

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0669628

FOR NPS USE ONLY
MAY 22 1978
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED
1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Biddle House
AND/OR COMMON
Biddle House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
S.E. Corner of Route 13 & Route 2
CITY, TOWN
St. Georges
STATE
Delaware
VICINITY OF
One
COUNTY
New Castle
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
One
CODE
10
NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CODE
002 03

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Mr. Earl Lester
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
St. Georges
STATE
Delaware
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Public Building

STREET & NUMBER
Rodney Square

CITY, TOWN
Wilmington
STATE
Delaware

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Delaware Cultural Resource Survey N-3935

DATE
_FEDERAL STATE _COUNTY _LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Hall of Records

CITY, TOWN
Dover
STATE
Delaware

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Biddle House, in northern St. Georges Hundred, is situated on a slight rise of ground overlooking the junction of two eighteenth-century roads known as the King's Highway (today, Route 13) and the Port Penn road (Route 2). By the middle of the nineteenth century this road junction was familiarly known as Biddle's Corner, after the owner of the sole farmhouse in the immediate vicinity. Farming has been the primary occupation for the inhabitants of this part of New Castle County since the late eighteenth century and to this day most of the lands are under active cultivation.

The Biddle House has undergone five distinct periods of growth and in the process has grown from a one-room-plan plank house to the extended rambling two-story structure that it is today.

The earliest portion of the Biddle House was most probably built during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Basically, it was a simple, one-room-plan dwelling built of heavy sawn plank with full dovetailed corners. The planks are four inches thick, one foot wide, and in some instances are eighteen feet long, though most are shorter. Pins set vertically into the horizontal butt joints secure the planks from movement. Strands of oakum are driven between the planks for additional weatherproofing of the joints. The weatherboards which originally covered the planks were replaced sometime in the late 19th century. The house had a western gable interior end chimney with an exposed base. The foundation of this section is comprised of brick laid in English bond to form a full earthen floored cellar, at the western end of which rests a truly massive segmentally-arched chimney support some 10 feet wide.

On the first floor the original cavernous fireplace has been twice reduced in size in conjunction with later nineteenth-century expansion and modification of the structure. Situated on the south wall are a doorway and an opening for a single six-over-six sash window. The northern wall was greatly altered with the addition of a bowed window in the late 19th century. The attic no longer exists in its original location, as the roof was raised when the second story was added to the plank section during the third phase of the Biddle House expansion. The first floor ceiling joists, now lathed and plastered, were once exposed with beveled edges. An enclosed staircase, added during the second building stage, flanks the right side of the chimney.

Sometime during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the second major construction phase took place. Against the west gable end of the plank house was added a federal two-story, three-bay, nogged braced frame side hall plan house with a west gable interior end chimney and simple, yet sophisticated, detailing in the form of baseboards, chair rails, raised four panelled doors and a closed stringer staircase with square balusters. The exposed interior principal posts are covered by beaded casings. On the first floor, some of these details were removed in the mid-nineteenth century to accompany the third phase of expansion and modernization. The second story of this federal addition

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Building technology.
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The present deteriorated condition of the Biddle House shifts it somewhat from the customary aesthetic notions and implications of architectural significance. However, it is nevertheless an important building and of great significance to an examination of Delaware architecture for several reasons. The plank house and nogged braced frame side hall house are both important individually as good examples of scarce architectural forms that characterized much of the housing in Delaware during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. The combination of these two earlier sections with the later Victorian wings establishes the Biddle House as an important architectural document that clearly illustrates within the context of a single structure the evolutionary development of wooden houses through time. The very complexity of the Biddle House makes it an especially informative field laboratory for the student of architectural history.

The plank house which forms the nucleus of the Biddle House is a type once very prevalent throughout New Castle and Kent County. However, very few of these have survived in any form through to the present. It is important to note that this first section, though enlarged upon, still retained a large measure of utility. The alterations to the plank house in the wake of the serial enlargements and modifications clearly demonstrates an aspect of early building practices wherein existing structural elements were modified and reused.

The nogged braced frame side hall house, the basis of the phase two enlargement, is another good example of a construction technique common to many early Delaware houses. Here, the brick nogging within the walls is of special interest as the Biddle House is the northernmost example discovered to date of an architectural practice which is more commonly encountered in lower Delaware.

Taken in its present entirety, the Biddle House shows the progression of the wooden house from the use of heavy plank to mortised and tenoned braced frame through to light timbered balloon frame. Somewhat ironically, it is the deteriorated condition of the house that permits a detailed study of its change through time.

During the period which runs from the date of the plank house construction to the last major modifications of the early 20th century, the house belonged to two farming families who were related by marriage, the Vandegrifts and the Biddles. As an artifact, this house provides important cultural evidence of how successive generations of a family have altered and added to their home in response to various changes in their social and spacial requirements.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Beers, D. G. Atlas of the State of Delaware. Philadelphia: Pomery & Beers, 1868.
New Castle County Orphans Court Record Book O, folios 178, 179.
- Rea, Samuel and Jacob Price. Map of New Castle County, Delaware. Philadelphia: Smith and Wistar, 1849.
- Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Delaware: 1609-1888. Reprint ed., Port Washington, N. Y.: Kenikat Press, 1972.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .2066

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	4 4 4	3 1 5	4 3 7 4 8 0 5	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	
C					D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated area is limited to that portion of the yard within 25 feet of the foundation of the house.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Bernard Herman, Lecturer, American Studies Program History Dept, Univ. of Del. and Dean Nelson, Historian

ORGANIZATION	DATE
Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs	
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
Hall of Records	(302) 678-5314
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Dover	Delaware 19901

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Lauren Kelly 5/17/78

TITLE Director, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST *Bill Labovich*
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE *12/8/78*
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
 DATE *Dec 5, 1978*

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

originally featured exposed beaded attic joists and painted vertical board room partitions, which were later covered with lath and plaster.

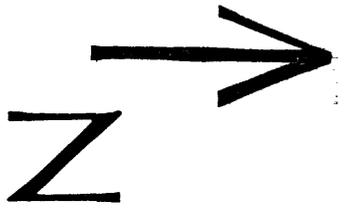
The chimney support of this section rests against the western end of the common bond cellar wall, but during the late nineteenth century the entire fireplace and chimney was removed and replaced by a brick flue for wood or coal burning stoves. The roof of this section has mortise and tenon rafters. A standing seam sheet tin roof overlies a finished split shake roof.

Phase three of the evolution of the Biddle House took place sometime in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet another wing was added, this time to the east gable end of the plank house. This section was built of balloon frame and rests on a stone foundation and full cellar. A brick chimney for a stove is located on the eastern gable end wall to the left of which is an enclosed staircase leading to the second floor and a staircase giving access to the cellar. At this time, a moulded box cornice with returns was added to the eaves to give the roof line of the entire house a more uniform appearance.

Late in the nineteenth century, a two-story wing was added to the Biddle House on the north side on facade. In addition, a square columned porch was added to the facade, extending around to the west gable end of the federal section. This was the fourth major alteration to the structure.

Early in this century a one-story, shed-roofed frame wing was added against the south exterior wall of the phase three, mid-nineteenth century wing. The house was covered in its entirety with mill-sawn cedar weatherboard around the turn of the century. Later in this century these weatherboards were covered over with a form of fiber-insulated, composition coated siding.

The house has been abandoned and is now open and subject to vandalism. As the primary significance of the Biddle house lies in its architectural aspects and is not concerned with its environment, only the ground within twenty-five feet of the house is included for the purposes of the nomination.



DUPONT PARKWAY
(U.S. RT. 13)

BIDDLE'S CORNER

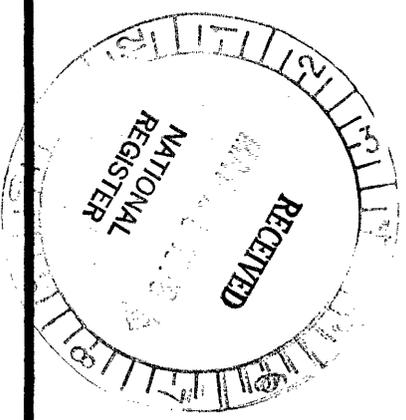
BIDDLE HOUSE



LISTON RANGE
REAR LIGHT

BIDDLE'S CORNER-PORT PENN ROAD
(DEL. RT. 2)

DUTCH NECK ROAD
(DEL. RT. 417)



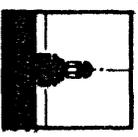
DELAWARE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

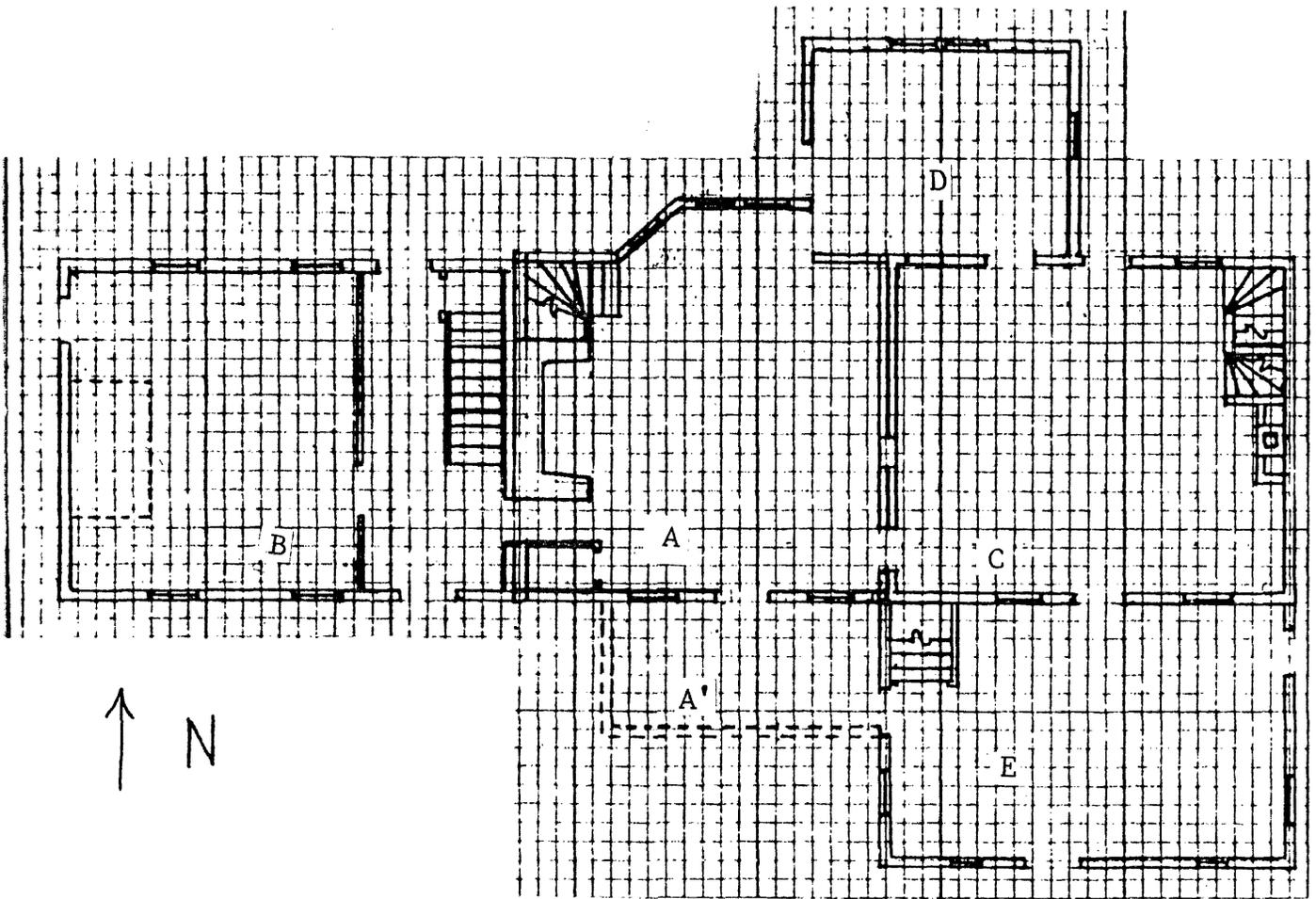
DRAWN BY DATE SCALE

D. Nelson April '78 1"=800'

FILE N-3935 TITLE Biddle House

General Sketch Map





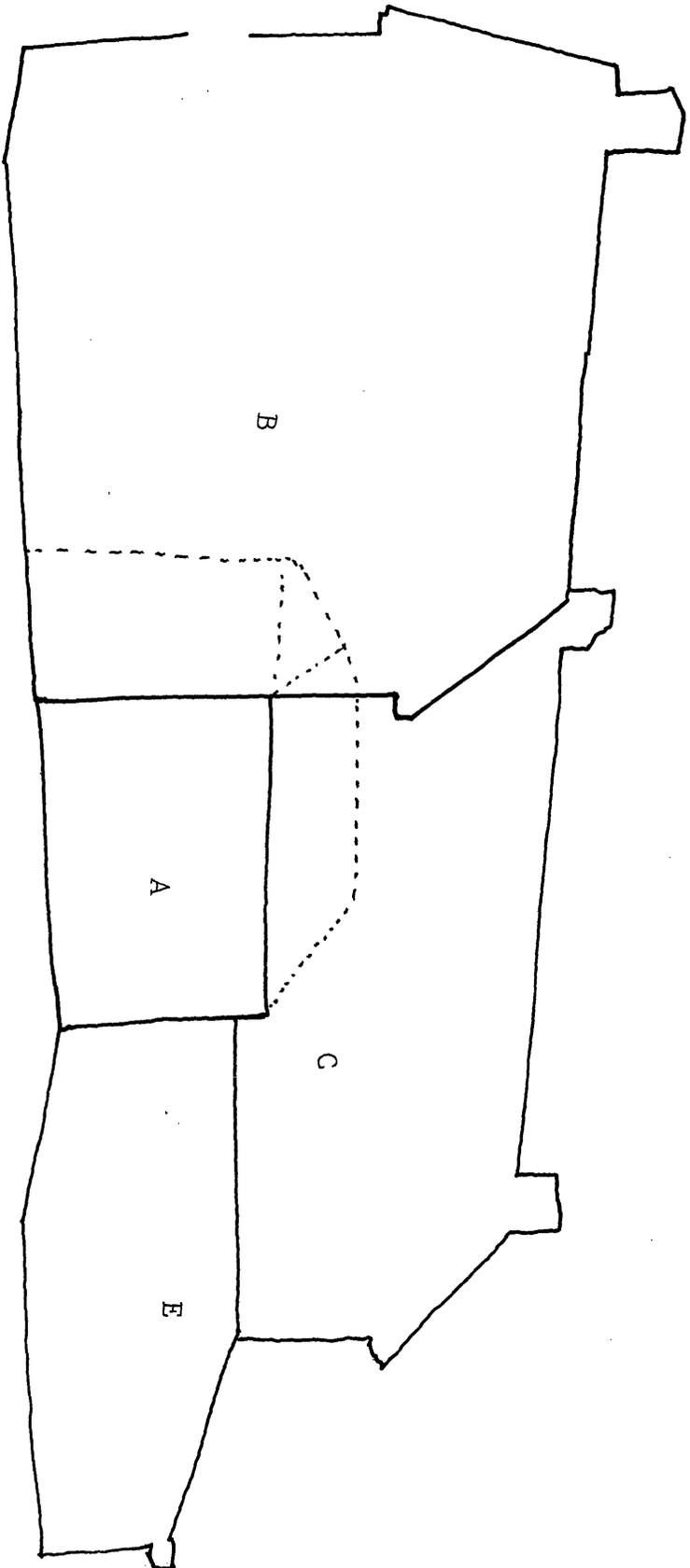
- Original core (A) c. 1780, heavy sawn plank
 (A') root cellar
- Additions (B) c. 1800-1825, mortise and tenon braced frame with brick nogging.
- (C) c. 1850-1860, balloon frame
- (D) c. 1890, balloon frame
- (E) c. 1910, balloon frame



DELAWARE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

DRAWN BY Bernard Herman DATE March '78 SCALE 1"=10'

FILE N-3935 TITLE Biddle House Floor Plan



MAY 23 1978

Original core (A) c. 1780, heavy sawn plank

Additions (B) c. 1800-1825, mortise and tenon braced frame with brick nogging

(C) c. 1850-1860, balloon frame

(E) c. 1910, balloon frame

DEC 8 1978