

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

N-427

Property Name: Woodside

Location and Verbal Boundary Description:

Woodside is located on route 435 (Choptank Road) .2 miles north of its junction with route 432. The nominated area includes four acres on the north side of route 435 containing the house, outbuildings, lane and grounds.

Owner: Thomas J. Stevens, Jr.  
R.D.1, P.O.Box 437  
Middletown, Delaware

Description:

Woodside is a fine and well preserved Italianate architectural statement of the type found throughout St. Georges Hundred and the Levels. The house has survived without any significant stylistic alterations since it was constructed in 1860. The L-shaped plan house is built in brick, stretcher bond, with full brick basement and double chimneys on the northern and southern ends. Most typical of Italianate architecture is the hipped roof with widely overhanging eaves, under which are situated elaborate brackets running along the cornice. Remnants of a widow's walk are evident. The house is a two story, five bay, center front passage plan with a five bay, highly ornamented porch running the length of the house facade. Windows are two over two sash with marble lintels. The shutters are paneled on the first floor and louvered on the second story. The double door entrance bears a transom and side window lights of blue and red glass. Brackets are used once again above the door.

The rear of the brick structure changes to three stories, the lintels change to wood, and the use of brackets diminishes. The frame structure, assumed to precede the brick structure, is a two story, center front passage, single room dwelling with one room above, and an attached frame shed addition.

In an 1898 inventory of Henry Clayton's estate, what has become three large

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Continuation sheet U-427 Item number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

rooms by removal of a dividing wall, was four; sitting room, parlor, dining room and kitchen. The largest, being the parlor (18x20) contains the only fireplace, the other chimneys being either blind or simply stove flews. Decoration includes the painted slate mantels and heavy trim around the windows and baseboards. Across the hall in the dining room, ghost lines in the ceiling reveal the past division between the sitting room and dining room. In the hallway the window lit stairwell features a figured wood bannister terminating in an octagonal newel post with a removable ivory button for secret storage of valuable documents. The kitchen features a stone hearth and circular service stairs to the second and third floor kitchen chambers. Within the leanto frame section is a well.

There are numerous outbuildings and structures situated close to the house. They are a stable, granary, cattle/dairy barn, equipment shed and water tower. These buildings are contemporary with the brick Italianate structure (1860), the dairy barn buildings dating somewhat later. The equipment shed utilizes unplanned cyprus posts and shows evidence of reused timbers. The granary, a two story drive-through, double crib style is constructed with massive hewn beams with grain chutes and sleeves still intact. Behind the outbuildings can be found the remains of a peach orchard, or importance in the history of the property.

**Historical Background and Significance**

Henry Clayton, who commissioned Woodside, stands as a classic example of the people involved in rebuilding activity. Yet in some ways he was exceptional, as he and his sons were experimental farmers and seemed never to experience the same devastating losses that his neighbors did. Henry is related closely to many prominent Delawareans. He is the son of Colonel Joshua Clayton, and grandson of the Honorable Thomas Clayton, a Dover lawyer. His great-grandfather was Governor Joshua Clayton, president and governor of Delaware. Governor Clayton was responsible for the initial settling of Claytons in St. Georges Hundred as he owned, along with Governor Richard Bassett, a major portion of what is known as Bohemia Manor. Henry's grandfather's cousin was John Middleton Clayton, considered by many to be the most influential political figure in Delaware.

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Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

10-427

Item number

Page

Indicative of the adaptability and survival instinct inherent in the Claytons is Henry's father, Colonel Joshua Clayton, who relinquished after five years, a successful law career in Dover to "wrestle with the clods" at Bohemia Manor "with ploughs which in those days never had a share to please him, being badly shaped and were often made of wood." He rejuvenated the depleted soil using innovative farming techniques such as sub soil ploughing, ditches, and "judicious use of lime." His solvency encouraged other neighbors such as B. T. Biggs to attempt the same methods.

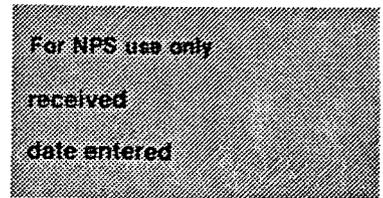
Henry was one of ten children to receive a portion of his father's 3,500 acres. By paying his father \$1.00 in 1873, he purchased the 212 acres known as Woodside. Deeds indicate that Henry was living on the property at the time. Historical and Autobiographical Encyclopedia (1882) indicates that the house was built in 1860 when Henry was 21 years old. Henry quickly saw the potential of the peach market and between 1865-1875, he was one of the most prosperous peach growers in St. Georges and the largest shipper of peaches in 1875. His peach trees are said to have numbered 19,000 at one time, and the 1870 Agricultural Census reflects the profits realized from the peach culture.

The neighboring town of Middletown offered excellent facilities for travel and transportation due to the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad, but offered very little to the farming community in the way of manufacture. In 1882, in the experimental vein of the Claytons, Henry and three others, (one being his father) formed a co-partnership for canning fruits and vegetables in Middletown on the corner of Scott and Lake Streets. The company was called Biggs, Clayton and Company. This attempt to redeem the peach market during its demise failed after two, four month seasons, during which time the company provided work for 120 employees. In 1887, sixteen years after an unsuccessful work works project in Middletown, Henry with others, supervised the construction of what would be a successful water works. This experiment is reflected on Henry's own farm, in the form of a water tower near his cattle barn.

Henry's adaptability and dabbling is reflected on his own farm in other ways as well. The variety of outbuildings indicate the number of farming ventures he chose

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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Continuation sheet 0-427 Item number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

to try, or was pushed into for economic survival. Initially his father was involved in raising wheat and Indian corn as well as some livestock while Henry was growing up and going to school in New Jersey. Upon his return to St. Georges in 1856, the completion of the railroad in Middletown set the stage for Henry's entrance into the peach industry. The Italianate houses often called "peach houses" actually preceeded the advent of the peach culture in Delaware, and like the orchards, were considered investments. The peach orchards were rather speculative and the architecture was a tangible, safe investment. Conjecture would suggest that by 1880 Henry was preparing for the demise of the peach culture as he invested \$300.00 in fencing and repairs, far above that of the other Claytons listed, and according to the Agricultural Census for 1880, he no longer owned any peach trees.

Henry Clayton's 1898 inventory and appraisal which was administered two years after his death, indicates that for the remainder of his days he raised cattle and grain, namely wheat. Part of his income came from the sale of strawberries and hot bed sashes. The advent of a mechanical age becomes evident as Henry owned a team of plow horses and the related equipment, while cooperatively investing in the cost of hiring a coal-burning threshing machine to harvest.

Henry Clayton lived at an opportune time in Delaware agricultural history, and due to his ability was able to capitalize on this. His home reflects their social and economic standing in the community. The outbuildings indicate the cycle in which farmers in St. Georges Hundred were caught. Together the house and farm buildings offer a significant look at the architecture, families, and the economic and social structures present in St. Georges Hundred between 1820-1890.

Nomination by Trish Bensinger



WOODSIDE  
12-427