

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

AUG 3 1987

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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.

1. Name of Property

historic name Messick, Dr. John W. House and Office  
other names/site number S-2813

2. Location

street & number 144 East Market Street  not for publication  
city, town Georgetown  vicinity  
state Delaware code DE county Sussex code 005 zip code 19947

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official John Ellem Date 6/4/1987  
Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

N/A  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Patrick Andrews 9/9/87  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

fa Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Health Care: medical business/office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce Trade: professional

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Gothic

Second Empire

Queen Anne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Asbestos

roof Asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Dr. John W. Messick house and office is a one-and-a-half story, mansard-roofed, victorian structure on the south side of Market Street. It is bounded on the west by North Lane, and on the east by South Railroad Avenue. The structure is three bays wide along Market Street with a fourth bay, set slightly back from the facade, in the form of a square turret on the side of the building nearest to North Lane. It is "L" shaped in plan with the turret attached at the base of the "L". A rear wing five bays deep extends back along the side of the property facing North Lane. Attached to the rear is a small, gable-roofed, one-story wing. At present the wood-frame building is sided with gray asbestos shingles which were applied at some point in the late 1950's or early 1960's. Prior to that time the original horizontal wood weatherboard siding was exposed. Similarly, the original wood shingle mansard roof is now covered with gray asphalt shingles. The main section of the structure dates from about 1875 with several later additions. Nearly all original exterior decorative trim remains.

The mansard roof has a molded box cornice and a panelled soffit which is set at an angle. The square turret has a wood-shingle hip roof with a sawn decorative finial at the peak. The molded box cornice and panelled soffit are continued here as well. A very early photograph of the house in the possession of Dr. Messick's granddaughter shows that this turret originally had a full mansard roof beneath the small hip roof, making it a full story taller than the rest of the structure. At some unknown time in the early 20th century the turret was lowered by the removal of this mansard section. Because of the survival of the finial, however, this alteration has not seriously detracted from the appearance of the building.

The three-bay and facade the accompanying turret present a balanced appearance to Market Street. Two entrance doors are located in the facade, one of which is in front of the turret. The door nearest South Railroad Avenue at the eastern end of the building gave access to Dr. Messick's dentist office and small laboratory, which was located in the east end of a the main core of the building. The door in the turret at the west end opened to a small alcove off the front parlor of the house. This room now serves as the law library for the legal aid society.

The windows on the first floor front are double-hung sash units with a single lite in the lower sash and sixteen lites in the upper sash. The first-floor

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1876 - 1918  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

C. 1876  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

Messick, Dr. John W.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

The Dr. John W. Messick House and Office is significant under Criterion "C" of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation in that it is one of the few remaining examples of the mansard style in the Town of Georgetown and it is the least altered 19th Century structure remaining in the town's business district, where it serves as an important element in the streetscape. Its significance is heightened by the fact that it is a rare surviving example in southern Delaware of a late 19th century building designed to serve the dual functions of professional office and family residence.

The structure dates from the late 1870's, shortly after Dr. Messick moved his family to Georgetown to begin his practice of dentistry there. It was built during a time when the town was experiencing its first real industrial growth and prosperity. The major catalyst in this change was the arrival of the Junction and Breakwater Railroad in the late 1860's. Very soon after that development came such new industries as the C.H. Treat Manufacturing Company, which brought many new workers into town with their families. Messick clearly chose an opportune moment to "hang out his shingle." The location of his home and office was also reflective of the importance of the railroad to the life of the community when it was built. It sits just at the point where the tracks crossed East Market Street, the main business street of the town, and just down the street from the railroad station. This made it convenient not only for Georgetown residents but also for persons coming to town on the daily trains from elsewhere up and down the line. At a time when many of the town's newly affluent businessmen were building their homes along the streets running parallel to the railroad tracks, Dr. Messick had a choice location. Yet even with the relative success of his dentistry practice he found it advantageous during the early years to have a sideline business. Early fire insurance maps indicate that he also operated answering machine business from the building into the mid-1890's, while also finding sewing room for a wife and three children.

Dr. Messick was a native of Sussex County for which Georgetown serves as the county seat, but he had not lived in Delaware for many years before returning

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

- Runk, J.M., ed. Biographical and Genealogical History of the State of Delaware.  
(Chambersburg, PA: J.M. Runk & Co., 1899)
- Wade, William J., Sixteen Miles from Anywhere - A History of Georgetown, DEL.  
(Georgetown, DE: The Countian Press, 1976)

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property .15

UTM References

A 

1	8	4	6	6	6	1	0	4	2	8	3	2	9	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated area is the lot on which the Dr. John W. Messick House and Office stands. It is an irregularly shaped parcel of 40.4 feet fronting on East Market Street by 117.6 feet along North Lane by 72.5 feet by 117.98 feet along South Railroad Avenue.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated acreage is that parcel of land that has historically been associated with the Dr. Messick House and Office.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Richard B. Carter, Preservation Planner

organization Sussex County Preservation Office date May 1986

street & number P. O. Box 589 telephone (302) 855-7771

city or town Georgetown state Delaware zip code 19947

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window in the side of the turret facing North Lane has double casement windows, each with sixteen panes. At the eastern end of the main core along South Railroad Avenue is a one-story bay window with a modified dormer above. The three double-hung windows in the bay window and the double window in the dormer are one-over-one units, but narrower than the conventional size. The double window is a modified lancet, as are most other original second-floor windows in the house. They are what might best be described as "clipped lancets" because the top is cut off, although the lancet design is carried out in the wood above the windows. The first floor windows have pedimented, molded drip caps. All original second-floor windows are in the form of modified dormers projecting from the sides of the mansard roofs. All dormer tops have applied wooden decoration. The decoration is continued in the molded over-door hoods over the two front doors. Each hood is braced with decorative knee braces. Beside a third door opening onto North Lane is another one-story bay window, this one rectangular in shape.

In its earliest form the house had a one-story open porch running along the east or Railroad Avenue side and a second one-story porch at the rear, connecting the house to a detached kitchen (a small rectangular, one-story, gable-roofed structure). At some point between 1897 and 1904 the rear porch was enclosed, thus connecting the kitchen to the structure of the house. At the same time a second story was added to the enclosed rear porch to provide for construction of a bathroom. These alterations may be dated with reasonable certainty as having occurred after 1902, since the town's municipal water system was installed that year.

The one-story porch on the east side of the house was also enclosed, probably in 1918 or very soon thereafter. While it was still open during Dr. Messick's lifetime, a fire insurance map dating from the early 1920's shows that the space had been enclosed and two bay windows had been added, thus bringing the house to its present appearance. The bay windows, which are harmonious with the style of the original structure, are positioned just behind the east end bay window in the original main core of the house in what was Dr. Messick's office.

None of the original outbuildings remain with the exception of the original detached kitchen structure (which has been attached to the house since before 1904). In addition to the kitchen there were originally a privy, a one-story shed and a stable. The house also had wooden picket fences along the South Railroad Avenue and North Lane sides. The one along the lane was replaced in the early 1900's with a low wall of rock-faced concrete blocks. This wall is still in place. The fence along Railroad Avenue is shown in a photograph of the house dating from the late 1950's or early 1960's, but it has been removed in recent years. The rear yard enclosed by the fences once contained a small "pound" or stable yard and a vegetable garden. Today it is used for parking by the Legal Aid Society.

The interior room arrangement is irregular but the original configuration of the rooms remains unaltered. Much original detailing remains as well. All doors and door trim, moldings, stair railings and baseboards are original as are most

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windows and wood-panelled window openings. Also remaining is the original raised wainscoat panelling in the dining room and the front parlor mantelpiece. The only modern alterations on the interior with the exception of electrical wiring and plumbing are the installation of sheets of panelling in two rooms and new suspended ceilings in several rooms. The original plaster walls and ceilings are visible elsewhere.

On the exterior, in additon to asbestos shingle siding and asphalt shingle roofs, a concrete handicapped access ramp has been constructed along the west side of the building. In all cases the alterations have been made without destroying the building's original fabric. Because of its relative lack of alterations and its distinctive styling, the Dr. Messick house and office continues to serve as an integral component in the stretscape of the East Market Street business district.

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there in 1876. He was born at Millsboro, a town ten miles south of Georgetown, in 1842. The son of a cabinetmaker, he had apprenticed under his father and worked at the trade until enlisting in the Union Army during the Civil War. Most of his wartime service was spent as a member of a regimental band. After the war he settled in Mechanicsburg, Pa., where he married a young lady he'd met there during the war. He supported his bride by working as a cabinetmaker, but as his family expanded with the birth of three children by the early 1870's, he felt a need for a more lucrative occupation. HE took up the study of dentistry in nearby Oxford, Pa., in 1874. Upon completion of his studies, apparently feeling that southern Delaware offered greater opportunities, he moved his family to Georgetown to set up a practice.

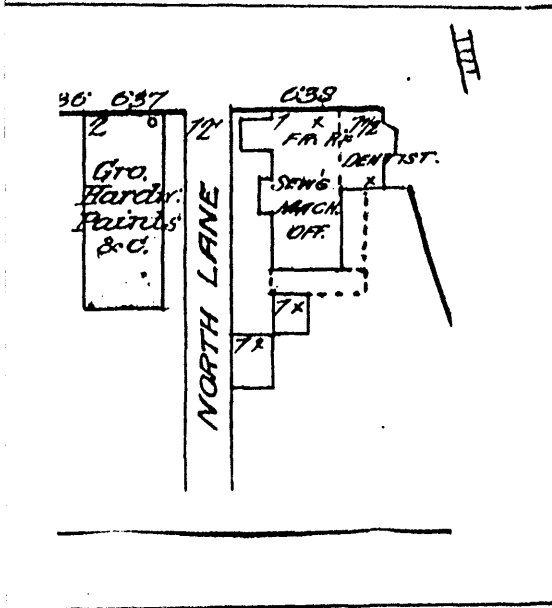
The building which served as his home and office was erected about 1876. Because of his skill as a woodworker it is at least arguable that he had a hand in building the house as well as designing it. It is known, for example, that when he was a senior warden of St. Paul's Episcopal Church during the 1890's, he personally oversaw the construction of its rectory. In any case, he occupied the building as office and residence during his entire career as a dentist, living there until a few months before his death in 1918.

Dr. Messick was prominent not only in the local Episcopal Church, but also in civic life. He served as a member and president of the Georgetown Town Commission from 1880 until 1883. He was also somewhat active in local politics.

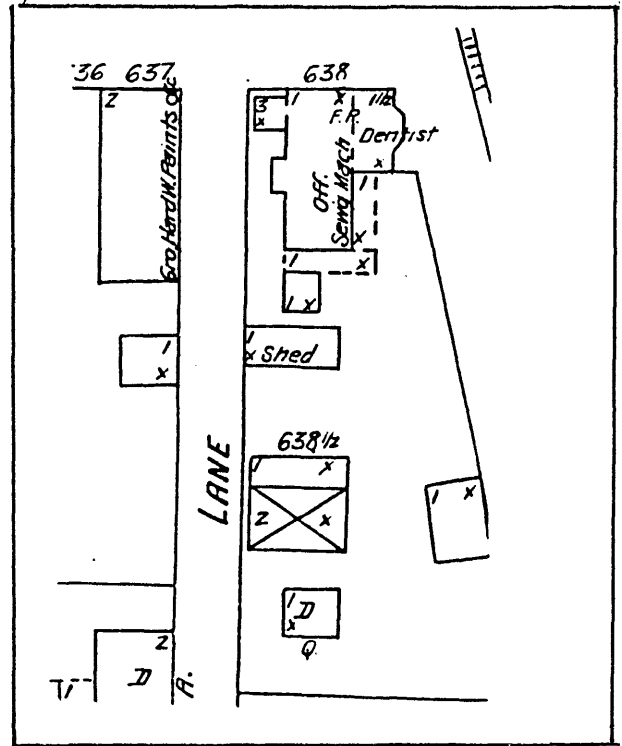
Following the deaths of Dr. Messick and his wife in 1918, the house and office was sold. Coincidentally, the building was occupied by a second dentist for much of the time between Dr. Messick's death and the late 1970's, when it was purchased by the Community Legal Aide Society for use as law offices.

CHANGING VIEWS OF THE DR. JOHN W. MESSICK  
HOUSE AND DENTIST OFFICE

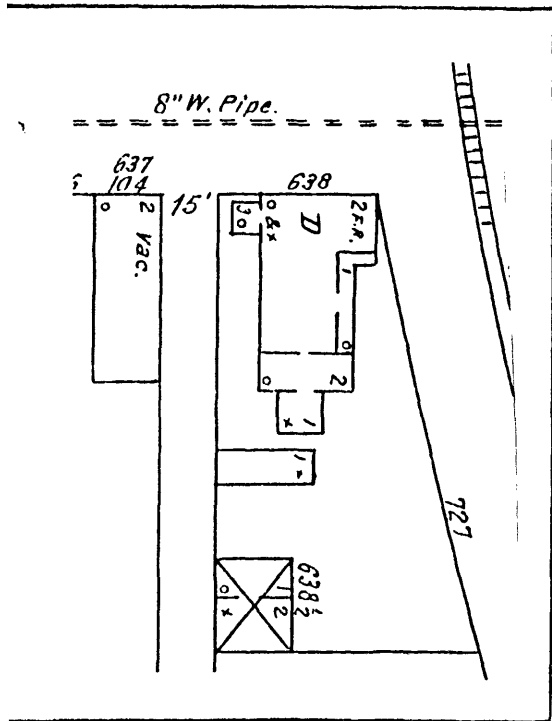
(From Sanborn Map Company Fire Insurance Maps of Georgetown, Delaware)



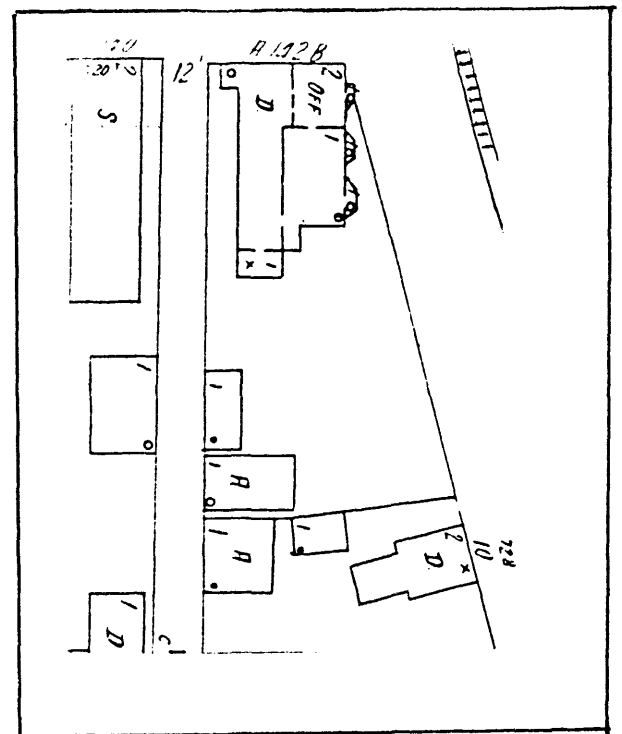
1885



1897



1904



1922



