

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

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).

1. Name of Property

historic name West Potato House

other names/site number CRS#-6617

2. Location

street & number Route 2

NA not for publication

city, town Delmar

vicinity

state Delaware

code DE

county Sussex

code 005

zip 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

Table with columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, 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: [Signature] - SHPO, Date: 9/25/90, Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: [Signature], Date: [Blank], 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: [Signature], Date of Action: 11/15/90

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 rock face concrete block
walls wood/weatherboard
roof asphalt shingle w/wood shingle in situ
other brick (chimney)
concrete (cellar floor)

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

Period of Significance

1925-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

~~N/A~~ unknown

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

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	4	2	5	9	0	2	2
Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

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B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

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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

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

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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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.

