

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received SEP 27 1982
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Walnut Farm

and/or common Walnut Hill Farm; the Roosa Farm

2. Location

street & number Roosa Road, NA not for publication

city, town Milford vicinity of congressional district

state Delaware code 10 county Kent code 01

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (confirmed 5/21/82 at Kent Co. Board of Assessments)

name Mr. and Mrs. J. Heyman Roosa

street & number Roosa Road

city, town Milford vicinity of state Delaware

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Kent County Administration Building

city, town Dover state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

K-2029

title Delaware Cultural Resource Survey - has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Archaeology & Historic Preservation

city, town Dover state Delaware

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	NA
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Roosa Farm (Walnut Farm) is an Italianate dwelling house with informal tree-planted grounds and an outbuilding complex, lying within the northwest borders of the present city limits of Milford. It is still largely surrounded by the fields with which it has been associated since its construction in the 1860s; it is also readily accessible visually from Route 113, which passes within a few hundred yards of the house and intersects with Roosa Road. Despite the proximity of the highway and some associated incompatible development, such as a bowling alley, and despite some modifications, principally the enclosure of the porch, the complex as a whole maintains a high degree of integrity. It clearly conveys in its forms, their relations, and the relation of the whole to the surrounding rural landscape, the image of an independent rural estate of its period.

The single most important element in the ensemble is the two-story, T-planned, dwelling house. It consists of a double-pile main block with a low hipped roof and a tall and ornate cupola, together with a lower-pitched, hip-roofed dining room block and a still lower kitchen-utility room wing to the rear. Principal among the outbuildings is a large frame barn which, despite remodeling to meet dairy codes in this century, retains its braced-frame, pegged construction and hewn oak corner posts, as well as its nineteenth-century board-and-batten siding and wave-crest vergeboards.

The house is three bays wide on the front elevation, with a single-story porch crossing the facade. The entrance into the main stairhall is from the right-hand bay; this passage in turn opens through double doors to the original parlor at left front, and through a single door, directly under the stair, into the sitting room which crosses the back half of the first floor of the main block. In the late 1930s, the left half of the porch was enclosed and remodeled as a bathroom for the bedroom into which the parlor was then converted. These rooms served as a suite in the family house for the present owners, who were then newly married. The remodeling of the porch involved only the enclosure of existing space, and it was sided with clapboards matching those of the house. Therefore, the massing of the house remains unchanged, and even with the loss of two original porch posts and brackets, the structure in its setting retains its character and associative qualities.

The elaboration of the exterior by means of millwork and picturesque protrusions is otherwise intact. The eaves of the main cornices, on both main block and dining room and service wings, are extended over paired Italianate brackets. These brackets recur under the shallower eaves of the porch and of the low tent roofs that cover the south side parlor and sitting room bays. These three-sided, beveled bays have molded panels under the two-over-two light, sliding sash windows which are used here and throughout the front sections. The windows have plain surrounds, and the wooden shutters survive on the front elevation. The front entryway is intact behind the screened porch. The door has molded panels below a large clear-glass pane which lights the hall. There are stained glass transom and sidelights in the surround.

(see continuation sheet)

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

Specific dates ca. 1867 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Walnut Farm, called Walnut Hill Farm or the Roosa Farm since the first few years after its construction, is by far the best-preserved and most evocative of a group of independent rural estates, picturesquely titled and designed, that encircled the prosperous south Delaware town of Milford at the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Built ca. 1867 by Joseph and Margaretta Yardley, and bought shortly thereafter by John J. and Sarah Elting Roosa, it has remained for 112 years in the ownership of the Roosa family. The house maintains the picturesque profile and much of the exuberant detail of the Italianate style, an unusually opulent choice for a farmhouse of that period and place. Surviving as it does in firm relationship to the surrounding fields, to the handsome barn and other outbuildings and to its own loosely landscaped grounds, the farm preserves the imagery of the model country home--at once practical, progressive, and self-consciously stylish--which must have influenced its design and development. It is therefore significant under criterion C for National Register eligibility, as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. Because of its association with John J. Roosa, who was an especially prominent and progressive farmer--for example, he was winner of first prize for evaporated fruit at the 1889 Paris Exposition, and first Master of the Delaware State Grange--it is also significant under criterion B, for its association with persons significant to the local past.

The 1868 Beers' Atlas of Delaware was published a year after Joseph Yardley bought the land on which the house stands, from Seneca E. Malone of Philadelphia. "J. Yardley's Walnut Farm" appears in the Atlas as one of more than a dozen establishments with similar picturesque names in the immediate vicinity of Milford. These included Lofland's Louisiana, McColley's Eglington, Wood's Oakwood, Russell's Reedland, Causey's Cypress, Gilbert's Wisihikon, and Underhill's Willowmere. Today almost all are gone, absorbed into the town, or seriously altered or deteriorated. Only Walnut Farm remains as a well-preserved working farm of the picturesque type. It is by no means an elaborate and literal evocation of the Downingsque model, as is, for example, Greenlawn near Middletown (N. R. 1973). It is rather the local expression of ideas and feelings about picturesque houses and "natural" plantings which had been gaining currency in the wider culture for a third of a century. These stylish, named estates stand in marked contrast to the great majority of far less picturesque farm homes, identified only by the owner's name, that dot the Beers' Atlas maps. Most of these less picturesque houses were also less expensive; one of the things the named estates express is money. But they may also express an attitude toward wealth and the production of wealth, a happy capitalist aesthetic, which found particular satisfaction in showy architectural forms, set jewel-like in the midst of a model, progressive farm.

(see continuation sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Beers' Atlas of Delaware, Philadelphia 1868.
Diamond Jubilee History of the Delaware State Grange, Dover, 1949:
Kent County land records, Recorder of Deeds, Administration Building, Dover.
Interviews with J. Heyman Roosa, November 1981, April 1982

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 23 acres
Quadrangle name Milford Quadrangle scale 7.5 minute

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>2</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>8</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	B	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>8</u> <u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>8</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	D	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>8</u> <u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>
E	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>8</u> <u>6</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	F	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
G	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	H	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	NA	code	county	code
state	NA	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia Wright, Historian

organization Bureau of Archaeology & Hist. Pres. date May, 1982

street & number Old State House, The Green telephone (302) - 736- 5685

city or town Dover, state Delaware

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 *Daniel R. Griffith*

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date 9/15/82

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

Bonnie Mae Dwyer date 11/10/82
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: *Patrick Andrews* date 11/8/82
Chief of Registration

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The most elaborate and conspicuous aspect of the decorative program is the cupola which gives the house its distinctive profile. It has a marked vertical aspect, since the body of it is somewhat taller than it is wide, and is moreover topped with a small, bracketed hipped roof. The visual steepness of this little roof is increased by the addition of decorative cross gables, each containing a sunburst panel and surmounted by a scroll-sawn finial; and by a small, gingerbread-balustraded deck at the very top, carrying one last lathe-turned finial. The cupola walls are penetrated by pairs of shouldered-arched windows, and their enforced narrowness further emphasizes the verticality of the design. The cupola was once a functional part of the house, providing ventilation when the windows were opened by means of a pole from the hallway below. The hatch has now been closed, to prevent the escape of heat.

The interior of the house maintains very good integrity. The stocky turned and beveled woodwork of the stairway is intact, except for the replacement of the button on the newel post. The parlor and sitting room are distinguished by ornamental plaster ceiling medallions and, in the parlor, a molded border with simple floral motifs. These two rooms are also distinguished by handsome and unusual false fireplaces, which cloaked the ducts for the original central heating system. The parlor mantelpiece is marble. In the sitting room, a softer stone is painted matte black with a fine incised line, echoing and elaborating the outlines of the form, picked out in gilt. The parlor and sitting room have plain plastered walls; the dining room has panelled wainscoting. The dining room is further fitted with the pendant ceiling light fixture, brass with etched glass globes, that hung in the parlor early in the life of the house.

There are rear stairs between the dining and sitting room walls, leading to the family bedrooms on the second floor; four in the main block and one, combined from the original two, over the dining room. There is a third set of stairs on the north side of the kitchen wing; these lead to small attic rooms which were formerly used by servants and are now used for storage. These rooms do not communicate with the family bedrooms. The kitchen wing was originally two steps down from the dining room and is fitted with six-over-six light windows. It may in fact be an earlier dwelling, surviving on the site or moved in and incorporated into the larger house at the time of its construction.

The agricultural outbuilding set is maintained in its original relationship to the house, although close comparison with an 1890s photograph shows that only the principal element present today, the fine frame barn, was certainly present in the late-nineteenth century. The barn was modernized for twentieth-century use by reconstruction in concrete of the lower south side, but most exterior fabric remains and much interior framing is visible. The adjacent stock-pound and hog house, the nearby shop and corn-crib, and further back in the complex, the metal-clad machine sheds, are post-nineteenth century. But except for the latter, they maintain the forms and in most cases the materials and barn-red color of the principal outbuilding. An icehouse, smokehouse, and a four-hole privy have all been removed since 1930, and a stable and woodshed have been taken down and replaced with a modern garage since 1979.

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Justification of Boundaries

On the advice of the Delaware State Review Board, the boundaries of the nominated area have been set to include most of that parcel of land on either side of Roosa Road, owned by J. Heyman and Mildred Roosa. As described in the VBD and shown on the accompanying sketch map, this includes a fairly regularly shaped block of land west of Roosa Road and south of Road 407, as well as a wedge-shaped parcel in the apex of the triangular space bounded by Roosa Road on the west, Route 113 to the east, and property under other ownership to the north. These boundaries, besides circumscribing an area under single present ownership, delimit an area which forms the visible agricultural setting for the buildings herein described; and as noted in the text of the nomination, the relationship of the buildings to the fields is an important aspect of the site's significance. In particular, these boundaries preserve the view of the structures and setting from Route 113. At the same time, they exclude those later structures which have been built in the vicinity of the site.

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This reading of the forms of Walnut Farm is consistent with the career of John Roosa, who chose this large farm for a not-particularly large family which was barely begun when he and his wife Sarah moved to Delaware from Owasco, New York in 1870. All of their three children were born in the house, which had six bedrooms. As mentioned above, Roosa was a notably progressive farmer. He developed facilities on his farm for the evaporation of fruit and the forcing of tubers. Apples, peaches, pears, strawberries, blackberries, chesnuts and walnuts were cultivated there, as well as livestock; Roosa's stationery in the 1890s was headed "Walnut Hill Fruit and Stock Farm/Horned Dorset Sheep--a Specialty," and cited his first prize at the Paris Exposition. These activities and the attitudes they reflect probably contributed to his election in 1874 as the first Master of the Milford Grange, and in 1875 as Master of the State Grange. From 1881 to 1885 he was Assistant Steward of the National Grange. That organization had been formed in the years immediately following the Civil War as a fraternal, service, and eventually a political organization for farmers; it fostered cooperative economic as well as social activity, encouraged a degree of participation by women, and emphasized education. Roosa, in a speech to the State Grange in 1882 employed rhetoric appropriate to the proprietor of a model farm when he said, "Let us hold aloft the torch of progress and march onward to that high and honorable position to which the profession of agriculture entitles all engaged in its pursuits."

Today Walnut Hill Farm produces mainly wheat and soybeans, and the orchards, fruit evaporation equipment, and other particular evidences of Roosa's more specialized agricultural pursuits are no longer in existence. But the well-ordered configuration of diversified buildings and plantings, dominated by the picturesque house and barn, still evokes the kind of physical setting he must have had in mind when he made his speech to the Grange.

Level of Significance

The level of significance of Walnut Farm, as checked in Item 10, is local. The architectural forms it contains are unusual--there are relatively few picturesque houses in the Delaware countryside, and perhaps even fewer barns with clearly picturesque elements--but they are not unique. For example, a closely similar house, with somewhat fewer alterations, has been surveyed near Camden, further north in Kent County. More importantly, the survival and integrity of such farms has not yet been plotted and evaluated on a statewide basis. For these reasons, the significance of Walnut Farm is at this point clearest in relation to the historic and surviving resources of its type in the Milford vicinity.

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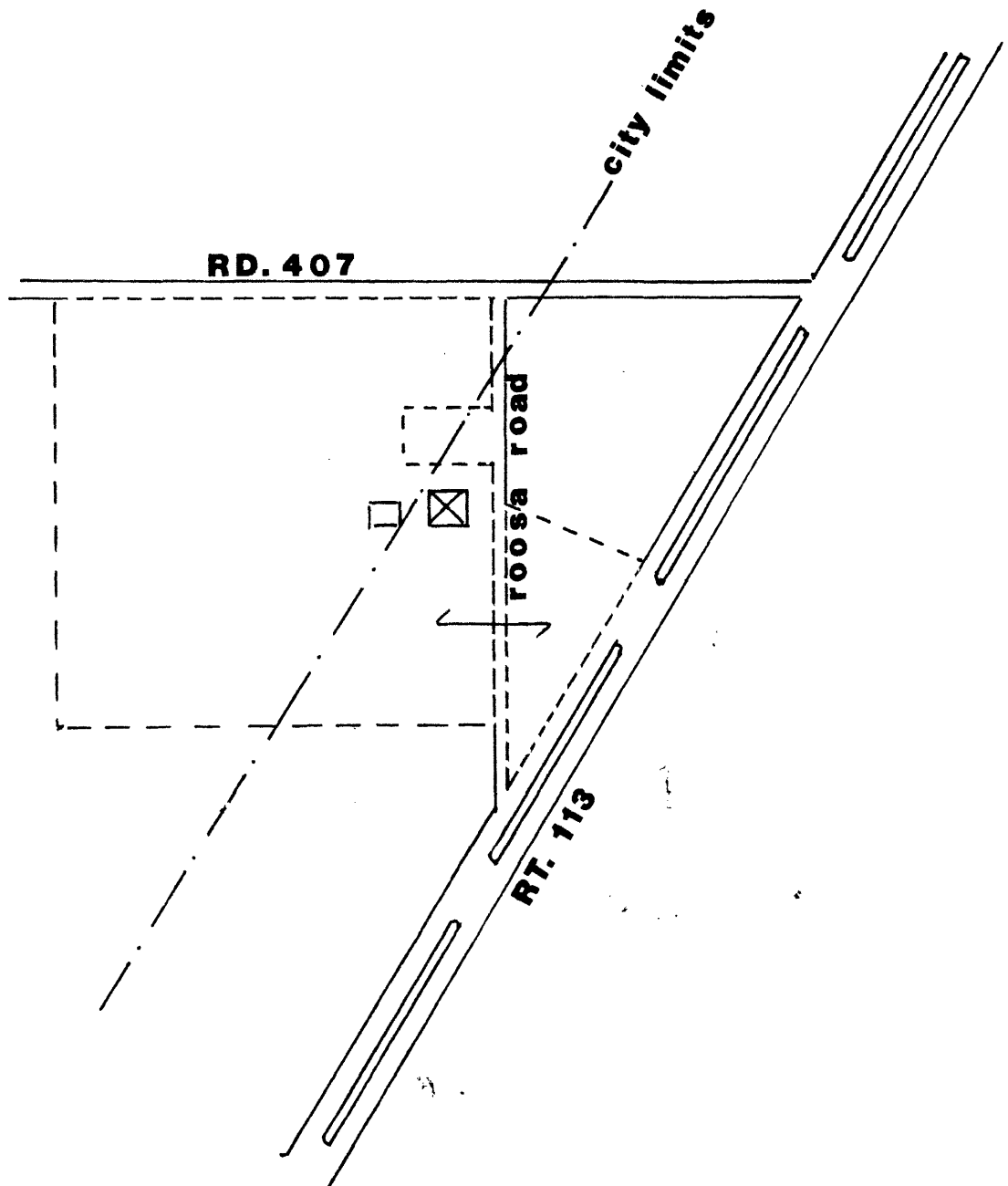
Walnut Farm

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated area are shown as the dotted line on the attached sketch map. Except on the south, they are coterminous with the boundaries of the parcel of land at the northwest edge of Milford owned by J. Heyman and Mildred Roosa and containing 19 acres within the city limits and 9.1 acres without. These boundaries by definition excluded a 120' X 150' lot under other ownership, containing a small modern ranch house, facing Roosa Road north of the Walnut Farm dwelling house. They also exclude another modern house and lot under other ownership several hundred yards to the south of the Italianate house. The southern boundary of the nominated area has been drawn due west along the northern boundary of this southern lot, to the western boundary of the Roosa parcel, for convenience and since the portions of the Roosa parcel to the rear of the southern lot are not visible in views of the nominated buildings.



WALNUT FARM
Milford, De.
(not to scale)