

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Hill Island Farm

other name/site number: Noxontown Farm, CRS# N-5898

2. Location

street & number: 3379 Dupont Parkway (U.S. Route 13)

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Odessa, Appoquinimink Hundred

vicinity: X

state: DE county: New Castle

code: 003

zip code: 19709

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Dwellings of the Rural Elite in Central Delaware, 1770-1830 +/-

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification
=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Daniel R. Gifford _____
Signature of certifying official Date 7/24/92

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. X See continuation sheet.

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 9/11/92
_____ 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): _____

Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

Current : Domestic Sub: single dwelling

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification:

Early Republican/Federal

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation Brick and roof Asphalt
rubble stone other Wood
walls Brick

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

Hill Island Farm is located in Appoquinimink Hundred, New Castle County, about one mile south of Odessa and 500 yards west of Route 13 at 3379 Dupont Parkway. The farm contains a dwelling, a horse barn, a trailer, sheds, and a privy on 430 acres of cultivated farmland and marsh. The farm is bounded on the north by Appoquinimink Creek and Hill (also known as Hell) Island, from whence it received its name.

The dwelling is a two-and-a-half story, five-bay, gable-roofed brick building with interior brick chimneys at each gable end and gabled dormers. The house faces south toward the drive and away from the creek and is aligned with the Noxontown Road (County Road 38) to the south. A two-story, gable-roofed, frame wing abuts the north wall. Behind the house to the north stand a trailer, sheds, a horse barn, and a privy, all dating to the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and considered non-contributing structures within the historic context established by the nomination.

The house has overall dimensions of 48' x 18' and is laid out on a center-passage plan. Hill Island stands on a coursed rubble stone foundation over a dirt-floored full cellar. The house is covered with a composition shingle gable roof composed of butted and nailed common rafters. Although the original roof framing was destroyed by lightning in the mid-twentieth

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century, the current structure retains the same historic form. The south elevation, laid in flemish bond with thick joints and glazed headers, is accented with a two-course belt course that continues along the side or gable elevations. The house was built in three distinct periods. First constructed in the early eighteenth century as a two-story, five-bay, gabled-roofed building, Hill Island was laid out on an unusual hall-parlor plan. Scars in the brickwork reveal that the dwelling originally possessed a pent roof running along the front elevation below the belt course. The house originally had two brick chimneys, one in the western gable end and the other in the center. Each of the two rooms on the first floor, therefore, had its own fireplace in the west wall. The front entry opened to the common room on the east. The fireplace stood in the center of the west wall with a doorway on the left (south) opening into the parlor and a winder stair on the right (north) leading to the second floor and the cellar. In the east wall was a centrally placed window. The parlor had windows in both the north and south walls, with small windows in the cupboards on both sides of the fireplace in the west wall.

During a second major building episode in the late eighteenth century, the interior of the house was gutted and changed to a center-passage plan. The former front entry was changed to a window and the entry was relocated one bay to the west giving the house a symmetrical appearance. The parlor windows in the end wall were sealed and the interior paneled. In the common room, the chimney was torn down and a new one built against the opposite gable wall. In the center of the house, a stair-passage was introduced with a winder stair in the rear. The third construction phase occurred in the mid-nineteenth century when a two-story frame kitchen was added to the north wall, giving the house its present appearance. The third construction period removed fireplace trim from the ground floor, but otherwise left the brick house reflecting its late eighteenth-century appearance.

The current appearance of the house is as follows. The front or south door opens into an 8' x 15' passage with an opposing rear door. In the northeast corner is a closed-string winder stair with turned balusters. To the left (west) is a 18' x 15' parlor with fireplace centrally placed in the west wall. To the north of the fireplace is a cupboard and to the south are open shelves. To the right (east) is a 16' x 16' dining room with a sealed center fireplace and shelving on both sides.

The second floor is divided into two rooms and an entry.¹ The parlor chamber retains its original paneled end wall with center fireplace and built-in closets on both sides. The paneling is organized in a tripartite system with two symmetrical end units flanking the chimney breast. Each of the end sections consists of vertically paired panels beside a replacement batten closet door topped with a single raised panel. The chimney breast area is composed of three horizontally ranged panels over a single elongated horizontal panel located over the fireplace opening framed by a moulded surround. The whole composition is surmounted with a quirked ogee

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cornice. The dining room chamber also features a paneled end wall with a centrally placed fireplace with flanking closets. The paneling arrangement in the dining room chamber mirrors that found in the parlor chamber with two exceptions. First, a second pair of vertically arrayed panels occupies the position between the closet area and the chimney breast. Second, the closets retain their four panel doors hung on HL hinges. The winder stair continues up to a twentieth-century finished attic.

Contributing Building
dwelling

Noncontributing Buildings
sheds (2)
horse barn
privy

Footnotes

1. Entry is defined according to the Builder's Dictionary (1734) as "a Door, Gate, Passage, Etc. through which we arrive at any place."

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: _____

Applicable National Register Criteria: A and C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : _____

Areas of Significance: Architecture
Social History

Period(s) of Significance: c. 1790-1820

Significant Dates : _____

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

Hill Island Farm is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A because it represents the changes in the landscape due to the emergence of a new class of farmers in the federal period (1770-1830) and under Criterion C as a type or method of construction that represents the late Georgian/Federal vernacular styles popular among Delaware's rural elite during the 1770-1830 +/- period. The houses of the rural elite as a functional type relate to the following historic context in the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan: Upper Peninsula Zone; 1770-1830 +/-; agriculture, settlement patterns and demographic change, and architecture, engineering, and decorative arts.

Beginning in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, a self-described class of agriculturalists arose who were less actively engaged in the physical practice of farming and more heavily involved in the administration and management of agricultural estates. They purchased land in towns and in the countryside as investments, often renting out the land to tenants or transferring operations to individual farm managers. By 1850, the result was a dominant class of farmers who did not cultivate the soil but recorded and regulated the annual cycle of planting and harvest through ledgers and daybooks.

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Thomas Rothwell III, the person who remodeled Hill Island to its present appearance, belonged to the self-described class of gentleman farmers or agriculturalists. In 1797, he owned two brick dwellings on 709 acres valued at \$15,173, placing him in the top decile of taxpayers in Appoquinimink Hundred.¹

The house is perhaps the best indicator of Rothwell's economic and social position. Its 1725 square feet of floor space and two-story height make it one of the largest homes built in rural Delaware during the eighteenth century. The accomplished level of interior ornament in the form of paneled fireplace walls, turned baluster stair, and moulded trim effectively continued the exterior impression of the house. More significantly, the construction of a brick house with a stair-passage plan materially and symbolically linked Rothwell with the particular community of central Delaware's rural elite.

After the Revolution, the elite farmers of rural Delaware's Upper Peninsula Zone turned their attention from plowing the soil to building new houses and outbuildings. Significant portions of farm income were invested in these new buildings, establishing a pattern of architectural renewal that would peak during the mid-nineteenth century. As capital expenditures, the new houses increased the property value of the farms. But the expenditures on brick, plank, and paint were also a testimony of the owner's status, for they also symbolized economic and social success.

When Hill Island was remodeled, the majority of dwellings were of log or frame construction; a significantly lesser number were made of brick. The 1816 tax assessment for St. Georges Hundred reveals that only 5 percent of the taxable population owned brick houses. Ownership of brick houses was directly associated with wealth and prosperity. Of brick house owners, 90 percent possessed more than a hundred acres of land; 93 percent were among the richest 20 percent of the population.

The construction of stair-passage plan dwellings, which first appeared locally in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, had come into general acceptance among the most affluent members of the society. The presence of a substantial interior passage physically distanced rooms and functioned to control and direct movement through the house. Rooms were no longer separated just by walls, but also by space, reflecting the owner's ability to afford specialized rooms and the luxury of privacy.

Although the addition of a stair-passage did not expand domestic activity to more than one or two rooms, it did redefine the former

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common room or hall with a more specific use and furnishing scheme, such as a dining room. This form, however, remained the property of the wealthy and was not adopted by other income groups. Thomas Rothwell's choice of housing, therefore, was not dictated simply by the current architectural fashions, but by his desire to be recognized as a member of the elite of Delaware.

Upon Rothwell's death in c. 1820, the farm was bequeathed to his grandchildren with the stipulation that it be rented out until the youngest grandchild reached the age of majority. To ensure that his requests were followed, he appointed Nicholas Ridgeley, William Corbit, Samuel Thomas, Daniel Corbit, and Able Corbit as guardians and executors. His son-in-law, Edward Wilson, administered the estate. Wilson was also a landowner and farmer with extensive property holdings.² In 1816, he owned seven parcels of land valued at \$44,264, making him the wealthiest taxpayer in Appoquinimink Hundred.³ Included in his holdings was "Noxontown farm in tenure of John Eliason" consisting of "a good brick house, wooden barn, stables, and other outhouses" assessed at \$4200.

When Wilson died, the property remained under the stewardship of the New Castle County Orphans Court for about ten years. In one annual valuation, the farm was described as having

a brick dwelling and kitchen, fraim barn, log meathouse, corn crib and stable. A well of good water in the yard and a garden enclosed with pailing, an apple orchard supposed to contain one hundred and fifty trees all old and much on the decline. The house and kitchen is in want of sundry repairs, the other buildings are good...good fishing shore for shad and herring.⁴

In 1826, the Orphans Court divided the land among the heirs, giving Hill Island Farm to Lydia Wilson and her husband, John Whitby.⁵ The farm continued to be passed from one generation to the next, although the family name changed to Watkins in the late nineteenth century and to Smith in the twentieth century.

Hill Island Farm has integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association.

Attachment A contains relevant historic and present day maps: Rea & Price's 1849 Map of the State of Delaware, Beers' 1868 Map of the State of Delaware, Hopkins' 1881 Map of New Castle County, present-day highway maps for New Castle and Kent counties.

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Footnotes

1. NCTA, Appoquinimink Hundred, 1797. Statistical analysis conducted by the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware.
2. Scharf, 1888, 1017.
3. NCTA, Appoquinimink Hundred, 1816. Statistical analysis by the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware.
4. NCOC, Book L, Volume 1, p. 115 (1822).
5. NCOC, Division of Lands, Book A, p. 43 (1826).

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

N/A preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

N/A previously listed in the National Register

N/A previously determined eligible by the National Register

N/A designated a National Historic Landmark

N/A recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

N/A recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State historic preservation office

Other state agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreeage of Property: Approximatly 4 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>18</u>	<u>442560</u>	<u>4364950</u>	B	___	_____	_____
C	___	_____	_____	D	___	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See attached map.

The boundary for Hill Island is shown on the accomanying New Castle County tax parcel map (tax parcel 14.7.4) and is outlined in bold black lines.

The nominated property is a roughly rectangular 250 by 900 foot plot situated approximately 3750 feet northeast of County Road 38 approximately 0.7 miles northwest of its intersection U.S. Route 13 and contains

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the farmhouse, yard and overlook to the tributary of Appoquinimink Creek that have been associated historically with Hill Island. The rest of the farm is not included.

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Primary Sources

- KCCC. Kent County Court of Chancery, Dover, Delaware.
- KCOC. Kent County Orphans Court Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- K CPR. Kent County Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- KCRD. Kent County Recorder of Deeds, Dover, Delaware.
- KCTA. Kent County Tax Assessments, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- NCOC. New Castle County Orphans Court Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- NCPR. New Castle County Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- NCRD. New Castle County Recorder of Deeds, Wilmington, Delaware.
- NCRW. New Castle County Recorder of Wills, Wilmington, Delaware.
- NCTA. New Castle County Tax Assessments, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

Secondary Sources

- Black, Samuel Henry. 1820. "An Essay, On the Intrinsic Value of Arable Land; With some General Remarks on the Science of Agriculture." American Farmer 2: 9-51.
- Bordley, J. B. 1801. Essays and Notes on Husbandry and Rural Affairs. Philadelphia: Budd and Bartram for Thomas Dobson.
- Bushman, Claudia. 1982. "The Wilson Family in Delaware and Indiana." Delaware History 20: 28-9.
- Cunnington, C. Willett, and Cunnington, Phillis. 1964. Handbook of English Costume in the 18th Century. London: Faber and Faber.
- Delaware Register. 1838. "Rural Life." The Delaware Register and Farmers' Magazine (April) 1:3, p. 195-198.

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Ferguson, David. 1981. "Architectural Survey Site Designated Number 1 Stellar Farm near Taylor's Bridge." Unpublished paper.

Herman, Bernard L. 1987. Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware, 1700-1900. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.

Munroe, John. 1979. History of Delaware. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press.

Munroe, John. 1973. Louis McLane: Federalist and Jacksonian. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Pryor, Clifford. 1975. The Forest of Appoquinimink. Milford, DE: Shawnee Printing.

[Rush, Benjamin.] 1786. "An Account of the progress of Population, Agriculture, Manners, and Government in Pennsylvania, in a letter from a citizen of Pennsylvania, to his friend in England." Columbia Magazine 1:3, p. 117-122.

Scharf, Thomas J. 1888. History of Delaware, 1609-1888. Philadelphia: L. J. Richards & Company.

Spurrier, John. 1793. The Practical Farmer: Being A New and Compendious System of Husbandry, Adapted to the Different Soils and Climates of America. Wilmington, DE: Brynberg and Andrews.

Sweeney, John. 1959. Grandeur on the Appoquinimink: The House of William Corbit at Odessa, Delaware. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press.

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approximately 4 acres. Beginning at a point 100 feet west of the head of the present farm lane, proceed approximately 900 feet east to the edge of the tributary of the Appoquinimink Creek. Follow the tributary north for approximately 250 feet along the west shore before turning and proceeding approximately 900 feet west. The parcel boundary is completed by turning south and proceeding approximately 250 feet south to the starting point. The location of the property is UTM reference point 18 442560 4364950.

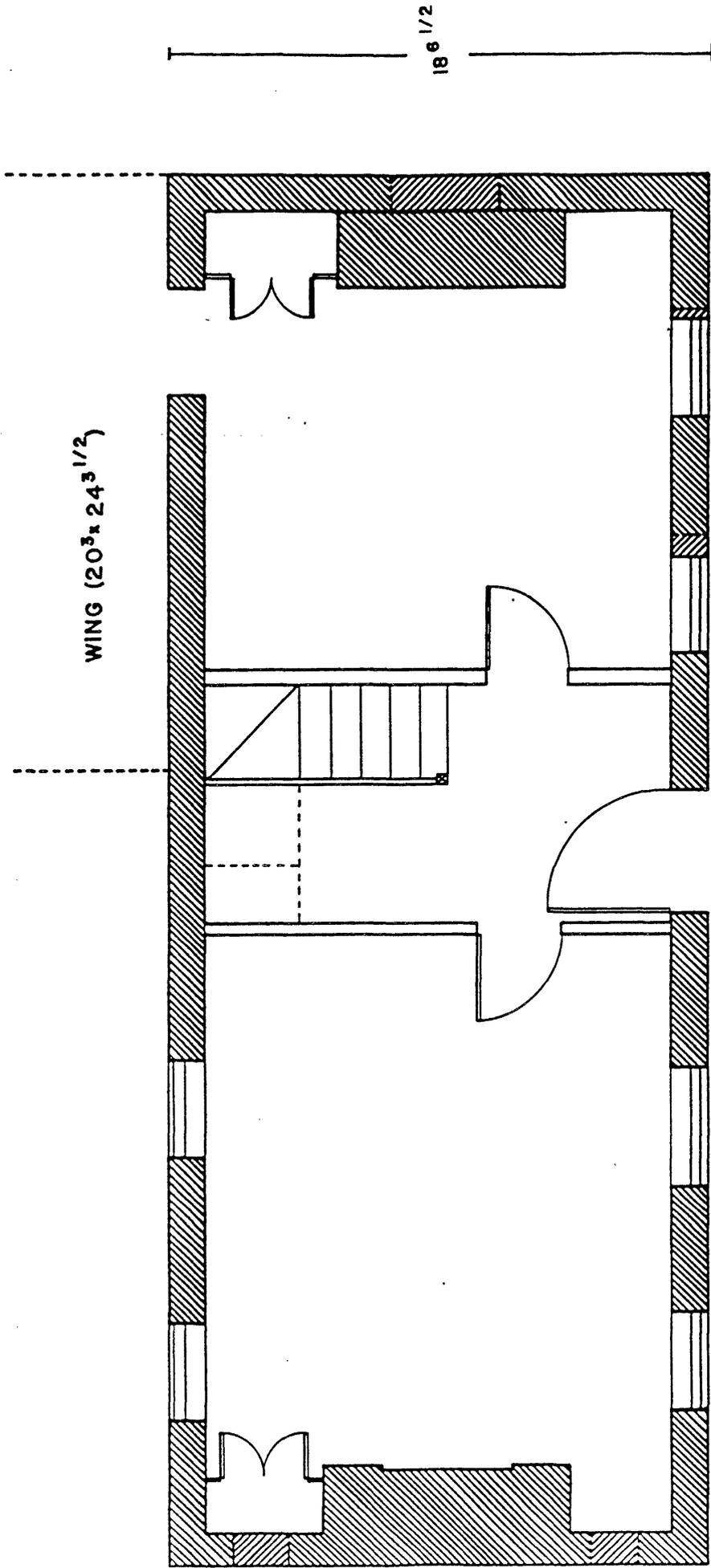
=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

Name/Title: Bernard L. Herman, Rebecca J. Siders and Max Van Balgooy

Organization: Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering

Street & Number: University of Delaware Telephone: (302) 451-8097

City or Town: Newark State: DE ZIP: 19716



47 1/2

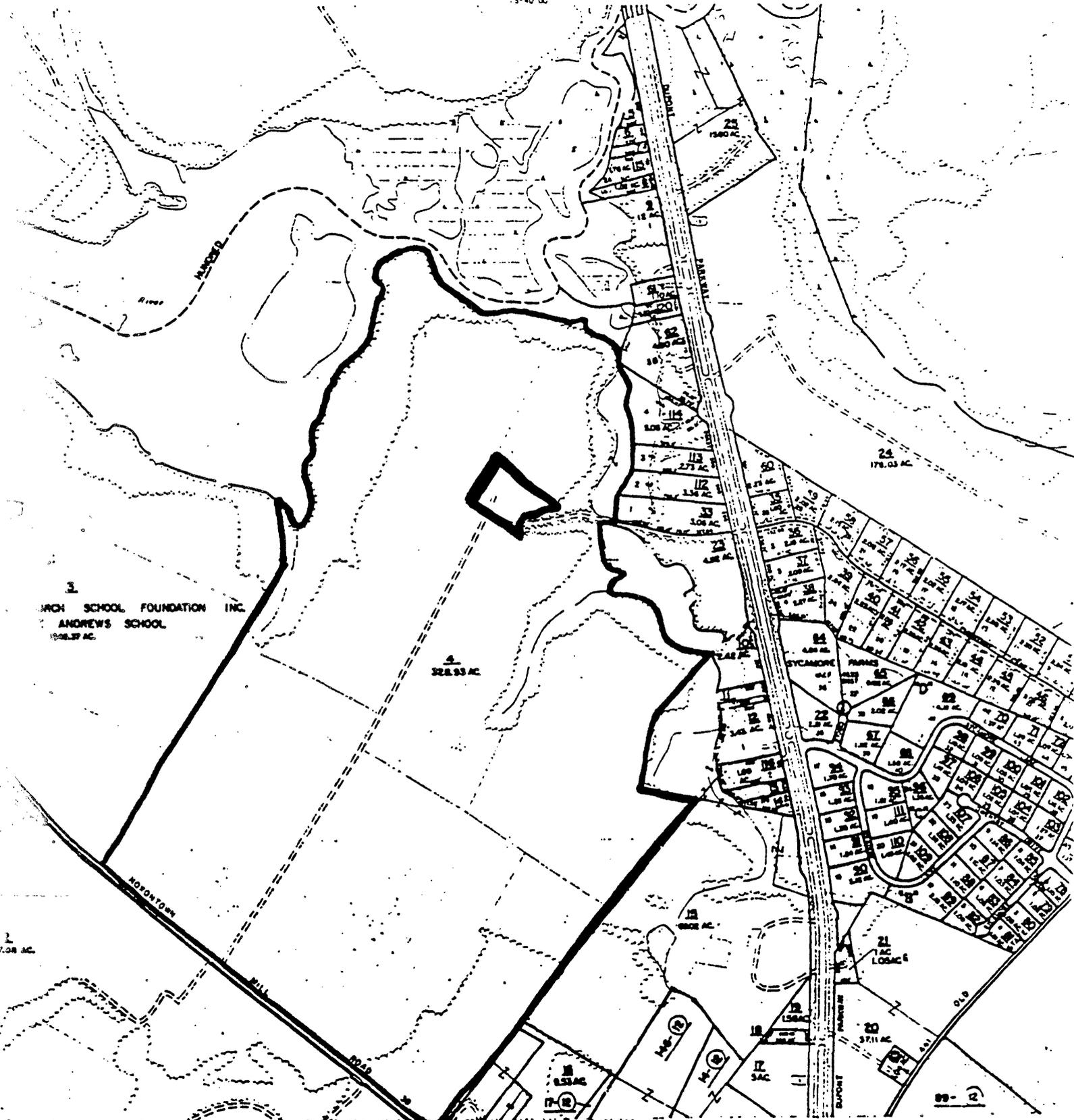
18 6 1/2

WING (20 3/4 x 24 3 1/2)

HILL ISLAND FARM (PERIOD II FLOOR PLAN, LATE 18TH CENTURY)
 ODESSA VICINITY, NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE



73°40' 00"



3
 ARCH SCHOOL FOUNDATION INC.
 ANDREWS SCHOOL
 100.37 AC

4
 328.33 AC

24
 178.03 AC

NOVOTOWN
 HILL

1
 17.08 AC

1 426 000

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LEGEND

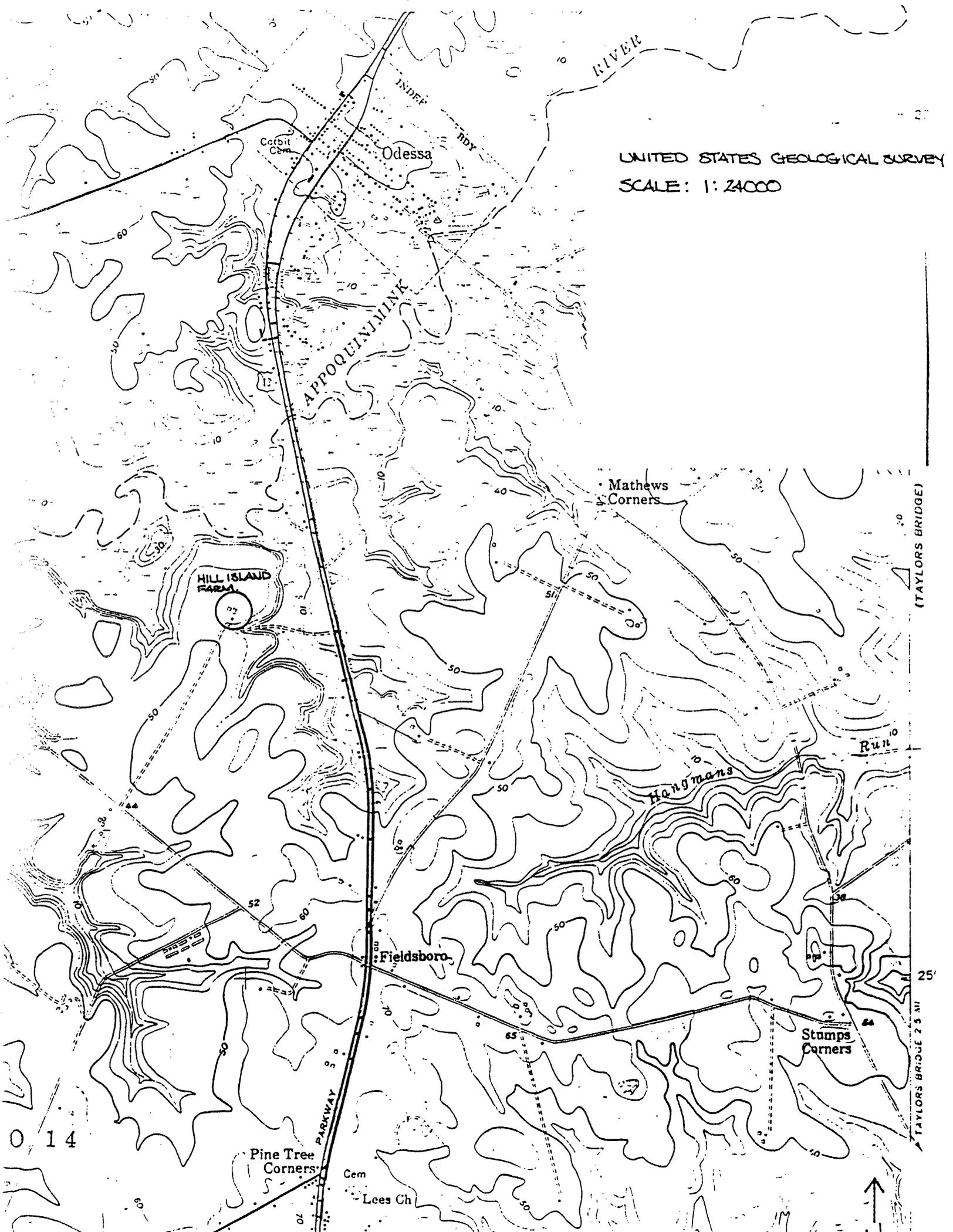
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REVISIONS	
1	APR 15, 1974
2	JULY 1, 1974
3	SEP 1, 1974
4	NOV 1, 1974
5	FEB 1, 1975
6	MAY 1, 1975

HILL ISLAND
 TAX PARCELS 14 7 4

UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
SCALE: 1:24000



(TAYLORS BRIDGE)

TAYLORS BRIDGE 2.5 MI



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Hill Island Farm, N-5898

In my opinion, the property meets/ does not meet
the National Register criteria.



Dennis Greenhouse
County Executive
New Castle County
Delaware



Date

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 92001139 Date Listed: 9-11-92

Hill Island Farm New Castle DE
Property Name: County: State:

Dwellings of the Rural Elite in Central Delaware MPS

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrews
Signature of the Keeper

9/16/92
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

The level of significance was clarified through a phone call to the Delaware SHPO. The property is locally significant. The nomination is officially amended to include this clarification.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**