

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

JUN 13 1978

DATE ENTERED

NOV 15 1978

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

ASHTON HISTORIC DISTRICT

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Thornton Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Port Penn

VICINITY OF

First

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Delaware

10

New Castle

002

## 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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 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
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Multiple Ownership (See Continuation Sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Public Building

STREET & NUMBER

Rodney Square

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Wilmington

Delaware

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Delaware Cultural Resource Survey

DATE

1977

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Hall of Records

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Dover

Delaware

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

The Ashton Historic District includes a part of an early land grant in St. Georges Hundred, including three early structures associated with the original settler and his immediate descendents. A number of nineteenth- and twentieth-century residences have been built on the western part of the tract, but the area included in the district has seen little alteration since the first half of the eighteenth century. Although the Reedy Point bridge dominates the skyline to the east, the overall environment of the area, including the road which divides the neck on which the nomination is located, is evocative of the early occupation. The northern boundary of the nomination is essentially that of the original grant. The western boundary includes a branch of the marsh and a hedgerow which marks the property line of one of the owners. The southern boundary includes the right-of-way of Thornton Road, an early boundary line, and a series of hedgerows which mark eighteenth-century land divisions. Delaware Route 9 was chosen as the eastern boundary because it runs along the edge of the marsh. The three structures associated with the early occupation are the Robert Ashton House, the Joseph Ashton House, and the John Ashton House. Associated with each of these dwellings are one or more nineteenth- and twentieth-century outbuildings which do not relate to the original settlement, but which are consistent with the rural character of the district. Also included within the district are the activity areas associated with the early occupation of each of the primary structures. These activity areas have not been defined archaeologically, but their extent can be predicted on the basis of work elsewhere in the state.

The Robert Ashton House, probably the earliest of the group, is located on the marsh of St. Georges Creek at the end of a long lane leading north from Thornton Road. This structure is a frame, five-bay, single-pile, gambrel-roofed building with shed-roofed dormers. It appears that the house was originally designed as a four-bay dwelling with interior end chimneys. A fifth bay was added to the west gable end at a later date. Aluminum siding, aluminum storm windows, and other modern alterations make it difficult to determine the original features of the house. However, the setting is much the same as when the house was first built, and the absence of significant ground disturbance or erosion indicates that it should be possible to design an archaeological investigation to study all phases of the site's occupation. A ruined frame outbuilding is visible in the woods to the west of the house.

The Joseph Ashton House, located on the south side of Thornton Road, consists of an early eighteenth-century brick structure with a late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth-century brick wing. The structural integrity of the building, which is now unoccupied, is threatened by a wide crack in the original facade running from the foundation to the eaves close to the east gable end. A similar problem in the rear wall appears to have been dealt with by the installation of a tie rod with a massive tie rod plate. The original section of the dwelling is a two-story, three-bay, hall-and-parlor-plan house. The brick facade is laid in a Flemish bond and glazed header pattern, while English bond is featured on the rear and gable end walls. Interior end chimneys are located in both gable ends. There is no water table. Exposed second floor joists suggest the presence of pent eaves on both front and rear walls. A two-course belt

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ashton Historic District reflects the earliest period of settlement in Delaware, and some of the changes in housing, settlement pattern, and economic orientation which occurred during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. It includes part of a nine-hundred-acre tract granted to Robert Ashton and others in 1686, and to which he had obtained sole possession by 1691. Ashton was a cousin of William Penn and had immigrated to Delaware from the vicinity of Bristol, England, in 1686. He was commissioned a justice for New Castle County in 1690 and served in the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1692. A member of the Society of Friends, he was one of the first early patentholders in St. Georges Hundred to actually occupy his grant and, in 1704, obtained twenty-five acres for the construction of a meeting house in St. Georges Hundred. At his death in 1706, the tract was divided between his two sons, with the northern part, which included his house and barn, going to his older son, John. The southern part went to his younger son, Joseph. The present Thornton Road appears to mark the location of the division line. Joseph also received 50 pounds sterling because "he hath little or no building on his part and tract of land." The first part of the Joseph Ashton House was probably built not long after 1706. The John Ashton House reflects a somewhat later settlement pattern, and may not have been built until after 1728, when John Ashton, Jr. inherited the property. Although the Joseph Ashton tract was divided in 1741, and soon passed into the hands of speculators and absentee landlords, the John Ashton tract remained intact at least to the end of the eighteenth century. The locations of the three houses in the Ashton Historic District illustrates a change in settlement pattern which has been documented for other parts of Delaware to have occurred in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. The two older structures, the Robert Ashton House and the Joseph Ashton House, are located close to the drainage system, well within the zone defined through previous work as characteristic of early historic settlement in Delaware. The John Ashton House, on the other hand, is located on the drainage divide, in a setting more typical of the second quarter of the eighteenth century and later. The association of these structures with a single family makes it possible to study this change in settlement pattern in a relatively stable social setting, reducing the number of variables which must be considered. All three sites appear to be relatively undisturbed, so that the potential for archaeological study is high.

The houses in the Ashton Historic District represent excellent examples of the housing of the well-to-do New Castle County planter of the first half of the eighteenth century. Although the Robert Ashton House has undergone extensive alteration, the scale and setting are much as they were when the house was built about 1700. This structure is larger than the early buildings which have been identified archaeologically. The construction of the brick Joseph Ashton House marks a move to a more substantial structure, although retaining the earlier settlement pattern. This house must have been one of the more elegant structures outside of New Castle in the first quarter of the eighteenth

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

New Castle County Surveys A-2 #29.  
 New Castle County Wills B-1 #123.  
 New Castle County Deed Book Q-2 #176  
 New Castle County Chancery Court Case H #16

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 170 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_

QUADRANGLE SCALE \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	8
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4	5	0	2	1	1	0
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4	3	7	6	1	1	0
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B 

1	8
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4	5	0	2	5	5
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4	3	7	5	2	2	0
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C 

1	8
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4	5	0	1	4	0
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4	3	7	5	1	4	0
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D 

1	8
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4	4	9	3	6	5
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4	3	7	5	2	7	0
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E 

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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Ashton Historic District is bounded on the east by Delaware Route 9, on the north by the marsh of St. Georges Creek, and on the west by a branch of the marsh and a

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Cara L. Wise, Historical Archaeologist; Mary Ellen Paturzo, Student.

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

April 1978

STREET & NUMBER

Hall of Records

TELEPHONE

(302) 678-5314

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

*Lauren C. Se...*

TITLE Director, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

6/2/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Charles A. ...*

DATE

1-15-74

ATTEST:

*William A. ...*  
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

Nov. 15, 1978

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Property Owners:

Mrs. Myrtle E. Eaton  
Box 165, RD 1  
Middletown, Delaware 19709

Mr. and Mrs. Claude Cross  
Canal Bridge  
Port Penn Middletown, Delaware 19709

Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Pennington  
Second and Monroe Streets  
Delaware City, Delaware 19706

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course is placed immediately under the second story windows on both front and rear walls, but does not continue on the end walls. These belt courses end about three feet short of the corners on both ends. They are placed immediately under the second story windows. The bed moulding for the cornice rests just above the top of these windows. The front and rear doors are placed slightly off-center between two double-hung sash windows, which have eight-over-eight lights and framed architraves with queen closers. The front doorway has a three-light transom. The windows on the second story, one over each of the first story windows, are also double-hung sash windows with eight-over-eight lights. On both the front and rear walls there is evidence of pairs of small windows, one on each story, which have been bricked up. Two small bricked-up windows are also found on the east gable end wall, close to the rear wall, and one to each story. On the front, additional openings include two bricked-up cellar windows with segmental arches, and a bricked-up cellar door with a stone lintel. Sockets on either side of the lintel indicate the presence of a roof over the cellar entrance. Additional sockets on either side of the door at the level of the threshold and at the level of the windows indicate the presence of a porch structure, which was necessary because the doorway is approximately four feet above ground level. The sockets for both the entrance roof and porch appear to be original. A third set of sockets has been cut into the brick at a later date for another porch, which was apparently associated with a group of brick pillars close to the front wall. None of these structures is now present.

The interior of the original part of the Joseph Ashton House displays three periods of construction and renovation. The hall displays early-eighteenth-century wainscoting, a closed-string staircase, and a federal-period mantel and fireplace surrounds on the earlier end wall panelling. The balusters and handrail appear to have been replaced in the style of the federal period. The original entry into the parlor has been replaced by a broad Victorian double door. The trim in the parlor has been replaced by a broad Victorian double door. The trim in the parlor is most notable for its elegant federal mantel with punch and gouge detailing, and its fireplace surrounds. Despite the diversity of periods represented, the alterations are compatible with the remaining original panelling and with each other.

Attached to the west gable end of the original structure, and entered through a door between the staircase and the fireplace, is a brick wing consisting of a two-story, two-bay section at a slightly lower level than the original house, and a one-story, two-bay kitchen section at ground level. There is no fireplace in the two-story section, but the kitchen has an interior end chimney in the west gable end. These two sections were built as a single unit. Neither section has a door to the outside on the facade, but both have rear doors. The rear door to the two-story section, which is approximately four feet above ground level, is served by a wooden platform

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porch supported by a brick foundation and approached from a screened-in porch at the back of the kitchen section. This porch is frame and appears to be fairly recent. On the west gable end of the kitchen, above the level of the door which opens to the outside next to the fireplace, is a series of sockets which appear to be original and which indicate the presence of some kind of structure on this end of the building. A similar series of sockets can be seen on the rear wall of the two-story section and may indicate a pent eave to match that on the original section, or a porch roof. The interior of the wing displays no distinctive features.

The Joseph Ashton House is situated on a small neck of land facing a marshy pond edged with trees and drained by a small gut, feeding an impoundment formerly known as Little Georges Creek. Tree-edged marsh also encroaches close behind the house, forming a wooded enclosure for the house site. There is no evidence of significant ground disturbance, indicating that the potential for productive archaeological excavation exists. Outbuildings include a frame privy and a small octagonal frame shed along the edge of the marsh at the back of the house. A large barn is located at some distance to the southwest. On the west side of the farm lane leading to the house, and closer to Thornton Road, is an abandoned house trailer, which should not be considered as significant to the nomination.

The John Ashton House, located on the north side of Thornton Road, opposite the Joseph Ashton House, consists of a brick, early-eighteenth-century main block and a frame wing. It is presently occupied and in good condition. The original structure is a two-story, three-bay, hall-and-parlor-plan house with bricks laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers. There are interior end chimneys in both gable ends. A pent eave runs across the facade, and the exposed ends of the second story joists suggest that a pent eave has been removed from the rear wall. The bed moulding under the box cornice rests directly over the two, second-story, eight-over-eight light; double-hung sash windows are on both front and rear walls. A two-course belt course runs across the facade immediately below the windows, turns up on the east end, runs along the gable end at a higher level than on the facade, turns down at the far side, and runs along the rear wall at the same level as on the front, forming a rectangular pattern on the end wall. A similar pattern is formed on the facade by the moulded water table, which begins about eighteen inches above ground level, rises to enclose two segmentally-arched cellar windows, then drops to the original level and runs across the east gable end wall and the rear wall. Neither the belt course nor the water table are found on the west gable end wall, suggesting the presence of a wing at the time the first section was constructed. The front and rear doors are placed slightly off-center between two double-hung sash windows with eight-over-eight lights and segmental brick arches. The front door is covered by a screened porch with a pitched roof. Two small bricked-up windows

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with segmental arches, one on each story, can be seen along the west end of the facade. Similar bricked-up windows appear on the gable end wall close to the front wall. Two cellar windows also pierce the east gable end wall. On the rear wall, there are three small rectangular windows in addition to the four eight-over-eight light windows. One of the small windows is located on the first story near the west gable end. Another window is located high on the wall on the first story next to the door, and a third window is found on the second story above that one. These three windows are composed of six lights arranged in three rows of two lights each. A segmentally-arched cellar window pierces the rear wall between the door and the west main window. The only feature visible on the west gable end wall is a small window lighting the attic close to the front wall. The interior of the main block was altered in the federal period. All visible brickwork has been painted white.

Attached to the west gable end is a five-bay, two-story frame wing at a lower level than the original structure. A chimney divides the wing into a three-bay section and a two-bay section. The detailing of the wing has been obscured by the presence of simulated brick asphalt wall covering and its date could not be determined.

The John Ashton House sits on a ridge marking the divide between two drainages and overlooking the surrounding fields. The facade faces southwest, toward Thornton Road. This setting is very different from the marsh and creek bank locations of the two earlier structures. As with the other structures, the absence of significant ground disturbance offers the potential for substantive archaeological investigation. A frame privy, metal shed, and small frame barn are located near the house.



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century. Very few structures of any kind survive from this period, probably as a result of the shift in settlement pattern. In this case, the substantial nature of the building and the fact that the residents after 1741 were tenants and small landowners may have contributed to the structure's survival. The John Ashton House reflects many of the characteristics of the Joseph Ashton House. In plan, scale, and fenestration the two structures are identical. This is the more striking because of the eight-over-eight light windows, which contrast with the narrower six-over-six light windows more commonly found on two-story eighteenth century buildings in Delaware. In detail, however, the John Ashton House displays a greater consciousness of style. This can be seen in the use of Flemish bond brickwork on all exposed walls and in the decorative elaboration of the water table and belt course. Both the Joseph Ashton House and the John Ashton House are good examples of the Delaware Quaker architecture of the early eighteenth century. They are particularly significant because few such structures remain, and most of those remaining are highly altered.

The Ashton Historic District is particularly significant because it offers a unique opportunity for an interdisciplinary study of the early colonial period and the social and economic changes which occurred in the second quarter of the eighteenth century in Delaware, probably as a result of the shift from a tobacco economy to a wheat economy. The association of the group with historically important settlers, the clear illustration of the shift in settlement pattern, and the significant architectural features of the Joseph and John Ashton House combine to produce a rich association for further study.

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"The Early History of Port Penn and St. Georges Hundred", Deborah J. Ancona. Ms. on file in the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

"Early Historic Settlement in Delaware", Cara L. Wise. Paper presented at the 1978 Middle Atlantic Archeological Conference.

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UTM REFERENCES

- E 18/449280/4376040
- F 18/449515/4376240

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hedgerow which runs in a south/southeasterly direction to Thornton Road. On the south, the boundary runs east along the south side of the Thornton Road right-of-way, including Thornton Road, to a hedgerow, then with the hedgerow south/southeast to another hedgerow at right angles to it, with this hedgerow northeast to a corner, then southeast along the hedgerow to a pond, and finally along the north side of the pond to Delaware Route 9.

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DEL. RT. 9

Delaware River

St Georges Creek

THORNTON

ROAD

pond

Little Georges Creek

