

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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MAY 1995

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 4

Page 1

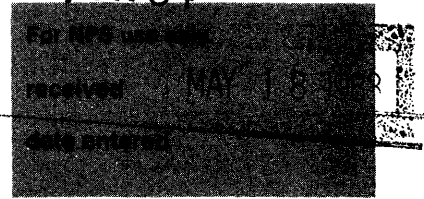
Owner's List Kenton Historic District

- .1 Carl and George Prettyman, Kenton, DE 19955
- .2 Mr. and Mrs. Stephen M. Woodworth, Kenton, DE 19955
- .3 A. Irene Wooleyhan, Kenton, DE 19955
- .4 Reagan L. & Sheryl A. Paquette, Kenton, DE 19955
- .5 Kenton Methodist Church, Kenton, DE 19955
- .6 John C. & Ingrid M. Sigler, Kenton, DE 19955
- .7 Carl Bruce Faulkner, Kenton, DE 19955
- .8} John W. & Elizabeth D. Pratt, Kenton, DE 19955
- .9}
- .10 Newell B. & Agnes L. Melvin, Kenton, DE 19955
- .11 Walter G. & Catherine McGinnis, Kenton, DE 19955
- .12 Robert E. Clegg & Thelma E. Miller, Kenton, DE 19955
- .13 Riley J. & Roseann C. Holman, Kenton, DE 19955
- .14 Julian B. Woodall, 103 Clayton Ave., Clayton, DE 19938
- .15 Walter F. Jarman, Kenton, DE 19955
- .16 Beulah M. Steele, Kenton, DE 19955
- .17 Arthur H. & Norma C. Ainsley, 1173 S. Little Creek Rd., Dover, DE 19901
- .18} George W. & Evelyn A. August, Kenton, DE 19955
- .19}
- .20 Evelyn M. Tashner, Kenton, DE 19955
- .21 John H. & Marietta K. Darden, Kenton, DE 19955
- .22 Willis & Doris A. Bailey, Kenton, DE 19955
- .23 Daniel A. & Anna W. Roberts, Kenton, DE 19955
- .24 William T. & Deborah A. Nicholson, RD 1, Box 611-8, Clayton, DE 19938
- .25 Robert Wilson & Jeannette W. Graham, 130 W. Frazier Street, Smyrna, DE 19977
- .26 James E. & Linda K. Hargett, Kenton, DE 19955
- .27 Robert L. & Beverly B. Moffett, Kenton, DE 19955
- .28 Nancy Wilson Cook & Thomas J. Cook, Kenton, DE 19955
- .29 Edward Hughes, Kenton, DE 19955

The owners of the individual properties are listed with the inventory for each property.

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Kenton Historic District - Description:

The Village of Kenton is a crossroads community located at the intersection of Route 42 and Route 300 in Kenton Hundred Delaware. It is located about half-way between Dover and Smyrna, but west of Route 13. The Delaware and Maryland Railroad tracks mark its western boundary. The village dates from the last decade of the eighteenth century, but did not achieve its peak until the last half of the nineteenth century when the railroad line was put through from Clayton to Maryland. The district is located along both sides of Commerce Street from the intersection at Main Street to the railroad tracks. The buildings in the rest of town are either modern structures or have been so altered that they no longer convey a sense of the past except for four properties that are being nominated individually.

According to Scharf's History of Delaware, Kenton was first laid out in 1796 by Philip Lewis who had begun to acquire property in the area five years before in 1791. The community was first known as Georgetown, then as Lewis Crossroads and finally, in 1806, by the name of Kenton. Both the name of Lewis Crossroads and Georgetown would be used as identifying locations in area deeds until well into the latter part of the nineteenth century. While Lewis is given credit for establishing the town and for owning the land in the area, in fact he only was able to acquire the land that was south of Route 42 Commerce Street, as the land on the north side was part of the Wilds' family holdings and remained so until the 1870's. A few building lots had been sold by the Wilds family, but most of the development occurred along Main Street. Both the 1859 Byle's Atlas of Kent County and Beer's Atlas of Delaware in 1868 show details of the town and given an idea of the growth of the town until 1868.

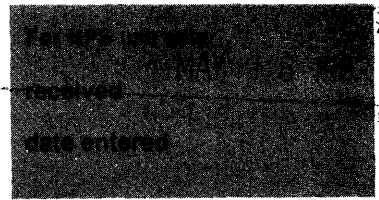
The town sits in the middle of a rich agricultural region and relies heavily on the trade of farmers to maintain itself. The roads that pass through the town were the roads northwest from Dover to the upper Chesapeake Bay and the roads southwest from Duck Creek or Smyrna to Centerville, Maryland. The first commercial enterprises to locate in the town, after a store, were a blacksmith and a wheelwright. The business directory, printed with the 1859 Byle's map, lists two mechants, two doctors and a hotel keeper. By 1868, the business directory on Beer's Atlas showed an increase with three blacksmith shops and one wheelwright. There was also a distillery in town along Main Street, owned by John Green, who was operating the Kenton Hotel at the time.

One of the reasons for the increase in tradesmen in 1868 was the prospect of having a rail link with Clayton and Smyrna to the north, and with the lower eastern shore of Maryland in the south. This line was not completed until 1869, but when it arrived and Kenton became a stop on the line, the town was assured a measure of greater success. By 1868, the town had spread away from the crossroads, along Commerce Street to the west. Soon after this, the gaps between the houses were filled in along both sides of Commerce Street. The process of completing the development of the town was finished by about 1880. Since that time, the only new construction has been very limited and has occurred just at the crossroads.

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During the first half of the nineteenth century, Philip Lewis and John Green were the people most responsible for the growth of Kenton. After the Civil War was over and the railroad was completed past the town, David S. Wilds and William C. Jump undertook to develop the community. Jump was a merchant and operated a store at the crossroads. He owned land on both sides of Frazier Street, or Green Street as it was known in the nineteenth century. Here he laid out a development of 54 lots. All of them were 50 feet wide, except for three lots on Main Street which were planned for commercial use. Only a few of the lots were sold and the and the land remains mostly open space.

Wilds had two areas on which to create building lots. The first was land that he owned along Commerce Street. This was sold to individual owners who contracted to build their own homes. Wilds' other building lots were on Main Street next to Jump's aborted development. This land was not sold off, but held for rental purposes. Wilds lost this land at sheriff's sale in 1902.

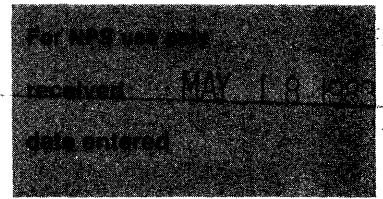
Except for a few houses that date from the early settlement of the crossroads, most of the buildings in the district date from the last half of the nineteenth century and more specifically from the 1870's and 1880's. The three oldest standing structures are the Wilds-Prettyman House (.1) and the Wilds-Cooper House (.2). Both are brick dwellings that were built by Nathaniel Wilds. The Wilds-Prettyman house was constructed c. 1780 as a 7-bay house. This unusually long house has been used as both a residence and a store. Mason Bailey, who also owned the Bailey House at Seven Hickories, was a merchant who operated a store from this building during the mid-nineteenth century. The main block was built at the same time while the rear wings, porch and facade windows date to a later period. The Wilds-Cooper House was built during the last decade of the eighteenth century and has always been a residence. One of its owners was Dr. William Cooper, who was a physician in Kenton. The house was originally a simple 3-bay dwelling that was enlarged in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Wilds family built two houses just west of the crossroads during the 1820's. These two houses were rental properties. The Wilds houses were small 3-bay frame buildings. It is not known for whom the houses were built but the Wilds family had many financial interests that would have required housing for workers or managers that would be located centrally to their holdings. Both of the narrow buildings, once located side by side, were built during the 1820's. During the 1870's these two houses were combined into one house when the west dwelling was moved behind the other and made part of the rear wing.

Thomas Lamb owned and built three houses, further west, during the early 1860's at the same time that he was acquiring his farms north of Blackiston Crossroads. All three houses (.13, .14, & .15) are 3-bay frame buildings. However, the Lamb main House (.13) is slightly larger and has a center hall, while the other two dwellings (.14 & .15) are narrow and have a side hall entrance. The cornices and trim around the window openings are the same on all three houses.

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The last three houses on the north side of Commerce Street were built at about the same time as were the three Lamb houses. The Guessford House (.16) and the Graham House (.17) are similar in plan and in some construction features, but are basically very different houses. Both of them are 3-bay, side-hall-plan dwellings with tall narrow windows, but the Guessford House is a 2-story frame building while the Graham House is a 3-story brick building. The last house in the row is the Sevil House (.28). A 3-bay, center-hall-plan frame house, it is similar to the Lamb Main House (.13). However, unlike that Lamb House, it was improved with an Eastlake porch and dormers in the 1870's, when the rest of the town was built and most of the older homes were similarly improved.

In the 1870's, the two most substantial buildings erected were the Kenton Methodist Church (.5), built 1876, and the Brick Lodge (.25) built at the same time. The church is a Gothic-Revival building which is a popular ecclesiastical style in Delaware. The Brick Lodge is a very verancular Italianate building that was built as a hotel and meeting place.

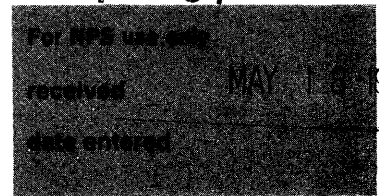
The rest of the buildings in the district are dwellings that range from the very plain, that is the house next to last on the south side of Commerce Street (.20), to the elaborate "Spindle and Spool" House (.23). This last house highlights the effect that the architectural ideals of Queen Anne architecture had on the town of Kenton. While basically a 3-bay, center-hall-plan frame house, the use of the recessed bay on the second floor, the projecting bay on the east gable end, the cross gable on the facade, the heavily-carved and decorated wrap-around porch and the use of classical motifs on the columns and corner boards all combine to draw upon the rich vocabulary of Queen Anne design to produce a house that is unlike any other in the region.

There are, of course, other houses that employ Queen Anne vocabulary to construct a very pleasing appearance. Both the houses just east of Church Alley (.3 & .4) use the asymmetrical floor plans of the period and use decorative carvings to highlight roof peaks and chamfered edges. Further to the west, on the north side, another house (.9) uses the traditional floor plan of a 3-bay, side-hall dwelling, but adds a projecting bay on the east gable end that is covered in fish scale siding. The rest of the house borrows from the "Free Classic" notions of the Queen Anne and has classically inspired corner boards, a heavy box cornice with dentils as well as brackets, and corresponding cornice window heads.

The early-twentieth century is represented by two examples (.6 & .24), but both blend in very well with the neighboring houses. While very boxy, both borrow from past styles and recombined them in a new manner to produce different types of housing. The one on the north side (.6) is a 2-story frame dwelling that combines Gothic cross gables with Queen Anne projecting bays. The one on the south side (.24) is a 1½-story frame building with a plain Palladian window on its temple-front facade. The clear lines of the "temple" are thrown off by the projecting bay on the east side and by the shed dormers.

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Kenton Historic District Inventory:

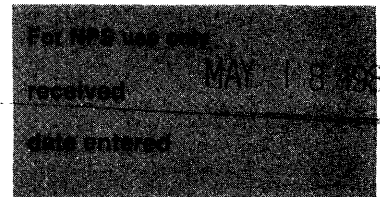
The dwellings in the town of Kenton do not have street addresses. Location reference is through map location. Tax parcel numbers are not used because of the presence of two houses on some lots. All structures contribute to the district, except for the open lot (.29) at the northwest corner of Commerce and Main Streets.

- .1 Wilds-Prettyman House, c. 1780: 7-bay, 2-story brick dwelling; entrance is the third bay from the north; facade is laid in Flemish bond brick, all painted white. Narrow belt course across facade, a small 1-story brick wing has been added to the south gable c. 1860. At the same time, dentils were added to the cornice and double-wide rear wing was placed on east face; numerous outbuildings clustered close to the house.
- .2 Wilds-Cooper House, c. 1795: 3-bay, center-hall, 2-story brick dwelling. Side wing added c. 1875; already on the National Register of Historic Places.
- .3 Queen Anne-style house, c. 1880: 2-story, frame, T-shaped building with projection to the front; wrap-around porch around front of house; chamfered corners with decorative sawn work at corners.
- .4 Queen Anne-style house, c. 1880: 2-story, frame, L-shaped building with projection to the front; decorative gable ends with paired windows in first and second floor; lancet windows and gable trim; projecting bay on east gable.
- .5 Kenton Methodist Church, c. 1876: Gothic-Revival church building with four stained glass Gothic windows, tower entrance on gable-end front; gable roof with partial returns; cornice motif carried across second-floor windows and around tower in a manner similar to a belt course.
- .6 Early-twentieth-century house, c. 1910: 2-story frame, rectangular dwelling with pyramidal roof, cross gable on temple front with dormers on sides; central chimney, projecting bay on east side; full porch on front with brick piers and round metal posts.
- .7 J. D. Wilds House, c. 1820: frame, 2-story, 3-bay, side-hall-plan dwelling with a gable roof, heavy box cornice with partial returns and cornice window heads on its two-over-two, late-nineteenth-century windows; modern, full porch across the front; house is U-shaped with a rear wing that is made up of a perpendicular wing, and then the house that was once to the west, and was a twin of the main block, was added to the rear of the perpendicular wing. There is an enclosed 1-story porch that fills in the space between the various blocks.



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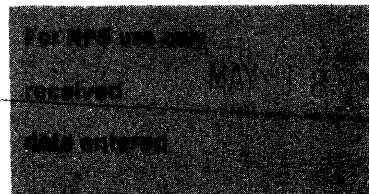
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- .16 Guessford House, c. 1850: low-story, 3-bay, side-hall-plan, frame house with a low hip roof and a brick foundation; tall, narrow, two-over-two windows replacing original sash; c. 1880, Queen Anne-style porch across facade; 2-story rear wing with a 1-story addition on east face.
- .17 Graham House, C. 1860: 3-story, 3-bay, side-hall-plan, brick building with a low hip roof and a box cornice and frieze that, at one time, was decorated with roof brackets; tall, narrow, two-over-two windows replacing original sash; double door with 4-light transom; c. 1880 porch with Ionic columns set on brick base; low rear wing.
- .18 Sevil House, c. 1860: 2-story, 3-bay, center-hall-plan, frame building on a brick foundation; gable roof with interior gable-end chimneys, roof brackets have been removed; arch-headed dormers, Eastlake porch and two-over-two windows added c. 1880; rear wing in two sections - a 2-story, 2-bay section and a 1-story, 2-bay section.
- .19 Garner House, c. 1860: 2-story, 3-bay, side-hall, frame building on a brick foundation; tall gable roof with complete return and roof brackets; two-over-two windows; entrance has 2-light transom and sidelights; interior gable-end chimney on west side.
- .20 Arthur House, c. 1860: 2-story, 2-bay, frame building; six-over-six windows; gable roof with box cornice and partial returns; modern hood over door; house has aluminum siding and 1-story rear wing.
- .21 House, c. 1870: Italianate, 2-story, 3-bay, side-hall-plan, frame house; gable roof with heavy box cornice, partial return and roof brackets; six-over-six windows; double door has transom; 2-story rear wing; full basement under house.
- .22 House, c. 1880: 2-story, frame, "temple front" building with gable roof and partial returns; entrance on gable end with transom and sidelights; two-over-two windows; unusual hipped pent eave with sawn decorative brackets; full porch with turned posts along east face; low, 1-story rear wing on south gable.
- .23 Spindle and Spool House, c. 1880: 3-bay, center-hall-plan dwelling with recessed east bay on second floor; cross gable on facade; gable roof has box cornice with partial returns, projecting bay on east gable end; 2-story rear wing; wrap-around porch on first floor with Queen Anne decorative sawn woodwork details; one-over-one windows with shutters.
- .24 House, c. 1910: 1½-story, "temple front", frame building with Palladian window with squared tops in gable end; one-over-one windows; house is raised on a brick foundation; full porch across front, Doric columns, shed dormers on gable roof, box cornice with partial returns; short, small wing on east face.

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The Kenton Historic District represents a crossroads community that developed as a result of its location astride important transportation routes and its ability to provide services to the surrounding agricultural population. Because of its association with the developing agricultural prosperity of the region and for its development as a railroad town, the district is eligible for listing under Criterion A. The grouping of architectural examples, particularly the use of Queen Ann styles and the presence of more typical housing examples, makes the district also eligible under Criterion C.

Kenton developed very slowly at first and its oldest surviving structures actually pre-date the existence of the town. However, under the guidance of Philip Lewis and the Wilds family and later with the help of John Green and other merchants, the town became a necessary and useful secondary economic center in Kenton Hundred. Before the automobile, travel was restricted to a more immediate area. Located within its borders were the immediate services of blacksmiths, wheel wrights, general stores, and post offices that were important in a farmer's life.

When the railroad was put through Kenton, the town became even more important as a shipping point for goods in and out of Kenton. It enabled the rural farmer to get his crops to market quicker and more reliable, and it also enabled him to receive goods that could not be easily produced in the immediate area. Mail order catalogs and traveling salesmen became necessary parts of a farmer's existence.

The houses in the town that date from its first 40 years are vernacular structures that fall into two categories. The first are the substantial brick dwellings of the Wilds family (.1 & .2) and the plain tenant houses that are now combined into one dwelling (.7). Around 1850 a small group of homes were built to the west of the Wilds houses and these were used by the merchants and tradesmen who were finding the town a good place in which to do business. The 3 Lamb houses (.13, .14, & .15) are plain vernacular dwellings, while the Guessford House (.16) and the Graham House (.17) were both influenced by the Italianate style that was popular during the 1850's and 1860's in Delaware. The next housing boom in Kenton occurred after the Delaware and Maryland Railroad was run through on the western edge of town. The houses built during the 1870's and 1880's represent the most advanced thinking in housing design in the area bet-



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Dover and Smyrna. Many of the houses were built with the Queen-Ann building grammar squarely in mind. The use of the projected bay is the most common way of expressing this new style and can be seen in a few houses (.3, .4, .9, & .26). The most elegant Queen Ann House in town and one of the most interesting houses of its type in rural Delaware is the "Spindle and Spool House" (.23) on the south side of the street. While it starts off with a basic 3-bay, center-hall-plan, it branches off from this traditional porch with the use of cross gables projecting bays, and recessed bays. Also, this house has a full porch on two sides of the house with elaborate carvings and decorative sawn work along the porches on the first and second floor.

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Historic Resources of Kenton Hundred

K-1378:	A:	18/446140	4347180
	B:	18/446480	4346610
	C:	18/446080	4346180
K-1374:		18/447600	4340230
K-1375:	A:	18/448500	4342230
	B:	18/448830	4341740
	C:	18/448270	4341530
	D:	18/447940	4342050

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Acreage of the Kenton Historic District, a part of the Historic Resources of  
Kenton Hundred: 9.16 acres.