

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received JUL 9 1986  
date entered AUG 13 1986

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

1. Name

historic Lewis Family Tenant Agricultural Complex

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Road 227, North Murderkill Hundred not for publication

city, town Wyoming vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Delaware code 10 county Kent code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Harry G. Neese

street & number 127 Broad Street

city, town Wyoming vicinity of state DE

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kent County Court House tax parcel: 102-1-14

street & number Federal Street

city, town Dover state DE

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title DE Cultural Resource Survey K-824 has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1982 federal  state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Archaeology And Historic Preservation

city, town Dover state DE

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Lewis Family Tenant Agricultural complex was constructed in 1850 as a tenant farm by a large land owner. The house is a hall/parlor plan dwelling of two stories. It is constructed of brick with a frame rear wing. The agricultural complex associated with the house consists of two barns and two metal granaries. The site has three contributing buildings, the house and two barns, and two non-contributing structures, the granaries.

The farm is still in active use. The principal crop is feed corn. The complex is located in the relatively flat landscape of North Murderkill Hundred, west of Wyoming. The land is fertile and well watered. While the land is not the most productive in central Delaware it was sufficient to make it attractive farm land. The land has been farmed since it was first cleared in the mid-eighteenth century. The complex is set back from the road about 1,000 feet. To the east is the Allabands Mill Stream. It flows north from its source toward Isaac Branch and Wyoming Lake.

In general appearance the house would have been built in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. However, a date stone on the west gable end clearly indicates the year of construction as 1850. The frame wing was added in the early part of this century.

The bricks are laid in five to eight course common bond. The entire house is painted white. It is difficult to determine if that is an original treatment but it has been on the building for a long time. The openings are balanced with a center entrance and two windows on either side. The second floor has three windows. All windows are 6 over 6 double sash except for the small

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1850 **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lewis Family Tenant Agricultural Complex is a nineteenth century example of an eighteenth century building tradition. Hall/parlor plan buildings in Delaware were uncommon by the first decade of the nineteenth century. That this dwelling was erected in the fifth decade of that century is evidence of the maintenance of traditional architectural forms beyond their generally accepted period of use. As such this dwelling is eligible under Criterion C. The farm is also an excellent example of agricultural patterns during the nineteenth century. The farm was the property of both Delaware and out-of-state land speculators and later apart of a large holding for a local family. Because of its association with that historical process of disbursal of original holdings, land speculation and consolidation into large family holds, the farm complex is eligible for listing under Criterion A.

The farmland was part of an original patent titled "Barnes Chance" which was granted in 1682. Secondary historical sources indicate that the land was farmed but there does not appear to have been a dwelling on this particular parcel. It had a long series of owners during the eighteenth century. In 1813 it became the property of Dr. Ezekiel Needham of Smyrna. Needham was principally a land speculator.

As the farmland in central Delaware was abused by poor farming practices during the eighteenth century, it became less valuable and productive. As a result,

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Beers Atlas of Delaware, 1868  
 Byles Atlas of Kent County, 1859  
 Kent County, DE, Deed Records, Will Records  
 Lewis Family File, Hall of Records, Dover, DE

T. Scharf, History of Delaware, 1882  
 U.S. Census Bureau, Agricultural  
 Census, 1850, 1860, 1870

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 30.7  
 Quadrangle name Wyoming Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A	1 1 8	4 4 1 7 5 4 0	4 3 2 8 5 0 0	B	1 1 8	4 4 1 7 5 8 0	4 3 2 8 1 1 1 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 1 8	4 4 1 7 2 7 0	4 3 2 8 1 1 1 0	D	1 1 8	4 4 1 7 2 4 0	4 3 2 8 4 1 7 0
E				F			
G				H			

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The boundary is a square that is shown on the enclosed USGS map. It starts at the north curb line of Rd 227 and extends north about 1250 feet. Its eastern and western borders are lines that parallel the driveway and are 500 feet from the center line of the drive. This includes all cultural resources.

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

Stephen G. Del Sordo, Historian  
 name/title Sharon Spencer, Research Assistant

organization Bur. of Archaeology & Hist. Preservation date May, 1986

street & number Old State House telephone 302-736-5685

city or town Dover state DE

# 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 *John E. ...* date 6-24-86

For NPS use only  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
 title SHPO date 8-13-86  
 Keeper of the National Register  
 Attest: Chief of Registration date

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garrett windows in the gable ends. They are 4 light fixed sash. The east gable end has no windows except for the garrett sash while the west gable end has a window on the ground floor and another on the second floor plus the two additional windows on the garrett level. There is no porch on the house at the present time. At one point there was a small hooded entrance entrance landing on the front but that was removed and replaced with a small porch with side railings and no roof. This treatment approximates the original entrance.

There is a full basement under the house with access being through an exterior bulkhead on the west gable end. The chimney arches for the interior gable end chimneys are located here.

The interior of the house is arranged in classic hall/parlor fashion. The main block contains two rooms with no central hall. The access to the second floor was and still is through a tight stair in the east room or parlor. The stair projects part-way into the room and is located to the left side of the fire place. In order to accomodate the stair and landing the wall between the fireplace and stairs is pushed out at a slight angle. While the stair is not constructed in a traditional half-winder fashion, the carpenter clearly was not comfortable with this type of stair and landing arrangement and pushed the wall forward in an awkward manner. The interior walls are plastered. The mantels are plain with little decorative elements. The frame wing was erected using ballon frame techniques. It does not appear to have replaced an earlier wing. The wing interior is plastered and was built to house service/kitchen activities.

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The barns are twentieth century replacements for older structures that were allowed to deteriorate and had to be replaced. The larger of the two is located on the west end of the complex. It was built to house cattle and feed and was constructed in the early 1920's. The first floor is cement block with the second floor and west shed being frame. It was sided with verticle boards. At the present it is sided and roofed with metal sheets but the original siding and roofing remains. A 1950's era shed roof has been placed on the east side. It is supported by heavy poles. A television antenna is attached to the roof ridge.

The smaller barn was used for storage purposes and was erected in the late 1920's. It is frame and rests on cement block piers. A small storage shed is located on the west gable end. A long pole shed is attached to the east gable end. The barn is covered with metal sheets on its walls and roofs.

The two granaries are located between the two barns. They are 1950's era open metal storage structures. They are round with cornical roofs. They both sit on concrete pads.

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large numbers of farmers abandoned their land to speculators and moved to new lands in the West that had recently been made available for settlement.

Individuals such as Needham purchased the farms of those leaving and rented them out to tenants. Needham is listed in land records and local histories as the owner of huge blocks of land in the Smyrna/Dover area. In most cases he bought intact agricultural farm complexes. This particular farm complex was not erected till 1850. Only the house survives from that first period of construction.

Upon Needham's death the land became the property of his three sons who were all residents of Massachusetts. They held the land until 1845 when it was sold to William Lewis. Lewis was the head of a local family that had settled on a tract of land known as Tomahawk. That tract is just south of the complex under discussion. The Lewis family had arrived in Delaware from Wales in 1740. The Lewis family holdings were limited to the family farm and a few small holdings until William Lewis (1800 - 1872) took over management of the family holdings.

William inherited the home farm upon his father's death in 1806. His father, Thomas, had died as the result of injuries that he had received in a log-rolling contest. He was bound out to a neighbor under whom he studied blacksmithing and carpentry. However, when he came of age, he took up farming. He increased the family holdings over time. The 1859 Byles Atlas of Kent County and the 1868 Beers Atlas of Delaware both show extensive holdings near the home farm. The principal crops were wheat and corn along with some dairy products.

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The farm eventually became the property of his son Garrett L. Lewis. William Lewis had 12 children and was married to Ann Allaband, whose family were local farmers and mill owners. The home farm, Tomahawk was sold by William's oldest son in 1882. This tenant farm was sold out of the family in 1899.

The conservative values of the Lewis family are evident in William's choice of the hall/parlor plan for the tenant house. The use of a stair hall was well fixed as the dominant dwelling type by the mid-nineteenth century. While in some instances, hall/parlor plan dwellings were erected for low-income housing, most of those were frame. This particular dwelling was erected in brick. Tax records indicate that the majority of domestic structure in central Delaware were frame. The fact that this is a brick building clearly indicates that it was not intended for use by common tenants. Since William Lewis had 12 children and this particular farm was given to his son. Garrett Lewis may have built it with the intention of providing family housing.