1141

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

(Form 10-900a). Type all entries.	•		
1. Name of Property			
historic name Armor, James House			
other names/site number N-506			
			······································
2. Location			
street & number 4905 Lancaster Pil	ke	NA	not for publication
sity, town Wilmington, Christ	tiana Hundred	x	vicinity
Delaware code DE	county New Castle	code 003	zip code 19807
3. Classification			
	egory of Property	Number of Resourc	es within Property
	building(s)	Contributing N	Ioncontributing
	district	2	0 buildings
	site	0	0 sites
public-Federal	structure	0	0 structures
	object	0	0 objects
		2	0 Total
lame of related multiple property listing:		Number of contribut	ing resources previously
N/A		listed in the Nationa	•
. State/Federal Agency Certification			
In my opinion, the property Reets A Signature of certifying official State or Federal agency and bureau In my opinion, the property meets	does not meet the National Regist		<u>7/24/92</u> Date
Signature of commenting or other official			Date
State or Federal agency and bureau			
National Park Service Certification			
hereby, certify that this property is:		intered 1	
entered in the National Register.	12 - 2	Netional	Kegibten / /
See continuation sheet.	- Lelous Byer		8/3/192
determined eligible for the National			
Register. See continuation sheet.			
determined not eligible for the			
National Register.			
removed from the National Register.			
	Signature of the	Keeper	Date of Action

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instruction	
Domestic/Single Dwelling	Domestic/Single Dwelling	
Domestic/Secondary Structure	Domestic/Secondary Structure	
7. Description		
Architectural Classification	Materials (enter categories from instructions)	
	Materiais (en	
		Stone
enter categories from instructions)	foundation _	-
Other: Mid-19th Century Vernacular		Stone
(enter categories from instructions)	foundation _	Stone Stucco

Sescribe present and historic physical appearance.

The James Armor House is a two-and-a-half story, stuccoed stone and frame dwelling that was constructed in three major building phases: a two-story stone wing dating to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a two-and-a-half story vernacular 'talianate style stone wing built around the middle of the nineteenth century, and two-story Colonial Revival style frame wing built in the 1930's. The two-and-a-half story Italianate wing is the largest and most prominent section of the house. It 'arves as the main block and its facade is oriented to the road. The early nineteenth tentury section functions as the rear wing and the 1930's wing extends from the west side of the Italiante and rear wings. Although the oldest wing has been modified furing the course of the later building phases, the mid-nineteenth century wing retains tost of its Italianate character and the 1930's addition exhibits most of its original 'offonial Revival style features. Behind the house is a small frame outbuilding constructed in the 1930's as a combination garage and workshop; it is included in this nomination as a contributing building.

The Armor House is located on the north side of Lancaster Pike (State Route 48) 0.6 miles west of Centre Road (State Route 141) and 0.5 miles east of Centerville Road (County Road 273). It is situated on a 2.37 acre parcel that is surrounded by a 1960's residential subdivision named Sedgely Farms. The wooded perimeter of the Armor House parcel secludes the historic house from this modern development. The original access to the Armor House was by means of a lane that entered from Lancaster Pike and proceeded past the east end of the house. During the 1970's that lane was blocked off and a curved driveway was installed off of Courtney Drive, which forms the eastern boundary of the property.

The massing and fenestration of the mid-nineteenth century main block is Itialianate in character. However, it possesses few stylistic details. This type of subtle reference to popular architectural styles is typical of the rural areas of New Castle County. This block is two-and-a-half stories tall, has a symmetrical three-bay facade, and a hipped roof that is so shallowly pitched it appears to be flat from most vantage points on the property. Both endwalls have symmetrical fenestration with two windows per floor and an interior chimney rising through its midpoint.

The main block is supported by a rubble stone foundation that encloses a full basement. The walls are also rubble stone with a stucco coating painted white. The roof is clad with standing seam metal painted red, and it is edged on all sides with a box cornice that has been sheathed with aluminum. The two chimneys are stuccoed.

8. Statement of Significance		-		
Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:				
Applicable National Register Criteria 🔍 A 🛄 B				
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	D	E F G		
Areas of Significance (enter categories from instruction Social History	ns) 	Period of Significance Circa 1804-1935	Significant Dates c. 1804 c. 1847 c. 1935	
		Cultural Affiliation		
Significant Person N/A		Architect/Builder Unknown		

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. Statement of Significance

The James Armor House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for the theme of Social History. The main block of the building is a fine example of a simple vernacular Italianate structure. The circa 1850 Italianate structure was constructed as a frontal addition to an earlier circa 1804 small stone house, which still serves as its rear wing. A Colonial Revival frame addition to the north side and rear of the main house completed the present The 1930's one-story frame garage/workshop is a contributing building structure. constructed about the same time as the Colonial Revival addition to the house. The building's three distinct phases of construction represent the evolution of a building through time. Each phase reflects a change in function in response to its owner's social and economic status and needs. These changes also represent a response to the changing social and economic environment of its location along Lancaster Pike.

The earliest portion of the building presently serving as the rear wing is a two-story, single-pile, gable-roofed stone house. Very little of the original interior fabric of the small stone house survives. Therefore, the original floorplan is a matter of speculation based on similar houses of the period. It is possible that the original stone house was a two-story, hall-parlor plan house with a corner winder-stair, leading to two chambers above.

The construction date is uncertain, but it seems probable that the original two-story, stone house was constructed between 1804 and 1816. In 1803-1804 tax assessment records for Christiana Hundred, John Stilley Junior was recorded as owning an old log house and an old log barn on the property. By 1816, Charles (Jarvis) Scullion was listed as owning a small stone house according to the Christiana Hundred tax assessment records.

From 1810 to 1838, the small stone house apparently served as the toll-keeper's on the Wilmington (later Lancaster) Turnpike. Between John Stilley's death in 1804

9. Major Bibliographical References	
Primary	
Delaware State Archives. New Cast	tle County Tax Assessment Records
1786, 1787, 1789, 1803-1804, 18	
,, <u>.</u> ,,,	
Delaware State Archives. New Cast	tle County Orphans Court Records.
James Caldwell S 1/197-200.	ere obuney orphand obure Records,
James Caldwell 5 1/19/-200.	
Delement Charles Auchterer Duchete	December John Chillen Conten
Delaware State Archives. Probate	
John Stilley II, and James Calo	dwell.
William Gordon Family Records.	
Historical Society of Delaware Ger	nealogy Card File - Armor Family.
	See continuation sheet
Previous documentation on file (NPS):	
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)	Dimen leastion of additional data:
	Primary location of additional data:
has been requested	State historic preservation office
previously listed in the National Register	Other State agency
he previously determined eligible by the National Register	Federal agency
UA designated a National Historic Landmark	Local government
WA recorded by Historic American Buildings	
Survey #	
	Other
MA recorded by Historic American Engineering	Specify repository:
Record #	
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of property _Approximately 2.5 Acres	
UTM References	
A 11 8 44 7 00 0 4 4 01 3 50	e I = I
Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
	Zone Easting Northing
	See continuation sheet
Verbat Boundary Description	
The nominated boundary for the Jar	nes Armor House is the legal parcel
on which it is situated, plus the right	
southern boundary of the legal parcel a	
Lancaster Pike (State Route 48). The 1	
on the attached map titled, "New Castle	
2-4-86)." The tax parcel number is	See continuation sheet
07-032.10-033.	
Boundary Justification	
The current 2.37 acre legal parce	l is what remains of the original
tract after it was subdivided for resid	
	-
parcel contains the surviving elements	or the domestre comprex.
	:
	See continuation sheet
	X See continuation sheet
11. Form Prepared By	See continuation sheet
11. Form Prepared By name/title Anne C. Wilson, Valerie Cesna/H	X See continuation sheet istoric Preservation Planners

organization New Castle County Department of Planning	date March, 1990	
street & number2701 Capitol Trail	telephone 366-7780	10711
city or townNewark	state	_zip code _19711
		•

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James Armor House, N-506

In my opinion the James Armor House meets V /does not meet the National Register criteria.

Dennis E. Greenhouse County Executive New Castle County, Delaware

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The facade door is located in the center of the three bays. It has an original three-light transom, but the raised and molded six-panel door and the pedimented surround appear to be twentieth century features, possibly dating to the 1930's Colonial Revival Style expansion. The windows flanking the entrance are paired That is, each window group is composed of two adjoining four-over-four sash. four-over-four sash units with a shared sill. Shutters with four raised and molded panels and iron holdbacks adorn the windows. A linear scar across the facade between the first and second stories indicates a full length porch has been removed. The second floor windows are six-over-six sash with louvered shutters and iron holdbacks. The upper half-story has six-light casements without shutters. All window types have the same trim: wooden lug sills and a plain board surround with an applied ogee molding on the outside edge. The fenestration on the endwalls is slightly different: four-over-four sash on the first and second floors and four-light casements on the half story. Shutters and trim are consistent with what is displayed on the facade.

The interior of the mid-nineteenth century wing appears to have been laid out originally on a single pile, center stair passage plan. The west end of the second floor was divided into two small rooms and the original plan of the half story is unknown. Today, the first floor is one open room, as its partitions and staircase have been removed. The plan of the second and upper story appear to have been reconfigured as an element of the 1930's renovation. Although the original floorplan is not intact, this wing of the house does still retain much of its interior woodwork.

The first floor shows evidence of its original plan in a five inch wide scar that runs from front to rear on the west side of the entrance. There is no similar scar on the east side of the door that would confirm the center hall dimension. But, the floor joists which run front to back, are doubled where the western partition was and also on the corresponding eastern side. Usually this manner of construction indicates that extra support is needed for a partition and/or staircase above it. Without the firm evidence for a second partition wall that would enclose the center stair in a hall, it is possible to speculate that the first floor was only divided into two rooms with the staircase being located in the east parlor, though such an arrangement would not have been typical.

The primary feature on the first floor is the fireplace at the east endwall. The masonry block that forms the fireplace projects two feet into the room and is about six feet wide. The arched opening is 2 feet, 6 inches high and 3 feet, 1 inch wide. Its wooden surround is a Federal style arrangement that is fairly typical in the local area. The surround is formed by flat, recessed-panel pilasters on either side of the opening and a flat entablature with a rectangular block in the center and two smaller blocks above the pilasters. The edge of the mantel shelf has a complex molding that is underlined by a band of punch and gouge trim. Each side of the fireplace contains a chimney closet in its upper half with a flat, recessed panel door. On the west endwall is a projecting block that appears to have been constructed

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to serve a stove. It is about the same width as the fireplace block but only one foot deep, and it is not supported by a masonry pile in the basement as is the fireplace. It has the same type of chimney closets. But, because there is no hearth the closets extend from floor to ceiling. This chimney is no longer connected to a stove. All of the windows in this room have slightly splayed, plastered reveals and a wooden sill with a bead-edged apron that is a few inches wider than the window opening. The window frames are trimmed with a wide bead along the inside edge. Likewise, the center bay door is surrounded by a flat molding with a narrow bead on its inner edge. One window on the west endwall has been changed to a doorway in order to access the 1930's porch abutting that endwall. The door itself is a nineteenth century, six-panel type with a box lock. But, shadows in the plaster wall and the characteristic 1930's doorframe molding that is used elsewhere in the house confirm the change. Another twentieth century change is the built-in bookcase in the southeast corner. The baseboards are six-and-a-half inches high with a beveled edge. They are continuous around the room indicating they were installed after the partitions were removed.

The second floor of the mid-nineteenth century front block can be accessed only from the staircase in the rear wing; although this is not the original arrangement. The second floor is currently laid out with a bedroom on the western end occupying one bay of this three-bay building. The remaining two bays contain a second bedroom along its front half, and a bathroom and small, centrally located hall along the rear half. A four inch wide scar in the ceiling and along the center endwall chimney in the west bedroom indicates that area was previously split into two smaller rooms. The six-panel room doors and closet doors and the molded door surrounds are identical to those in the 1930's wing. This suggests the second floor was repartitioned as an element of the 1930's expansion. The window trim and baseboards, however, are the same as those found on the first floor.

The third level of the mid-nineteenth century wing is a half story with sloping ceilings that follow the contours of the shallowly pitched hipped room. It is accessed by a combination straight-run and winder staircase (six treads and four treads, respectively) along the rear wall of this wing. The plan is similar to the second floor; it also has the same 1930's period six-panel doors and moldings. The windows at this level are casements, but they are trimmed in the same fashion as the first and second floor sash windows. Baseboards on this floor are seven-and-a-half inches high and have a beaded top edge; these may be the type originally in place on the two lower floors.

The basement below the mid-nineteenth century Italianate section is a full basement with whitewashed, rubble stone walls and a rectangular stone chimney support centered on the east endwall. The west endwall does not have a chimney support. Floor joists are vertical-sawn and they extend from front to back. At the center of the basement two of the joists are made with double the number of the others. Their location corresponds to where a center hall on the first floor was originally

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laid out. Access to this basement is through the north wall from the basement of the rear wing which, in turn, is accessed by a bulkhead entrance on its east side.

The rear wing is the oldest section of the house. By documentary evidence it dates to the period 1804 to 1816. It is a stuccoed stone, two-story, three-bay, single pile building that has been reworked with each of the two succeeding periods of expansion at around 1850 and 1935. Its main entrance facade points east, the south endwall abuts the mid-nineteenth century Italianate wing, and its west (rear) wall joins the 1930's wing.

The facade has an asymmetrical three-bay, center door arrangement. The door itself is a raised, six-panel type with a large box lock. It is split in half to operate like a "Dutch" door. The first floor windows are six-over-nine sash with wooden lug sills and raised, two-panel shutters. They are trimmed with a wooden surround that is mortised and pegged at the corners and beaded on the inside edge; a narrow beveled molding is applied to the outer edge. The two-bay second story is pierced by six-over-six sash windows with louvered shutters and the same trim. A shed-roofed porch with three square post supports extends across the full length of the facade. The basement bulkhead entrance is located within the porch floor at the north end. The only other exposed exterior wall is the north endwall which is pierced by one, six-over-six sash window on the second story and two wooden, louvered attic vents on either side of the interior end chimney. The roof is a very shallowly pitched gable with an aluminum-covered box cornice.

The pitch of the roof was originally much steeper. Flattening the roof pitch was achieved by building the front and rear wall about three feet higher so the rafter feet have a higher seat relative to the ridge. The interior of the attic reveals the mechanics of this alteration. There, it is apparent by some wooden bracing that was built into the top of the masonry wall, that the top three feet of the wall were added. Also, some shadows in the stucco of the exterior north gable show a faint outline of the steeper roof pitch. There seems to be no practical reason for changing the roofing since the ceiling heights were not raised to take advantage of the greater roof height, and the attic remains unfinished. The roofline change appears to have been made for aesthetic reasons, perhaps to better match the shallowly pitched roof on the Italianate wing.

Judging from the size of the building and its fenestration the original plan of the rear wing was most likely a hall-parlor plan with a corner winder staircase. However, there is no structural evidence to confirm that plan. The interior wall surfaces have been redone so no shadows of removed partitions can be detected, and all of the floor joists have been replaced in the twentieth century leaving no framing features to identify the original stair location.

The first floor is currently one large open room with a small cooking fireplace on the north endwall and a twelve-tread, straight run staircase along the rear wall.

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The cooking hearth is an original feature. The opening is three feet, seven inches high and three feet, eleven inches wide. Stucco covers the face of the fireplace and the mantel is formed by a bead-edged board with a shelf supported by two brackets. The crane is still in place. A modern wood-burning stove sits on the brick hearth. A masonry block in the basement supports this fireplace. On the left side of the fireplace is a built-in cupboard with double-leaf batten doors fixed with H-L hinges. To the right of the fireplace is a closet with the same type of doors and hardware. The staircase dates to the 1930's renovation period. It is an open string staircase with square balusters spaced two per tread. On the bottom tread the balustrade circles around the slender newel column. Underneath the staircase is a small powder room. The two facade windows have splayed, plastered reveals and beaded trim that is similar, but not identical, to the trim in the Italianate wing. A two-foot, seven inch wide door opening in the south wall has been blocked and fitted with shelves.

The second story of the rear wing has also had its plan reconfigured. A hall runs the length of the south endwall, and a bedroom and closets occupy the remainder. The windows on this floor have rounded reveals rather than the splayed reveals on the first floor. The beaded trim is the same as on the first floor windows, however. Although the ceiling is currently plastered, the joists were originally exposed. Examination of the joists through the attic floor showed that the joists are painted.

The unfinished attic of the rear wing is accessible only through a hole in the wall that joins the attic of the 1930's wing. Both of the long walls are taken up with the supplementary bracing for the added portion of the wall. Each brace is embedded in the masonry near the top of the wall and angles down to the floor where it is notched over a board that parallels the long wall. The north gable previously had a window on either side of the interior brick chimney. Those windows have been partially bricked-in and now a small louvered, wooden vent occupies both of those spaces. The alteration cannot be detected from the exterior due to the stucco. The rafters in this wing appear to have been replaced when the 1930's wing was constructed because the dimensions and quality of the lumber used is identical in the two wings.

The rear wing has a full basement with whitewashed, rubble stone walls. A stone chimney support is located on the north endwall below the kitchen hearth. A doorway in the south endwall provides the only access to the basement of the Italianate wing. A small opening in the west wall enters to a narrow, stone-walled passage leading to a small stone enclosure that is thought to contain a well. The passage and the enclosure are actually located in the crawlspace of the 1930's wing although they existed prior to the construction of that wing. A 1918 survey of the property clearly shows a footprint of the house with a very small wing in the location of the wall enclosure.

The 1930's wing abuts the west wall of the rear wing. It is a frame, two-story, hipped-roof structure built above a crawlspace. Weatherboard is the exterior covering. Like the two other wings, the roof is clad with standing seam metal and its box cornice

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The windows are irregularly spaced, being arranged is covered with aluminum. individually, in pairs, and in groups of three. Most are six-over-six sash with a plain board surround, molded dripcap, and wooden slip sill. Louvered shutters adorn some of the second story windows, but none of the first story windows. А one-story, gable-roofed kitchen wing is located at the northwest corner of this block. The shed-roofed porch on the front (south) elevation was originally open, but has been enclosed for use as extra living space. The first floor interior of the 1930's wing is laid out with a dining room occupying the front half, and a kitchen and pantry located to the rear. The primary feature in the dining room is a triple window composed of a six-over-six sash flanked by a much narrower two-over-two sash. The small pantry features a built-in cupboard and storage cabinets, while the kitchen itself is less representative of the 1930's period due to a series of alterations.

The second floor of the 1930's wing is accessible only by means of the staircase in the early nineteenth century wing. A bedroom occupies the front half of this floor, and a bathroom and utility room are located against the rear wall. The original purpose of the utility room is uncertain. However, it may have functioned as a sleeping porch or sunporch. The partition walls are finished with weatherboard rather than plaster, and the room's corner location provides cross ventilation. This room contains a pull-down staircase for access to the unfinished attic.

All of the interior doors in the 1930's wing are the raised and molded, six-panel type typically used in twentieth century, Colonial Revival dwellings. The molding used for the door and window surrounds is also typical of the style and period. The baseboards are consistent throughout this wing; they are seven-and-a-half inches high with an ogee molding on the upper edge. All three wings of the house have identical hardwood floors.

The garage/workshop(.2) was built in the 1930's and remains unaltered. It is a frame, one-story building with a front-facing gable roof. The exterior exhibits the same finish materials as the 1930's wing of the house: weatherboard siding, six-over-six sash windows with louvered shutters, and standing seam metal on the roof. The front of the garage has two batten doors which hang on a roller track; a six-light casement window pierces the attic level. The rear of the building, which houses the workshop, is shaped like a one-story lean-to. A staircase leads from this room to the attic.

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and James Armor's purchase of the property in 1847, the property changed ownership eleven times, possibly reflecting the property's use as a toll-stop. Due to the instability of ownership during this time period, it is unlikely that the house was expanded beyond the small, two-story stone building evident in the rear wing today.

With James Armor's purchase of the property on March 25, 1847 for \$3,000.00, the property entered into a stable period of ownership until the property was sold by his widow, Catherine in 1891. The larger Vernacular, Italianate front block of the house was constructed during James Armor's period of ownership circa 1850. The property's \$5,000.00 value in the 1850 Agricultural Census for the State of Delaware compared to the \$3,000.00 paid by James Armor in 1847 may be an indication that the Italianate addition had been completed by this time.

The building is a rare example of a simple Vernacular Italianate structure in northern Delaware. The cubed-shape massing of the two-and-one-half story main block with its simple hipped roof is characteristic of Vernacular Italianate design. The _fenestration of its three-bay facade with the paired four over four windows on the first floor are also characteristic of the Italianate design. The center-bay door is also characteristic of the style, although the present entry is a Colonial Revival replacement. Another characteristic of the Italianate style would be the full-facade porch which has been removed, but which is evident in scars in the stucco over stone facade.

Much of the original interior fabric of the main block remains on the first floor although the center stair has been removed and the narrow floorboards are a twentieth century replacement. The interior features of the enlarged parlor, (which possibly originally included a parlor and dining room), reveal a mixture of Federal Vernacular and Italianate Vernacular styles. The Federal fireplace mantle on the south wall with its punch and gouge decoration and the chimney closets on the east and west walls reveal this influence. The Vernacular Italianate influence can be found in the paired four over four facade windows with a thick beaded surround. This mixture of Federal and Italianate interior elements would be expected in early examples of Vernacular Italianate design.

During the Rupert period of ownership in the early twentieth century, the James Armor House received a frame Colonial Revival rear (north) and side (west) wing. According to the 1918 Rupert Investment Company survey of the property, the L-shape stone house at that time consisted of the front Italianate main block and the older two-story rear wing (which probably served as the kitchen). A full-facade front porch is also indicated in the sketch as well as a small stone "bump" on the west side of the rear wing indicating the location of the well-house. This well-house is presently accessible from the basement of the rear wing.

The two-story frame north and west wing incorporates many Colonial Revival features popular in the early twentieth century. The exterior weatherboard siding

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and six over six windows make reference to earlier styles. On the interior the use of six-panel doors, the characteristic early twentieth century molded window and door surrounds, and the tall seven-and-one-half inch baseboard are representative of the style.

With the addition of the Colonial Revival wing some alterations were also made to the other two wings. These include the installation of narrow hardwood floorboards, throughout the house. On the second and third floors of the Italianate section 1930's six-panel doors and molded window and door surrounds similar to those found in the Colonial Revival wing can be found. On the exterior the center-bay door of the Italianate structure was replaced by a raised and molded, six-panel door and pedimented surround characteristic of the Colonial Revival style.

The interior floorplans of the Italianate wing and the rear stone wing also appear to have been altered at this time. With the renovations, the kitchen was shifted from the rear kitchen wing to the new wing. The location of the dining room was also shifted from the west front parlor to the new wing. At the same time, the center passage stair in the Italianate section was removed and the open string staircase was added to rear wing. The second-story floorplan was apparently also altered during the Colonial Revival expansion and renovations.

Despite these alterations, the Colonial Revival addition did not detract from the Italianate main block of the house. Most of its major structural features as well as some of the original details such as the mantel and window surrounds were retained. The Colonial Revival Wing and the garage/workshop are representative of the early twentieth century period. The renovations reflect the efforts of its wealthy owners to update the structure while retaining much of the historic character of the other two wings.

Significance Under Social History

The James Armor House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for Social History. The evolution of the building from the early nineteenth century through the early twentieth century reflects the changing social and economic needs of its owners and tenants. Each of the building's three major construction phases is clearly evident in the three wings of the house. The construction of each of these wings represents a change in the building's function in response to changes in the owner's status and needs. These changing needs also reflect a response to the changing social and economic environment along Lancaster Turnpike.

The property on which the James Armor House stands was associated with the Stilley Family from the early eighteenth century until the settlement of John Stilley the second's estate circa 1807. The settlement of his estate occurred at a time when preparations for the Wilmington (Lancaster) Turnpike were being made. From documentary

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evidence it appears uncertain whether any members of the Stilley Family lived in the original small stone house which served as the rear wing of the larger Italianate James Armor House.

The earlier two-story rear stone wing may have been built in response to the construction of the Lancaster Turnpike between 1809 and 1817. The two-story stone building apparently served as the toll-keeper's house or booth on the turnpike from 1810 at least until 1838 or possibly to the 1850's. The toll-gate was located in the southwest corner of the property.

An 1810 deed to the 49-acre property provides verification that the toll-gate was located in the southwest corner of the property. According to the property description, the line between the property and the adjacent Charles Springer property went to "a cornerstone over the road late William Armor's now his son James Armor's land," (N.C.Co. Deeds I 3/60). The grantor or seller mentioned on this deed to Jarvis Scullion was Thomas Maguire, possibly the same Thomas Maguire mentioned by Scharf as the contractor of the Wilmington Turnpike. Jarvis Scullion was the first verified owner of the small stone house since he was mentioned in the 1816 Christiana Hundred tax assessment records as owner of a small stone house on forty-nine acres.

The placement of a toll-stop at this juncture was probably a strategic decision on the part of the managers of the Wilmington Turnpike Company. The location of the toll-stop should be viewed in relation to the tavern-complex surrounding the adjacent Charles Springer House and Tavern. Travellers going west from Wilmington confronted the toll-stop before reaching Little Falls Creek and the tavern-complex. There, many of the needs of the travellers and their animals could be served. Travellers going east, on the other hand, confronted the toll-stop before they could proceed to Wilmington.

This property description of the 49 acre tract stating that the property line crossed over the road in the southwest corner remained consistent in deeds from 1810 to 1838. However, none of the deeds specifically mentioned a toll-gate. Although the 49 acre property changed ownership seven times from 1810 to 1838, the property description seemed to have been copied word for word in each of the deeds. This unstable pattern of ownership which continued until 1847, may have been a reflection of the toll-keeper's relationship to the Wilmington Turnpike Company.

The nature of the relationship between the toll-keepers and the owners and managers of the Wilmington Turnpike Company is uncertain. However, it appears that it was not always economically advantageous to the toll-keeper. Between 1824 and 1843, the property was twice sold by sheriff's sale due to debts acquired by owners or tenants.

For example, Jarvis Scullion who was probably the first toll-keeper on the property, lived on the 49 acre property until his death around 1822. However, in

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July of 1810, Scullion had sold the parcel to John Doart, a store keeper of Londonderry Township (N.C.Co. Deeds I 3/230). On August 12, 1825, the parcel was sold at sheriff sale in order to recover the \$500.00 debt owed to Dorat by the Scullion estate (N.C.Co. Deeds S 4/363). In this deed poll, Scullion and his wife were described as "terre tenants," indicating that they were not the true owners, since Dorat held the deed to the property.

Several of the later owners such as John Gordon, James Caldwell and James Emlen appeared to be real-estate speculators or wealthy land-owners. These owners seemed to maintain the property in a tenant relationship. For example, John Gordon and James Emlen acquired the property, quickly sold it to other "owners" who sold it back to them shortly thereafter. Another source of confusion is the fact that the deeds for the property can be traced directly to 1847 (after the property was realigned to 66 acres). Between 1810 and 1847, there were several breaks in the chain of title.

The 1849 Rea and Price map also verifies the location of the toll-gate in the southwest corner of the James Armor property. The toll-gate is labelled with a bracket-like symbol across the road and the word, "Gate." Early toll-gates have been described as a long pole attached to a rope which stretched across the road. When the toll was paid, the pole would be turned (Ward: 1969, p.63). However, it is uncertain exactly what kind of gate was present on the Lancaster Turnpike or whether the toll was paid at the gate or the toll-keeper's house.

By 1860, on H. Eckel's Preliminary Survey of the Wilmington and Brandywine Railroad, the toll-gate is in the same location. On Eckel's map, however, there is a building on the south side of Lancaster Pike in the location of the gate. This is an indication that a new toll-keeper's house or booth had been constructed sometime after James Armor purchased the property in 1847 on the south side of Lancaster Pike.

The unstable pattern of ownership of the 49 acre toll-keeper's tract from 1810 to 1847 is probably a reflection of the precarious existence of the toll-keepers and their relationship to the owners and managers of the Wilmington Turnpike Company. This contrasts sharply with the property's stable period of ownership from 1849 to 1891 under James and Catherine Armor.

During his 44 year period of ownership, James Armor was a successful farmer on his 66 acre parcel. Information obtained from the Agricultural Census for the State of Delaware indicates that he engaged in the practice of mixed agriculture raising wheat, Indian corn, Irish potatoes, livestock poultry, eggs and fruit. Between 1850 and 1880, Armor participated in dairying to an increasing degree. Armor's success as a farmer undoubtedly contributed to the stability of the property compared to the earlier period. The shift of the toll-booth's location to the south side of the Lancaster Pike by 1860 also contributed to this stability.

With the circa 1850's construction of James Armor's large Italianate frontal

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addition to the former small toll-keeper's house, the property underwent a major change in form and function. The Italianate "mansion" reflected Armor's status as a well-to-do farmer along Lancaster Pike.

James Armor constructed his Italianate style house during a rebuilding period in the early to mid-nineteenth century when the construction of larger suburban mansions was common along Lancaster Pike and its vicinity. Like the James Armor House, many of these buildings were constructed as either front or endwall additions to previously existing farmhouses. At nearby Glenden (CRS: N-501), a rear stone circa 1775 house was later expanded by means of an early to mid-nineteenth century five-bay, center-hall, double-pile, Federal and Greek Revival style addition to the front. Another house (CRS: 504) associated with the Robinson Family for most of the nineteenth century, consists of a circa 1764 stone farmhouse to which a larger stone end wall building was added about 1820.

The mid-nineteenth century Lancaster Turnpike vicinity also seems to have been an environment open to new architectural styles represented by Greek Revival, Gothic Revival and Italianate structures. These would stand in contrast to the by then familiar Vernacular Georgian and Federal influenced styles. Two buildings in the same vicinity on Lancaster Turnpike also represent the new mid-nineteenth century styles. "Highfield Hall" (CRS: N-495A) is a high-style, Italianate, mansard-roofed dwelling which was constructed by J. C. Grubb circa 1845. This building is presently part of the Masonic Home of Delaware complex. It stands on the south side of Lancaster Pike almost directly across from the James Armor House. Another example of a nearby mid-nineteenth century mansion is the circa 1845 Samuel Chandler House (CRS: N 12, 080), built in the Tuscan Villa Style.

By 1905, the 66¼ acre former James Armor property had been split into at least two smaller parcels with the sale of 30.3 acres (including the Armor House) to Edwin D. Courtney. In 1907, this parcel was sold to Anna Swift Rupert.

In the early twentieth century, the Rupert Investment Company purchased many former agricultural properties in Christiana Hundred, accumulating at least 251.70 acres in the vicinity of the James Armor House. The Ruperts also owned the Charles Springer House and Tavern (CRS: N-507) adjacent to the Armor House on the west; the stone Robinson Family farmhouse (CRS: N-504) to the north; and the late nineteenth century William Mayne Mansion which is now a part of the Tatnall School property.

The Charles Springer House underwent minor alterations during the Rupert's ownership, including the replacement of a boxed-in winder-stair with a Colonial Revival, straight-run staircase. At the Robinson House, a circa 1930 wood Colonial-Revival addition was built to the pre-existing stone farmhouse during the Rupert's period of ownership. Some of these former farmhouses owned by the Rupert's were leased to employees, but others served as the homes of Rupert Family members. Such was the case of the James Armor house where Mary Rupert lived until the property

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was purchased by William C. and Jean D. Gordon in 1961.

The two-story frame 1930's Colonial Revival addition and alterations to the James Armor House were intended to modernize and enlarge the structure. The movement of the kitchen from the rear nineteenth century wing to the frame wing represented a practical response to the needs of a twentieth century family. Although the additions and alterations made to the James Armor House and other Rupert properties were modernizations, they were executed in Colonial Revival style. In their use of Colonial Revival style elements to modernize their properties, the Ruperts were apparently intending to make renovations which were compatible with the buildings' earlier periods of construction. As a style that was popular among wealthy landowners of the period, the Rupert's use of the Colonial Revival style features was also a reflection of their elevated socio-economic status.

As wealthy landowners, the Ruperts were participants in the early twentieth century "country house" movement. Wealthy families would purchase early farmhouses "and would expand and alter them with Colonial Revival additions. The Colonial Revival alterations and addition to the James Armor House reflected a change in its use as a well-to-do farmer's residence to the wealthy suburban residence of a member of the Rupert Family. By this time, its environment along the Lancaster Pike was changing from a rural agricultural one to a neighborhood of wealthy suburban estates. The Lancaster Pike as a paved road provided close proximity (within four miles) for the residents of these estates to the City of Wilmington.

Other examples of the country-house movement along Lancaster Pike in the early twentieth century have survived. The Briedablik Estate (CRS: N-12086), an early ninettenth century stone farmhouse with Colonial Revival additions and outbuildings, was converted to a model dairy farm in the early twentieth century. Limerick (CRS: N-505), another early nineteenth century farmhouse, was converted to a country estate by means of Colonial Revival additions in the early twentieth century.

The evolution of the James Armor House through its three phases of construction in response to changing socio-economic conditions was closely related to the changing environment along Lancaster Pike. John Stilley's death in 1804 and the settlement of his estate occurred at a crucial time, since preparations were being made for the construction of a hard-surfaced toll-road joining Wilmington to the Newport-Gap Turnpike. The Delaware General Assembly commissioned the incorporation of the Wilmington Turnpike Company in 1808 and construction was begun in 1809. The construction of the tunrpike occurred during a period of major transportation improvements in New Castle County. These improvements included turnpikes, canals and railroads. The Wilmington Turnpike Company was one of nine turnpike companies commissioned by the Delaware General Assembly between 1808 to 1815.

There is evidence to suggest that the turnpike was built along an earlier road, perhaps the Old Wilmington Road. Two early deed references for properties in the

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vicinity refer to an earlier road. An 1805 deed for a property adjoining the road refers to it as "the public road," (N.C.Co. Deeds, D 3/70). Later in 1807, a deed for another property refers to the "Wilmington Road," (N.C.Co. Deeds, G 3/75).

The Wilmington Turnpike was built to join the mills, markets and port of Wilmington to the agricultural regions of northern Delaware and southeastern Pennsylvania. According to Scharf, the road was constructed in two phases by the contractor, Thomas Maguire. By October 1812, the first four-and-one-half miles were complete to just beyond the four mile mark of the neighboring Charles Springer Tavern (CRS: N-507). The remaining one-and-one-half miles were complete by December, 1817. The turnpike ceased operation as a toll-road in 1877 when it became a public road (Scharf: 1888, p. 416-417).

Nineteenth century maps traced the evolution of the Wilmington or Lancaster Turnpike. Throughout its history, the route has retained the same alignment although the road has been widened. The 1820 Henry Heald map shows the route of the newly constructed turnpike although the name is not provided. Deeds of this period refer to the road as Wilmington and Lancaster Turnpike. The 1849 Rea and Price Map of New Castle County also refers to the road as the Wilmington Turnpike. By 1868, on the D. G. Beers Atlas of the State of Delaware, the road is labelled as the Lancaster Turnpike. The Lancaster Turnpike continued to operate as a toll-road until 1877 when it was opened as a public road (Scharf: 1888, p.417). On the 1881 Hopkins Map, the road is still labelled as the Lancaster Turnpike. However, on the 1893 Baist Atlas, the road is simply labelled as Lancaster.

Documentary Evidence of the Property

Deed records indicate that Jacob Stilley acquired his Christiana Hundred estate from George Reed (N.C.Co. Deeds H 1/45) in 1725, William Cocks (N.C.Co. Deeds S 1/32) in 1719, and Christopher Springer (N.C.Co. Deeds S 1/52) in 1741. Jacob Stilley died in 1774 and left his real estate to his son, Andrew Stilley (N.C.Co. Wills, K 1/114). Andrew Stilley died circa 1794, and his letters of administration list John Stilley as his next of kin (N.C.Co. Wills Adm. O 1/110). The letters of administration authorize a probate inventory for 1795, but no record of this could be found. John Stilley was probably Andrew's brother referred to in Jacob Stilley's will.

Tax Assessment information for Christiana Hundred in 1804 list a John Stilley, senior with 105 acres, two log houses and a log barn. In addition, the tax records lists a John Stilley, junior with 137 acres, an old log house and an old log barn. John Stilley, junior or the second, is apparently the individual who inherited the Jacob Stilley estate. John Stilley, senior, listed in the 1816-1817 tax assessment records as being 96 years old died circa 1817 (N.C.Co. Probate Records, John Stilley (senior) Inventory). John Stilley, junior, predeceased him in 1804. John Stilley, junior (identified in his will as John Stilley II) provided that his real estate be sold at a public sale.

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The 137 acre John Stilley II estate seems to have been sold in three parcels from 1805 to 1807. A 25 acre parcel was sold to James Chalfant on February 28, 1805 (N.C.Co. Deeds D 3/70). This parcel included a portion of Little Falls Creek with the right to construct a springhouse. The document clarifies the inheritance of the property by John Stilley II. John Stilley II is identified as the grandson of Jacob Stilley, and therefore presumably the nephew of Andrew Stilley and the son of John Stilley, senior. A reference is made to John Stilley II's inheritance of the property through, "sundry acts of the Orphan's Court," but no Orphan's Court record could be found. The sale of this 25 acre parcel is not mentioned in the John Stilley II probate records, although the sales of two other parcels are mentioned.

A second 49 acre parcel was located on the north side of the public road (probably the Old Wilmington Road). This was to later become the Wilmington (Lancaster) Turnpike. Deed records verify this sale on June 26, 1810 for \$500.00 by Thomas Maguire to Jarvis Scullion (N.C.Co. Deeds I 3/60). Mention is made to a prior deed dated May 9, 1807 between the Stilley estate and Thomas Maguire, but no specific deed wreference could be found. The John Stilley II probate inventory contradicts this deed placing the date of sale on March 25, 1806 directly to Jarvis Scullion. The 49 acre portion sold to Jarvis Scullion in 1806 or 1810 is the location of the small stone house.

The John Stilley II probate records mention the sale of a third 79 acre parcel of land to his son, Isaac Stilley for \$2,805.62 on February 28, 1805. No deed record could be found for this transaction. The probate records assert that this parcel was sold again to the "highest bidder at a public sale" on March 14, 1807. The purchaser of the \$1,600.26 property was James Armor, son of neighboring William Armor. The relationship of this James Armor to the later James Armor, who constructed the Italianate addition to the small stone house after his purchase in 1847, is unknown. The probate records also mention "a mantion (mansion) farm," probably on the 79 acre site. No deed records could be found for the Isaac Stilley or the James Armor sale of the 79 acre portion of the property.

In March of 1807, the earlier James Armor purchased a 39 3/4 acre portion of his father, William's estate for \$1.00 (N.C.Co. Deeds G 3/75). From the property description in this deed and the 1810 deed between Thomas Maguire and Jarvis Scullion, it appears that this 39 acre tract was located on the south side of Lancaster Turnpike across from Jarvis Scullion's tract. The 1810 Jarvis Scullion deed also provides some indication regarding the location of the 79 acre tract James Armor had purchased from the John Stilley estate earlier in 1807. This information indicates that the 79 acre tract was located on the north side of the road and adjacent to Jarvis Scullion's property on the east (N.C.Co. Deeds I 3/60).

By 1816, the earlier James Armor is listed in the tax assessment for Christiana Hundred as owning 42 acres of land, 19 improved, with one large stone dwelling, a wooden barn and stables. From the tax assessment information, it appears that James Armor sold off much of his 79 acre portion of the John Stilley II estate. Information

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from the 1810 and 1820 Census indicate that Jarvis Scullion and James Armor were neighbors, since their names are listed above or below each other.

The earlier James Armor acquired the remainder of his father, William Armor's 182 acre estate in April of 1825 (N.C.Co. Deeds C 4/380). William Armor died and shortly thereafter, the property was sold at sheriff's sale in July of 1828. A description of the late William Armor's property in an advertisement in the <u>American</u> <u>Watchman</u>, placed it at the intersection of Wilmington (Lancaster) Turnpike and Center Road, probably in the southwest corner. (Historical Society of Delaware Genealogical Card File - Armor).

Whether the earlier James Armor continued to live in the vicinity after the 1828 sheriff's sale is uncertain. The relationship of the earlier James Armor to the later James Armor who added the Italianate section to the small stone house after 1847, is also speculative.

The 49-acre tract on which the small stone toll-keeper's house was located, was occupied by Jarvis Scullion from circa 1810 to 1822. Jarvis Scullion's heirs were forced to sell the property at a sheriff's sale in 1825 due to his previously described debts to John Dorat.

John Gordon of Wilmington was the purchaser of the tract in 1825. Tax Assessment information for Christiana Hundred in 1828 indicates that Gordon was a real-estate speculator owning "332½ acres, a wharf and store, 10 lots on rent and 8 houses on rent." In 1827, Gordon sold the property to Abraham and Marcy Taylor. On March 31, 1831, they sold it back to John Gordon (N.C.Co. Deeds S 4/364). This deed summarizes the 1825 sheriff sale and the 1827 sale of the property to the Taylors although no specific deed reference is provided. Tax assessment information for 1822 and 1828 is confusing in reference to buildinngs on the site. Both refer to a "small" word illegible under buildings and improvements, possibly referring to a small stone house.

In 1834, John Gordon sold the 49 acre tract to Leonard Swaub of Chester County, Pennsylvania. Curiously, the deeds for the 1824 sheriff sale, the 1831 sale between John Gordon and Abraham Taylor and the sale of the property to Swaub in 1834 were all recorded on December 31, 1834 on succeeding pages of the deed book. This indicates that Gordon held the earlier two deeds until 1834. The relationship between Taylor and Gordon seems similar to that of Scullion and Dorat with Taylor and Scullion not holding true title to the land.

On December 25, 1838, Leonard Swaub sold the 49 acre parcel to James Caldwell for \$1,400.00 (N.C.Co. Deed E 5/90). The property description for this deed is identical to those in the 1810, 1825, 1831 and 1834 deeds. This description mentions that the property line crosses over the road to a cornerstone of James Armor's property, indicating ownership of a toll-stop.

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James Caldwell died intestate in 1840 and John S. Caldwell and John Huey were appointed administrators of his estate. The Orphan's Court ordered a sale of a portion of James Caldwell's 180 acre estate, because of debts. The debts resulted from a November 3, 1837 Superior Court judgment in favor of Asher Bailey and against Leonard Swaub for for \$842.35. Leonard Swaub was the previous owner of the 49 acre property purchased by James Caldwell in 1838 and incorporated by him into his 180 acre estate. James Caldwell seemed to be a wealthy landowner who owned a "mansion farm", and a "small farm", farmed by James McFaggen (N.C.Co. Probate Records, James Caldwell Inventory). The small farm probably corresponded to the smaller 49 acre tract.

A newly formed 66 acre parcel incorporating the 49 acre parcel was the result of the Orphan's Court order on behalf of the administrators of James Caldwell's estate. A plat was drawn up by a surveyor outlining the 66 acre parcel with no buildings indicated. (N.C.Co. Orphan's Court Records, James Caldwell, S 1/197-200), (See Orphan's Court Plat). The new parcel extended the property eastward to the Oak Hill School (S.H. 22) on the north side of Lancaster Pike. On October 9, 1842, the 66 acre parcel was sold to James V. Emlen (N.C.Co. Deeds L 5/19) at a sheriff's sale. The property description for this deed as well as the Orphan's Court plat indicates that the property might no longer include a toll-gate in the southwest corner. The line on the west bordering the tavern property extends only halfway across the Lancaster Turnpike.

James V. Emlen sold the 66 acre parcel to John Barnes of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania on April 10, 1843 for \$2,076.00 (N.C.Co. Deeds L 5/22). John Barnes sold the property back to James Emlen on February 10, 1844 for the same amount of money. Unlike the previous deeds, the 1843 and 1844 deeds mention buildings. The deeds refer to "all the messuage or tenement and tract of land," although the type of building is not described. The sales by Emlen to Barnes and back to Emlen again seem to fit the earlier pattern of ownership by Jarvis Scullion and later by John Gordon and Abraham Taylor, although the property may no longer have included a toll-stop after 1843.

James Armor purchased the property on March 25, 1847 for \$3,000.00 from James V. Emlen (N.C.Co. Deeds T 5/463). The deed for this transaction uses the same property description which was written when James V. Emlen purchased the property from the James Caldwell estate in 1843. This property delineation was based on the 66 acre tract outlined on the Orphan's Court Survey of 1843 (See Orphan's Court Plat). The outlines of this tract are still evident on the 1893 Baist map. The 66 acre tract was to remain intact until the parcel was split in 1905.

With James Armor's purchase, the property entered a stable period of ownership until his widow Catherine sold the property in 1891. According to the <u>Blue Hen's</u> <u>Chicken</u> of August 3, 1849, James Armor was married to Miss Catherine Egbert, "at the upper Lancaster Toll Gate," by Reverend Mr. Love in 1849. (Historical Society

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of Delaware Genealogical Card File - Armor Family). James Armor continued to live there until he died intestate in 1890. Mrs. Catherine Armor continued in residence until March 3, 1891 when she sold the 66 acre property to Edgar R. Vernon (N.C.Co. Deeds G 15/260).

The 66 acre parcel of property was split by the sale of 30.3 acres to Edwin D. Courtney by Edgar R. Vernon on October 27, 1905 (N.C.Co. Deeds K 20/453). The James Armor House stood on this 30.3 acre parcel. The Courtneys sold this parcel to Anna Swift Rupert on October 14, 1907 (N.C.Co. Deeds P. 21/47). Later, the Ruperts also acquired the other portions of the James Armor property. On March 27, 1924, the James Armor property was joined with several other properties the Ruperts had purchased in the vicinity and purchased by the Rupert Investment Company (N.C.Co. Deeds X 24/41).

The Rupert Investment Company was a trust which managed the Rupert properties which included at least 251.70 acres according to the 1918 Rupert Investment Co. Survey. In the post World War II period, the Rupert Investment Co. gradually divested itself of its trust properties, including the tract surrounding the James Armor House. This area became the Sedgely Farms Subdivision. The James Armor House was one of the last Rupert trust properties to be sold. On March 29, 1961, the James Armor House was purchased by Mr. & Mrs. William C. and Jean D. Gordon who have maintained and preserved the house until the present time.

Comprehensive Planning

The James Armor House is located in Geographic Zone I, Piedmont.

Its period of significance extends from circa 1804 to circa 1935 in recognition of the three architecturally important building phases. Therefore, the applicable comprehensive planning chronological periods are:

1770 - 1830 ± : Early Industrialization
1830 - 1880 ± : Industrialization & Early Suburbanization
1880 - 1940 ± : Urbanization and Early Suburbanization

The Armor House falls within the theme <u>Architecture</u>, <u>Engineering</u>, <u>and Decorative</u> <u>Arts (12)</u>. and under the theme <u>Transportation</u> and <u>Communication</u> (10).

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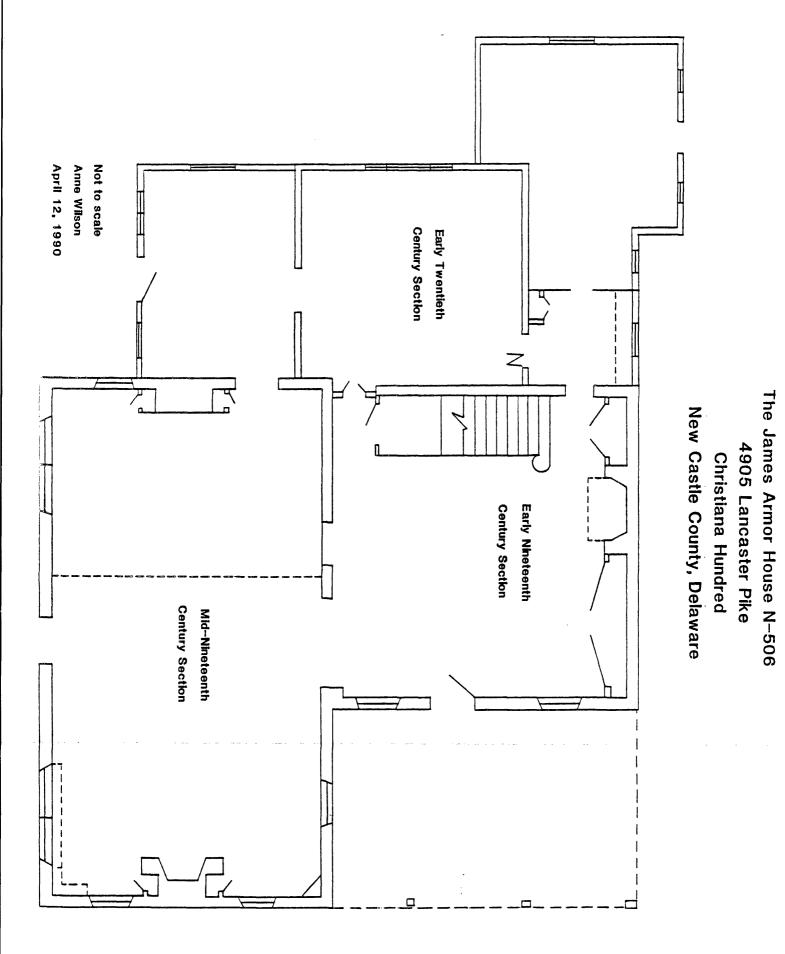
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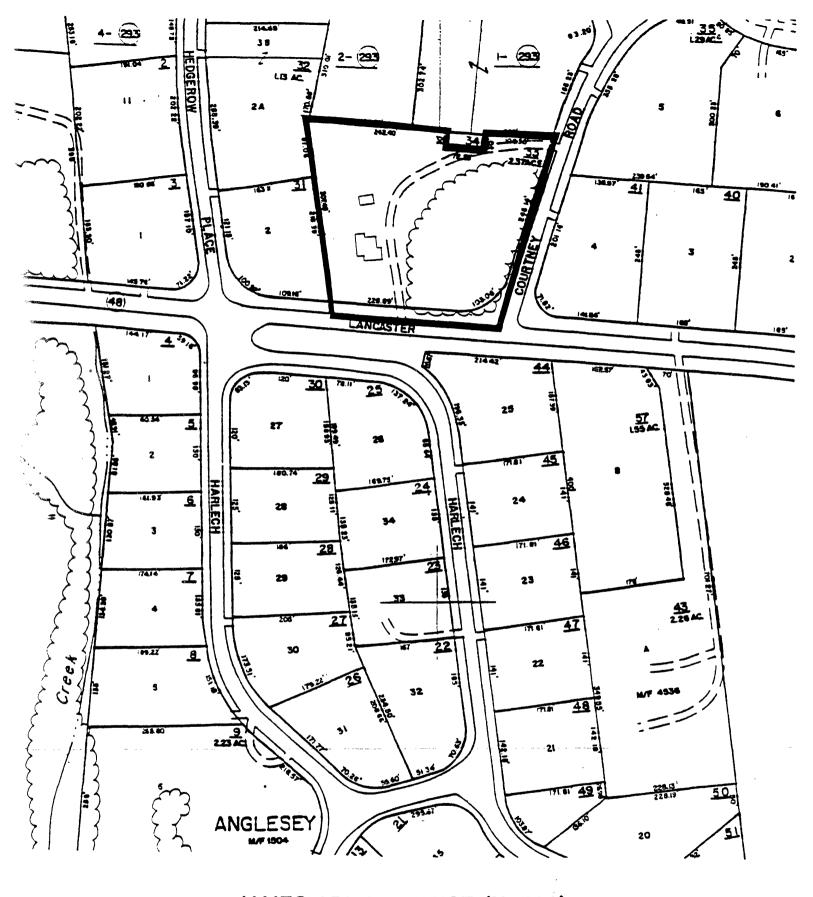
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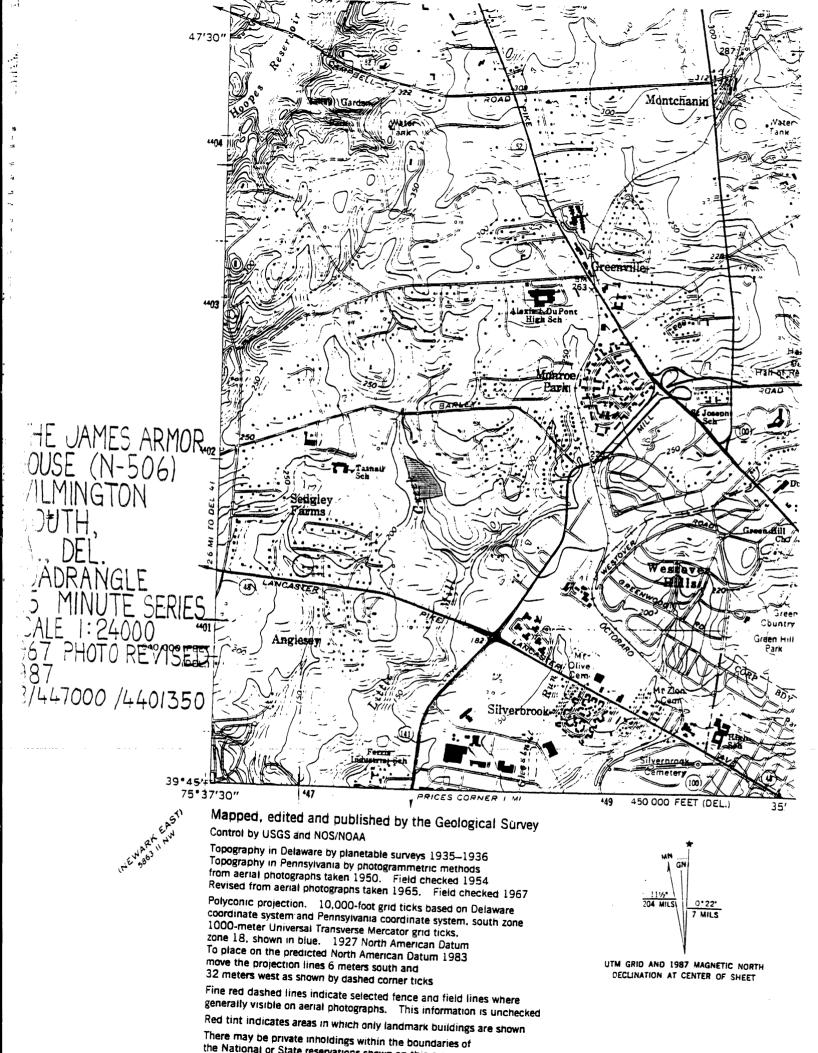


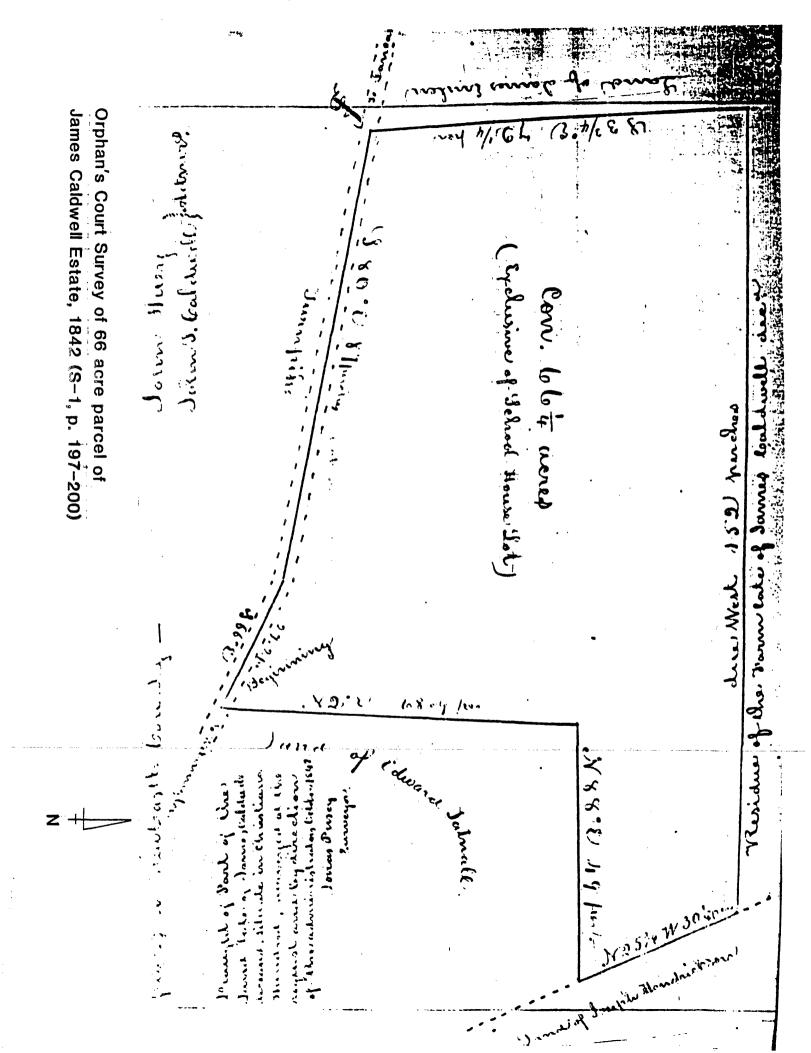
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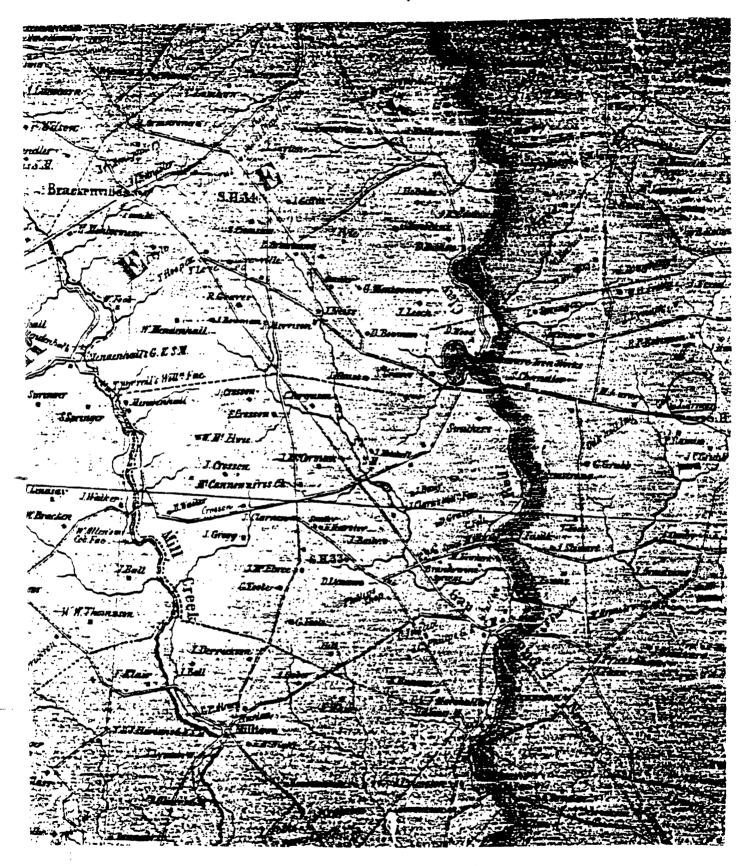
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JAMES ARMOR HOUSE (N-506) New Castle County Property Tax Parcel Map (Revised 2-4-86) Parcel 07-032.10-033 Approximate Scale: 1 inch = 165 feet

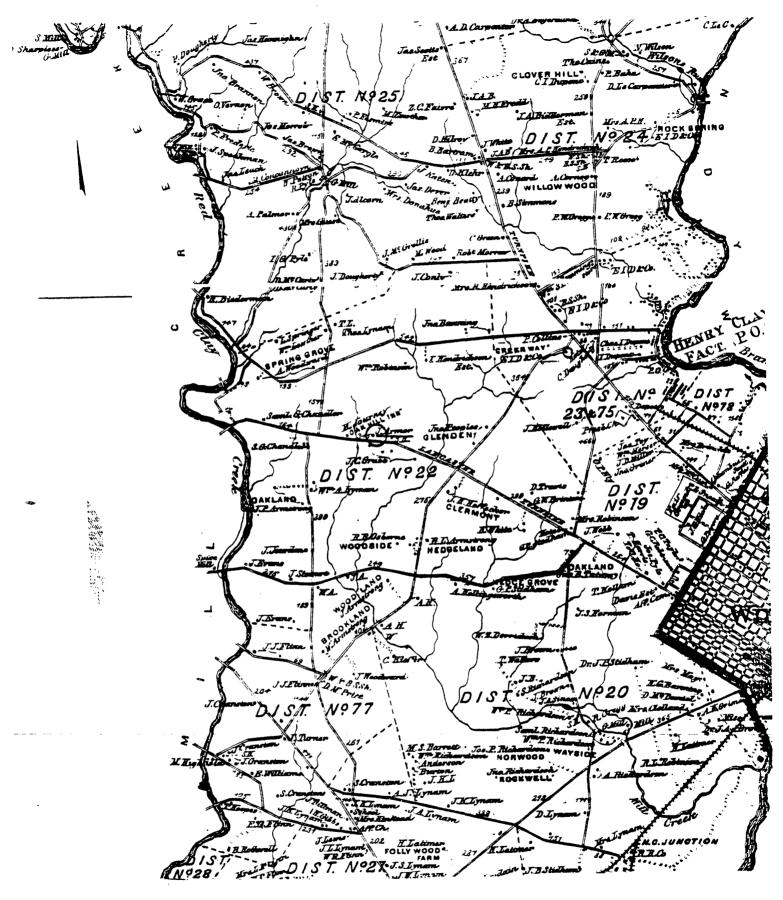






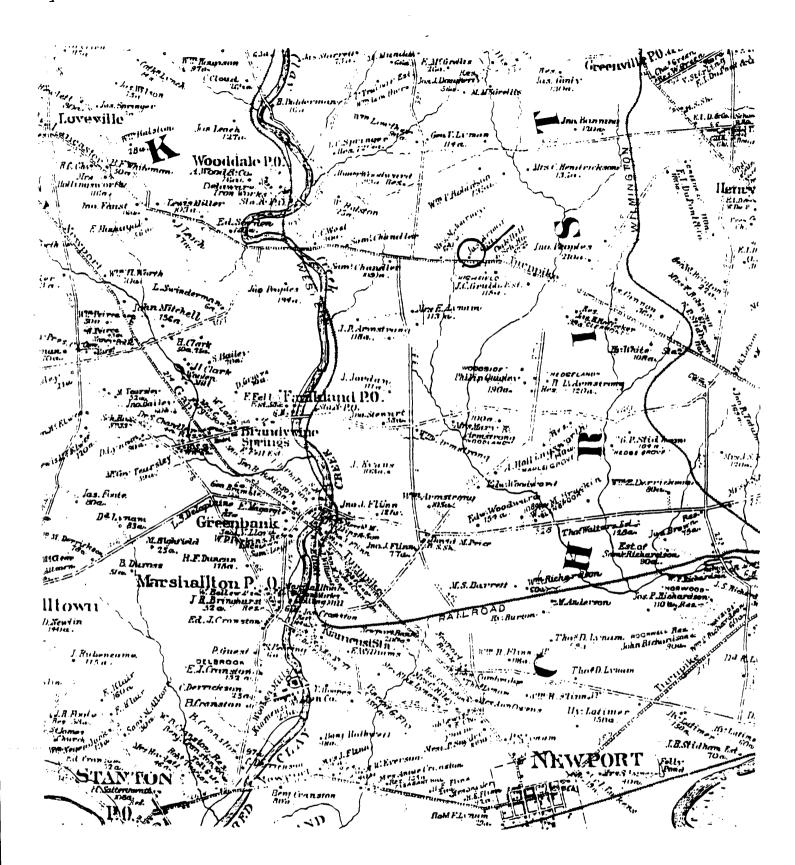
Samuel Rea and Jacob Price Map of New Castle County, Delaware Philadelphia: Smith and Wistar, 1849 Scale: l_{4}^{1} inch = 1 mile

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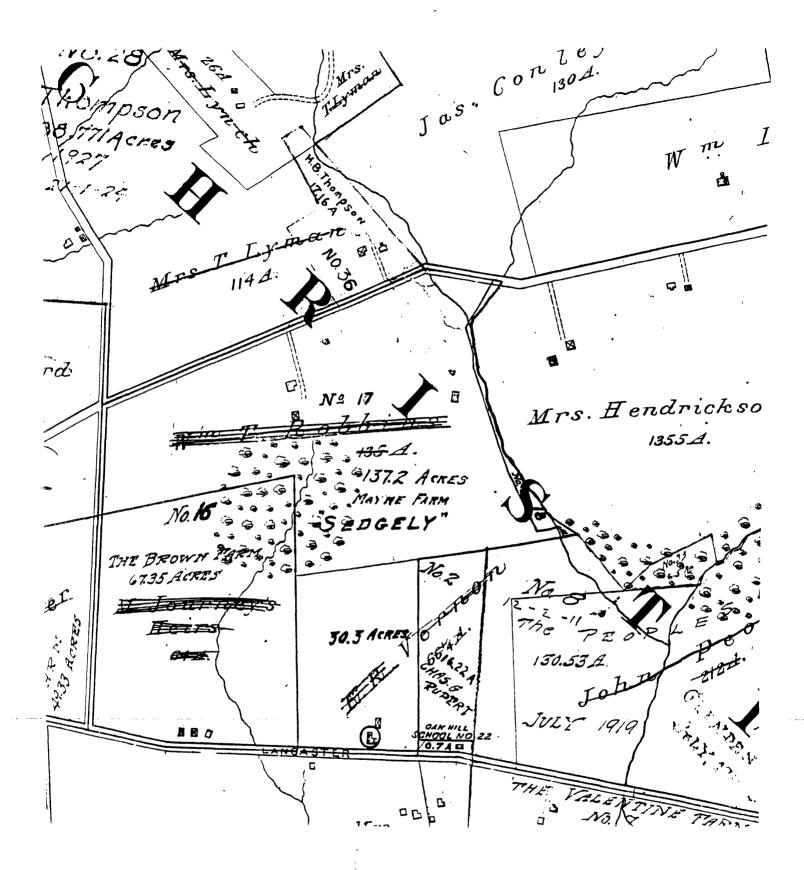


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D. G. Beers Atlas of the State of Delaware Philadelphia: Pomeroy and Beers, 1868 Scale: l_2^l inch = 1 mile



G. M. Hopkins Map cf New Castle County, Delaware Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins, 1881 Scale: 1-3/4 inch = 1 mile



G. William Baist Atlas of New Castle County, Delaware Philadelphia: G. William Baist, 1893 Scale: 1-3/4 inch = 1 mile