

6-10-1969

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STATE:

Delaware

COUNTY:

New Castle

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON:

AND/OR HISTORIC:

Stonum [sometimes spelled Stoneham] (George Read House)

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Ninth and Washington Streets

CITY OR TOWN:

New Castle

STATE

Delaware

CODE

19720

COUNTY:

New Castle

CODE

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

(Check One)

- District
- Site
- Object
- Building
- Structure

OWNERSHIP

- Public
- Private
- Both

Public Acquisition:

- In Process
- Being Considered

STATUS

- Occupied
- Unoccupied
- Preservation work in progress

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC

- Yes:
- Restricted
 - Unrestricted
 - No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertainment
- Government
- Industrial
- Military
- Museum
- Park
- Private Residence
- Religious
- Scientific
- Transportation
- Other (Specify)
- Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

Mr. and Mrs. William Wheyland

STREET AND NUMBER:

Ninth and Washington Streets

CITY OR TOWN:

New Castle

STATE:

Delaware

CODE

19720

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:

Office of Recorder of Deeds, New Castle County Building

STREET AND NUMBER:

Eleventh and King Streets

CITY OR TOWN:

Wilmington

STATE

Delaware

CODE

19801

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Historic American Buildings Survey No. Del-91

DATE OF SURVEY: 1936

- Federal
- State
- County
- Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington

STATE:

D.C.

CODE

20540

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

19

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The oldest portion of Stonum, the part to the right-rear which is now occupied by the kitchen, dates from around 1730. There is a nine-foot door connecting with the main wing in front, probably the original entrance. It is situated in a direct line with the present front door. The front portion of the house was built sometime prior to 1769 when George Read sold his country property, though whether during or prior to his period of ownership is not certain.

The country place that Read so much enjoyed commanded a fine view of the Delaware (a view long since screened out by industrial development along the river). Two and one-half stories with a four-bay facade, the plan was basically L-shaped, though with a rather unconventional floor plan. There is no staircase in the axial hall, perhaps because it is uncommonly narrow. Instead, the stairs run on the interwall of the east corner room, the foot being to the right of the original front door. These stairs have an open stringer, moulded handrail and balusters, and paneled wainscoting.

In 1850, a room was added in the northwest corner, in the crook of the L. The wall abutting on the main wing has an unusual "bite" taken out of it, in order to avoid blocking the corner rear window of the main wing. Besides the 1850 addition, there are other obvious impositions on the integrity. Most of the original brick superstructure has been stuccoed and painted yellow, the roofs are of sheet metal, and there is a large cinder-block front porch which was added in the 1920s. Yet, in many ways Stonum is remarkably unchanged. A HABS report from 1936 judged it to be in a "very good state of preservation," and its appearance has changed very little since then. Noteworthy original features of the main wing are the corner fireplaces, the detailed woodwork and elegant mantles, the 1-1/2-inch red pine flooring, the wooden cornice with its modillion course, and the exceptionally high 9 over 9 windows of the facade. (There are some of these at the rear of the original section as well.) Only one significant structural change has been made inside, the removal of the wall between the hall and the right-hand room on the first floor of the main wing.

The present occupants have owned the house since 1943. They appreciate its historic significance, and in 30 years have modernized only the kitchen. On the other hand, nothing in the way of restoration has been attempted, though restoration would not be nearly so big a job as it might at first seem. In any event, since the foremost house associated with Read (the one on The Strand in New Castle) was destroyed 150 years ago, Stonum stands as the most significant structure commemorating his life.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

George Read, born in Maryland and educated in Philadelphia, became one of the two or three most significant figures in Delaware political affairs from the late 1760s until the 1790s. He served Delaware in a great variety of ways during the Revolutionary period, especially when morale fell dangerously low after the capture of Wilmington. It was Read who, in James Peeling's words, succeeded in gradually "injecting a new spirit into the state."

At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Read expressed such fear of the large States "swallow[ing] up the smaller ones" that he indicated a willingness to see the States abolished altogether, with each county given equal representation in the National Legislature. He was satisfied, however, with the Constitutional provision giving the same representation to all States in the Senate. Following the establishment of the new National Government, Read served four years in the Senate, then returned to Delaware to become Chief Justice. He held this post until his death in 1798.

A resident of the New Castle vicinity for some 45 years, Read's only home now extant is Stonum, during the late 1750s and 1760s his country retreat. (Stonum is now, however, merely on the outskirts of town.) A four-bay structure which still retains a stately aspect despite considerable--though not irreversible--alterations, Stonum is a private residence and not open to the public.

Biography

George Read was one of three Delaware delegates to the Constitutional Convention who was a native of Maryland. Read's family moved to New Castle in 1733, soon after he was born, but all his formal education took place in Pennsylvania. He read law in Philadelphia and was admitted to the bar there at the age of 20, though within a year he moved his practice to New Castle. In 1763 he built a home on The Strand which he occupied until his death 35 years later. This house burned in 1824. However, he also had a country retreat called Stonum, which is still extant. Read's grandson and biographer, William Read, records the remark of a contemporary that "all the time Mr. Read can spare from his profession is devoted to his farm 'Stonum'."

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Eberlein, H. D., and C. V. D. Hubbard, Historic Houses and Buildings of Delaware (Dover, 1963).

Federal Writers' Project, New Castle on the Delaware (Wilmington, 1937).

McDonald, Forrest, We the People: The Economic Origins of the Constitution (Chicago, 1958).

Nevins, Allen, The American States During and After the Revolution, 1775-1789 (New York, 1927).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		39° 39' 39"	75° 34' 38"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than 1 acre.

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Robert C. Post, Survey Historian

ORGANIZATION **Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service** DATE **7/6/73**

STREET AND NUMBER:
1100 L Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE **D.C.** CODE

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____ <i>Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</i></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____ <i>Keeper of The National Register</i></p> <p>Date _____</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Delaware	
COUNTY	
New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance (page 1) Stonum (George Read House)

A moderate in the face of deteriorating relations with England, Read protested the Stamp Act and advocated nonimportation for New Castle County, but in the Second Continental Congress he declined to vote for the Declaration of Independence. Nevertheless, once it was adopted, he signed it and became a stalwart partisan of separation from England. He was probably the primary figure in the Delaware Constitutional Convention, and has even been credited by William Read with singlehandedly drawing up the Delaware Constitution. While this is open to question, as Allen Nevins points out, there is no doubt that after 1776 Read became a central figure in Delaware politics. He served in the Legislative Council, then as Vice President of the State, and then as President. During the troublous times after the capture of Wilmington in 1777, Read was, according to James H. Peeling, "unremitting in his efforts to raise troops, clothing, and provisions, and ... he gradually succeeded in injecting a new spirit into the state."

Although Read had reservations about certain aspects of the Articles of Confederation, he did draft the act authorizing the Delaware delegation to sign. In 1782, he returned to the Legislative Council, and also began sitting as a judge in Admiralty Cases which came before the Court of Appeals. In 1786, he represented Delaware at the Annapolis Convention, then went to Philadelphia in 1787. While he would have preferred to see the Confederation system of representation remain unchanged, he aligned himself with those who believed that, all things considered, the Articles should be scrapped. "The Confederation was founded on temporary principles," he declared. "It cannot last; it cannot be amended."

Like each of his Delaware colleagues, Read felt it imperative to 'keep a strict watch upon the movements and propositions from the larger States, who will probably combine to swallow up the smaller ones by addition, division or impoverishment." As Carl Van Doren emphasizes, "Read was willing to see the United States made into a consolidated nation, which would do away with all the States." He could garner little support for such a radical idea, though, so simply insisted on the provision according all States equal representation in the upper house. He held no reservations about the central Government similar to those concerning the large States, and would have conceded both the legislative and executive branches considerably more power than the Convention eventually accorded them.

Read has been credited with playing the crucial role in persuading Delaware to adopt the Constitution. As a matter of fact, persuasion was scarcely necessary, since, as Forrest McDonald has pointed out, "Delaware was prepared to ratify the Constitution even before the document was

(Continued)

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Delaware	
COUNTY New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance (page 2)

Stonum (George Read House)

completed." Read served in the United States Senate until 1793, an uncompromising Federalist. He resigned to become Chief Justice of Delaware, a post he held until his death five years later.

Though a major figure in Delaware history, Read rose to the rank of national significance only during his participation in the Philadelphia Convention of 1787. Still, it is worth noting that William Pierce, the Georgia delegate who recorded character sketches of his colleagues, called Read "a very good Man," and emphasized that he was renowned for his legal acumen. His was surely not an uneventful career: On his gravestone in the yard of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in New Castle is carved the following epitaph:

"George Read, Born A. D. 1732. Died 21st. September 1798. Member of the Congress of the Revolution, the Convention that framed the Constitution of the United States and of the first Senate under it. Judge of Admiralty. President and Chief Justice of Delaware and a Signer of the Declaration of Independence."

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Delaware	
COUNTY New Castle	
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(Number all entries)

9. Bibliographical References (page 1) Stonum (George Read House)

Peeling, James H., "George Read," Dictionary of American Biography,
Vol. XV, pp. 422-424.

Read, William T., Life and Correspondence of George Read (2 vols.,
Philadelphia, 1870).

Van Doren, Carl, The Great Rehearsal: The Story of the Making and
Ratifying of the Constitution of the United States (New York,
1948).