

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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12. (N-5319):

A. Property Name: Granite Mansion

B. Location & Verbal Boundary Description: The Granite Mansion is located at 292 West Main Street on the north side of the road, approximately half a mile west of New London Road. The property being nominated includes the mansion, two outbuildings, the property being nominated includes the mansion and two outbuildings located in the southwest corner of the lot. The nominated acreage is a square 250 feet along West Main Street and 331.25 feet back from West Main Street and contains approximately 1.9 acres. The parcel of land on which this nominated area is situated totals 13.9 acres (property tax map, City of Newark, Map No. 13, Lot No. 66).

C. Owner: First Presbyterian Church, 292 W. Main Street, Newark, DE 19711

D. Property Description:

The Granite Mansion was constructed in 1844 as a cubic form, Greek Revival dwelling; however, exterior renovations dating to 1924 have given the building a Neo-Classical appearance. The general form of the building is a three-story, three-bay cube with a flat roofline and a rear kitchen wing. The main (south) entrance is sheltered by a classical portico with a bull's eye motif on its reeded frieze, and Doric column supports. A spiderweb fanlight tops the six-panel door. The first and second floor windows are six-over-six sash. Their shutters have been removed but the shutter tiebacks, formed in the shape of grape clusters, are still attached to the walls. Casement windows light the third floor.

The 1924, renovations included the addition of a two-tiered Corinthian porch on the east elevation, a Doric Porte-Cochere on the west elevation, French doors on the first floor side elevations, and modillion cornices. It is not known when the building was first stuccoed. A view of the stone walls from the interior, where some repairs are being made, revealed a roughly-cut, dark-grey granite.

The interior, which is arranged on a double-pile, center-hall-plan, features some very fine woodwork. The first floor is the most ornate, possessing enriched cyma recta crown moldings, egg and dart chair rails, splayed and paneled window cases, and deeply-carved rosette cornerblocks on the door and window surrounds. The plaster walls have a paneled effect owing to the rectangular frames of bead and reel, and egg-and-dart moldings that fill the area above the chair rails. The crown moldings, chair rails and wall panels appear to be part of the 1924 renovation. The fireplace in the front right room is framed by reeded pilasters and a reeded lintel with a bas-relief panel depicting four Greek maidens clothed in drapery. The staircase at the rear of the hall, which rises in six straight runs up to the third floor, is appointed with a curving handrail, slender turned balusters spaced three per tread, and scrollwork on the step ends.

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The woodwork on the second floor consists primarily of the rosette corner blocks found on the first floor. The third floor is very plain. Aside from the added sets of glazed French doors on the first floor, the interior doors throughout the house have two molded vertical panels.

The basement has rubble stone foundation walls and stone partition walls that echo the center-hall-plan above. The doorways in the partitions are brick-lined, round-arched openings.

To the rear of the house is a small stuccoed, gable-roofed outbuilding thought to be a springhouse. Its decorative features include a molded box cornice with partial returns and lancet windows with label moldings on the side elevations. Below the building is a cold storage area.

Northwest of the springhouse is a one-and-a-half-story frame and stucco building with fluted pilasters running up the facade. This structure was built in 1924 as a three-car garage with servants' quarters above. The first floor has since been enclosed.

E. Historical Background:

The Granite Mansion was built for James L. Miles between 1844 and 1845. Apparently the cost of the building ran so far beyond Miles' estimates that he only lived there a few years, since he could not pay the bills. He was a prominent personality in the Newark community, having been a member of the State House of Representatives in 1848, a member of the Delaware Light Dragoons, and a one time postmaster of Newark.

The building was designed by Isaac Johnson and built under William Wollaston with the aid of George B. Gilmore, Enoch Howell, Robert Ferguson, William Bell, and James Ray. The names of the designer and builders were uncovered in 1974, while renovations were being made to the property.

The house passed through several owners and then was purchased in 1924 by Norris Wright, part owner of the Continental-Diamond Fibre Company. With the professional assistance of a Philadelphia architect named Wood, Wright renovated the property giving it the neo-Classical look that was in vogue at that time. In 1955, it was bought by the First Presbyterian Church of Newark, the current owners.

F. Significance:

The Granite Mansion gains its significance from two periods. Constructed in 1844, it was one in a group of Greek Revival style buildings that characterized new construction at the middle of the nineteenth century. The neo-Classical renovations to the building in 1924 updated the style of the building, helping it to achieve the neo-Classical appearance that was currently in style. It is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C.

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G. Bibliographical References:

Ruth L. Batt, "Granite Hall," unpublished Art History Paper,
University of Delaware Archives, Box 292, file 8.

William D. Lewis, "University of Delaware: Ancestors, Friends, and
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1961), pp. 1-243.

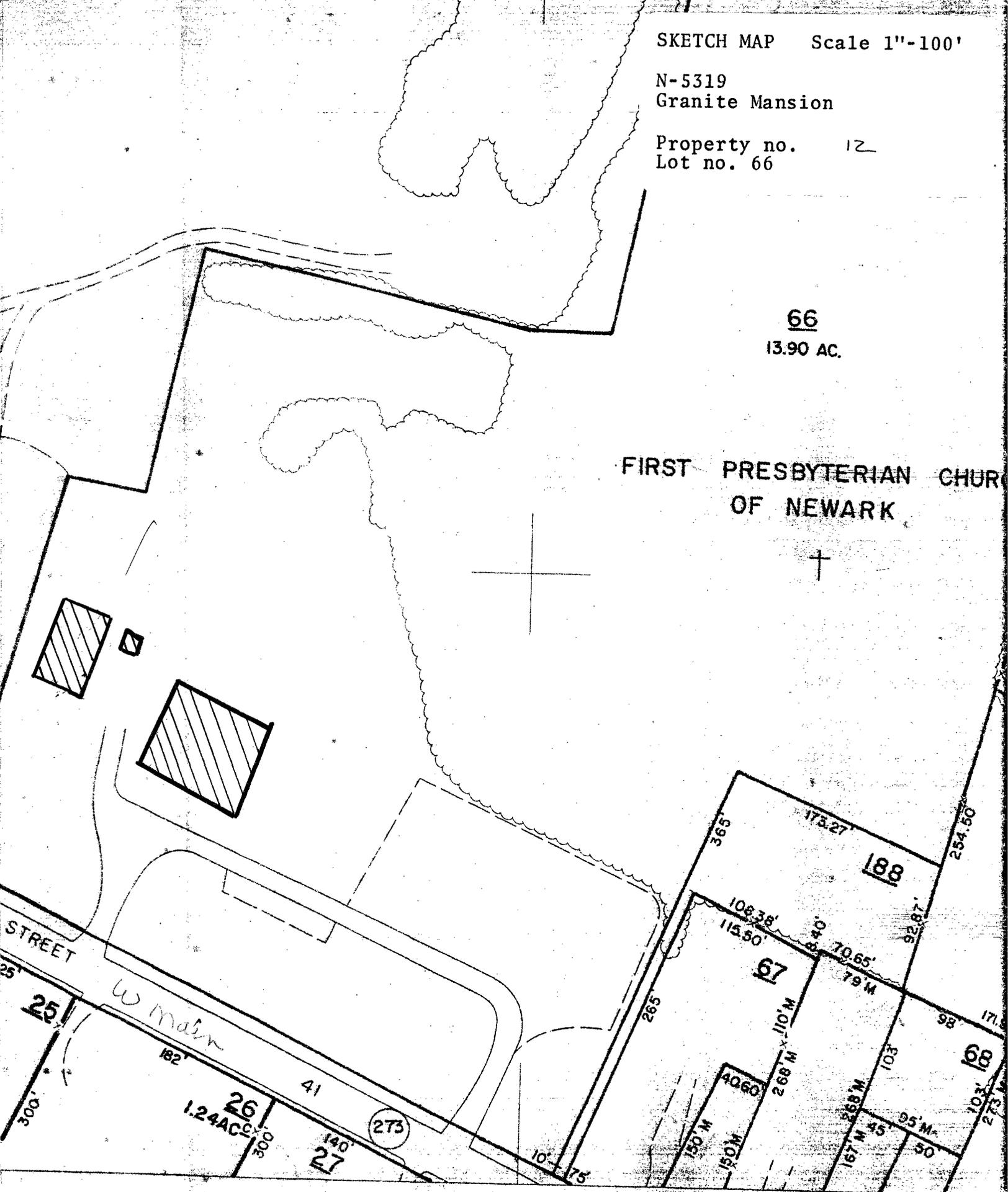
SKETCH MAP Scale 1"-100'

N-5319
Granite Mansion

Property no. 12
Lot no. 66

66
13.90 AC.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF NEWARK



LEGEND

TE HIGHWAY
WAY

- STATE LINE
- COUNTY LINE



CEMETERY