

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

JUL 27 1982

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Jesse Robinson House

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number High Street N/A
not for publication

city, town Seaford NA vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Delaware code 10 county Sussex code 005

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property (information obtained 1/5/82 from Sussex County tax rec.)

name Mrs. Everett West

street & number 204 Eighth Street

city, town Laurel NA vicinity of state Delaware

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Sussex County Courthouse

street & number The Circle

city, town Georgetown state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Del. Cultural Resource Survey-S-364 has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Hall of Records

city, town Dover state Delaware

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located at 613 High Street (Middleford Road), the Jesse Robinson house lies in one of the earliest sections of Seaford and on the eastern edge of Seaford Hundred. Like many frame houses in Sussex County it reflects at least two periods of construction and their corresponding styles: in this case the early to mid-nineteenth centuries and the Federal to Greek Revival-Italianate styles. It is in an excellent state of preservation.

The earliest single-story frame section dates from before 1820, and presently serves as a rear wing. It was built as a single-pile, one-room-plan house with narrow, hand-beaded mill-sawn weatherboards and a three-bay facade with a central entrance. A more modern door with multiple small panes has replaced a much earlier wood panelled door, but the four-light transom above the entrance remains. A nine-over-six single-hung sash is located on either side of the door; the windows have flat trim and louvered shutters. The south gable end of this section has a simple brick interior end chimney as well as two six-light casement windows and a bulkhead basement entrance. The cellar is modern, dug to make room for a furnace. The original rough-hewn floor joists remain. This section rests on a brick foundation and has an asphalt-shingled, steeply pitched gable roof. The molded box cornice has perforated dentil trim, a vernacular attempt at something resembling the characteristic Federal style molding. A single gable-roofed dormer with a nine-light casement was added sometime during the latter part of the nineteenth century, thus raising the wing to one-and-a-half stories.

The second phase of construction of the Jesse Robinson house dates from about 1860, and the building of what is now the front section. It is a two-story, single-pile, center-hall-plan frame structure, five bays in width and resting on a brick foundation. This front portion is a good example of the popular mix of Greek Revival and Italianate architecture as it is executed in the more populous areas of Sussex County. The exterior walls of this section are covered with weatherboard and have large corner pilasters with molded caps, a characteristic feature of the Greek Revival style. The low-pitched gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has a molded box cornice with partial returns. The east and west ends each have an interior brick chimney, the former being exposed on the first floor level and the latter having a corbelled cap. The facade entrance is centrally located and is wooden with six recessed panels; it has architrave trim, a molded lintel and a four-light transom, as well as louvered door shutters. The windows are two-over-two double-hung sashes with molded lintels and louvered blind-type shutters; the gable ends also have two-light casements on the attic level. The east gable end has a single story screened porch with a lean-to roof; this appears to be a relatively modern addition.

The west side of the one-and-a-half story rear wing has a cat-slide roofed section down its entire length. This section dates from the construction of the main house, roughly 1840 to 1850. It appears that it may have been a porch that was later enclosed, although the present owner maintains that to the best of her knowledge its always been enclosed.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates Ca. 1820/1860 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Jesse Robinson house is architecturally significant as an extremely well-preserved and relatively unaltered example of a mid-nineteenth century Sussex County townhouse. A degree of historical significance attaches to the house as well, through its association with the locally prominent nineteenth century lawyer and politician for which it is named. The house itself is typical in the vernacular mix of Greek Revival and Italianate elements in a two-story main section dating from the mid-nineteenth century, and in the fact that this section was added to an earlier one-and-a-half-story dwelling. This earlier, late Federal style house is one of the oldest surviving structures in Seaford; like the later section, it reflects a clear attempt to impart a fashionable appearance to a modest vernacular structure, by means of high-style details. The significance of the whole is enhanced by original interior woodwork and exterior shutters and hardware, and by a large mid-nineteenth-century boxwood planting in the rear yard. Thus the property is significant under criterion C of the National Register guidelines, in that it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period; and under criterion B, in that it is associated with a person significant to the local past.

Jesse Robinson, who moved into the older house in 1855 and added the larger section several years later, was a member of the town's upper middle class, serving as lawyer, town alderman, and member of the Delaware House of Representatives. An interesting comparison may be drawn between his stylish but relatively modest home and the massively elegant Italian-villa style mansion built about the same time, just outside of Seaford, by Governor William Henry Harrison Ross (N.R. 1977). Jesse Robinson's house is obviously far more typical of the housing enjoyed by the average comfortable citizen. While hardly unique, it is one of the best remaining examples of such housing in Seaford.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888. Phila.: L.J. Richards & Dol, 1888.
Beers, D.G. Atlas of Delaware. Philadelphia: Pomeroy & Beers. 1868.
Interview with Mrs. Everett West, Laurel, DE 1980. Granddaughter of Jesse Robinson.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .23 acres

Quadrangle name Seaford East

Quadrangle scale 7.5 minute

UMT References Lat./Long.: Lat. 38° 38' 31", long. 75° 36' 31"

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification The boundaries follow the exact lines of the metes and bounds description for the parcel of land on which the nominated structure sits. The description is recorded in Sussex Co. Deed Book 419, page 132. The parcel is illustrated on Sussex Co. Tax Map No. 4-31-5, parcel No. 307.

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

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard B. Carter, Historic Preservation Planner; Phyllis A. Hastings, Assi't. Planner

organization Sussex County Pres. Planner's Office date December, 1981

street & number Old Courthouse, South Bedford Street telephone (302) 856-7701, ext. 361

city or town Georgetown, 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 *Daniel R. [Signature]*

title Deputy/ State Historic Preservation Officer date 7/15/82

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
[Signature] Entered in the National Register date 8/20/82
Keeper of the National Register
Attest: _____ date _____
Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

The interior of the Jesse Robinson house has undergone more alterations than has the exterior; the one-and-a-half-story rear wing has seen the majority of these changes. The interior of this rear section presently serves as a kitchen. An enclosed staircase winds behind the now filled-in fireplace, and leads to a bedroom in the half-story. The configuration of this fireplace in relation to the staircase is typical of the period around 1810-1820 in Sussex County vernacular architecture. The ceiling in this kitchen has exposed beams which are probably original. The cat-slide roofed section is presently open to the interior of the kitchen. The half-story of this original section has wide plank floors and sloped ceilings.

The present main section has more detailed trim, typical of that often seen in Sussex County houses in the Greek Revival style. The staircase in the center hall has two flights with turned balusters and a simple balustrade and newel post. There is molded trim at chair rail height and around the ceiling cornice. Both rooms on the first floor of this section have fireplaces; the mantle in the east room is molded with reeded pilasters, while that in the west room is more simple. A late nineteenth century corner cupboard seen in the west room is not original. This section has four-panel wooden doors and architrave trim around the window and door openings on the first floor, while those on the second floor have flat, unadorned trim.

Boundary Justification for the Jesse Robinson House

The nominated area of 10,200 sq. feet contained within a rectangular lot of 85 feet by 120 feet, is the complete parcel of land on which the Jesse Robinson House is situated. The parcel is a town lot and has remained more or less constant in size since the early nineteenth century.

