

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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K-1323

Property Name: Thomas Davis House

Location and Verbal Boundary Description:

The Thomas Davis House is located on a 155-acre tract of land located on the southwest corner of Route 6 and Road 138. The house is located in the center of the farm. It and its associated farm complex are reached by a long lane that comes south from Route 6. Because the complex of buildings is in the very center of the farm, and because of the farmland's long association with the house, the entire farm tract is being nominated to the National Register. Tax Map No. 17-2-26; Deed Book I-36, p. 171.

Owner: William W. and Lina B. Hutchison

Box 222

Clayton, Delaware 19938

Description:

The Thomas Davis House, c. 1790, is one of the more academic Federal-style buildings in Kenton Hundred. A brick, 5-bay, 2-story, center-hall building, the attention to detail is much superior to most eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century buildings in the hundred. The bricks used are a very fine regular quality and are laid in Flemish bond with a five-course belt course. On the facade, the remaining walls are laid in common bond. The windows on the first floor are twelve-over-twelve. Those on the second floor are eight-over-twelve. The center door has six raised panels, a five-light transom and a molded marble sill. The Colonial-Revival entrance portico is an early-twentieth-century replacement for the original door hood. The house has gable end interior chimneys with brick arched supports in the full basement. The interior details are all mostly intact and date from the construction of the house. The chimney pieces on the first floor are Federal in style, with architectural surrounds and blocked mantle shelves. The stairhall has an open staircase with slender balusters. The chimney bricks in the second floor rooms are simpler versions of those on the first floor.

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The rear wing of the house was constructed around 1840. It is much influenced by the Greek Revival style then currently in fashion. It has a low gable roof with a corbelled brick cornice. The brickwork is all done in common bond. There is currently a low enclosed porch that runs the length of the west side of the rear wing and an open porch on the rear.

Historical Background:

Thomas Davis of St. George's Hundred bought this property in 1855 from the estate of Alexander Jones. Jones had received the land from the estate of his father, Abel Jones, in 1844. At this same time his brother James received the William Stevens farm (K-1366) adjacent to this tract. Land records do not indicate when Abel Jones acquired the land but a plot map for the William Stevens House tract indicates that Jones had the land then. Most likely, Abel Jones inherited the land from his father, or bought it through an unrecorded deed as there is no land transfer record for the property before 1844. This was not an unusual occurrence in Kent County.

When Abel Jones wrote his will in 1844, he divided his adjoining farms among his three sons: David, James, and Alexander. Alexander received the mansion house, now known as the T. Davis House. Alexander was to share the dwelling with his mother who was willed the use of the parlor and parlor chamber for as long as she lived. It was most likely as a result of this request, that Alexander added the rear wing to the house after he was given the land.

The farm was sold in 1855 at the death of Alexander to pay his debts. Thomas Davis bought the farm at a sheriff's sale. Davis lived at the time in St. George's Hundred, New Castle County. The farm remained in the Davis family until 1917, when it was sold to the Hutchison family, who now owns it.

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State of Significance:

The Thomas Davis House is a finely detailed example of a late-eighteenth-century Federal building. In basic plan and use of interior space, it is a typical Delaware farmhouse; but the attention paid to its construction details raises it far above the common example. The brickwork was laid with wide scored joints and the bricks themselves were made as regular as possible. The decorative details on the facade and the interior woodwork all combine in a compatible manner to convey the sense of formality associated with the Federal style. The house is also important in that it shows the evolution of the use and definition of interior space. When first erected, the function of each room was less formally designated. Each room served dual purposes which was most likely adequate until 1844 when Alexander Jones' mother was allotted half of the house. This division necessitated the incorporation of a rear wing into the household to contain service functions and to hold a dining room. It is interesting to note that the rear wing is off-set to the east and that its western edge does not impinge on the space defined by an imaginary extension of the stairhall. The Thomas Davis house is being nominated under Criterion C because of its architectural style as a complete statement of Federal building tradition.