

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 30 1979
DATE ENTERED	28

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC "Achmester"

AND/OR COMMON  
Axmester

**2 LOCATION**

*N of Middletown on SR 429*

STREET & NUMBER

On Route 429, one mile east of Route 896

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Middletown *Me.*

\* VICINITY OF

One

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Delaware

10

New Castle

003

**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"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<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 Mr. Henry N. Vaughan

STREET & NUMBER  
20 West Chestnut Hill Avenue

CITY, TOWN  
Philadelphia,

VICINITY OF

STATE  
Pennsylvania

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Public Building

STREET & NUMBER  
Rodney Square

CITY, TOWN  
Wilmington

STATE  
Delaware

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Delaware Cultural Resource Survey

N-3930

DATE  
1978

\_\_ FEDERAL  STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS Hall of Records

CITY, TOWN  
Dover

STATE  
Delaware

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

Situated on the north side of County Road 429, approximately one mile east of its junction with Route 896, Achmester is in north central St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware. Large, prosperous farms with Greek Revival peach mansions and other early farm complexes dominate the landscape along this road running from Armstrong Crossroads to the former grain shipping town of Odessa, three miles east. Very little in the way of new building has occurred here in this century, leaving broad, unspoiled vistas of an area which has maintained its agricultural status to the present.

Achmester is a one-and-a-half story, single-pile, frame dwelling having a formally composed five-bay main block on a full basement of stone; a five-bay, gable end wing of uneven fenestration; and a rear service ell, also of 5-bays. The asphalt-shingled gable roof is pierced on the facade by gable-roofed dormers, and at the rear by shed-roofed dormers. Four interior end chimnies and one interior chimney are of stuccoed brick with corbelled caps. At the facade, simple box cornices and dormers have been decorated at a later date with Gothic Revival sawnwork trim, pendants, and vergeboards. A single-bay portico on the gable end wing has a flat roof with architrave cornice, supported by a pair of square, chamfered-edged posts. Its tracery-like sawn decorations applied to the corner brackets and cornice are repetitions of motifs found on the dormers. Concurrent with the addition of this trim was the vertical projection of the chimnies, accomplished through the use of paired terra cotta chimney pots, octagonal in shape with horizontal mouldings suggesting capitals. The house is sheathed with German siding and has plain cornerboards. Under the shed-roofed porch at the rear of the ell can be seen beaded weatherboard, indicating the later nature of the predominant German siding. Louvered shutters conceal four-over-four pane windows.

An oil painting of about 1850 shows "Achmester, seat of the late Richard Mansfield" in its original configuration with only minor changes apparent today: the weatherboard appears to be of the earlier type found under the rear porch; there were two pairs of windows at the gable end of the main block where now only the upper pair remain; the Gothic decorations had yet to be added; the roof had wood shingles; and there was a portico on the main block nearly identical to that surviving on the gable end wing. Mansfield's detailed account books indicate that the main section of the house - the main block and presumably the gable end wing - was constructed between June and August of 1829. The main or western block was afforded the most formal treatment of the three sections. Its highly symmetrical form is established by the even placement of a pair of windows on either side of the replacement Renaissance Revival center door, and emphasized vertically in the reduction of the number of bays and in the attenuated nature of the dormers framed by the interior end chimnies. The main block has greater height in its second floor; taller windows and the roofline rise about one-and-a-half feet above that of the other sections. Inside, the center hall has an open string stair with reeded balusters and a square newel post. A rear exit door is located directly opposite the main entrance. Throughout the hall and the room on either side is a simple beaded baseboard and evidence of a chair rail. An original chimney piece remains in the eastern room. In the Federal style, a tripartite blocked mantle shelf extends over a likewise blocked entablature above the fireplace architrave. In the western room, a Renaissance Revival black marble chimney piece replaces the earlier type described above. Its round arched opening is visually reinforced by two panels formed by bolection moulding echoing the overall configuration. A raised panel cartouche extends slightly at the top of the curve, implying support for the curvilinear

# 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1829

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Developed in the course of the nineteenth century as the Mansfield and Nowland family seat, Achmester is an unusually well documented example of New Castle County, Delaware, vernacular architecture and rural life. Through its original construction and later alterations Achmester maps the building patterns of both the extreme eastern reaches of the northern Chesapeake Bay country and the mid-nineteenth century rebuilding of the Delaware architectural landscape. Just as important is the plotting through account books and other primary sources of the life of Achmester's principal owner - General Richard Mansfield.

A meticulous record keeper and progressive farmer, Richard Mansfield resided at Achmester from his purchase of the property in 1819 until his death in 1846. Between 1826 and 1844 Mansfield maintained detailed accounts of his various enterprises, business dealings and agricultural activities including the names, activities and wages of all those involved in planting and harvesting the fruits of Achmester. Among the many references included in the eighteen years of continuous record keeping are descriptions of liming the clover and grain fields every spring with generous applications of plaster dust, the payment of husband and wife teams in the harvest season for the ancient practice of cradling and bundling the sheafs of grain, and the sending away of raw wool to William Garrett in northwestern New Castle County for the purpose of carding, spinning and weaving the wool into usable fabric.

Mansfield's will of 1841 and room by room inventory of 1846 reveal a man of considerable wealth and learning. The will makes specific mention of the division of his library, with his son James receiving a full run of the "Niles Register" and both of his children equally dividing the remainder of the library. Mansfield's estate inventory further lists a full array of domestic goods including carpets in nearly every room, case furniture, chairs and unusual items such as a buffalo robe found in the store room. Taken with Mansfield's accounts of farm expenses and a merchandising endeavors the records accumulated on his death reveal a man concerned in a very conscious way with the administration of his day to day existence. Richard Mansfield's concerns however, went beyond his immediate well being and public record describes his contribution to the community as a whole through his service as a commissioner of the Delaware Railroad in the 1830's, a founder of the Middletown Academy and an officer of the rank of Brigadier-General in the Delaware Militia. His life was simply the realization of a mid-nineteenth century ideal of the gentleman farmer - a man educated in both books and practical experience - with close ties to both community and home.

Though Achmester's plan suggests that it was built in several stages, physical examination has not suggested the sequence, if indeed this is the case. In June through August of 1829, though, a series of account book entires list first the completion of a cellar excavation, then the lining of the cellar with stone, and

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

J. Thomas Sharf History of Delaware

New Castle County Deeds, Wills Inventories; Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware

Mansfield Account books; Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

MIDDLETOWN QUADRANGLE LACKS U.T.M. TICKS (See Continuation Sheet)

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 210 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Middletown

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
E	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
G	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
F	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
H	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point where north edge of Road 429 right-of-way meets the railroad right-of-way then to the east about 4200 feet to the western edge of the right-of-way of Cedar Lane and

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Robert A. Warnock, Cultural Preservation Specialist, Div. of Historical & Cultural Affairs  
Jean Athan; Preservation Aide, City of Wilmington  
Bernard Herman, Lecturer, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware

ORGANIZATION Dept. of Planning & Development (Jean Athan)  
University of Del. (Bernard Herman)

STREET & NUMBER City of Wilmington (Jean Athan)

CITY OR TOWN Wilmington, Delaware (Athan)  
Newark, Delaware 19711 (Herman)

DATE April, 1979

TELEPHONE 571-4654  
738-8431

STATE

# 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 Daniel R. Griffith, Acting Director

DATE 10/22/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12-28-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER  
 ATTEST: William H. Bralman  
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 12-28-79

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Achmester

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

mantle shelf of the same material. Doors of six double-raised panels have simple architraves.

The gable end wing of five bays has an exterior door at the bay closest to the main block. Here a passage runs about one-third the length of this section, rather than extending back the width of the house. On the far side of this passage is a relatively small room having a late-Federal mantle of the same type as that of the main block. Two vertical-board closet doors one full size, the other tall and narrow, flank the chimney piece. The largest room of the house is the three-bay section of this wing, connected to the rear ell, and having a painted marble chimney piece like that at the opposite end of the house, a double closet with mid-nineteenth-century paneled doors, and access to the second floor via a winding stair. A simple Federal chair rail, baseboard, and the architraves are identical to those of the main block.

The rear ell has been much altered in its rear fenestration and floor plan with the introduction of modern plumbing and kitchen facilities. The five bays, two doors and central chimney visible from the east indicate its original hall-parlor plan. It is possible that this ell was the original 1819 home of Mansfield, becoming the service wing at the time of the 1829 additions. Exterior examination, however, does not support this idea in that the fenestration and other details would suggest a synchronous date for the entire home, or an extensive remodeling of 1829.

The second floor with its inward slanting ceilings is finished with plaster and lathe as found on the first floor. Six rooms are found there; the two larger rooms of the main block having fireplaces with simple architraves. Windows at the dormers are two-over-two pane Victorian examples and at the gable ends are original three-over-six pane windows. The main block section of the second floor has a large stair landing and doors, each with four raised panels.

The outbuildings of frame construction are a cow barn, shed, milk house, and granary. These are of vertical board siding with corrugated metal roofs. Associated with the granary is a large twentieth-century metal silo. A smokehouse of square dimension and log construction is sheathed with vertical board siding and has a cedar shake roof. A metal, wind-powered water pump is located at the far corner of plan of outbuildings which most closely resembles a court. Two modern intrusions are a trailer and a cement block garage.

Two hundred and ten acres of farmland remaining from the original Mansfield plantation are included in the nomination. This acreage contributes to the agricultural significance of Achmester as the economic mainstay of the Mansfield family and is additionally significant because of the detailed documentation concerning its husbandry in surviving Mansfield account books.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

INVENTORY OF OUTBUILDINGS OF ACHMESTER FARM

- N3930.1 - Log-built smoke house sheathed in board-and-batten; surmounted by A-shaped roof of cedar shingles
- N3930.2 - Intrusion: modern trailer
- N3930.3 - Wooden shed of vertical board siding; gable roof covered with corrugated metal
- N3930.4 - Modern intrusion: cement-block-built garage
- N3930.5 - Metal wind-powered water pump
- N3930.6 - Wooden cow barn; gable roof covered in corrugated metal
- N3930.7 - Wooden granary; gable roof covered in corrugated metal roof; original strap hinges
- N3930.8 - Wooden milk house with interior and exterior vertical wood siding

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Achmester

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

finally, the completion of the dwelling itself by carpenters Robert and John McFarlane and their assistant Willis after 102 days of labor on September 1, 1829. The section of the house alluded to in these entries is the main one-and-a-half story, center-passage plan block. Whatever the sequence of additions, the house had reached its present shape by 1846 as evidenced in Mansfield's inventory and documented in a painting of the house and grounds executed shortly after his death. In the years after Mansfield's death his descendents through his daughter's marriage to the Nowland family modified the dwelling only through the later nineteenth century addition of Italianate and Carpenter Gothic detailing.

In the growth of the house the two primary manifestations of the rebuilding of the rural architectural landscape of northern Delaware are fully documented. The rebuilding period ran from approximately 1829 and the opening of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal a few miles to the north and the advent of the peach culture by the Reybold family located just outside of Delaware City to the decline of the peach boom due to disease in the 1860's and 1870's. At its start Achmester, reflecting a visual tradition more commonly associated with the vernacular architecture of the Chesapeake Bay side of the peninsula, represented a new investment in the land as a substantial manor house conveying qualities of budding affluence and permanence. At the close of the rebuilding period when Achmester received its architecturally eclectic detailing the investment was confined to an updating of stylistic sensibilities through the application of fashionable trim. In both instances the pattern of development in Achmester is an intimate part of a larger pattern in the surrounding landscape and is mirrored in a number of other local structures and districts including the towns of Port Penn and Odessa and houses like Biddle's Corners, Monterey and the Commodore McDonough House.

In sum, Achmester is the vital material link to past states of mind and expressive cultural patterns which can only be partially explored through document sources. The house, now vacant, is the full expression of one man's practical learning, domestic concerns and agricultural success in an era and locality characterized by such achievements.

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

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Achmester

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

- 
- A. N 39°28'53" W 75°43'3"
  - B. N 39°29'15" W 75°42'57"
  - C. N 39°29'21" W 75°42'
  - D. N 39°28'57" W 75°41'56"
  - E. N 39°28'41" W 75°42'12"

FHR-8-300A  
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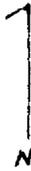
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION CONTINUED

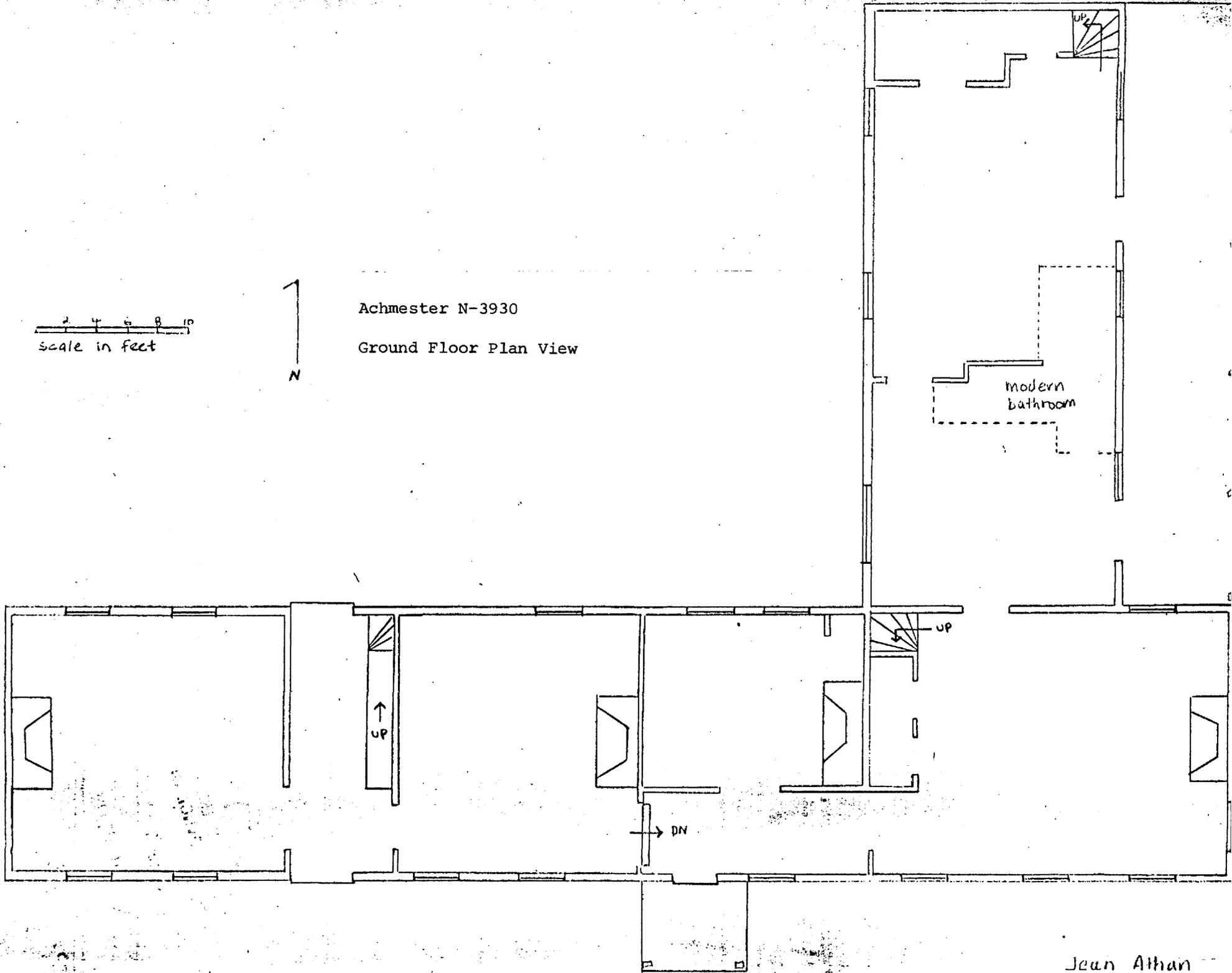
proceed along the hedgerow west about 1900 feet, then north about 1000 feet to meet a creek. Proceed westward along the creek for approximately 4000 feet to the east edge of the railroad right-of-way. Then proceed south along the railroad right-of-way about 2400 feet to the point of origin.

2 4 6 8 10  
scale in feet



Achmester N-3930

Ground Floor Plan View



Jean Athan  
4.1.78