

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received SEP 28 1984  
date entered NOV 7 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic

and/or common Little Creek Hundred Rural Historic District

2. Location

street & number ~~North and West of the Little River & Route 9~~ <sup>DE 9</sup> not for publication

city, town Little Creek  vicinity of

state Delaware code 10 county Kent code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple (see attached continuation sheet)

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kent County Register of Deeds

street & number Kent County Building

city, town Dover state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Cultural Resource Survey K-5686 has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1981  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

city, town Dover state Delaware

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Little Creek Hundred Rural Historic District is located in southern Little Creek Hundred with a small portion in East Dover Hundred, Kent County. It contains almost 2500 acres of agricultural land and farm complexes. The district is bisected by Delaware Route 9 and by Route 8. The Little River forms most of the southern and western boundary. Herring Branch flows along the northern boundary while the tidal marsh of the Delaware Bay in the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge forms the eastern boarder. The town of Little Creek is located at the southeast corner of the district but is not within the district.

The land has always been in agricultural use since the first English occupation in the seventeenth century. Prior to that the native Indian population used the area. One of the largest prehistoric village sites in Delaware, The Hughes-Willis site [NR. 1978] (.6) is located along the Little River between the Bellach farm (.7) and The Hanson Farm.(.5) The land is flat and very fertile. The district is one of the few locations in Kent County where Matapeake-Mattapex soils are found. In fact, it was discovered that the district boundary follows the soil type boundary after the district boundary had been laid out. Crops yields here are generally higher than elsewhere in the county. The highest elevation in the district is 25 feet above sea level. Most of the land is 10 to 15 feet above sea level.

The district consists of eleven distinct adjoining farm complexes, an octagonal school house and the Little Creek Quaker Meeting house and cemetery. All of the dwellings associated with the farms, the meeting house, the school, and many of the agricultural outbuildings were constructed before 1860. There are only five small houses, a grain elevator and a modern farm complex that do not contribute to the district. They occupy only a small portion of the district.

The primary building material used within the district is brick with eight of the major buildings being of that material. Of the remainder, three are frame and two are stone. The stone buildings constitute 2/3 of all the stone buildings in Kent County. The other stone building is the Stone Tavern in the town of Little Creek. The agricultural outbuildings are all of frame or log construction. The most common type being braced frame. A recent survey of orphans court records indicate that brick buildings made up about 5% of the building stock in Kent County before 1820. They were owned, for the most part, by the wealthiest families. Given the fact that in this district over 61% are brick, this district constitutes an abnormal concentration of houses for prosperous land owners than anywhere else in the county.

An important feature of the district is the landscape. Except for a few small stands of trees and the structures, the entire areas is cultivated. During the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries, almost all of the stands of trees were removed except for individual farm wood lots. The houses that survive were all standing by 1868 when the Beers Atlas of Delaware was published. That map shows a higher number of standing buildings than is presently extant. However,

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
..... prehistoric	..... archeology-prehistoric	..... community planning	..... landscape architecture	..... religion
..... 1400–1499	..... archeology-historic	..... conservation	..... law	..... science
..... 1500–1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	..... economics	..... literature	..... sculpture
..... 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	..... education	..... military	..... social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	..... art	..... engineering	..... music	..... humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	..... commerce	..... exploration/settlement	..... philosophy	..... theater
..... 1900–	..... communications	..... industry	..... politics/government	..... transportation
		..... invention		..... other (specify)

Specific dates N/A Builder/Architect N/A

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Little Creek Rural Historic District is an historically and architecturally significant area in that it preserves, almost intact, an example of the historic rural central Delaware landscape during the last half of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century. As such, it is eligible for listing under criterion A for its association with the historic occupation and development of the area and for its function as a model for the study of that process. The district is also eligible under criterion B for its association with a closely related set of families that were the first developers of this district and its principal owners during most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They also were a group of people who were active in political, religious, educational, and merchantile activities in central Delaware. The district is also eligible under criterion C as a result of the significant collection of buildings, both domestic and agricultural, that exist without major alteration since their last use as home farms for the families that built them.

The first European settlement in Little Creek Hundred began in the 1670's while Delaware was part of the lands of the Duke of York. Appropriately, the first land grant was titled "York" and was granted in 1676. York was originally given to a William Stevens of Maryland. He was not able to hold it for long and by the early eighteenth century, the land that made up York was primarily owned by the Emerson family. Just north of York is the tract that is known as Willingbrook. It also was granted in 1676, again by settlers from Maryland. The lower portion of this land soon came into the possession of the Cowgill family. South of York was the tract known as London. Like the other two tracts, it was first patented by Maryland settlers under the Duke of York. The last tract that makes up this historic district is called Exchange and it was not patented until the early eighteenth century.

The European occupants cleared the land and erected the first dwellings. They were most likely impermanent structures and no above ground trace remains. It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that permanent dwellings were constructed. These dwellings were all substantial brick buildings and are physical evidence of the quick rise to prosperity that the fertile soils provided. They were all built within about ten years of each other. They include the 1770 Hanson Farm (.5), the 1760 Bellach Farm (.7), the 1770 Macomb Farm (.8) and the 1770 Emerson Farm (.13). This was followed by a record round of development that occurred between 1780 and 1810. This was brought about by the need to provide farms for both male and female offspring and the realization that the original 800 to 1,000 acres land grants were no longer manageable and were in some respects unprofitable. Therefore, some of the land was sold. It was during this period that the remainder of the dwelling houses, except for the Parris House (.4) and the McColley House (.12) were built. The Quaker Meeting

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2500

Quadrangle name Little Creek

Quadrangle scale 1: 2400

UTM References See Continuation Sheet

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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## Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet 10/page2

## List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Stephen G. Del Sordo; Historian

organization Bureau of Archaeology & Historic Preservation date June 1, 1984

street & number Old State House, The Green telephone (302) 736-5685

city or town Dover state Delaware

# 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 John R. Kern

title Director, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs date September 24, 1984

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

<u>John A. Brown</u> Keeper of the National Register	Entered in the National Register	date <u>11-7-84</u>
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Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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LITTLE CREEK HUNDRED RURAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

James H. & Joann E. Opdyke  
RD 3 Box 333  
Dover, DE  
Cowgill Farm Complex

Dean E. Nelson, Chief  
Bureau of Museums  
Rose Cottage  
Dover, DE  
Octagonal School House

Charles S. & Irene M. Opdyke  
RD 3 Box 331  
Dover, DE  
McColley Farm Complex

Charles F.R. Mifflin  
101 Stuart Drive  
Dover, DE  
Dr. G. Emerson Farm Complex, "Rich Neck"

Rita & Mary E. Cartanza  
RD 3 Box 330  
Dover, DE  
Emerson Farm Complex

Cartanza Farms Limited Partnerships  
RD 3 Box 336  
Dover, DE  
Tax Parcels 59.1.38, 69.1.08, 69.1.03,  
69.1.04, 69.1.23 & 69.1.24

Cartanza Farms Limited Partnerships  
RD 3 Box 336  
Dover, DE  
T.W. Wilson Farm Complex, Cedar Tree Lane

The Honorable Crawford Carroll  
Mayor, City of Dover  
City Hall, Dover, DE  
Tax Parcel 69.1.08.01

Henry Beers Wilson, et. al.  
55 Rolling Road  
Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971  
York Seat, The Wilson Farm  
Complex, Little Creek  
Meeting House & Cemetery

John L. & Emma Tarburton  
P.O. Box 916  
Dover, DE  
Tax Parcel 69.1.02

William & Margaret Wilson  
RD 3 Box 344  
Dover, DE  
Macomb House

Carroll M. & Beatrice T. Stone  
RD 3 Box 339  
Dover, DE  
Tax Parcel 69.1.2

John F. & Mary Tarburton  
RD 3 Box 341  
Dover, DE  
Parris farm Complex

Josephine A. Martin  
RD 3 Box 342  
Dover, DE  
Tax Parcel 69.1.22

Christina M Rowehl,  
Bernard W. Rowehl, Jr.  
Diane Marie Miller  
RD 3 Box 356  
Dover, DE  
Hanson Farm Complex

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Little Creek Hundred

all of those buildings that are now gone were not the main houses but houses for tenants and farm managers. Therefore, what has survived over time is the main farm complexes of this rural area.

The farm complexes are arranged in a typical lower Delaware Valley fashion. The main house is always the first structure encountered as one approaches the farm from the road. Arranged behind the house are the agricultural support buildings. In this area, the farm buildings area arranged in a line or a "U" shaped formation with the larger barns in the center and the other buildings arranged to either side. Due to recent changes in crops, many of the out-buildings are no longer in use. Until the post World War II era, the main farming activities were grain crops and dairy farming. Since the 1950's, a major change has taken place with increasing change to potatoes and soy beans. Some dairy farming is still done. This area apparently never went through the Delaware mania for peach cultivation but remained with the more conservative traditional farming practices.

The housing stock primarily consists of traditional buildings that are not vernacular design but are not architect designed either. The earlier buildings such as the Hanson farm (c.1770) (.5) and the Macomb farm (c.1770) (.8) [NR.1974] both show the early preference to hall-parlor plan houses. However, a contemporary of these two, the Emerson House (.13) uses the center hall plan as its organizing principal. The Bellach farm (c.1760) (.7) is also constructed around a center passage but its facade is the gable end. This is similar to New Castle's 1730 Amstel House and Smyrna's 1750 Belmont Hall. Side-passage plan houses are also represented by the original portion of Willingbrook (c.1800) (.9) and by the stone addition to York Seat (1825) (.14).

The exterior decoration of these houses is, for the most part, plain. The Macomb house and the Emerson House both have glazed header diamonds on their gable ends. The brick work on the Emerson House is one of the better examples of Flemish bond glazed headers in the county. Several of the dwelling houses have belt courses and water tables as would be expected on eighteenth and early nineteenth century brick structures. Cornice decoration is also kept to a minimum. Simple box cornices predominate. York Seat (.14) has a corbelled brick cornice on the stone block. The McColley House (.12) has decorative sawn barge boards and the Parris House (.4) has Italianate roof brackets which is appropriate to the construction of that house about 1860. The Bellach Farm house (.7) also has simple box cornices but the form is redone to incorporate a pediment on the gable end which is the principal facade of this structure.

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.1(K-118)

Little Creek Friends Meeting House and Cemetery, (1802).  
This brick building replaced an earlier structure on this site. It is a 1½ story brick building with common bond brickwork on all four sides. It has a gable roof. The interior woodwork has been completely removed except for a stair and interior woodwork in the southwest corner. It originally was fully plastered, contained a gallery and had a movable partition in the center of the building which was typical of Quaker Meeting Houses. The building was last used as a meeting house in 1885. That year it was sold to the Mifflin family. It is now used for storage but plans are being formulated for the restoration of the building.

The cemetery is located across the lane from the meeting house. It is surrounded by a plastered brick wall with a single wrought iron gate. The earliest dated stone is from 1771. The marked graves include members of the Cowgill, Emerson, Wilson, Mifflin, and Hayes families. A small trust fund established by the Wilson family is used to maintain the grounds.

Those Quakers who had settled in this area had worshipped as part of the Duck Creek Meeting in Smyrna. In 1711, they were granted the privilege of holding their own meeting. It is not known when the first meeting house was built but Scharf's History of Delaware indicates that it might not have been until 1771 when land was set aside for that purpose. In 1783, Thomas Hanson gave 150E through his will to Samuel Hanson and Ezekiel Cowgill to build a meeting house. The meeting house was not constructed until 1802.

The cemetery and meeting house are contributing elements to the district.

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- .2 (K-1632) Thomas Mifflin Farm Complex (c. 1797). This is a 5 bay, 2 story, brick dwelling with a gable roof. The facade is laid in flemish bond with a 3 course belt course. The remaining walls are laid in 5 course common bond. A 2 story brick wing is located on the east gable end. While a full 2 stories in height, it is lower than the main block since the main block sits on a raised foundation. A one story woodshed is attached to the east end of the wing. The roof is a gable roof with corrugated tin as a covering. It has a plain box cornice with interior gable end chimneys on the brick wing. The chimneys on the main block are partially exterior end chimneys that rise to the bottom of the gable end and then narrow with two slight set-offs on the western chimney. The eastern chimney is partially obscured by the gable end wing.

The interior is arranged as a traditional center passage plan building. It retains a blend of c.1780 period woodwork, mostly crown molding and base boards, and c.1840 mantels and stair trim.

The outbuildings consist of a large frame and cement block barn c.1920 and a wood privy c.1840. A large frame barn was recently destroyed by previous tenants who used it for firewood.

The house was built in 1797 as a replacement for an earlier dwelling. The 1797 county tax assesment for that year notes that the "walls of a new house just up, rest of buildings very ordinary." It was erected by Jabez Jenkins who held it as a "Mansion farm and dwelling". It had been in his family since 1711 when his grandfather Jabex Jenkins had bought it from Richard Richardson, the first settler. At his death in 1815, it was sold to Sarah Turner and her son Johnathan Walker Mifflin. In 1872, it was sold out of the Mifflin family to Thomas W. Wilson. Wilson was a cousin of Thomas Mifflin, the previous owner. The Wilson family has owned the farm since that time. All of the standing structures are contributing elements of the district.



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.3 (K-120)

T.W. Wilson Farm Complex, "The Mifflin Farm" or Cedar Tree Lane Farm (c.1800). This dwelling house is very similar to the Mifflin House (.2) located to the north on the other side of the Dover-Little Creek Road. It is a 5 bay, 2 story, brick building with a gable roof. It has 2 interior gable end chimneys. The present gable wing on the west end replaces an original 2 story wing. The present wing is a 1½ story replacement that dates to about 1960. The facade of the core is laid in flemish bond with a 4 course belt course. The remaining walls are laid in 5 course common bond. The windows are replacements for the originals. However, they match the original configuration. The facade has a very elaborate federal entrance way and door surround. It consists of a recessed door, a four light transom, raised panel side paneling and doric pilasters.

The interior is arranged in a center hall passage plan. The interior woodwork, including the mantels, floors, and door surrounds is intact. During the 1960's renovation, a 3 bay porch on the facade was removed and a new step constructed to the front door.

The outbuildings consist of post 1950's pole barns and cement block sheds. There is also a small grain elevator on the farm near the pole barn.

This house is a replacement for an earlier structure that was a dwelling for Dr. Ezekiel Needham of Smyrna. It was constructed about 1800 either as a residence for Dr. Needham or for a farm manager. He had extensive land holdings in the Dover-Smyrna area. In addition to this farm, he also owned the Bellach Farm (.7). Upon his death in 1828, he willed the farm to his nephew Johnathan Walker Mifflin. By 1859 the farm was the property of Thomas Walker Wilson. Mifflin was Wilson's stepfather. In 1884, he willed the farm to his son Daniel Mifflin Wilson. Local tradition claims that this was a bribe to Daniel to improve his lifestyle. In his younger days, he had been a poor student at Swarthmore College. In 1880, he married Edith Hayes, his childhood sweetheart and a daughter of Manlove Hayes. After his marriage, he became active in Republican politics.

The house is a contributing element and the agricultural buildings are non-contributing elements of the historic district.

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.4 (K-2034)

George Parris Farm Complex (c.1860).

The Parris house is a three story, frame Italianate dwelling and it is the youngest historic building in the district. In plan, it is a 5 bay center hall passage building with a rear wing that gives the house an "L" shape. It is orientated to the south and the Dover-Little Creek Road. The main block has typical Renaissance-Revival features that include the classical porch with Ionic columns and elongated brackets at the roof. The roof is flat. The 6 over 6 windows have slight cornice window heads and the corner pilasters are plain and simply decorated. The rear wing is only two stories in height and contains service stairs and kitchen facilities.

As part of the original landscaping, a lane from the highway was laid out with flanking trees and other plantings. Some of the trees and plantings still survive.

The outbuildings are modern replacements for the original buildings. They consist of cinder block sheds and pole barns.

George Parris, who had this house built around 1860, was a Baptist and a relative newcomer to the Dover area. He had arrived in Dover from New Jersey in 1832. He was a merchant and land owner with extensive holdings in Dover, Leipsic, Little Creek and in Little Creek and Dover Hundred. His first purchase was Long Point Farm which was located on the south side of the Dover-Little Creek Road. As his wealth increased, he had this farm complex constructed around 1810. The Long Point Farm eventually became a tenant farm and was used as such until it was destroyed in the early 1960's.

The house is a contributing element while the outbuildings are non-contributing elements of the historic district.

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.5 (K-988)

Hanson Farm Complex (c.1770)

This house is a brick hall/parlor plan dwelling house. It is a two story building with a one story west gable end wing that was added about 1800. The facade of the building is laid in flemish bond and has a single course belt course. The other walls are laid in common. The four bay facade clearly indicates the hall/parlor arrangement of the interior. The second floor has three openings. The building has an interior gable end chimney on the east side and a partial exterior chimney on the west gable end.

The outbuildings consist of c.1930 cement block barns and sheds and a small, one story modern farm workers dwelling. There is also a number of small wooden sheds of late nineteenth or early twentieth century vintage.

Timothy Hanson began acquiring the land that constitutes this farm in 1715. He slowly accumulated this farm and several others before his death in 1754. His son, Timothy, inherited the farm and held it until his death in 1814. At his death in 1847, the land was sold to Jonathan Jenkins. He, in turn, left it to his daughter, Virginia E., wife of Dr. Henry Ridgely. Virginia lived a very long life and did not pass away until 1904. Her daughter held the property until her death in 1939 when the farm was sold out of the family. From the last Timothy Hanson's death in 1847 until the present Rowehl family purchased the farm in 1948, the farm and house was a tenant property.

The main house and farm buildings are all contributing elements while the modern tenant house is not.

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.6 (K-486)

The Hughes-Willis Site. This is a prehistoric archaeological site. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 21, 1978. The nomination states in part:

"The Hughes-Willis Site is one of the largest prehistoric village sites known in Delaware. The major occupation represented is the Late Woodland Slaughter Creek Phase of lower Delaware and the southern part of the Delmarva Peninsula. Artifacts of this culture are not commonly found as far north as the Hughes-Willis Site. The Middle Woodland Carey Phase of central Delaware is a minor component at this site, but this culture has not been well documented.

The fall to winter occupation attributed to the Late Woodland manifestation is of particular interest, because the previously excavated large sites had produced evidence of summer occupations, and seventeenth-century Dutch sources indicate a pattern of community dispersal during the fall and winter. The presence of shell in the one Middle Woodland feature and their absence from the Late Woodland features also indicates a change in the use of the site between about 200 A.D. and about 1500 A.D.

Of even greater importance is the degree of preservation of organic material in soil at the Hughes-Willis Site. The soil conditions at the site are unusual for the area and will enable archaeologists to solve problems regarding subsistence and community organization which cannot be addressed at other sites because of the lack of organic stain or organic refuse preservation.

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.7 (K-2036)

Bellach Farm (c.1760) This is a brick, 5 bay, 2 story brick building that is similiar to New Castle's 1730 Amstel House on that the facade is on the gable end. The building is oriented to the east. The facade is laid in flemish bond with a raised foundation and watertable. The use of the gable end for the facade allowed the builder to imitate a classical temples by giving the dwelling a full pediment on the facade. The present porch is a twentieth century addition and obscures the symmetrical arrangement of the facade. The cornice is a simple box cornice with no decoration. The rear 2 story wing is an original feature of the house and contains service facilities. While it also has a raised foundation, it is lower than the main block. A scar on the rear wall indicates that another rear wing paralleled the present wing. Access to it was from the original wing and not from the main block.

The interior of the house is unaccessable due to the owner's objection but it is laid out in a traditional central hall plan as is the Amstel House. The mantels and some woodwork remain in the house.

The outbuildings consist of two large early twentieth century cement block and frame barns and a series of smaller sheds and service buildings that date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This farm was originally the property of Timothy Hanson whose home farm, The Hanson Farm (.6), is located next to this property. They are separated by The Little Creek. At his death in 1754, he left this farm to his daughter Elizabeth who later married James Bellach, a local lawyer and a Kent County Judge. It remained in the Ballach family until 1807 when it was sold for \$9,290.25. The last Bellach owner, John, grandson of Timothy Hanson, was a Brandywine Hundred millowner at the time of sale. The purchaser was Dr. Ezekiel Needham who was acquiring land in the area. The land was next sold in 1842 by the heirs of Dr. Needham. At that time the sale price was \$7,120 and it was paid by Jacob Stout. Stout was a wealthy merchant and land owner in the Dover-Smyrna area. The farm remained a tenant property during the Stout ownership. The Stout family sold the farm to the parents of the present owner in 1941 for \$7,850. The sales and history of this farm reflect a pattern that was common throughout the nineteenth century in Delaware.

All of the buildings on this farm complex are contributing elements of the historic district.

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.8 (K-321)

Macomb Farm Complex (c.1770). The Macomb Farm was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on December 2, 1974.

The Macomb Farm House is a brick two-story structure with a facade laid in flemish bond with a glazed-header pattern. The house faces the west. The gable ends contain diapered brickwork, evident despite the stuccoing on the north end. The main facade, on the west, features a belt course and a watertable. The rear windows and the basement windows feature segmental arches, whereas the facade windows have wood lintels. Dormers have been added to the roof. A brick wing extends the house along its main axis to the southward.

The interior is laid out on a modified hall/parlor plan. It contains three rooms. The hall extends the depth of the northern portion of the house. The southern portion consists of two rooms. The front room retains its panelling as does the hall. The rear parlor has been converted into a stair hall and passage to the wing. As a result, much of the original panelling in this room has been removed. Both of these two smaller rooms have corner fireplaces which are intact.

There is a small frame shed to the rear of the house that functions as a garage. This house and four acres was separated from the original farm in 1971.

The first important owner of the Macomb farm complex was Judge Thomas Irons (1708 - 1784). He acquired it around 1768. He left it to his grandson, Thomas Irons Macomb.

Irons was judge of the Kent County Court of Common Pleas, and the father-in-law of Eleazer Macomb, one of the commissioners who built the State House in Dover. Eleazer Macomb held both military command and civil office during the Revolution and became State Auditor after the war; he was a banker and ship owner in Wilmington from 1792 until his death in 1798. His son, Thomas Irons Macomb, remained on the Little Creek Hundred farm until his death. His niece, the wife of Robert

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.8

Frame, inherited the property in 1836. During much of the nineteenth century, the house was occupied by tenants; in 1854, it was described as being in "tolerable repair".

By 1859, the farm was the property of Henry Stout, a son of Jacob Stout. It remained in the Stout family until 1940.

The house is the only contributing element to the historic district at this farm.

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.9 (K-165)

Willingbrook, Cowgill Corner Farm Complex (c.1800)  
This is a brick and frame structure orientated toward the east. The original portion of this house was the brick southern block. That portion was originally constructed around 1800. It was a side-hall passage dwelling with a flemish bond facade and a 3 course belt course. The other three sides are laid in 5 course common bond. It had a full basement and an interior gable end chimney. The frame section was added about 1850. While this addition provides the house with a 5 bay facade that would tend to indicate a center hall passage plan dwelling. The interior consisted of only 2 rooms with the stair being opposite the door but placed in the north room rather than enclosed in a separate space. The frame section also has a full basement and there is a connecting passage between the two basement sections. A frame rear wing was added at a later date. While the frame sections were originally covered with weather board, they are now covered with asbestos siding. The brick block is painted white. Much of the interior has been removed over the years, especially while this farm was a tenant farm. However, it still retains enough integrity to determine building sequence and to maintain the exterior impression.

This farm is the last remaining dairy farm in the area. The main dairy barn is a large 60' x 30' cinder block and frame barn copied from the Amish barns which have been built over the last 30 years by the local Amish population concentrated west of Dover. It is about 10 years old. There are also a number of small sheds and smaller dairy related structures. The most important out building is a log granary that was constructed about 1800. It is a massive structure that is 15' x 30' on a raised cinder block foundation. It presently has a gambrel roof. A fire in the late 1940's damaged the original roof and this was a replacement for the original. The present owners do not know the shape of the original roof. The granary is covered with german siding that appears to pre-date the fire. The logs are not laid up in a typical fashion, rather they are mortised into corner posts. All of the horizontal logs measure 5" x 11" while the corner posts are almost 12" square.

This farm and several others nearby were originally settled by the Cowgill family. They held it until the late nineteenth century when it was sold out of the family and used as



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a tenant farm. The Cowgill family remained somewhat apart from other families in the area and there were not many marriages between them and the Emersons, Hayes, Mifflins and Wilsons. They were members of the Quaker Meeting and some members of the family are buried there.

The house and granary are contributing elements while the modern barns are non-contributing elements of the historic district.

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.10 (K-114)

Octagonal Schoolhouse (1836). This building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 24, 1971.

This one story building is of undressed stone, stuccoed and whitewashed, with eight sides of equal dimension and a pyramidal shingled roof. Each of seven facets has a window, the eighth a door. Beneath the eaves is a stepped brick cornice, the building's one decorative detail. There is a relatively recent frame vestibule sheltering the entrance. Within is a single large room. In its earlier years it had two circles of desks, back to back, the outer one for the boys, the inner for the girls.

A small utility building is located near the school. It was constructed in the 1960's.

The school house was built as a result of the passage of 1st public School law in Delaware in 1829. About 1836, the residents of the area, under the direction of Manlove Hayes, Sr. constructed this building for use as a school for their children. Prior to this, the school age children in the vicinity had either gone to a subscription school or attended classes at the Quaker Meeting House. It was used as a school until 1931. From then until 1967, the school was used by the Cowgill Corner's Community Club. It was the scene of yearly picnics and other social affairs. In 1967, the school house was given to the State of Delaware as interest in the community club had declined.

The school house is a contributing element of the Historic District. The utility building is not.

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.11 (K-166)

"Rich Neck" (c.1820)

This farm complex consists of the main house, a frame barn, smoke house, dairy and a series of small sheds. All of the out-buildings date to the late nineteenth century.

The house is a frame, 5 bay, 2 story dwelling that was originally a 3 bay hall parlor plan house. The dwelling was enlarged in the mid-nineteenth century to a full 5 bays and redesigned to be a center hall plan house. The house faces west and the original block of the house includes the northern portion between the two chimney piles. The front wall of the original section contains brick nogging. It is possible that the other walls are also done in a similiar fashion but the present owners are not sure if this is the case. The interior is mainly intact and shows the effects of the mid-nineteenth century remodeling. The northern chimney pile has been rebuilt and the fireplaces closed up. The southern chimney stack is intact as are the mantels. Because of its original use as a hall/parlor plan house, the present center passage is very wide and contains a fireplace.

The exterior of the house is sided with asbestos shingle over the original weatherboard. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingle. The roof framing system was redone at the time of the mid-nineteenth century remodeling.

The tract of land on which this farm sits was part of the original Emerson lands acquired by Govey Emerson in the early eighteenth century. The property remained in the Emerson family until 1885 when it was sold to the then current tenant Joseph Seward. The last Gouverneur Emerson who died in 1873, was a physician, mostly living in Philadelphia, who used this farm as well as the adjoining farm (.12) as a tenant property and as a place with which to conduct experiments in agriculture which was of strong interest to him.

The house and all the outbuildings are contributing elements of the historic district.

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.12 (K-2086)

McColley Farm Complex (c.1840)

This farm complex is made up of the dwelling and arranged to the east of the house, the outbuildings. The outbuildings are all twentieth century structures with the oldest being a mid-century cement block and frame 2 story barn.

The dwelling house is a 4 bay, 2 story frame building that is laid out in a hall-parlor plan. This is a very late use of this plan. It faces the west. There is a full basement under the house and rear wing. The wing appears to have been built at the same time as the main house. It has a gable roof with interior gable end chimneys. The box cornice has partial returns. The gable ends have decorative sawn barge boards that might be a later nineteenth addition to the house. The front porch and the small bay are on the north wall.

While this farm was part of the original Emerson family grant, it was split off in the late eighteenth century and eventually sold to John Pleasenton of nearby Pleasenton Abbey. He willed it to his daughters Susan and Eliza in 1838. Susan married Hiram McColley and in 1845 Eliza sold her interest to Mr. McColley. The farm remained in the McColley family until 1984 when the present owners acquired it. For much of the late nineteenth century and until it was sold in 1944, the farm was a tenant property.

The house is a contributing element and the outbuildings are not contributing elements of the historic district.

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.13 (K-2087) Emerson Farm Complex (c.1760)

This farm complex was the home farm of the Emerson family and was passed down through the family until it was sold to the present owners in 1947. The complex consists of the main house and a tenant house and two one story cinder block farm buildings. All of these buildings except for the main house are recent replacements for the original buildings that had fallen into disrepair.

The main house is a 5 bay, 2 story brick dwelling that sits on a raised foundation. It is a well designed structure and one of the substantial dwellings in the area. The facade faces west. It is laid in flemish bond with bold glazed headers on the facade. It has a water table and a stepped belt course. The windows on the facade have stone lintels with a raised keystone. The other sides are laid in 5 course common bond. The north wall has a diamond done in glazed headers. The partial exterior chimney appears to be original. The south facade has a small niche at the second floor level that most likely contained a date stone.

In 1934, the building burned and the interior was lost. The owner at that time had the building saved and redid the interior. The present owners have extended the original 2 story wing to include a new kitchen and garage. They also added the Colonial-Revival porch to the front.

The main house is the only contributing element at this farm complex.

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.14 (K-148)

York Seat (c.1790)

This farm complex was the home farm of the Hayes family and had originally been part of the Emerson tract. It consists of the house, a log outbuilding, and a frame workshop. The outbuildings at one point were much more extensive, but they have been destroyed in the recent past to accomodate a large scale walking irrigation system.

The house is a frame and stone dwelling that was constructed at two separate times. The original portion is the frame southern block. It is a 3 bay, story and a half gambrel roofed dwelling. It is covered with what appears to be the original sawn weather-board secured with wright headed nails. The southern wing and rear enclosed porch are of undetermined age. This side of the house is occupied by tenants and has not been inspected by the owners or managers for sometime. From a close inspection of the exterior and an examination of documentatry evidence, it would appear to have been built in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Interior photographs taken in the early 1950's show federal period mantels and other wood work. Jonathan Emerson was given this portion of the Emerson family tract before he married in 1794. Emerson died in 1812 and his widow Ann Bell married Manlove Hayes, Sr. in 1814. In 1825, Hayes added the stone wing.

Except for the Stone Tavern and Octagonal School House, this is the only stone building in Kent County. The addition had a side hall passage plan. It was to be the principal portion of the dwelling and the stair hall, the principal entrance. This part of the dwelling has been empty for many years but it is intact. All of its original woodwork, including Greek-Revival mantels are still in place. There is a full basement under this block of the house but not under the frame block. The stone wing has an elaborate corbelled cornice of brick.

The log outbuilding might have been a stable. It is now used as a chicken coop. The frame workshop is used for storage. Both buildings date to the mid-nineteenth century.

Manlove Hayes, Sr. bought this farm from the Emerson estate and upon his death, willed it to his son, Manlove Hayes, Jr. Hayes lived here until 1863 when he moved to his new home, Greenwald, (K-126) in Dover. From then until the present, the farm has remained a tenant property owned by descendants of Manlove Hayes.

All of the buildings on this property are contributing elements of the historic district.

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The following structures do not contribute to the historic district:

- .15 Grain elevators- A series of tall metal elevators and related machinery.
- .16 Meeting House Road dwelling- Modern ranch house.
- .17 Meeting House Road dwelling- Modern ranch house.
- .18 Route 8 dwelling- Modern ranch house.
- .19 Log Point Road dwelling complex- modern ranch house and garage.
- .20 Route 9 migrant workers housing- modern cinder block, row of housing units.
- .21 Octagonal School House dwelling- modern tenant house, located in front of school house.
- .22 Cartanza Complex- modern complex, consisting of 2 dwelling houses, office, and warehouse for Cartanza farms.

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House (.1) was also built during this time. The Mifflin House (1797) (.2) does not exactly fall into this category. It was built by Jabez Jenkins as a new mansion house and not as the result of land division. Jenkins had held this land, a portion of York, since 1711.

Starting in the second decade of the nineteenth century, soil fertility levels dropped due to intensive farming and poor agricultural practices. The resultant drop in both farm value and profit as well as the death of some of the male heirs to the original families provided the opportunity for a number of large land holding merchants to purchase the farms and to enlarge their own holdings.

Dr. Ezekiel Needham of Smyrna and Henry Stout of Dover were the first two of several individuals who were purchasing large tracts of farm land and leasing them as tenant farms. Thomas Mifflin and Thomas Wilson, both related by marriage to the older families would also purchase land within the district. Perhaps the most stable piece of land was the central portion of York. It has remained in the control of descendants of the Emerson family since its original settlement. The western portion, known as York Seat (.14) became the property of the Hayes family as the result of the death of Jonathan Emerson and the remarriage of his widow to Manlove Hayes, Sr.

Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, an agricultural reform movement developed in Kent County. This was not an isolated occurrence but rather part of a similar pattern that occurred along the east coast of the United States. The reform movement encouraged the increased use of crop rotation methods, the use of fertilizer, the use of improved machinery, and the use of improved marketing of crops. Two of the leaders of this movement in Kent County were Manlove Hayes and Gouverneur Emerson who were half-brothers and owners of most of the York tract.

The interest in agricultural reform had the effect of reinforcing the use of traditional crops and the further division of the land into smaller units that could be handled by a single family. The use of intensive single family tenant farms caused a building boom within the district in that accommodations were built for each of these new farm families. The 1868 Beers Atlas of Delaware shows 30 dwellings within the district. These 30 dwellings were owned by 10 individuals.

The pattern of tenancy would last until about 1950. During the 1950's, farmers from New Jersey and Long Island came to central Delaware and purchased these and other farms. As they adopted modern farming and converted the fields to use for potato farming, they removed all of the mid-nineteenth century tenant houses and left standing all except one of the main farm complexes. Long Point farm on the south side of Dover-Little Creek Road near the Little River was taken down in the early 1960's in order to provide clear space for an irrigation system.



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During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, those who occupied the land within the historic district were active in a wide range of activities.

Judge James Bellach and Judge Thomas Irons were both lawyers and members of the Kent County judiciary during the late part of the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, large tracts within the district were owned by three different physicians. Gouverneur Emerson, Ezekiel Needham and Henry Ridgley. For these three men, the properties were investments and portions of larger holdings of land in the country. Even Dr. Emerson, who held his farms (.11 & .12) as birth rights, only maintained a temporary residence here. He was primarily a resident of Philadelphia. However he took a close interest in his lands here and controlled their use.

In 1850, he published his edition and revision of Englishman C.W. Johnson's Farmers Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Rural Affairs. In his introduction, he tells the reader that he has adapted the book to an American audience and then goes on to give his views on the poor state of American agriculture and the benefits that are to be gained from scientific agriculture. After this book was published he made a series of speeches to the Kent County Agricultural Society and to other groups such as the Delaware Horticultural Society. In 1862, he wrote a paper on cotton growing in the middle states. In 1857, he edited the Practical Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Gardener's companion with a calender. This had originally been published in England and was authored by Patrick Neill. He also translated into English F. LePlay's the Organization of labor in Accordance with Custom and the Law of Decalogue. This was in 1870. Emerson is listed on the cover as a member of the American Philosophical Society.

His half-brother, Manlove Hayes, credits Dr. Emerson with introducing the use of fertilizers, especially guano, into Delaware and with the subsequent rise in productivity and in farm prices. In his early years, he studied as a physician and in 1819 he traveled as a surgeon on board a merchantman to the mediterranean and to China. When he returned he settled in Philadelphia and took up his medical practice. In 1832, he was awarded a silver pitcher in appreciation from the city of Philadelphia for his work in halting an epidemic of Asiatic Cholera.

Manlove Hayes, grew up in York Seat (.14) and made it his home until 1863. He seems to have been struck with the same wonder-lust as his half-brother. Before his death in 1910 he published his "Reminiscences." He studied at the Newark Academy and in 1833 while a student he helped lay the first brick at the 1st college building at what was to be the University of Delaware, Old College (N-1484). In 1834 he became a student at the college. In 1836 he left the college to become a member of an engineering team laying out a railroad from Knoxville, Tennessee to the Georgia State line. He remained at this task until 1840 when he returned home. He had been home for the first time in 1839. At that time he recorded that:

"The times were hard upon farmers, the price of grain was low and crops were short, as the fertility of the fields could not be kept up with the limited quantity of manure made in the cattle pounds, and no other means were adopted for fertilization.

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Guano had not been introduced and phosphates and other fertilizers were unknown. Lime was used, but the majority of landowners were not able to buy it and many had no faith in its fertilizing qualities. In 1839 the depression in business was general and this condition was spreading throughout the country; many banks had suspended or threatened suspension of specie payment; the outlook was anything but favorable."

For the first few years after his return in 1840 he was not engaged in any particular business. He assisted with the family farms and participated in some of Dr. Emerson's agricultural experiments such as the use of fertilizers. In 1847, he organized the Dona Steamboat and Transportation Company which was to reopen the old landing at Dona east of Cowgill Corner. He built a wharf and a hotel. Kent County built a road to the site. A steamboat made three trips a week to Philadelphia. The landing was a great success as it provided convenient access to Dover and was much in demand by local farmers.

At the same time he became active in the organization of both the Kent County and State agricultural societies. In 1849, his father died and he inherited the main farm (His brother Charles was given the farm at Little Creek landing that has the Stone Tavern as its main house).

Hayes' next major project was to assist in the organization of the Delaware Railroad. In 1852 he was a member of the State legislature and participated in the plans for the formation of the line. In 1865, he was elected a director of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad Company. In 1869, he became Secretary and Treasurer of the company. He held these posts until he died in 1910. When that line was bought out by the Pennsylvania Railroad, he became active in its affairs but not as director.

An other active interest of his was the establishment and maintenance of libraries. He is recorded as being active in Dover's Library. He was also a trustee of Delaware college.

The architecture found within the district was constructed during a one hundred years span from 1760 till 1860. This was the period of greatest significance to the district in that this marks the time when the farmers in the area were far enough removed from initial settlement to begin to build substantial homes and goes to the end of the initial building period and the end of owner occupation of the major farms.

The buildings that the occupants in the district erected are all very traditional in design. Within that tradition there is a wide variety of choices in terms of form. Consequently hall-parlor, side hall passage and center hall passage plans exist side by side. In fact, the hall parlor plan was employed to erect the McColley House (.12) around 1840. This plan is usually associated with the eighteenth century. This evidence of the conservative nature of architecture choice is reinforced in the Wilson House (.3) as well.

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Constructed c1820, it still retains many earlier features such as the use of a belt course and flemish bond brick work on the facade. Only its Greek-Revival influenced entrance indicates any concern for architectural style and fashion.

Two structures that were very much designed with fashion in mind are the Macomb House (.8) and the Emerson House (.13). Both have flemish bond facades as were typical for the time. Both also are examples of the fashion of using glazed headers to create a decorative impression. The Macomb House decorations consist of a diamond on each gable end. At the Emerson House, the diamond is used on the north gable end but the facade uses glazed headers as part of the flemish bond brickwork. The effect when the sun shines on it is very impressive and dramatic. While these decorative features were once common, the survival rate is not high and buildings with patterned brick work are no longer common in Delaware.

Two other rare buildings for Kent County are the two stone structures, Octagonal School House (.10) and York Seat (.14). The York Seat stone addition was done in 1825 by Manlove Hayes, Sr. Octagonal School House was built in 1836 also under the direction of Manlove Hayes, Sr. The third stone building in the country Stone Tavern (K-130) in Little Creek appears to have been built in the 1820's by Manlove Hayes, Sr. and his father-in-law John Bell. There is no record as to why stone was used in the construction of these buildings or from where the stone was coming from. Local legend has always stated that barges of stone were diverted from the Lewes Harbor of Refuge Project that was being built at the same time. While their fabric is unique to the country, the form of these buildings is not unique. They were erected using traditional plans.

The one building that is radically different from the rest of the dwelling houses is the Parris House (.4). It was constructed about 1860 by a relative new comer to Dover, George Parris. Parris arrived in the Dover area in 1832. He was originally from New Jersey and Scharf's History of Delaware notes that his was the second Baptist family around Dover. He was a merchant with extensive farm holdings and grain shipping interests in Leipsic and Smyrna. His house is based on traditional forms in that it is a center passage plan house. However, it is built in the Romantic Revival fashion of the time and employs elements of Greek Revival and Italianate architecture. Its stylistic elements were most likely similar to many of the tenant houses erected at this time but its scale was most likely larger. The Parris House is actually more closely related to dwellings in Dover than to dwellings in the rural countryside east of Dover.

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- B. 18 460620 4338140
- C. 18 460540 4338000
- D. 18 460800 4337260
- E. 18 460426 4336980
- F. 18 461040 4335800
- G. 18 461250 4334790
- H. 18 460410 4334540
- I. 18 458720 4335140
- J. 18 457510 4335070
- K. 18 457580 4336200
- L. 18 456770 4336590
- M. 18 456420 4337230
- N. 18 456710 4337800
- O. 18 456190 4337880
- P. 18 456570 4338500
- Q. 18 459190 4338280

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BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This historic district was created to identify and protect a unique cultural landscape. The eleven farm complexes as well as the meeting house and school present a clear view into the early nineteenth century that reveals much about the nature of land settlement patterns and farm layout in central Delaware. The boundaries were drawn to take advantage of natural barriers and also follow historic land division lines. The area outside of the district, while still mostly farm land, contains too many intrusions to be included as part of the district.

The boundary is described on the attached USGS map. The district begins at the intersection of Route 9 and Road 66. It proceeds along the west side of Route 9 to the center of Herring Branch. It then goes east along Herring Branch to point A marked on the USGS map and which is along a line that is the east boundary of Kent County parcel 39.1.21. Then along that line to a southerly unnamed branch of Herring Branch. Then west along this water course to the west side of Route 9. Then south along Route 9 to the beginning of the curve onto Route 8 west. Then west along Route 8 to a point opposite the furthest point west of the town of Little Creek and to stop its southerly direction at a point that is labeled point G and is close to the furthest point west of the town of Little Creek. Then west to point 4 on the map along the Little River. Then west and north up the middle course of the Little River till it intersects with the north side of Route 8. Then west along Route 8 to a point labelled J that is about 400 feet west of the driveway to the Hanson Agricultural Complex (.5). Then in a perpendicular direction north to the Little River. Then in a north north east direction to the west side of the long Point Road and a point labelled L. Then north along this road to the north branch of Herring Branch. Then along the several courses of Herring Branch to Road 66. The north east along the south side of Road 66 to the place of beginning.