

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 K-1511

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K-1511:

1. Property Name: "REED HOUSE" *1511*

2. Location & Verbal Boundary Description: Southeast side of Lombard Street at its termination adjacent to the Leipsic River. It is sited on a parcel of land fronting Lombard Street and the Leipsic River, 50 feet wide and 200 feet deep, containing .299 acres, Lombard Street, Leipsic.

3. Owner: Captain Kenney Wright, Lombard Street, Leipsic, Delaware.

4. Property Description:

The Reed House sits on a low knoll on the southeast side of Lombard Street and overlooks the Leipsic River. The two-story braced frame dwelling consists of a sixteen by twenty foot one-room plan with a later one-story frame wing from the east gable end. The principal facade contains a three-bay facade with a centrally located door flanked on either side by four-over-four light sash. The exterior is presently covered with green composition shingle. The main block of the structure also possesses a gable roof with a shallow boxed cornice and is covered with composition shingle applied directly over earlier wood shingle. A plain tetra-style front porch with squared supports and shed roof graces the west facade structure.

The interior of the main block includes a gable end chimney pile with a heavily carved Federal mantel and a box winder stair leading to the upper floors of the house. While other interior elements have been masked with more modern trim, a board-and-batten door for the second floor stair entry remains in situ.

5. Historical Background:

Dating from the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Reed House is sited where the Leipsic River first enters the village from the Delaware Bay. The location of the structure, at the edge of the wetlands and high ground, illustrates the orientation of the community to water. The house was additionally connected with rum running activities in the Prohibition era of the 1920's and 30's when smugglers from Leipsic and Little Creek would meet ships outside the twelve mile coastal limit, pick up a cargo of bootleg liquor and run it back to shore in high powered boats propelled by surplus World War I airplane engines.

6. Significance:

This building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The building's timber construction typifies the construction materials commonly employed in the flat sandy areas of southern Delaware's coastline where no natural stone existed for building purposes and brick was reserved for those who could afford to set up a clamp or kiln and fire their own. In plan the Reed House is truly representative of the vast majority of Federal period domestic architecture where rich and poor alike occupied a single ground floor room.

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Architecturally significant, the Reed House represents the late usage of a chambered hall plan. This arrangement consisting of a two-story dwelling with a single room on the ground floor and a fully developed chamber overhead was used by wealthy Delaware planters in the early eighteenth century. By the early nineteenth century (the period in which the Reed House was built) the chambered hall was no longer widely built. Its use here in conjunction with finely carved federal period mantels indicates the diminished but long term perserverance of earlier Federal traditions by those who could afford to commission desirable dwellings.

The Reed House also provides a vital index to the geographic growth and commercial development of the village of Leipsic in the nineteenth century. This site, originally known as Fast Landing, constituted the eastern most plot of land of Little Duck Creek (now the Leipsic River) in an area otherwise dominated by marsh and tidal drains. The geographic setting of the dwelling demonstrates the way in which Leipsic's nineteenth century inhabitants took part in trades and occupations closely linked to the water. From this location the building's original owners and subsequent occupants enjoyed a ready access to the water and its natural resources which supported a variety of land and water occupations. The dense marsh across the river supported an abundant muskrat population trapped for their pelts. Cutting marsh hay also contributed to the economic livelihood of the village. The harvested hay was used to produce cores for hollow bodied iron castings, as cattle feed or as packing material. The bulk of the one hundred tons of marsh hay annually cut in the vicinity of Leipsic was shipped directly to Wilmington and Philadelphia. The water not only supplied a variable harvest, but was also the primary commercial avenue linking Leipsic to the urban centers of Philadelphia and Wilmington and the oyster shipping centers of Port Norris and Bivalve, New Jersey.