

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received SEP 16 1984

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Moore House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 511 W. Mt. Vernon Street NA not for publication

city, town Smyrna X vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Delaware code 10 county Kent code 01

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> NA being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (confirmed 5/21/82 at Kent County Board of Assessments)

name Earl L. & Ethel S. Davis

street & number 511 W. Mt. Vernon Street

city, town Smyrna X vicinity of state Delaware

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kent County Recorder of Deeds

street & number Kent County Administration Building

city, town Dover state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Del. State Cultural Resource Survey-<sup>K-3926</sup> has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1981  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Bureau of Archaeology & Historic Preservation

city, town Dover state Delaware

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Robert and Mary Moore house sits on a large parcel of land--300 feet fronting Mt. Vernon Street on the north, and 200 backing onto Commerce to the south--near the eastern edge of Spruance City, a subdivision laid out between Smyrna and Clayton in the 1860s. The house is frame, clapboarded, and two stories in height. It has an unusual, off-set double-pile, "house-on-house" plan, and decorative detail derived from the Italianate, Gothic Revival, and Greek Revival styles. It possesses a high degree of integrity, since the massing, almost all exterior detail, and the grounds are all intact. The shallow corner lot to the east is planted to lawn, emphasizing and making more visually accessible the 19th-century suburban aspects of the house. Early out-buildings, including a stable and privy, occupy the deeper space to the rear, and to the west is an expansive gardening and fruit-growing plot.

The interior of the house was not accessible and according to the owner has been somewhat altered. But the plan in effect places a three-bay single-pile form in front of a wider single-pile form which extends an extra bay to the east. A running porch crosses the facade and fills the ell at first-floor level. The house is elaborately gabled: the front section has a side-facing gabled roof and a centered cross gable; the rear section has gable ends to the east and to the north, with a slope to the west. In the rear is a two-story shed-roofed section that extends the width of the house. The front section contains the parlor; the rear gabled section contains the dining room; the rear shed-roofed section is the kitchen, pantry and laundry. The whole is seated on a brick foundation, or, in the case of the front porch, on brick piers.

A front door penetrates the left bay of the front section. Originally it opened into an enclosed stairhall; sometime in this century, the whole stairhall-living room space was made continuous. At extreme left on the rear gabled section, a second front door enters the dining room. The continuous, hip-roofed, open porch from which both these doors lead is supported on its original turned posts. It has lost its scroll-sawn brackets, the most conspicuous loss of integrity to an otherwise almost perfectly preserved exterior:

The exterior clapboards are presently painted grey with white trim. All windows on the front and the east side, including the full-size attic lights, are two-over-two sash. On the rear gable, the attic sash is pushed close up under the frieze board to produce a lancet shape. On the west elevation the windows are more eccentric. No fewer than three diamond-shaped windows occur, two downstairs and one up (these contain single large panes of glass, and may represent reglazings). There are a pair of small, square, four-paned windows at attic level.

The distinctive cornice treatment consists of closely-spaced Italianate brackets over plain frieze boards, lining the rather deep raked and lateral eaves of both main sections. The cross gable, curiously, is close-eaved and unbracketed. Its window, unlike that of the rear east side gable, is not set so high as to produce a lancet, but the steepness of the gable and the triangular bit of wall left above the window contribute to an image derived from the Gothic Revival. There is a single, corbelled brick interior chimney at the rear of the rear ridgebeam.

(see continuation sheet)

# 8. Significance

<b>Period</b>	<b>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</b>			
<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) Local & Social
<b>Specific dates</b>	1868	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	Robert Moore	History

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The 1869 Moore house is the handsomest and least altered dwelling in "Spruance City," a nineteenth-century subdivision plotted on unincorporated land between the nearly contiguous towns of Smyrna and Clayton. The house carries a conspicuously unusual "house-on-house" plan within an elegantly decorated shell, with thickly applied brackets, distinctive diamond-shaped windows, and a running porch around an asymmetrical facade. These picturesque forms are unusual among Delaware houses of this size and period; a far commoner choice was an unbroken, symmetrical, three- or five-bay facade on a boxy single-pile house. Together with the extra-large lot and intact suburban outbuildings, the Moore house illustrates with remarkable effectiveness the response of an independent working class family to the suburban ideal promoted by the nineteenth-century landscape movement. The conspicuous shape and surface treatment probably also served as a kind of occupational advertisement for the owner, for Robert Moore was listed in the 1870 census as a house carpenter. Mary Moore's occupation is reflected here as well, for she was listed as keeping a house. The property is nominated to the National Register under Criterion C, as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

Robert and Mary Moore bought their pair of 50 foot-wide lots, on what was then called Font Hill Avenue, from John S. Spruance in May of 1868. In 1902 Isaac Joslin acquired the house in settlement of a debt from the Moores and added to the parcel two 50' lots to the west and the 100' corner lot to the east. These lots remain unbuilt to this day, devoted to open lawn and fruit and berry plantings, and they contribute a great deal to the image of the independent suburban homestead projected by the house and outbuildings on the Moore's initial lots. By 1869, Robert Moore's worth as reflected in the tax rolls had jumped from the \$320 in personal property reported there in previous years, to include \$1700 in real estate. This figure certainly represents the "two-story frame dwelling and stable in Spruance City, in tenure of self," which were spelled out in the rolls a few years later.

Spruance City, then, was already at least partially subdivided at least a year and a half before James W. Spruance publicly advertised lots in his "newly named Spruance City" in December of 1869. He was charging \$100 apiece for lots to be distributed by random drawing; the Moores had paid \$250 for, presumably, their choice of available double-wide parcels. James Spruance was a sufficiently astute promoter to include Font Hill, the mansion house for the 200-acre tract he was subdividing, among the otherwise empty lots to be drawn for by the \$100-ticket-holders. According to George Caley's local history of the Smyrna-Clayton area, 140 persons had bought at least one ticket before the drawing on February 15, 1870.

(see continuation sheet)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Kent County Land Records  
U.S. Census Records, Del. State Archives  
Caley, George, Footprints of the Past, Smyrna 1963

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.3 acres

Quadrangle name Smyrna

Quadrangle scale 7.5 minute

### UMT References

A 

1	8	4	4	7	0	1	0	4	3	4	9	5	7	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property includes the 1.3 acre parcel (parcel 03, block 1; K.C. property map # 19.05) on the southwest corner of Mt. Vernon and <sup>Upam</sup> Street in "Spruance City", on which the buildings herein described are sited and all of which is under the present ownership of Earl L. and Ethel S. Davis.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county NA code

state NA code county NA code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia Wright, Historian

organization Bureau of Archaeology & Hist. Pres.

date May, 1982

street & number Old State House, The Green

telephone 302-736-5685

city or town Dover

state Delaware

# 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

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date 9/10/82

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 10/19/82

for Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Continuation sheet Moore House

Item number 7

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There are two original outbuildings. The single-cell privy has vertical siding, front-facing gabled roof, and an inverted triangular vent cut into the door, which seems to echo the minor Gothic Revival allusions of the house. The frame stable, also vertically planked and gable-roofed, has a small gabled cupola with louvered side vents. There are two-over-two light sashes in the loft, but six-over-six light windows below. It has received an inconspicuous frame addition to the rear. A more conspicuous but quite compatible later addition to the set of outbuildings is a twentieth-century frame garage. The lower pitch of its gables and its exposed rafters show the pervasive influence of the bungalow mode.

Justification of Boundaries:

The boundaries were drawn to include the original two lots purchased by the Moores in 1868, plus three additional contiguous lots added by the next owner in 1902. This choice was made, first, because all of this property is under single present ownership, and second, because the contiguous lots, as mentioned above and again in the significance statement, do much to reinforce the imagery of turn of the century nineteenth-century suburban homestead.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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CRP No. 1001-100  
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Continuation sheet<sup>m</sup>

Moore House

Item number<sup>8</sup>

Page 2

Despite Spruance's inventiveness in marketing a tract which had found no buyer when put up for sale as a mansion farm 15 years earlier, his fortunes eventually failed. By 1882, a deed of trust to John Hoffecker declared that "the said John W. Spruance, owing to sundry misfortunes, is unable to discharge his debts and is willing to convey all his real estate for the benefit of his creditors." This included his unsold lots in Spruance City. But despite the misfortunes of its developer, the subdivision itself remains as a modest monument to the attractions, both practical and aesthetic, of block-deep lots at relatively low prices, just outside the limits of a town but within easy reach of the town's conveniences. The Moore house, for example, is within 150 feet of the Smyrna town line, and little more than a block from the site of the ticket office of the Smyrna Railroad, which branched at Clayton from the Delaware and the Delaware and Maryland lines.

The house of the Moore family conveys with special effectiveness the historic circumstances of its site and the way of life of its early owners. It does this by means of the landscaped space around it; by its retention of historic outbuildings (the frame stable for the horse that would have gotten the family to town, the retired outhouse the family would have used); and by the well-preserved, picturesque forms of the dwelling house itself.

Level of Significance

The level of significance claimed for the Moore house is local. The property has unusual, if not unique, features which make it of interest to the architectural and social history of the state as a whole. However, our ongoing inventory does not yet provide readily accessible information on the exact distribution of the house-on-house form, or contextual information on other, perhaps similar, nineteenth-century subdivisions in Delaware. The significance of the house, therefore, seems most appropriately discussed in the local context of Smyrna-Clayton and Duck Creek Hundred.