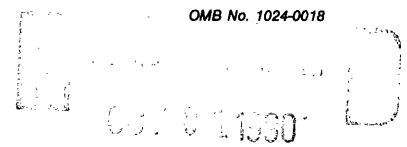


11694

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# 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 Phillips Potato House  
other names/site number CRS#-6786

### 2. Location

street & number RD 3, Box 358  not for publication  
city, town Laurel  vicinity  
state Delaware code De county Sussex code 005 zip code 19956

### 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>N/A</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>N/A</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Sweet Potato House of Sussex County, Delaware

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 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.

Dana R. [Signature] -SHPO 9/25/90  
Signature of certifying official Date  
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.

[Signature] IWA  
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.  
 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:)

Patrick Andrus 11/15/90  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/processing, storage

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/storage

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Other: Potato House

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brickwalls asbestos shingle w/ weatherboard in situ

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roof tin (wood shingles in situ)other brick (chimney), concrete (first floor)

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The Phillips Potato House is a two story, balloon frame structure built circa 1900 and measuring 24 feet by 29 feet. it is located .2 miles southwest of the junction of Roads 492 and 492A, and 1 mile south of Bethel lying on the west side of an unimproved dirt road which is located on the south side of Road 492. The potato house is part of a working farm complex which features a 1940s gambrel roof barn and early 1900s cartshed. The farm complex is not being considered for nomination. Outbuildings lie in close proximity to the potato house. Today the major crop of the farm is Indian corn sold largely for chicken feed to local granaries. The surrounding environment includes cultivated (Indian corn and soy bean) and uncultivated fields and scattered stands of trees. During the heyday of the sweet potato the Phillips Farm grew Indian corn and produce vegetables such as peas, tomatoes, and cucumbers. The sweet potato house functioned until the 1940s when black rot and intensive labor costs made sweet potato production unprofitable.

The building rests upon a concrete foundation. Exterior fabric is green asbestos shingles over original weatherboards. A modern tin roof covers the original wood shingles (in situ). Interior brick chimney remains in the south gable end of the building.

The present owner, Mr. Marshall Phillips, worked side by side with his father and grandfather in this potato house and remembers many of its functional details. He reports that the wood for the building was bought from a mill not far from the building site (mill no longer standing). He also reports that this potato house held up to 6,000 bushels of sweet potatoes which were stored in slightly elevated bins and heated with a coal stove.

The plan represents a less frequently encountered arrangement in surviving

**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)

Agriculture  
Architecture

Period of Significance

1900-1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

~~\*\*\*~~ unknown

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

The Phillips Potato House is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of an architectural reflection of a broad historical trend and as a significant architectural type. The potato house as a functional type relates to the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan's study III under the 1800-1940 period and is an example of that plan's property type 1B reflecting major economic and cultural trends relating to agriculture.

The broad historical pattern to which the potato house is directly linked is the modernization of agricultural practices in southern Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century including the emergence of truck farming, the growth of perishable produce crops, and the development of modern agricultural marketing. The growth of sweet potato cultivation in southern Delaware was one of the major manifestations of the changes in production practices and crop choice. The potato house is the remaining physical evidence of this important trend of Sussex County's agricultural history when the sweet potato was "king".

Sweet potato cultivation dominated the region particularly in the years between 1910-1940, and was one of the first crops to benefit from truck farming and modern agricultural marketing. The long (eight month) and multi-phased process of sweet potato production impacted the culture and economy of the rural community in Sussex County during the years of its prominence as one of the area's cash crops.

The potato house is significant as an architectural type. It was essential

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Delaware Agricultural Statistics, Historical Series 1866-1974, Bul. no. 419, Newark: University of Delaware, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1976.

Hancock, Harold B. The History of Sussex County, Sussex County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Herman, Bernard and Siders, Rebecca. The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, prepared for the Delaware State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 1987.

Oral History Interviews with retired sweet potato farmers of Sussex County, August 1986. Tapes with the Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering, University of Delaware.

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

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

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

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

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property .039 acres (796 square feet)

UTM References

A 

1	8
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4	4	6	2	9	2
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4	2	6	7	4	3	1
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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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 Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Tax Parcel Map #- 4-32-7, 10

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the site is a rectangle surrounding the potato house and extending ten feet from the roof line on all sides.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is justifiable because this nomination asks for the consideration of only the potato house. The property and additional structures associated with the site are not included in this nomination.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Judith Quinn  
 organization Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering date December 23, 1987  
 street & number Urban Affairs, University of Delaware telephone 302-451-2394  
 city or town Newark state Delaware zip code 19716

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1

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examples. Instead of the typical gable end entrance, loading access was provided by doors on east and west lateral sides of the building. Bins were placed back to back in the center of the floor. Bins facing west were loaded through the west door and bins facing east through the east door. A narrow (two foot) path encircled the bins providing limited access for tending purposes. Loading access for second floor bins was through a second floor door on the south gable end of the building. The arrangement of the second floor bins is unknown.

Tightly fitting window hatches, and triple sheathing, both in evidence today, insulated the potato house against winter cold and early spring warmth. First floor entrance doors exhibit exterior hinged doors and interior sliding doors. Doubled doors were an added insulating safeguard found in many houses.

The fenestration of the Phillips Potato House is uncharacteristic. Because of insulating concerns one generally finds minimal fenestration. Here, the gable ends contain the expected first, second, and attic story windows. In addition however, the lateral sides contain not only centrally placed entry doors but one large window flanking both sides of the entries. The total number of doors and windows is twelve. The symmetrical arrangement of doors and windows creates a striking "house-like" appearance. A similar number and arrangement of openings is found at the Chipman Potato House (CRS# 5873) Each opening is carefully covered with a tightly fitting door or hatch.

The Phillips Potato House is in excellent condition and is currently used for storage.

United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

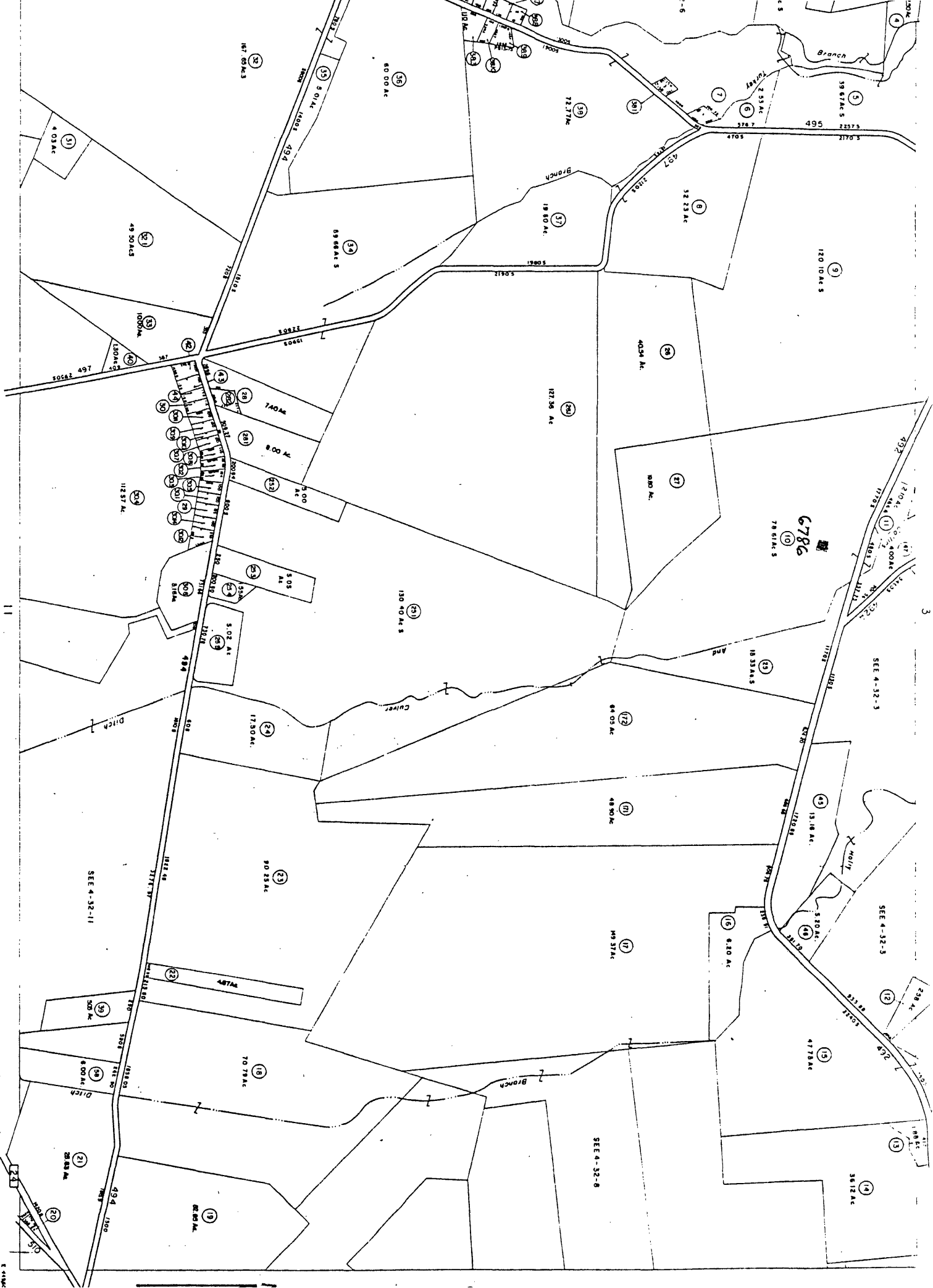
CRS#-6786

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to the process of sweet potato production in both curing and storage capacities and was developed as a distinct building type to provide the functional needs required for a successful, saleable sweet potato crop. Potato houses share common construction elements and are recognizable on the landscape as belonging to this specific property type. The Phillips Potato House is a significant example of the property type because it retains an important number of elements characteristic of potato house construction and function. These elements include; triple siding, interior chimney, tightly fitting window hatches, interior ventilation features, and doubled doors at primary entrances.

The Phillips Potato House stands as a wonderful reflection of agricultural and cultural trends in early twentieth century Little Creek Hundred. The building itself, and Mr. Phillips accompanying oral history provide a rare opportunity to understand first hand some of the changes, emphases, and practices of the sweet potato culture. It is one of the most complete examples of the property type surviving today. In addition, this potato house was a strictly commercial venture. Marshall Phillips recalls the close relationship between his father and J. A. Morgan the largest produce broker throughout the 1920s and 1930s. James Morgan dealt largely in sweet potatoes and the Phillips potato house was a large supplier for Morgan's market.

The Phillips Potato House has integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship and association.



Phillips Potato House  
CRS#-6786  
First Floor Plan

