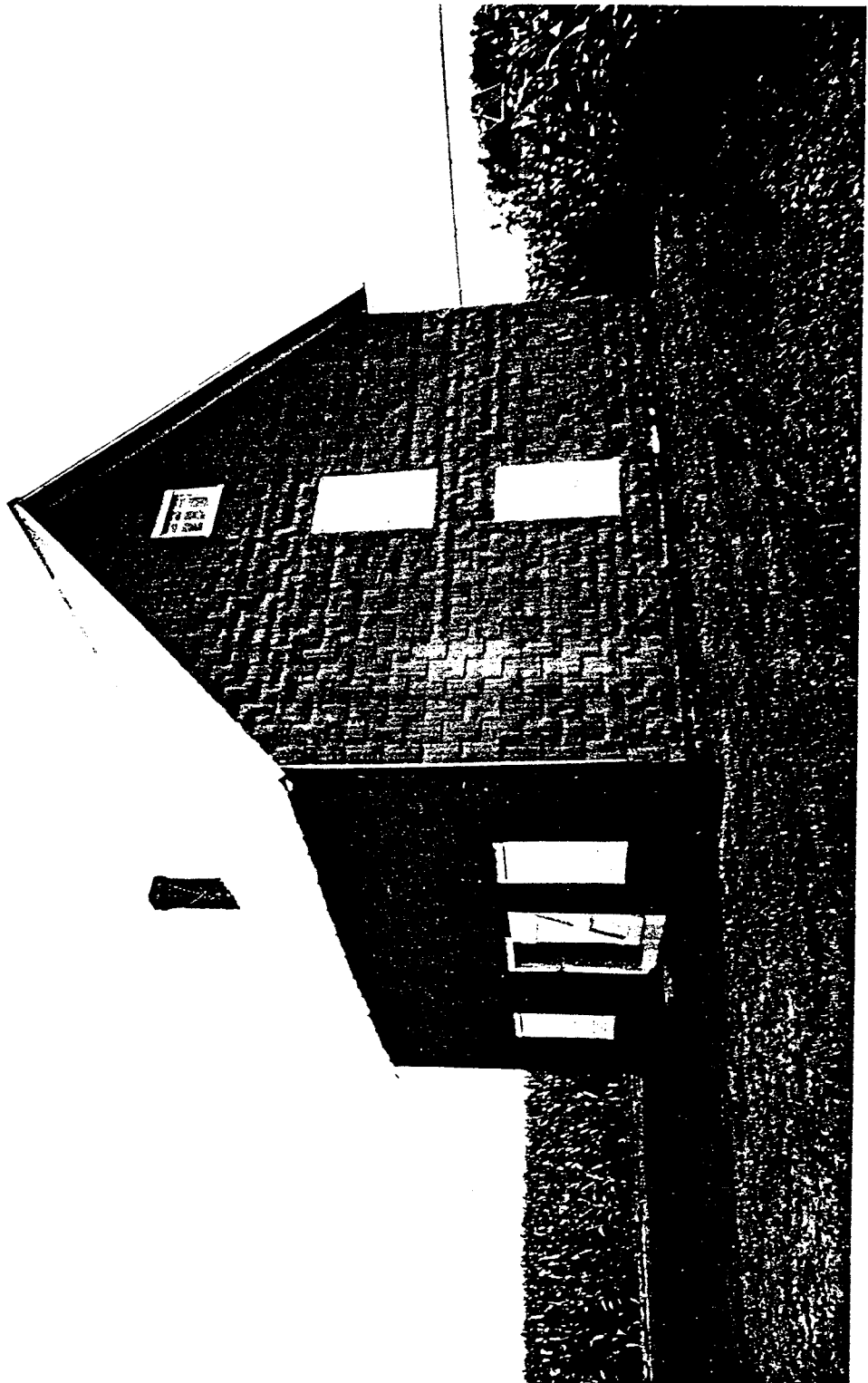
## 11. Form Prepared By

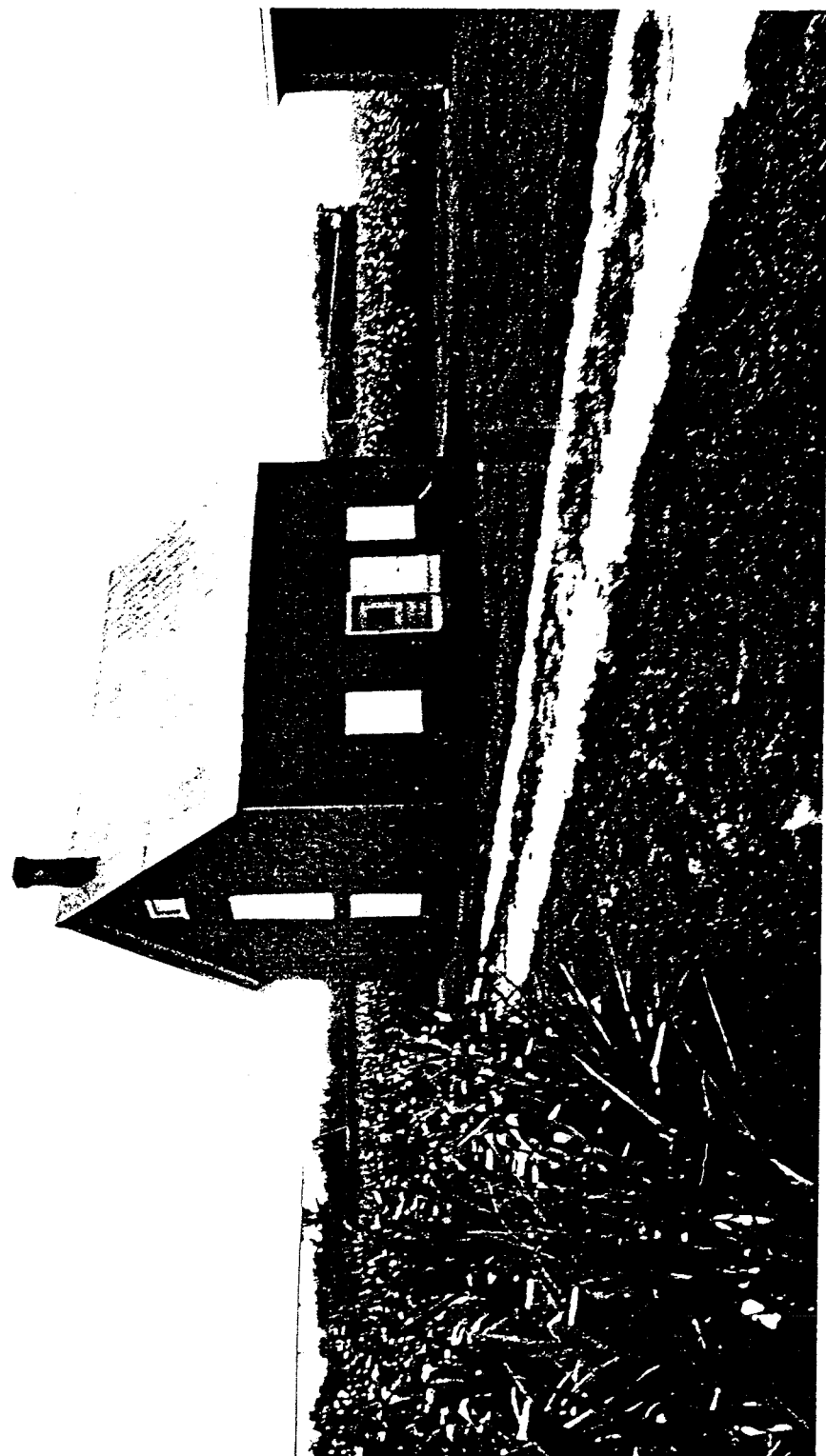
name/title Judith Quinn

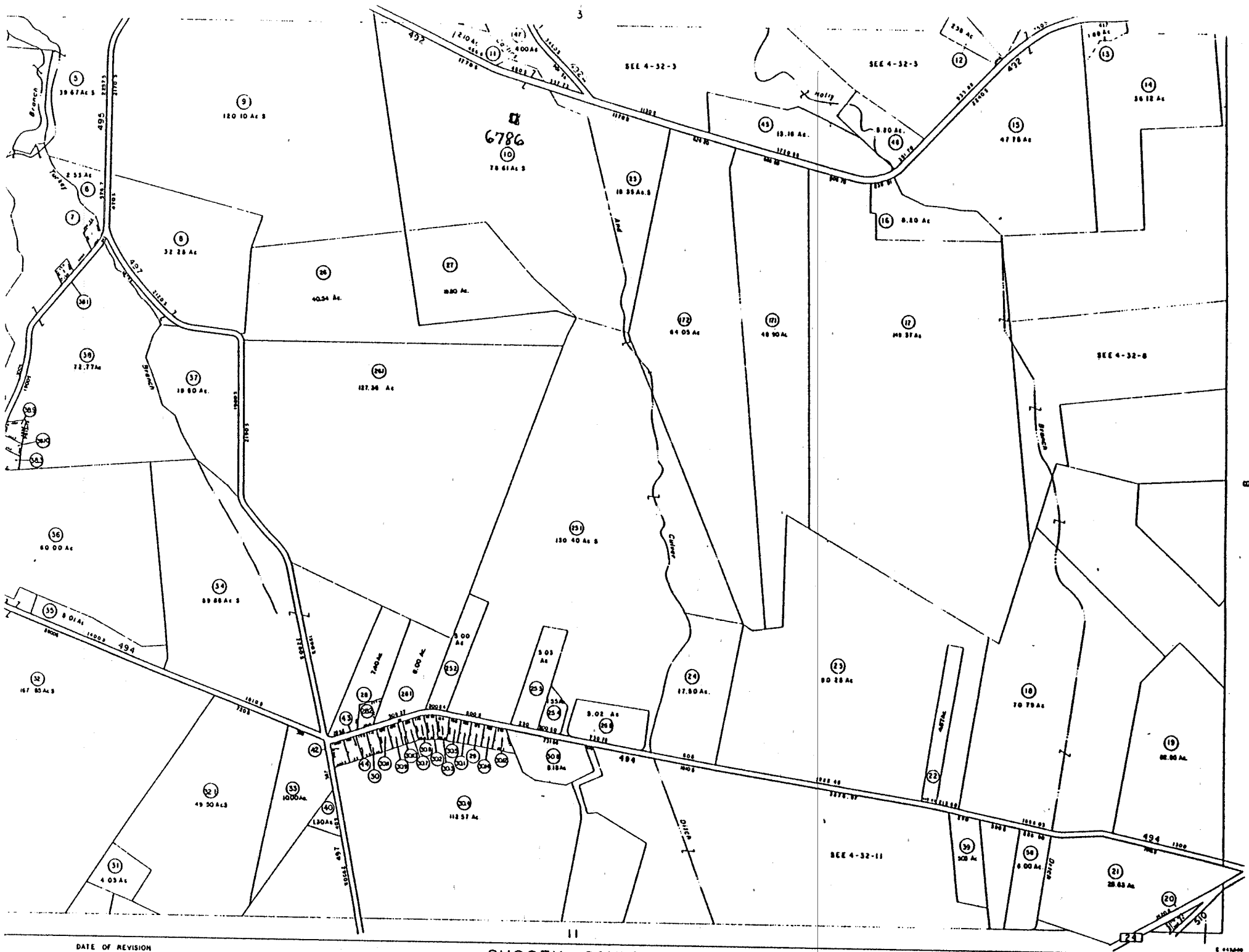
organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987

street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394

city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716







DATE OF REVISION

DATE OF COMPILATION SEPT 24, 1978 DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY DECEMBER 1974  
 PREPARED BY: STATE PLANNING AND RECONSTRUCTION DIVISION, DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY

THE INFORMATION ON THIS MAP WAS OBTAINED FROM THE DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY, DIVISION OF PLANNING AND RECONSTRUCTION, AND THE DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MECHANICAL INDUSTRIES, DIVISION OF LAND USE AND PLANNING. THE STATE OF DELAWARE DOES NOT WARRANT THE ACCURACY OF THIS MAP.

## SUSSEX COUNTY DELAWARE

LEGEND	
County line	43 Map parcel number
Ward line	44 Original lot number
District line	4401 Map parcel dimension
Water	

Tax Parcel  
Map 4-32-7



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Dickerson Potato Houseother names/site number CRS#-6903**2. Location**street & number Road 494, Box 285☐ not for publicationcity, town Delmar☒ vicinitystate Delawarecode DEcounty Sussexcode 005zip code 19940**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

## Contributing

1  
  
  
  
1

## Noncontributing

N/A buildings  
  
sites  
  
structures  
  
objects  
  
Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, DelawareNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls wood/weatherboard

roof asphalt, (wood shingle in situ)

other concrete (ground floor)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The potato house of the Dickerson complex is a fine example of the building type and is one of the few surviving full two story examples in Little Creek and Broad Creek Hundreds. It is located west of Laurel, Delaware at the intersection of Roads 494 and 498 having buildings on northwest, northeast, and southeast corners of the intersection. The potato house rests on the southeast corner. It measures 30 feet 4 inches by 23 feet 3 inches. The surrounding environment consists of numerous outbuildings including corn cribs, a wash house, barn, cart shed, school house and barn. The potato house stands alone on its corner of the intersection separated from the rest of the complex by Road 494. Cultivated and uncultivated fields surround the complex. The land is very flat and the present day crops are Indian corn and soy bean.

The Dickerson Potato House was built in the early 1900s. It is a balloon frame, gable fronted structure and retains its original narrow width, milled siding and interior brick chimney. The whole rests upon a brick foundation.

Fenestration of the front gable end is altered slightly (two windows and double sliding door added ) but remains original on the lateral sides and rear gable end. On the front and rear gable ends, original fenestration included centrally placed first, second, and third (attic) story loading doors, and centrally placed first and second story windows on lateral sides of the building. Rear gable end and lateral side fenestration remains in its original arrangement. Tightly fitting hatches cover all windows and doors.

The interior condition is unknown though storage bins have been removed for equipment storage.

The roof is of modern asphalt shingles over original wood shingles.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1915-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Dickerson Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend and as a significant architectural type. The potato house as a functional type relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's Study unit III under the 1880-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation in southern Delaware was one of the major manifestations of these changes in production practices and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend in Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940, and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

CRS#-6903

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to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities and was developed as a distinct building type to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type. The Dickerson Potato House is an excellent example of the property type retaining elements characteristic of potato house construction and function. These elements include; multiple sheathing, gable end orientation, interior chimney, and closely fitting window hatches.

The significance of the Dickerson Potato House lies also in its excellent condition and unusual size. It retains the exterior integrity while its full two story size indicates that the sweet potato crop and subsequent storage was a primary concern for the Dickerson agricultural complex.

The Dicerson Potato House has integrity of location , design, materials, workmanship, and association.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419,  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1986.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial  
Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca, The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation  
Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic  
Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, Delaware.  
August 1986. Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering, Univ. of DE.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L. J. Richards and Co., 1888.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .035 acres (716 square feet)

### UTM References

A 18 441229 4266850  
Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

Tax Parcel Map #: 4-32-6, 40

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the site is a rectangle surrounding the potato house and extending five feet from the roofline of the building on all sides (a ten foot extension from the building would extend into Roads 494 and 498).

☐ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of only the potato house. The property and additional outbuildings with which the potato house is associated are not included in this nomination and therefore a boundary which encompasses additional structures is not relevant to this nomination.

☐ See continuation sheet

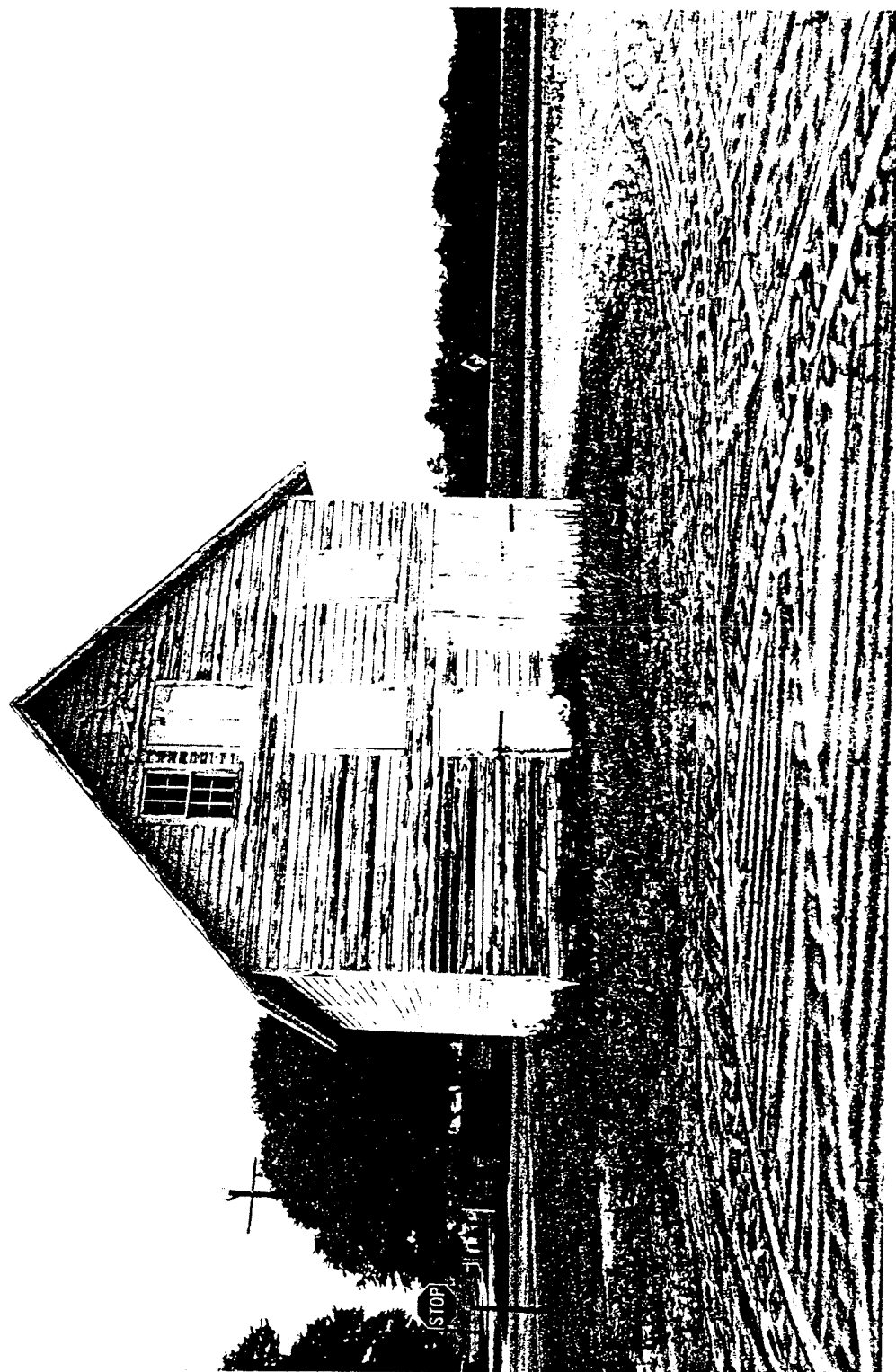
## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Judith Quinn

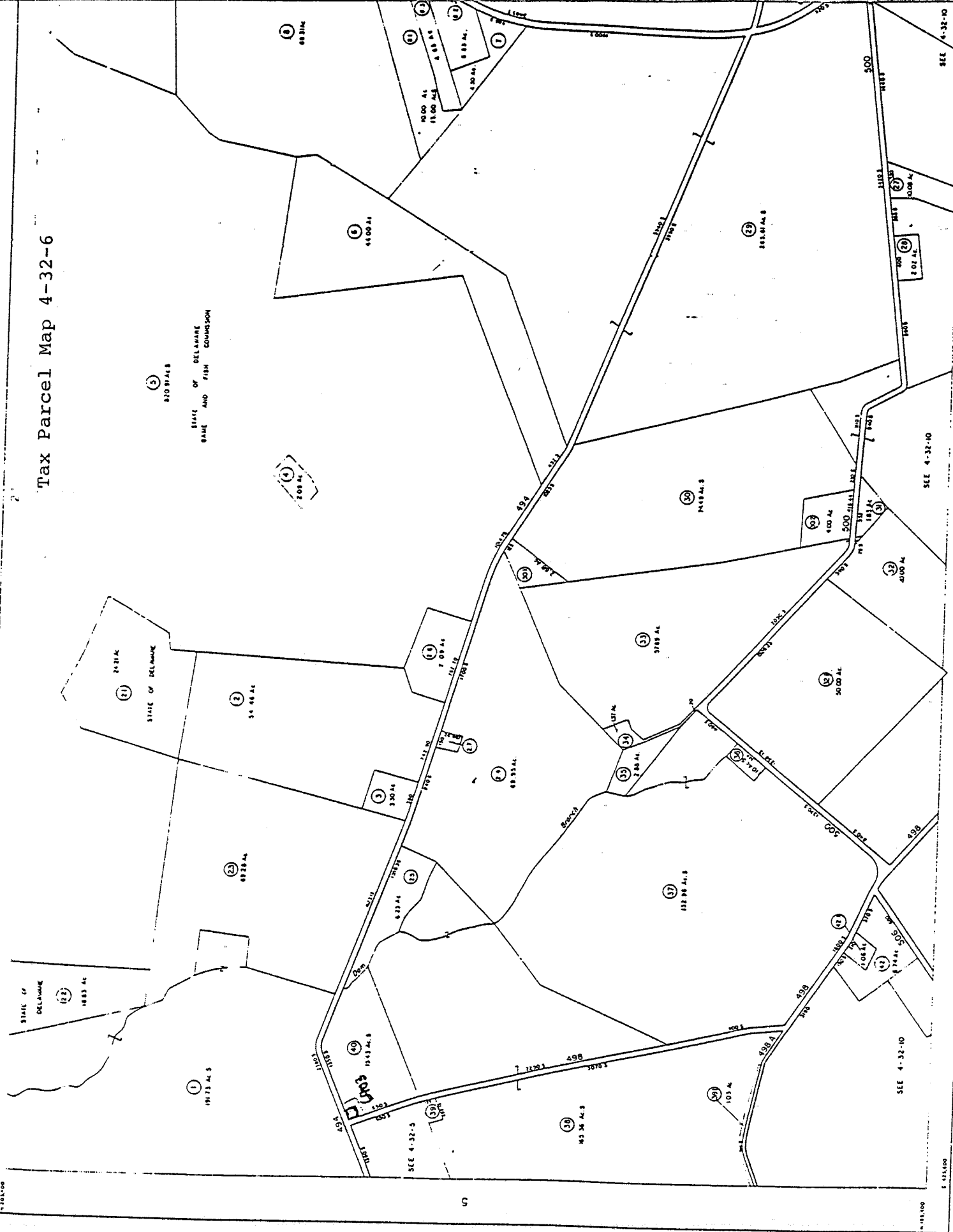
organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987

street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394

city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716



## Tax Parcel Map 4-32-6



**AERO SERVICE**  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19134

DATE OF REVISION

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

SUSSEX COUNTY

UN 3311

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Moore Potato Houseother names/site number CRS#-6664**2. Location**street & number Road 72, Box 337☐ not for publicationcity, town Laurel☒ vicinitystate Delawarecode DEcounty Sussexcode 005zip code 19956**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

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

Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, DelawareNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick & concrete block

walls wood/weatherboard

roof tin/wood shingles in situ

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Moore Potato House is a one and one half story, gable fronted, balloon frame structure built circa 1920. It is located south/southeast of intersection of Roads 72 and 463 lying on the south side of Road 72. It belongs to a farm complex which not being considered for nomination and measures 16 feet 6 inches by 20 feet 4 inches. The surrounding environment consists of a farm courtyard with extensive outbuildings including a chicken house, barn, three sheds, hen house, ice house, privy, and corn crib. The potato house is located on the southeast side of the farmyard complex and stands partly within a small woods. The complex is surrounded by open fields both cultivated and uncultivated and lies on a medium duty county road. During the heyday of the sweet potato this farm produced Indian corn and produce vegetables such as peas cucumbers, and tomatoes as well as sweet potatoes.

The Moore Potato House is triple sheathed having weatherboards over diagonal boards, over interior planking (wall covering). The fenestration of both front and back is original and reflects the design standard of the majority of gable fronted potato houses. A central first floor door capped by a second floor window, capped in turn by a small ventilation window in the gable comprises the front gable fenestration. The rear gable fenestration is identical. A single window pierces the left side wall presumably for additional ventilation. The present roof is tin over original wood shingles.

The interior has been thoroughly converted to storage space. There is no evidence of stove, chimney, or storage bins. There is the distinguishing gap between walls and ceilings which allowed warm air unimpeded passage to potatoes on the upper floor. The floors are slated, likewise enhancing air circulation.

The building is in fair condition. The exterior is still largely preserved and it is structurally sound. However, neglect is evident.

☐ See continuation sheet

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1920-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Moore Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend and as a significant architectural type. The potato house, as a functional type, relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's study unit III under the 1880-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation in southern Delaware was one of the major manifestations of these changes in production practices and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend in Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940 and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

CRS#-6664

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and was developed as a distinct building type to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type.

The significance of the Moore Potato House lies in its well preserved exterior and in commonly shared construction elements related to the function and design of sweet potato houses. These elements include; tall and narrow proportions, triple siding, minimal fenestration, tightly fitting window hatches, and interior ventilation features (especially the slated floor). The Moore Potato House has integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and association.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419,  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial  
Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation  
Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic  
Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, August 1986.  
Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L. J. Richards & Co., 1888.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acres of property .02 acres (422 square feet)

UTM References

A 

1	8
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4	5	6	3	8	8
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4	2	6	3	5	1	7
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

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☐ See continuation sheet

Tax Parcel Map #: 3-32-5, 7.3

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the site is a rectangle surrounding the potato house and extending  
ten feet from the roof line of the building on all sides.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of only  
the potato house. The property and additional non-contributing structures associated  
with the site are not included in this nomination.

☐ See continuation sheet

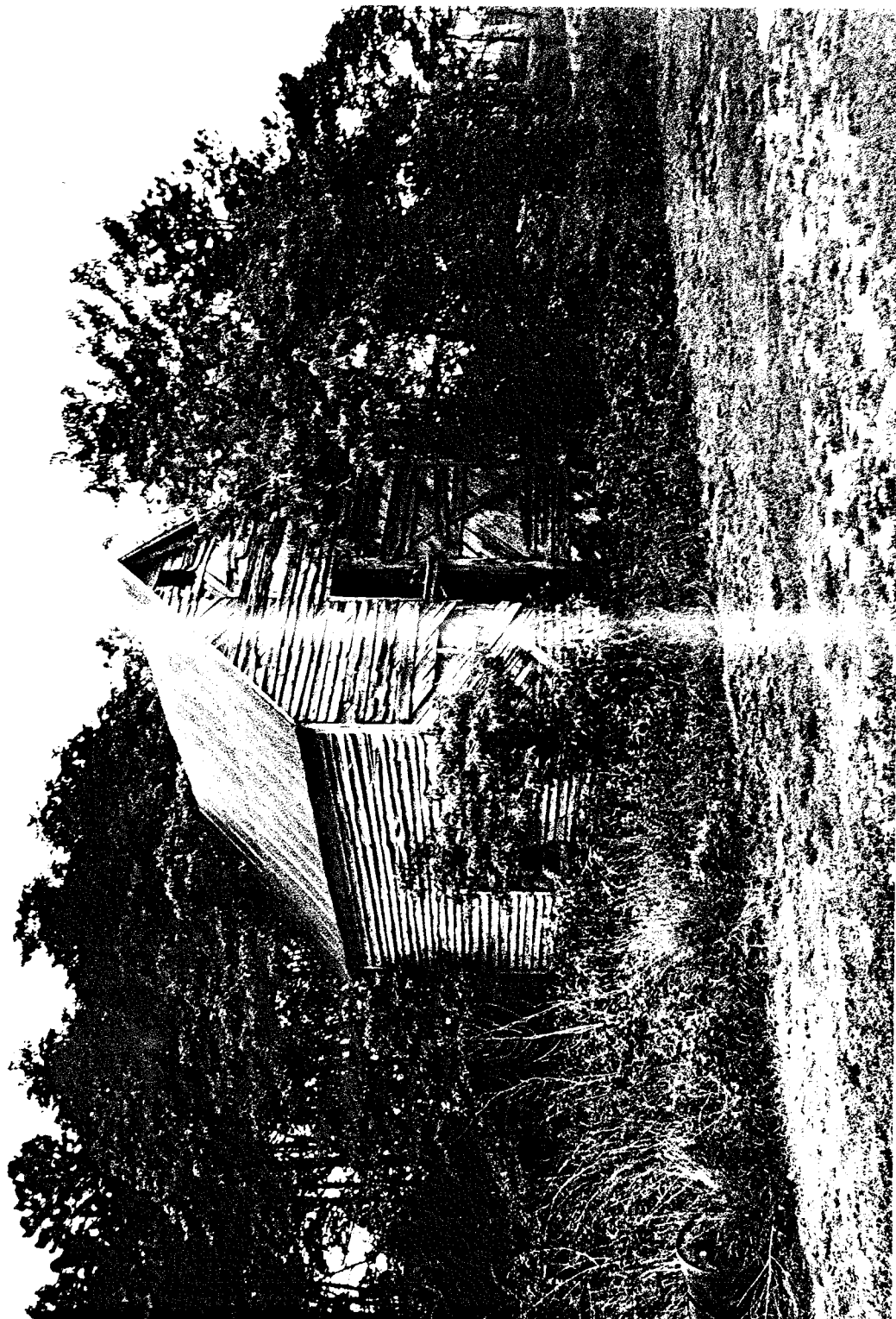
## 11. Form Prepared By

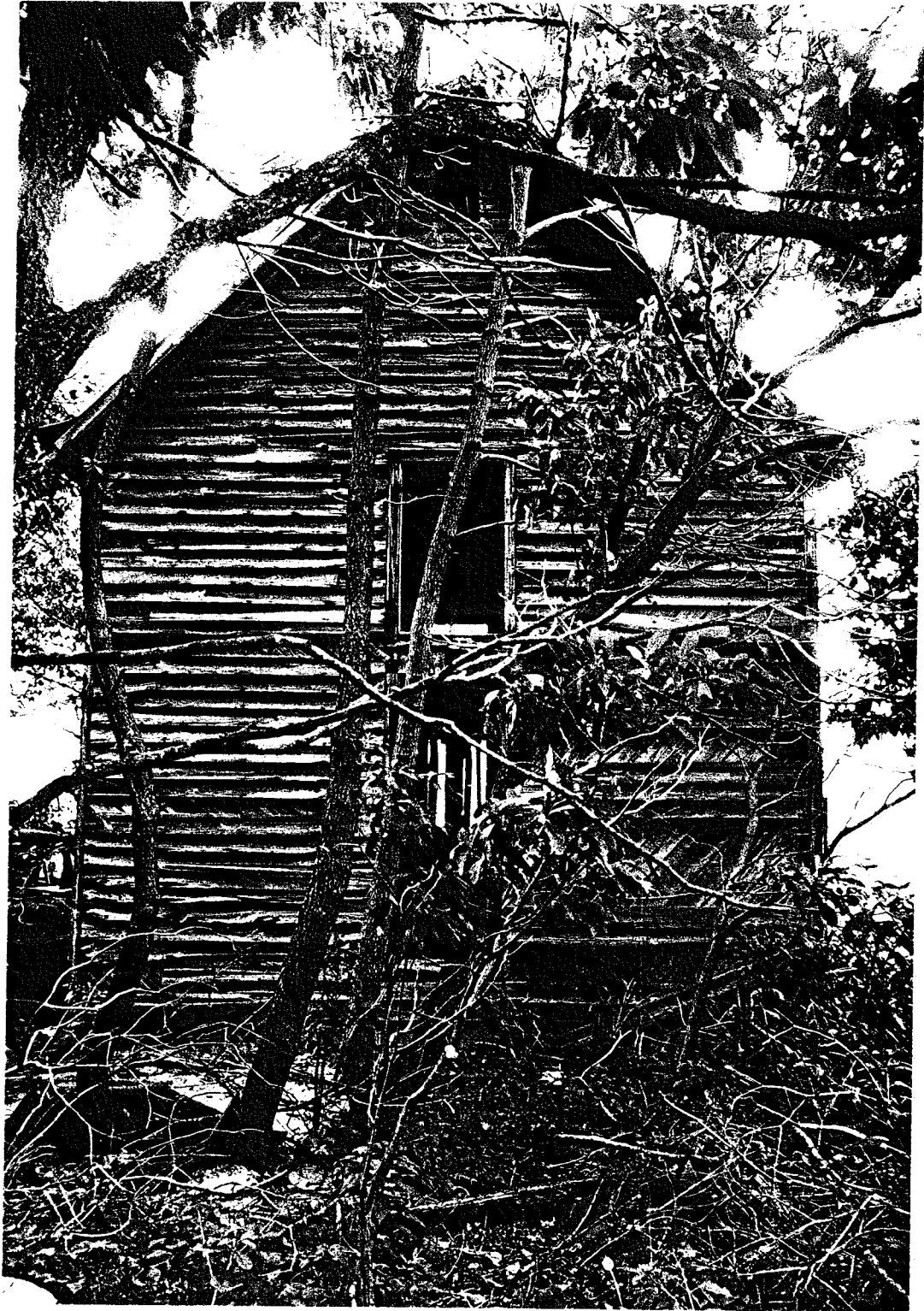
name/title Judith Quinn

organization Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering date December 23, 1987

street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394

city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716





# Tax Parcel Map 3-32-5

2-32

2-32

BROAD CREEK  
LITTLE CREEK

STATE PARK COMMISSION  
TRAP POND STATE PARK

SEE 3-32-6

9

**LEGEND**

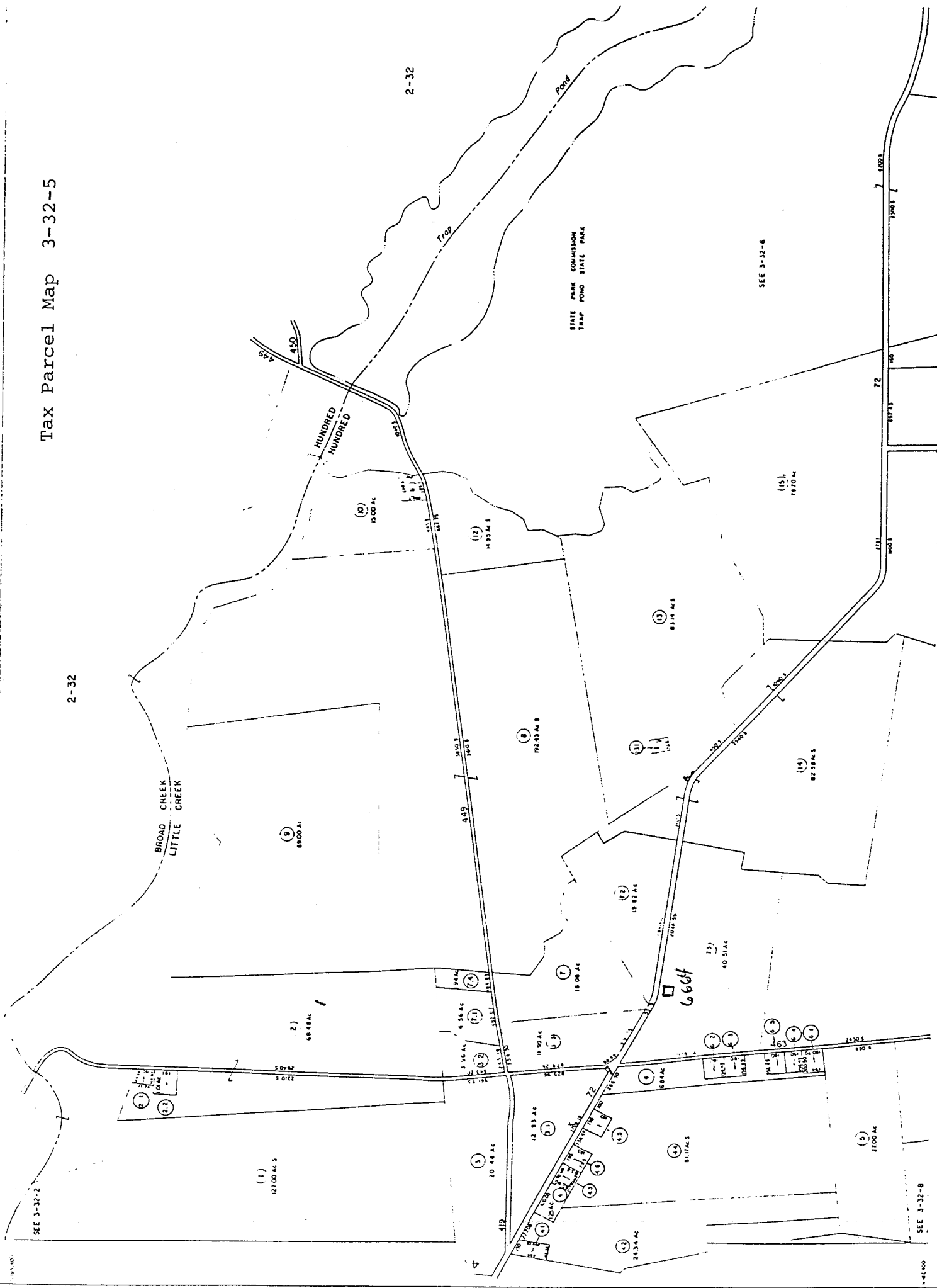
- County line
- Map parcel number
- Original lot number

**SUSSEX COUNTY  
DELAWARE**

THE INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS FOR INFORMATION  
ONLY AND DOES NOT  
CONSTITUTE A WARRANTY  
OR GUARANTEE OF ANY  
KIND.

DATE OF REVISION  
OCTOBER 1977  
DATE OF REVISION  
OCTOBER 1977

**AERO SERVICE**  
PHOTOGRAPHIC / REPRODUCTION  
1-473400



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Stanley Potato Houseother names/site number CRS#-6723**2. Location**street & number Route 2, Box 161☐ not for publicationcity, town Laurel☒ vicinitystate Delawarecode DEcounty Sussexcode 005zip code 19956**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

## Contributing

1

## Noncontributing

N/A buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, DelawareNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete blocks

walls wood/weatherboard

roof tin

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Stanley Potato House is a one and one half story, gable fronted, balloon frame structure built circa 1920 of dimension cut lumber. It measures 17 by 23 feet and is located south/southeast of Laurel, Delaware .47 miles north of the intersection of Roads 68 and 451, lying on the east side of Road 68. It belongs to a farm complex which is not being considered for nomination. The surrounding environment consists of cultivated (corn) and uncultivated fields and numerous (15) outbuildings including a kitchen, granary, chicken house, lumber shed, and garages. The landscape is emphatically flat. During the heyday of the sweet potato the farm would have grown Indian corn, and produce vegetables such as peas, tomatoes, cucumbers, and melons like its neighbors. The small size of this potato house indicates that it was used solely for the crop of the Stanley farm and not for rented storage space.

The condition of the potato house is excellent. It rests upon concrete blocks suggesting that it has been moved from its original site. Today it is used for storage.

Both exterior and interior of the building largely retain their original appearance, although as in most existing potato houses, the storage bins have been removed. Fenestration is original. The front gable end features a sliding first story loading door, while the upper story has a hinged loading door. The rear gable end has only a small attic story window in the gable. Lateral sides have no fenestration.

Original, narrow face, mill-sawn weatherboards comprise the exterior layer of the building's double siding. Four inch gaps between side walls and attic story floor boards indicate characteristic potato house ventilation. Nailing patterns indicate a center aisle running lengthwise through the building (gable end to gable end). A wooden loft ladder to the left of the main entry provides

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

CRS#-6723

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access to the upper story. The interior chimney no longer exists but occupied the rear gable end of the building. The original wood shingle roof has been replaced with tin.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☒ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

1920-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Stanley Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend and as a significant architectural type. The potato house, as a functional type, relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's study unit III under the 1880-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing.

The growth of sweet potato cultivation in southern Delaware was one of the major manifestations of these changes in production practice and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend in Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation cominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940 and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significantas an architectural type. It was essential

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

CRS#-6723

to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities and was developed as a distinct building type to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type. The Stanley Potato House is a significant example of the building type because it retains an important number of elements characteristic of potato house construction and function and is in excellent condition. These elements include; minimal fenestration, center aisle floor plan, double siding, and hatched loading doors. The storage and curing functions of the potato house are manifest in these elements. The building is an excellent example of the importance of the sweet potato crop for both large and small farms, personal and commercial consumption. The small size of the Stanley Potato House identifies it with the small grower of sweet potatoes who cultivated his crop for personal consumption. The Stanley Potato House has integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and association.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419,  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial  
Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation  
Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation,  
1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County,  
August 1986. Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of DE.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co., 1888.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other  
Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .024 acres (491 square feet)

UTM References

A 

1	8
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4	5	2	6	5	7
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4	2	6	3	1	9	9
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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Tax Parcel Map #: 3-32-4, 54

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the site is a rectangle surrounding the potato house and extending ten feet from the roof line of the building on all sides.

☐ See continuation sheet

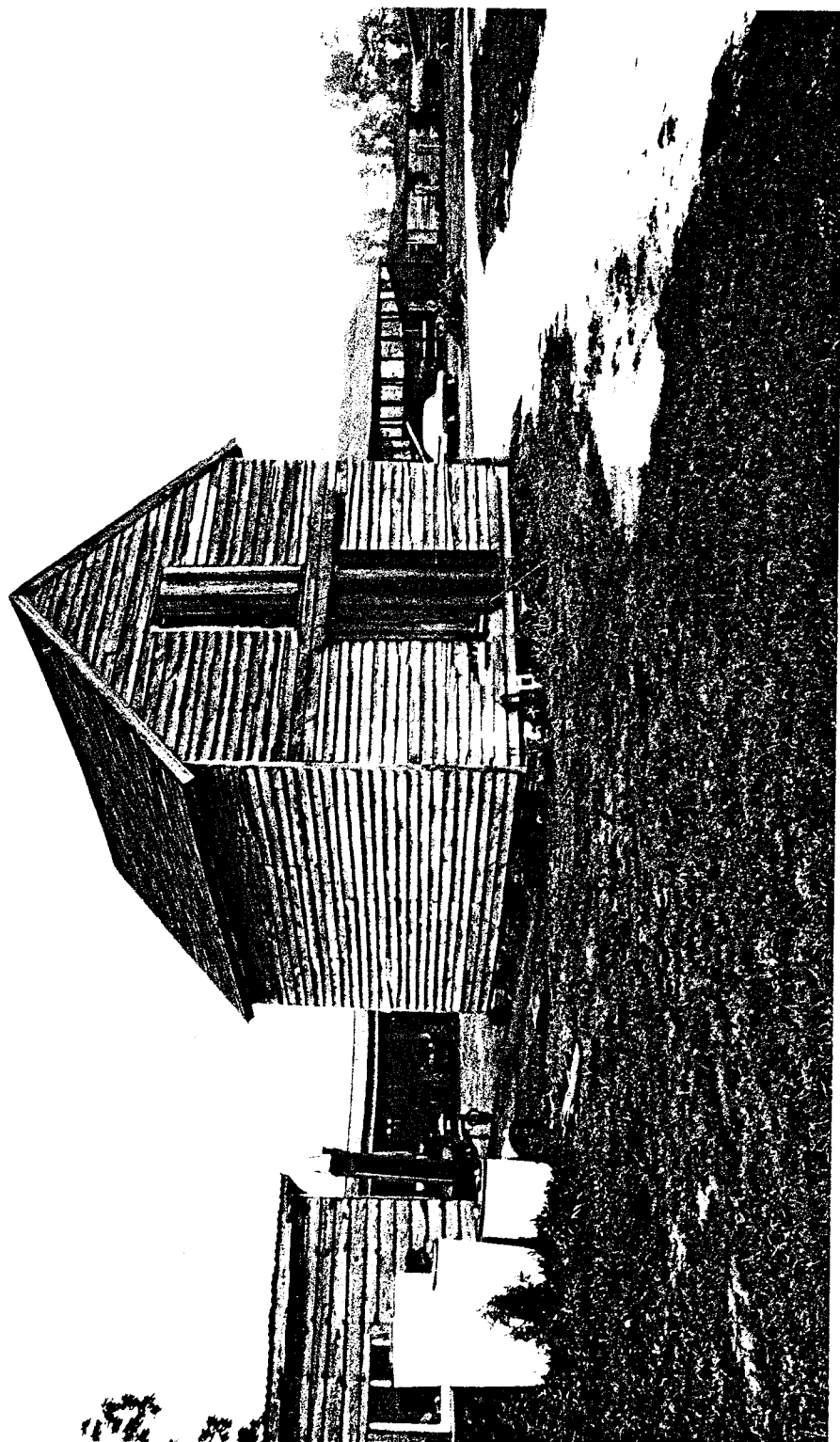
Boundary Justification

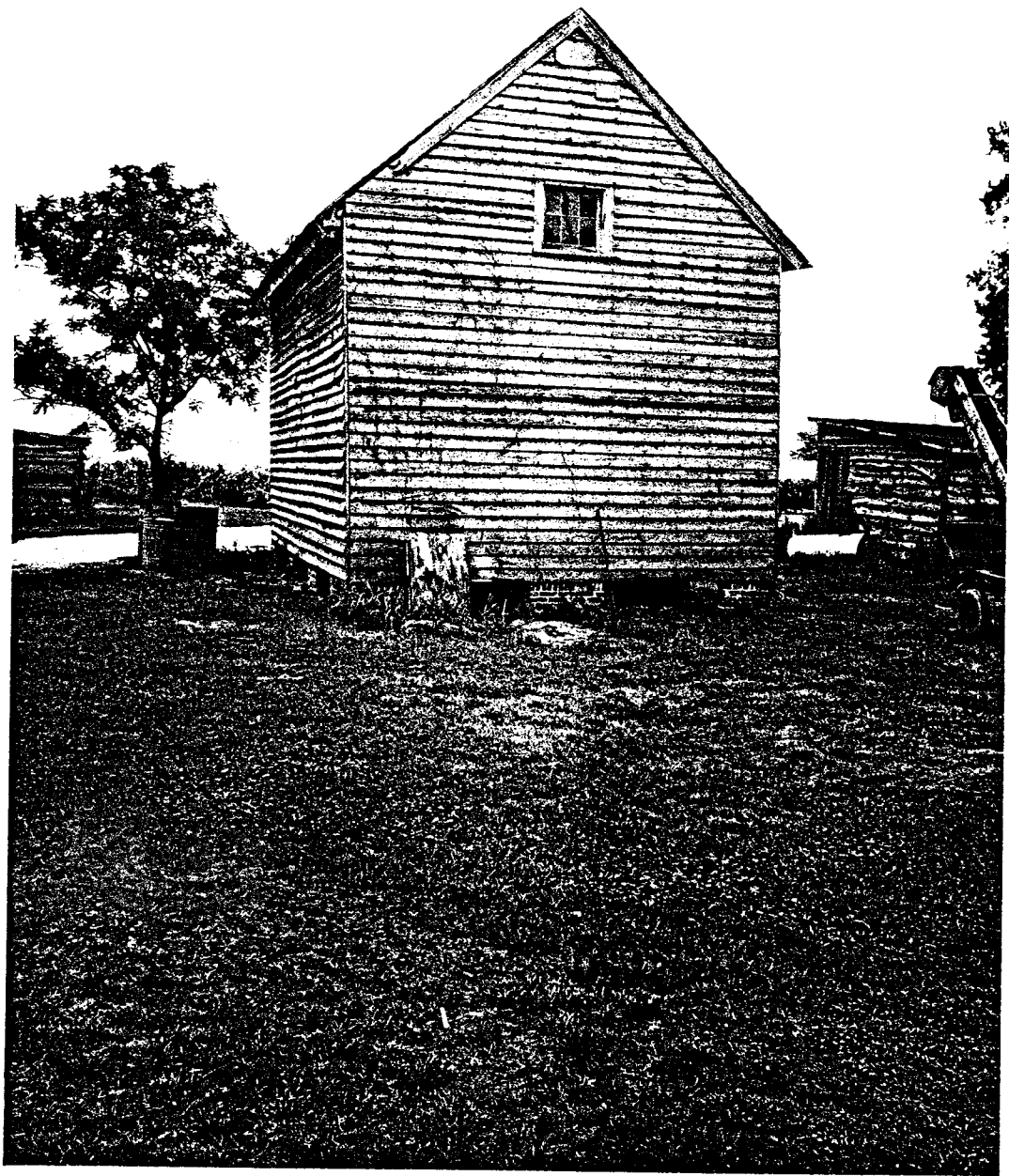
The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of only the potato house. The property and additional structures associated with the site are not included in this nomination.

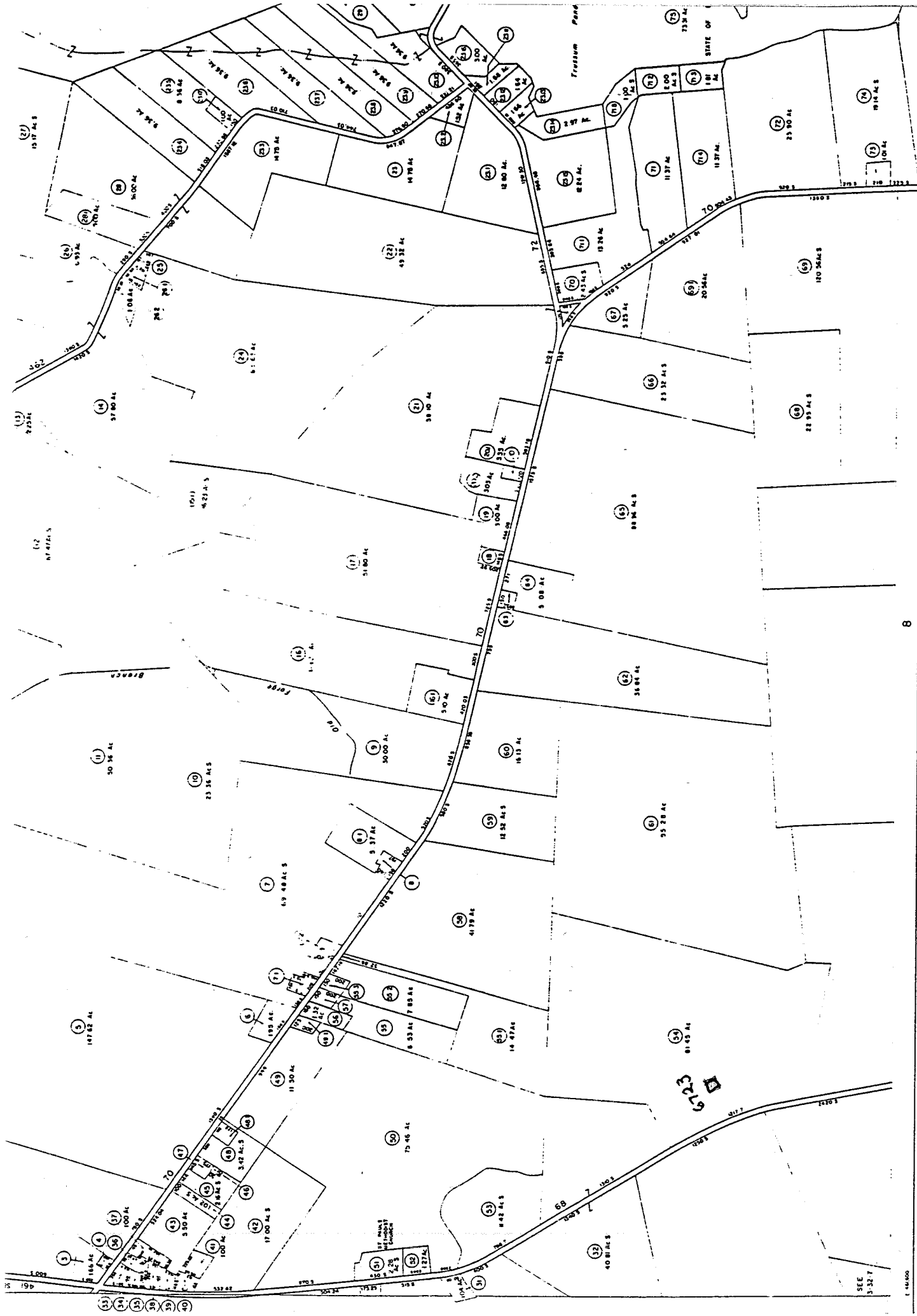
☐ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Judith Quinn  
organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987  
street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394  
city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716







**LEGEND**

County line	City parcel number
Township line	Original lot number
Section line	As shown on map
City or Borough line	As shown on map
Property line	As shown on map

All Dimensions Shown in Feet

# SUSSEX COUNTY DELAWARE

Map of Sussex County, Delaware, showing the location of the property shown on this map. The map is based on the original survey of the property and is not a reproduction of the original survey. The map is not a substitute for a survey and should not be used for legal purposes.

**AERO SERVICE**  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19115  
DATE OF COMPLETION: OCTOBER 1977  
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY: DECEMBER 1976  
PROPERTY DATA FROM: 1973 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY  
SHEET NUMBER BASED ON THE DELAWARE STATE PLANE COORDINATE SYSTEM  
SHEET MAPS

DATE OF REVISION

Tax Parcel Map 3-32-4

MAP 3-32



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Collins Potato Houseother names/site number CRS#-6754**2. Location**street & number Road 509, Box 814☐ not for publicationcity, town Laurel☒ vicinitystate Delawarecode DEcounty Sussexcode 005zip code 19956**3. Classification**

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

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

Name of related multiple property listing:

Sweet Potato Houses of Sussex County, DelawareNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Potato House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls wood/weatherboard

some metal siding

roof tin

other concrete (first floor)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Collins Potato House is a two-story, balloon frame, gable fronted building built in the late nineteenth century and measuring 19 by 30 feet. It is located 1.9 miles south of Laurel, Delaware 400 feet northeast of the junction of roads 509 and 510A, lying on the east side of Road 509. The surrounding environment consists of flat, uncultivated fields, meadows, and scattered stands of trees as well as non-contributing outbuildings in close proximity (two sheds and one garage).

The Collins Potato House is triple sided with narrow, mill-sawn weatherboards over diagonal siding, over interior wall planking.

The original fenestration remains on the west gable end of the building and remains intact (in situ) beneath modern metal siding. The west (rear) gable end features a central door with a large window directly above it at second floor level. A small ventilation window occupies the attic story under the roof gable. The east (front) gable end exhibits similar features. A central door on the ground floor is accompanied by a second floor loading door intended to facilitate loading of potatoes into the second floor bins. The east (front) gable end has an attic story window now obscured by metal siding.

The identical first and second floor plans of the building consisted of a central aisle flanked by three-sided bins. The plan is characteristic of potato house construction. Today the first story has been transformed into a stable though the center aisle plan remains clearly marked by supporting posts. The second floor retains its original appearance, including original storage bins. The bins, five per side, are deep, narrow, slated, and rising to ceiling height. Stairs in the northeast corner provide access from first to second floors. Interior framing remains unchanged.

A coal stove stood in the first floor's center aisle. The stove is no

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

CRS#-6754

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longer present but the interior chimney still stands in the west end of the building.

In form and materials the Collins Potato House stands as an excellent example of a once essential farm building in Sussex County. The present owner, Paul Collins, reports that this potato house built by his grandfather was the first potato house to be built in Little Creek Hundred. At the time of the sweet potatoes' heyday the Collins Farm grew Indian corn and produce vegetables such as peas, cucumbers, tomatoes as well as cantalopes and strawberries.

Lean-to sheds have been added to north and south sides of the building and tin siding now covers the front gable facade. The value of the building's interior integrity (particularly the existence of storage bins) outweighs any detriment perceived in exterior changes. No structural alterations mar the original building, it remains intact within the above mentioned changes.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Architecture

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Period of Significance

1895-1937

\_\_\_\_\_

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Cultural Affiliation

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Collins Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend, and as a significant architectural type. The potato house, as a functional type, relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's study unit III under the 1880-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation in southern Delaware was one of the major manifestations of these changes in production practices and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend in Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940 and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

CRS#-6754

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to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities and was developed as a distinct building type to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type. The Collins Potato House is an excellent example of the property type retaining elements characteristic of potato house construction and function. These elements include; tall and narrow proportions, triple siding, minimal fenestration, interior chimney, tightly fitting window and door hatches, interior ventilation features, and original storage bins.

The Collins Potato House is particularly important due to the rare example of extant potato bins found in its second story. The well preserved bins provide invaluable evidence of storage techniques developed by the farmers of southwestern Delaware. The information the building provides reflects the significance that the sweet potato crop had for the farmers of Little Creek Hundred in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Collins Potato House has integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419,  
Newark: University of Delaware, Agriculture Experiment Station, 1986.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial Committee,  
1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic  
Preservation Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and  
Historic Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, Delaware.  
August 1986. Tapes with the Center for Historical Architecture and Engineering, Univ. of DE.

Scharf, Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888, Philadelphia: L. J. Richards and Co., 1888.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .078 acres (1600.8 square feet)

### UTM References

A 18 447263 4264193  
Zone Easting Northing  
C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
D \_\_\_\_\_

☐ See continuation sheet

Tax Parcel Map #: 4-32-11, 15

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the site is a rectangle surrounding potato house and adjoining  
lean-to additions and extending ten feet from respective roof lines on each side  
of that rectangle.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of only  
the potato house. The property and additional structures associated with the site  
are not included in this nomination. Lean-to additions are included within the  
boundary description only because they are inseparable from the potato house.

☐ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

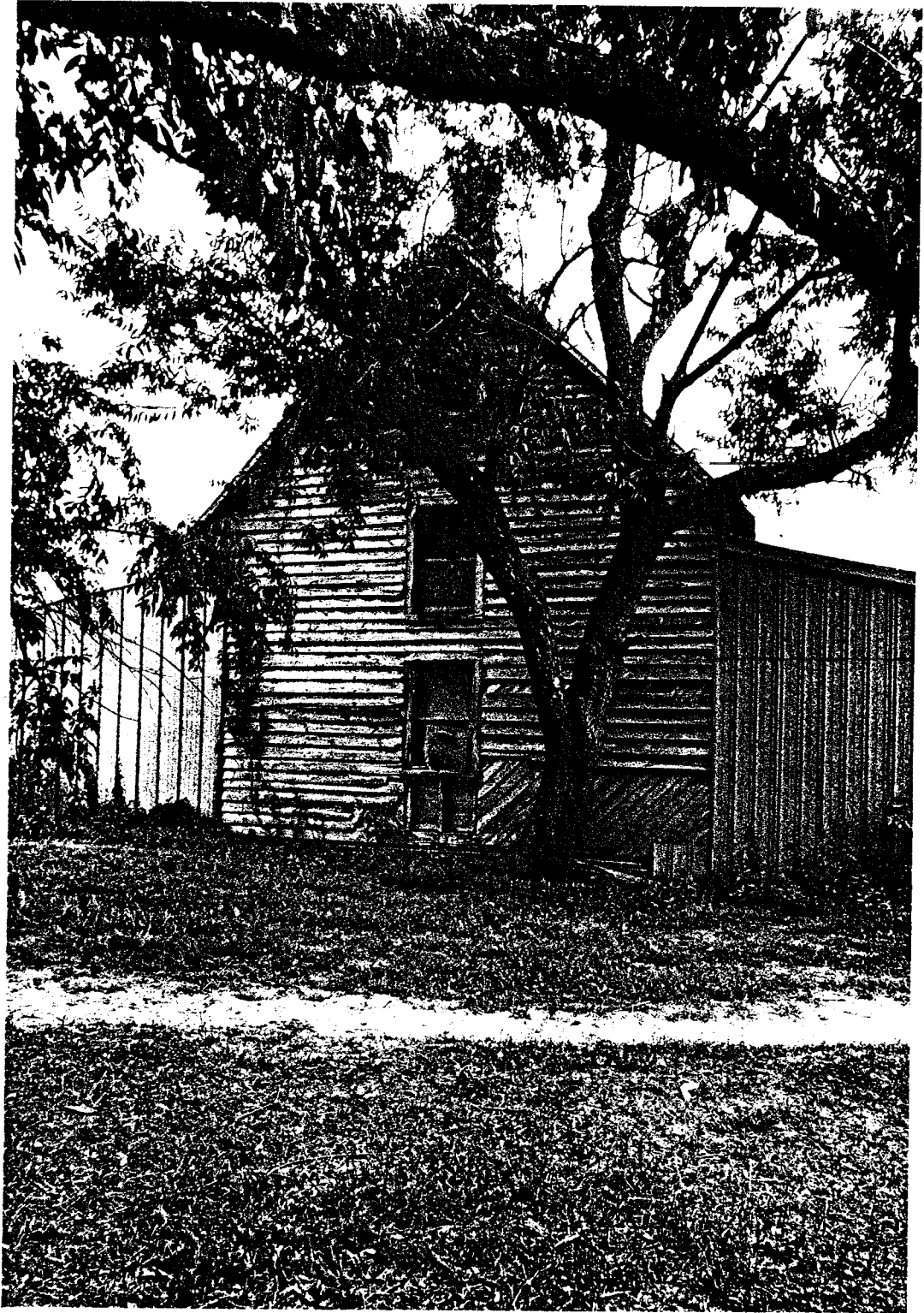
name/title Judith Quinn

organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987

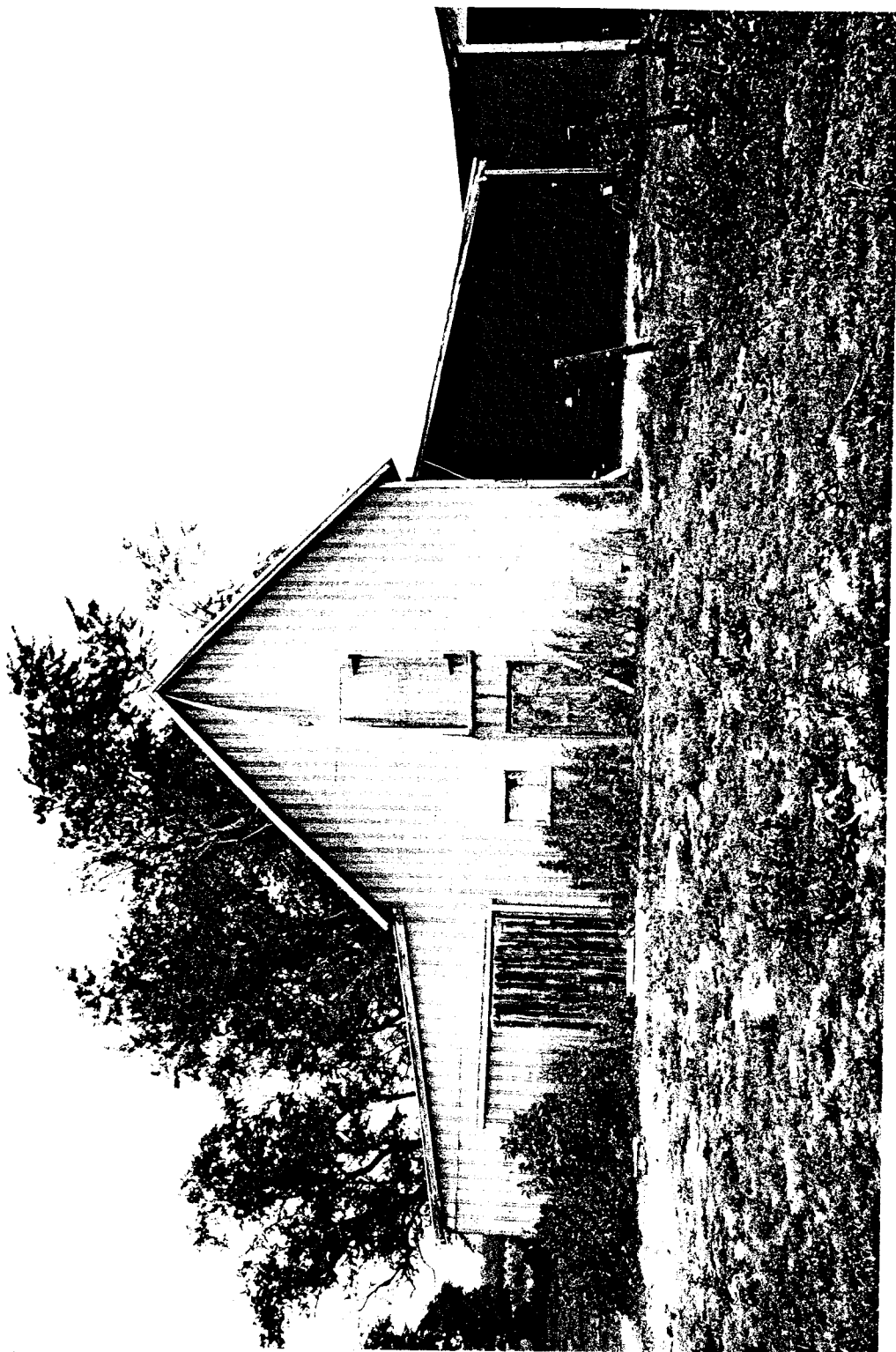
street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394

city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716









Case 1:18-cv-01001 Document 1-1 Filed 07/26/18 Page 1 of 1

## ADVICE

DATE OF COMPLETION (NOT 12, 1973) DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH RECEIVED 10/17/73  
DATE LOCATED, IDENTIFIED  
PROBABLE DATE FROM PHOTO RESEARCH, FBI, DISSEMINANCE AND RECORDS PLANS  
BEST EFFORT BASIS ON THE DELAWARE STATE PLANS COORDINATE SYSTEM

**Country Codes and Abbreviations**

