

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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received **SEP 7 1983**
date entered

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 DAVID J. CUMMINS, HOUSE

and/or common "Glen Fern"

2. Location

E of Smyrna

street & number Route 12, Duck Creek Hundred not for publication

city, town Smyrna vic. vicinity of

state Delaware code 10 county Kent code 001

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input checked="" 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 | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <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"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a | <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

name Mrs. Elmer Pratt

street & number R.D. 1

city, town Smyrna vicinity of state DE 19977

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Federal Street

city, town Dover state DE 19901

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Delaware Historic Site Survey, K-3938 has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

city, town Dover state DE 19901

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The David J. Cummins House, "Glen Fern," is an eighteenth-century, hall-parlor plan house that was expanded and altered during the nineteenth century. It has become an interesting example of a Victorianized Colonial-Revival building. The house and its wings are stuccoed brick, which makes it impossible to determine the brick bond.

The house and its outbuildings occupy a small portion of a 415-acre farm below Smyrna in Duck Creek Hundred. It is on the east side of DuPont Highway, north of Route 6 and south of Duck Creek. Belmont Hall is the next property to the west. The land is flat and well watered. The land is actively farmed. The house is set back from the road and the approach to it is by a long drive that parallels the original lane, that had large trees planted on either side. The lane no longer exists but the trees remain. Immediately to the rear of the house is a small garden and four domestic outbuildings. Larger farm buildings and a tenant house are arranged on either side of the lane but set further back from the house.

The house was constructed in the mid-eighteenth century as a 4-bay, hall-parlor house. It is oriented towards the south and the chimney stack is on the interior west gable end. That wall is fully panelled. The original stairs, a half-winder, were located on this wall.

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/ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates c. 1750, 1770 Builder/Architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The David J. Cummins House, "Glen Fern," is a well-preserved statement of of the late-nineteenth century fascination with classical architecture and their interest in the Colonial-Revival. This house combines a small hall-parlor, eighteenth-century house with a later addition that was meant to be both modern and up-to-date, and also sympathetic to the colonial origins of the house. Because of this, the house is eligible under Criterion C.

Glen Fern was originally a secondary house on the property of "Belmont Hall" and during the eighteenth century was the property of Governor Thomas Collins. Upon his death, the estate was divided to provide for his heirs and John Cummins was eventually able to acquire the property. He was a wealthy merchant who was actively involved in the grain shipping business and in the development of Smyrna as a grain-shipping port. He was a large landowner and was active in political affairs. When he died in 1833, his land was divided among his heirs. George Wilson Cummins, the oldest son, was appointed administrator and took over the family business. David James Cummins was nine years old at the time. Part of his inheritance was Glen Fern.

In the early 1840's, he joined his brother George W. in the family business but retired ten years later to devote himself to agriculture and his banking interests. In 1853, the year he retired, he was appointed a director of the New Castle County Bank. He later was made a director of the National Bank of Smyrna. His interest in agriculture was manifested mainly at Glen Fern, but he was a major landowner in central Delaware. Along with his brother George, his is the most frequently listed name in the Smyrna area on the 1868 Beers' Atlas of Delaware.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Beers' Atlas of Delaware, 1868.
Byles' Atlas of Kent County, Delaware, 1859.
Scharf's History of Delaware, 1888.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 77.48

Quadrangle name Smyrna

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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|------|---|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 0 |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

B

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

C

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| 1 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

D

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H

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| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet.

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 Stephen G. Del Sordo, Historian

organization Bureau of Archaeology and
Historic Preservation

date May 1983

street & number Old State House, The Green

telephone 302-736-5685

city or town Dover

state DE 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

title

date 8/31/83

For NPS use only

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

RECORDED TO THE
National Register

for Melores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

date 10/6/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet David J. Cummins House Item number 7 Page 2

In the 1880's, David J. Cummins enlarged the house to make it suitable for one of his children. This was not Cummins' main house. He lived nearby in Smyrna but used this property as a model farm. The slightly lower and wider wing to the east was added at this time. The wide chimney stack on the east gable end is false and serves no purpose. With the addition came a rearrangement of rooms and interior architectural elements. The original eighteenth-century mantel was removed and replaced with a nineteenth-century Colonial-Revival mantel. The stairs were removed from the end wall and the space that they occupied was converted into a closet. The stairs were moved to the center of the house.

Much of the original east gable end was removed at the first floor to provide access to the wing. A set of large French doors was added to the opening. This provided a division between the former hall, which became a dining room, and the new wing with its large sitting room. The second floor is wholly given over to bedrooms. One pleasant feature of the new wing is the projecting bay on the east gable end. Its design is very much influenced by Queen Anne architecture and was a very popular item on both new construction and on modernizations. The front and east porches were also added at this time. The influence of the Colonial-Revival and the interest of the Queen Anne architects in classical forms is very much in evidence on these two porches. The columns are nicely tapered and fluted; their capitals are Ionic. The slightly flat roofs are created with the use of a full entablature.

The landscaping of the house grounds was also undertaken at this time. The trees along the original lane were planted. Formal gardens were added to the front and rear of the house and the outbuildings were erected just to the rear. They were used for storage of food and equipment for the house. There is also a privy to the rear. The farm buildings were constructed in the early-twentieth century and are lined up along the access lane which extends to the north.

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Continuation sheet David J. Cummins House Item number 7

Page 3

The main barn and a smaller barn are constructed of cement with a framed second floor. The small sheds are frame. The tenant house was constructed during the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

During the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century, there were many out-buildings. David J. Cummins had an extensive peach orchard here during the 1870's and 1880's. As part of his peach operation, he had a large cannery and an evaporator. He sold his products under the brand name "Glen Fern." When the peach blight destroyed the orchard, Cummins had all the trees pulled up and destroyed. The cannery was used to process other fruits and vegetables. The cannery and evaporator no longer exist.

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Continuation sheet David J. Cummins House

Item number 8

Page 1

In the early 1880's, Cummins decided to convert the dwelling house at Glen Fern into a modern residence for one of his children who was an invalid. Cummins, himself, lived in Smyrna. The house had been built in the mid-eighteenth century as a hall-parlor plan vernacular building. In the process of updating it, Cummins was sympathetic to its original design and created a new dwelling out of the old that was both modern and also respectful of the original. The Centennial of 1876 had created a widespread interest in the colonial period and many people gained a new appreciation of that period, especially for its material culture. Many houses were built in the new Colonial-Revival style and the influence of the classical rules and details can be seen in the Queen Anne style that was also popularized as a result of the Centennial Exposition.

Cummins was most likely very much aware of the current trends in architecture. His brother George was certainly aware of the latest fashions when he remodelled Woodlawn. David J.'s own life style was less extravagant and he chose to remodel Glen Fern in the simple Colonial-Revival. As a statement of that style, Glen Fern is an excellent example. Cummins completely redid the interior of the house. Only the panelling on the west endwall remained. On the exterior, the changes were less obvious. The wing was stuccoed along with the main house, and the false chimney stack was added to the east gable end to balance the house. The porches added to the front and to the east end were similar to porches that could have been constructed in the eighteenth century, but they are heavier and more massive than those from that time period. The only feature on the house that is not necessarily appropriate is the projecting bay on the east gable end. Even that, though, was adorned with classical details.

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Continuation sheet David J. Cummins House Item number 10

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The boundary for Glen Farm includes the main house, the gardens, tenant house, and the outbuildings. The boundary is a rectangle that uses the access lane as its center line and includes all the land 750 feet on either side of the lane. It extends northward from the north side of Route 12 for 2,250 feet. The total acreage is 77.48 acres.