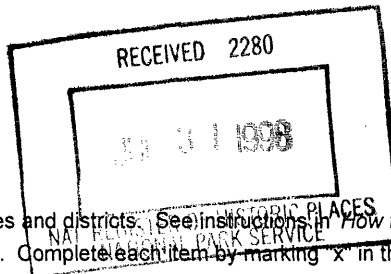


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



1010

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instruction. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Gibraltar

other names/site number: CRS # N-9075

2. Location

street and number: 2501 Pennsylvania Avenue

N/A not for publication

city or town: Wilmington

N/A vicinity

state: Delaware

county: New Castle County

zip code: 19806

3. State/Federal/Tribal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally, statewide, locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Daniel W. Griffith State Historic Preservation Officer June 18, 1998
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Patrick Andrews

9/14/98

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	0	buildings
	0	sites
7	0	structures
36	0	objects
48	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed**in the National Register**

N/A

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Agriculture/Subsistence
 Domestic
 Landscape
 Recreation And Culture

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Agriculture/Subsistence
 Domestic
 Landscape
 Recreation And Culture
 Vacant/Not In Use

Historic Subfunctions

(Enter subcategories from instructions)

- Horticulture Facility
 Park
 Secondary Structure
 Single Dwelling
 Street Furniture/Object
 Work Of Art (Sculpture, Carving, Rock Art)

Current Subfunctions

(Enter subcategories from instructions)

- Horticulture Facility
 Park
 Secondary Structure
 Single Dwelling
 Street Furniture/Object
 Work Of Art (Sculpture, Carving, Rock Art)

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Colonial Revival
 Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- | | |
|------------|------------------|
| Foundation | Granite |
| Walls | Granite |
| Roof | Asphalt
Slate |

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes..
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance

1844-1945

Significant Dates

- 1909
- 1915
- 1916

Significant Person

(Complete if criterion B is marked above)

- Hugh Rodney Sharp
- Marian Cruger Coffin

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

- Albert Ely Ives
- DeArmond, Asmead & Bickley
- Marian Cruger Coffin- Landscape

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7. Description

Page 1

Gibraltar
New Castle County, Delaware

Narrative Description

Summary

Gibraltar, the former home of Hugh Rodney Sharp, Sr. and his wife Isabella Mathieu duPont Sharp, is found about one and a half miles from the center of Wilmington, Delaware. The Gibraltar estate is unique in the City of Wilmington, containing an impressive Italianate and Colonial Revival mansion. The large Brandywine granite mansion sits on a rise with the land sloping away from it in all directions. A tall stone perimeter wall surrounds the imposing dwelling with landscaped lawns and gardens. The landscape of Gibraltar reflects elements of two distinct periods of landscape design. The western half of the property retains elements of the natural English style of landscape design that dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This portion of the estate reflects elements of the Brinkle ownership of Gibraltar. The gently sloping tree-covered lawns to the south and west of the mansion, and many naturalized plantings and native trees along the driveway represent nineteenth century landscape elements of the property. To the east of the mansion the landscape elements form a dramatic series of terraces and formal gardens designed by Marian Cruger Coffin, an important pioneer female landscape architect. This eastern portion of the estate reflects the early twentieth century American Country Place era of landscape design, which is characterized by designs of large estates with elaborate houses and neoclassical gardens. The mansion and ancillary buildings are embellished by 6.11 acres of elegantly terraced garden rooms each serving a particular function. Like rooms of a house Coffin designed the garden areas of Gibraltar to be intimate, secluded spaces decorated with plantings and European-style furniture and ornaments. Bridging the thirty-five-foot drop between the mansion and the formal garden, Coffin designed three parallel terraces, a widely used element of classical Italian villa design.

The original Italianate core of the large mansion was constructed of Brandywine granite c. 1844 by John Rodney Brinkle, the grandnephew of Caesar Rodney, the first Governor of Delaware and a signatory of the Declaration of Independence. Hugh Rodney Sharp and his wife Isabella Mathieu duPont purchased the large rectangular home in 1909. During the decade following their purchase, the Sharps transformed Gibraltar into an elegant estate representative of the industrial affluence of the early twentieth century. Philadelphia architects DeArmond, Ashmead and Bickley undertook considerable renovations and additions to the mansion in 1915. In 1916, the Sharp's hired Coffin to design the complex and romantic gardens in the fashion of the American Country Place era. With the completion of the landscape elements and the 1927 addition to the mansion by Florida architect Albert Ely Ives, Gibraltar became an elegant estate and showcase of garden design.

Description

The Gibraltar estate covers an entire city block. The enlarged stone mansion, pool house/garage/greenhouse and service building, tool shed and garden house are all associated with Gibraltar when it served as the residence of Hugh Rodney Sharp and his wife Isabella Mathieu duPont Sharp. This urban estate is just within Wilmington's westernmost city limits. Near the estate is urban infill of comfortable upper-middle-class housing built largely in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Directly across Greenhill Avenue is rehabilitated housing, which originally housed the Gibraltar staff.

Stylistically, the exterior of the Gibraltar mansion suggests Italianate and the Colonial Revival influence. The asymmetrical plan coarse-cut granite stone mansion consists of a three story central hall plan core with multiple two story wings added in the early twentieth century. This core is the original dwelling built c.1844 by John Rodney Brinkle. An early twentieth century painting of Gibraltar by Julia Brinkle, grandniece of John Brinkle and a 1912 painting of the house by Stanley Arthur show the three bay square central hall plan structure with a hipped roof with a widow's walk. The painting also shows the two end chimneys and a front porch with flat roof and fluted Doric Order columns.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7. Description (continued) Page 2

Gibraltar
New Castle County, Delaware

The foundation and the exterior walls of both the original dwelling and the later additions are all Brandywine gray granite from a quarry found to the north of the property on Delaware Avenue near Bancroft Parkway. The roof system consists of five connecting slate hipped roofs with flat roofs over the southeast and northeast additions and over the Conservatory on the south side of the structure. The main roof has a cupola capped with a widow's walk with turned balustrades. There is a flat roof over the small entry to the west and a flat roof over the front portico. The cornice has boxed soffits with a denticulate frieze.

The east facade has a three-story bay central core flanked on the south with a two-story single bay addition. The window pattern of the east facade consists of four symmetrically spaced six pane triple hung windows with cut stone sills and paneled shutters on the first level and four pane by four pane casement windows with louvered shutters on the second level and three by three casement windows and louvered shutters on the third level. The one story portico is at the center of the original central core on the east facade. It resembles the central part of the original porch with fluted Doric Order columns. The east entry door consists of a paneled door with side lights and transom. The entry has louvered shutters. The architrave has a denticulate cornice.

The south elevation is the conservatory that consists of a south wall with seven triple-hung twenty over twenty over twenty sashes and a twenty-pane door with a twenty over twenty double-hung sash above. The west elevation has several additions to the original three bay main core. This elevation is now asymmetrical with nine bays. In the center of the original core there is a one bay wide projection with entry enclosure. The entry door consists of square pilasters flanking a paneled entry door with side lights and a fanlight transom. On the second level, above the entry, is an eight over eight double-hung window with a fan light. To the north on the second level are six by four by four casement windows with louvered shutters. On the third story are smaller three by three casement windows with louvered shutters. A three-story two bay addition with chimney projects forward from the original plan of the dwelling. There is also one ground level six over six double-hung window with another matching window at a half floor level.

The north elevation is asymmetrical and irregular. The recessed one story porch with square columns and pilasters protects the north entry into the kitchen and service area. To the east, on the main block of the dwelling, is a two-story porch with wood columns and balustrades. These porch areas have been enclosed with large glass storm panels.

Mr. and Mrs. Sharp renovated the interior of the mansion to the Colonial Revival style. All woodwork, doors, and paneling throughout the dwelling are consistently Colonial Revival. The original center hall and stairway with turned newel and balustrades were preserved in situ. The main rooms on the first level, consisting of the living room and the dining room on the east and the library on the west, have heavy ceiling cornice detail and double entry doors entering the central hallway. The library has a fireplace with a plain wood Colonial Revival mantle on the west wall. A single recessed arched bookcase is on each side of the fireplace. Both the living room and the dining room have fireplaces on the exterior walls. The dining room is fully paneled with recessed cupboards on the south wall. The living room and library have tall French doors on the south that lead to the conservatory. The conservatory has a narrow balcony at the first floor level, with stairs on the east and west ends that descend to ground level.

On the north side of the central hall is a small room placed a half story above the hall level. Behind the main stairs at the west end of the hall are a double set of stairs leading down four steps to the ground level and the west entry. The kitchen and pantry that are to the west of the dining room and can also be reached from the central hall by descending a stair to the service room and up stairs into the kitchen pantry area. On the second floor are three main bedrooms with baths and four

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7. Description (continued) Page 3

Gibraltar

New Castle County, Delaware

servants' rooms with a shared bath in the wing over the kitchen. On the third floor there are three large bedrooms in the main block of the dwelling and a bath and two additional bedrooms in the servant's wing.

The nineteenth century carriage house has been enlarged and transformed into a pool house, including a pool changing area and a filter room. A greenhouse/garage/service building, with laundry and living quarters for the chauffeurs were added to the pool house, by Pierson U-Bar Co. of New York City. The east elevation of the pool house has an arched double door at ground level. Between the pool house and the garages there is a stairwell with arched entry leading to the greenhouse, laundry and chauffeur's quarters above the garages. A rounded tool shed is along the east side of the service courtyard, beside the Greenhill Avenue entrance. The service space formed by the tool shed and the adjoining iron fence contains the evidence of three rectangular cold frames and small garden area. The larger vegetable garden area is to the north of this service area in the northeast corner of the property. Another small garden house is at the northeast corner of the bald cypress allee, just outside the large iron gate and beside the Greenhill Avenue perimeter wall. The appearance of all support buildings matches that of the mansion. The foundation and exterior walls and both the original dwelling and the 1915 and the 1927 additions were constructed with Brandywine gray granite from the same quarry found to the north of the property on Delaware Avenue near Bancroft Parkway.

The city block sized property is entirely surrounded by a six-foot high stone wall. Both the Pennsylvania Avenue and Greenhill Avenue entrances to the estate are flanked with pillars topped with cast stone vases adorned with floral ornaments. The western half of the property has a gentle slope, but the mansion sits on a high elevation with the view to the east dramatically overlooking landscaped terraces and formal gardens.

Gibraltar's romantic landscape was designed and carried out by Marian Crugar Coffin whom Mr. Sharp hired in 1915. Coffin's scheme for Gibraltar represented both the prevailing neoclassical taste and style of the Country Place era and her basic design approach to keeping the plan simple and in axial relation to the main house, carefully proportioning house, garden and architectural elements. The area east of the mansion contains a small lawn, flagstone terrace, large marble staircase, evergreen terrace, pool terrace, vestibule, formal flower garden, and bald cypress allee. To the south of the mansion are the lower lawn, Pennsylvania Avenue entrance driveway and the upper lawns. Each of these garden rooms served a particular function in response to its anticipated use by the owners. Including a conveniently placed swimming pool, shady seating and strolling areas and spaces for entertainment. To dramatize the thirty-foot drop in elevation between the house and the formal flower garden to the east, is a sequence of four terraces parallel to the long axis of the mansion, a widely used element of classical Italian villa design. The elegantly terraced areas and garden rooms, like rooms of a house are decorated with plantings and garden ornaments, and once were furnished with European-style garden furniture. The grand romantic setting of Gibraltar is an urban oasis. Despite its present urban setting, landscape historians place Gibraltar in the Country Place era of landscape design.

Reflecting the Sharp's overseas travel and visits to great gardens of Europe, neoclassical metal and stone statuary accent the allee, vistas, stair landings, and private spaces of the estate. Ornate iron railings with floral patterns delineate the east perimeter of the flagstone terrace, which runs parallel to the mansion. The large marble staircase with two-piece wrought iron railings with floral pattern and brass finials connects the flagstone terrace to the evergreen terrace, the vestibule and pool terrace. To the west side of the mansion is a natural English Park setting with rolling lawns, clumps of large trees, blooming azaleas, and drifts of daffodils and hyacinth. The neoclassical formality to the east of the mansion with the boxwood hedges, stone walls, terraces, statuary, fountains, cutting garden, are contrasted against the skyline of Wilmington. The bald cypress and smoke tree accented allee in the southeast corner of the property terminates at an Italianate tea house and marble fountain. The allee is accented with carved figures of "Winter," "Autumn," "Summer," and

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Continuation Sheet**

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Gibraltar

New Castle County, Delaware

"Spring." Exbury azalea and peony bloom in profusion just inside the garden wall which separated this secret from one of Wilmington's busiest corners, the intersection of Pennsylvania and Greenhill Avenues.

Contributing Elements:

Buildings: 5

1. Mansion
2. Pool House/garage/greenhouse/service building
3. Tool Shed
4. Garden house
5. Tea house

Structures: 7

1. Wall encompassing the property
2. Bald Cypress Allee
3. Stairway
4. Flagstone Terrace
5. Evergreen Terrace
6. Pool Terrace
7. Gazebo

Objects: 36

1. Marble Fountain
2. Cast Stone egg & dart vase (2)
3. Carved stone figure; Winter
4. Carved stone figure; Autumn
5. Carved stone figure; Summer
6. Carved stone figure; Spring
7. Cast stoned Vase (2)
8. Cast stone Eagle (2)
9. Fountain with dolphin
10. Cast stone bench (2)
11. Lead putto on stone ball (2)
12. Large stone putto on stone ball (2)
13. Stone figure at pool (2)
14. Semi-circle bench
15. Small cast stone fruit basket (6)
16. Small pool fountain with two putti
17. Wrought Iron Gate (2)
18. Wrought iron fence at pool
19. Wrought iron terrace railing
20. Wrought iron stair railing
21. Winged hat figure
22. Base for missing objects (3)

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

Gibraltar is a significant early twentieth century industrialist estate within the city of Wilmington, Delaware. It was the residence of Hugh Rodney Sharp, one of Delaware's preeminent preservationists and philanthropists associated with the early twentieth century growth of the duPont Company. Furthermore Gibraltar is significant for the dramatic landscape design and implementation by Marian Cruger Coffin, who was among the first and most accomplished of professional female landscape architects in the United States. The landscape and gardens at Gibraltar embody the distinctive characteristics of Coffin's work and are representative of the American Country Place era of landscape design.

The Gibraltar Estate is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B for its association with Hugh Rodney Sharp and under Criterion C for its American Country Place era gardens designed by Marian Coffin; and for the residence and accessory buildings which embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Colonial Revival period. Early twentieth century renovations at Gibraltar were undertaken by regionally renowned architects; De Armond, Ashmead and Bickey of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Albert Ely Ives of Wilmington, Delaware. Both the Gardens and the structures exhibit a high degree of physical integrity. Despite the urban development outside the estate walls this remarkable and relatively undisturbed landscape remains, as do the institutions established from the philanthropy of Hugh Rodney Sharp who greatly contributed to the cultural and educational institutions of Delaware; particularly his preservation efforts in Odessa and the development of Delaware College into the University of Delaware.

Gibraltar is an excellent example of an architecturally evolved elite estate of a Wilmington-based industrial family. During the early twentieth century Gibraltar evolved from the nineteenth century home of John Rodney Brinkle, grandnephew of Caesar Rodney first Governor of Delaware and signatory of the Declaration of Independence, into the grand early twentieth century industrialists' estate of Hugh Rodney Sharp and his wife Isabella Mathieu duPont Sharp.

Hugh Rodney Sharp, Sr.

Hugh Rodney Sharp was born in Seaford, Delaware, on July 30, 1880, the son of Eli Richard (1823-1921) and Sally (Brown) Sharp (1837-1918). He spent his childhood on a farm near Seaford, and later in Lewes, Delaware, where his father had been appointed deputy collector of customs for the Port of Lewes.

In 1896, Hugh Rodney Sharp entered Delaware College in Newark, and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree on June 20, 1900. Upon graduation, he became both principal and teacher at the three-room public school in Odessa, a village on the Appoquinimink river, twenty-two miles south of Wilmington, Delaware. Mr. Sharp remained in Odessa for three years and formed a lifelong attachment to the community. In 1903, he left the village and moved to Wilmington to work in the Accounting and Purchasing Department of E.I. duPont de Nemours & Company. There he became a close friend of company president Pierre Samuel duPont (1870-1954). Through him, Mr. Sharp met and later married Pierre's younger sister Isabella Mathieu duPont (1882-1946). Following the marriage in 1908, Sharp came under the paternalistic eye of his new brother-in-law who greatly influenced Sharp's historic and philanthropic interests.

In 1915, Pierre duPont named Sharp his assistant and gave him the opportunity to enter the duPont Securities Company. The two brothers-in-law formed an effective work-relationship, one that would eventually provide the states of Pennsylvania and Delaware with schools, hospitals, and roads. During the next forty years countless charitable causes received their support.

By 1920, duPont and Sharp had launched a program for the development of Delaware College. Simultaneously, Sharp was involved in some of duPont's personal projects, overseeing construction of the Conservatories and the installation of an organ at Longwood Gardens.

In 1921, Sharp gave up his active role in the duPont Company and turned over his position as Chair of the Building and Grounds Committee of Delaware College to Henry Francis duPont (1880-1969). With his family and friends, among them Gertrude Brinkle, Sharp set off on an extended trip around the world. During the remainder of his life, Sharp's interest seems to have been devoted largely to philanthropic and historic preservation activities, among them the development of Delaware College and the preservation of the Historic Houses at Odessa, and to the construction and landscaping of his personal estate, Gibraltar.

The Development of Delaware College

Beginning in 1915, And throughout the rest of his life, Rodney sharp served as a Trustee and major benefactor of the University of Delaware. He became a member of the Board of Trustees in 1915, a member of the Buildings and Grounds Committee in 1917, and served on the Board's Executive and Finance Committees.

Sharp was a driving force in lifting up Delaware College to university status and had a personal interest in the physical development of the institution. He strongly influenced preparing and carrying out a master plan for the campus. In 1918, he wrote to the Dean of Woman's College recommending Marian Coffin to design the new campus layout. It had occurred to him that "Miss Marian Coffin might be a suitable person to make the detail of our planting." He knew Miss Coffin very well, she helped him with his landscaping at Gibraltar. Over the years, Sharp worked closely with Coffin and H.F. duPont to assure the application of Coffin's design for the campus.

Virtually unnoticed nationally, Sharp gave a total sum of more than \$35 million to the University between 1915 and 1967. His financial contributions consisted of cash gifts for the purchased of properties and the construction and maintenance of major campus buildings. Other benefactions included ten endowed professorships and funds for the establishment of the campus alumni office. The University received \$32 million in gifts under a trust agreement set by Mr. Sharp in 1950, to increase the university's endowment fund.

For his work fostering education, Sharp received several University of Delaware honors. The Sharp Laboratory and Sharp Hall were named after him. In June 1948, the University awarded him with the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. In 1953 the Alumni Association named him the outstanding alumnus of the year to recognize his achievements as a Trustee of the University, philanthropist, and citizen of the state of Delaware.

Hugh Rodney Sharp and the Preservation of Delaware's Colonial Heritage

Sharp took great interest in the preservation of historic landmarks. His genuine love of colonial architecture resulted in many contributions to the renovation and preservation of eighteenth-century historic buildings in Delaware.

In 1938, Sharp purchased and restored the Corbit House in Odessa, which he had frequently visited as a young teacher. He also preserved Odessa's old school house and hotel, renamed the "Brick Hotel," and several other structures he acquired or moved to Odessa over the next thirty years. To assure the continued preservation of the houses, Sharp gave the renovated and attractively furnished Corbit House and the partially restored Brick hotel to Winterthur, in 1958 and 1966 respectively.

Winterthur renamed the Corbit House the Corbit-Sharp House in honor of the donor, and opened it as a house museum. In 1968, only a few months after Sharp's death, the Corbit-Sharp House was designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service. Another property, the Collins-Sharp House, was given to Winterthur in 1977 by Sharp's sons, Hugh Rodney Sharp, Jr. and Bayard Sharp.

Sharp also supported other preservation projects in the State of Delaware: In 1931 he served on a committee formed to move the Bank of Delaware building from its original site at Sixth and Market Streets in downtown Wilmington to Lovering Avenue. In 1937 Sharp helped in the restoration of the Old Dutch House in New Castle. Ten years later he was involved with the restoration of New Castle's Old Court House.

In 1931, Sharp was appointed chair of the State House Commission. He also served on the Board of Directors and as Vice President of the Historical Society of Delaware. In May 1964, Sharp accepted an award from the Delaware Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, "for his leadership in the preservation of the architectural heritage of Odessa." In 1966, he received the Award of Merit of the American Association for State and Local History in recognition of his years of active leadership in preserving historic buildings in Delaware. Sharp was also a founding member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

In a list of major interests since 1918 written personally by Sharp and submitted to the University for its records in July 1966 he ranked "Restoration of GIBRALTAR and design of gardens," at the top of the list followed by his other accomplishment entered chronological order.

1916 Restoration of GIBRALTAR and design of gardens

1917 Helped to restore Old Town Hall, Wilmington

1928 Helped to restore the University of Delaware campus and to plan the mall and buildings leading from Main Street to the memorial Library

1931 Chaired the Building Committee for the new legislative building and adjacent lands in Dover

1931 Member, Committee for Removing the Bank of Delaware (1816) at 6th and Market Streets to Lovering Avenue.

1937 Member, Restoration Committee, Old Dutch House, New Castle

1938 Restored and furnished the William Corbit House in Odessa (it was given to the Winterthur Museum with an endowment in 1958)
1938 restored the Odessa School House (it was given to the Town of Odessa for use as a Community House in 1947)
1940 Restored Pump House, Odessa
1942 Restored Moore House, Odessa
1947 Member, Restoration Committee, New Castle Court House
1951 Restored January House, Odessa
1955 Member, Restoration Committee, John Dickinson House, Dover
1955 Moved the Leftover House across the Appoquinimink Creek and rebuilt it
1956 Helped to plan and build the Catholic Church, Boca Grande, Florida
1957 Restored an exterior of the Odessa Hotel (gave it to Winterthur in 1966)
1958 Member, rebuilding Committee, which removed the Henderickson House to Old Swedes Churchyard
1964 Moved the Collins-Sharp House, Odessa, from its site near the Delaware River and restored and furnished it
+ Life Member - Trustees of University of Delaware since 1918, and Member, Grounds and Member, Building Committee
+ Chairman, Committee for Building Fund, Memorial Library, University of Delaware
+ Member, Building Committee - Tower Hill School
+ Vice President, Historical Society of Delaware
+ Associate Member - Garden Club of America
+ Founding Member - the National Trust for Historic Preservation
+ Member, Advisory Committee, Longwood Foundation
+ Member of the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum
+ Member of the University of Delaware Library Associates

Sharp - Amateur Plantsman and Horticulturist

Gardens and horticulture were often topics of conversation among the members of the duPont family. Though Sharp never took formal classes in horticulture, over the years he became a knowledgeable amateur who knew about a variety of plants and their relative merits. His use of Latin plant names in correspondence, and his detailed description of plant species he encountered during his travels are evidence of his knowledge and interest in horticulture. During his travels around the world, Sharp visited estate gardens, botanical gardens and nurseries, collecting plants to send home to Gibraltar or to give to other members of the family. His letters to Pierre duPont from these trips are filled with observations of new plants and the gardens he visited. They reveal Sharp's growing knowledge of horticulture.

Throughout his life, Sharp pursued his love for horticulture, as evident in his involvement in the design and construction of his two estates; Gibraltar and the Hacienda in Boca Grande, Florida; the creation of a Colonial Revival-influenced garden in Odessa; and his dedication to the design and planting of the Delaware College campus.

Marian Cruger Coffin

Coffin was born in Scarborough, New York, on September 16, 1876 to Alice Church and Julian Ravenal Coffin, both members of wealthy upper-class families. The reckless lifestyle of her father, and early divorce of her parents left Coffin and her mother almost penniless; forcing them into an unsettled existence. For the following years, they had no permanent home and lived with various members of the Church family in Geneva, New York where Coffin had an almost aristocratic upbringing. Here, she learned to handle social situations with grace and made contacts among the prominent families of Geneva's affluent Victorian community. These connections would later prove invaluable in launching her career.

Reaching adulthood, Coffin's financial situation left her with only two choices: to marry a rich husband or take on a professional career. Coffin chose the latter and enrolled at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston to study landscape architecture. Coffin's reception at MIT was not quite as warm as she had hoped. The landscape architecture option had the same stringent admission requirements as the general program in architecture, and having had almost no formal schooling, Marian Coffin was completely unprepared to meet such requirements and was initially refused admission. She persevered and after intense tutoring in mathematics was permitted to enroll as a special student in 1901. Though a special student, Coffin took a complete range of courses including studies in engineering, physics and math, mechanical drafting and freehand drawing, architectural and landscape design. She complimented her technical studies with lectures in botany and an extensive course in horticulture at the Arnold Arboretum under the direction of Charles Sprague Sargent.

MIT's landscape design program was in the tradition of the L'Ecole Des Beaux-Arts, the French National School of Fine Arts, emphasizing the classical ideas of balance, order, proportion, and harmony. The director of the program, Guy Lowell (1870-1927), was a scholar of the L'Ecole Des Beaux-Arts. In his courses, he taught the values of European, particularly Italian,

classicism which strongly influenced Coffin's professional work. While Coffin was his student in 1902, Lowell published his book *American Gardens*, further promoting the revived classical design principles in the United States. Following this publication, many landscape architects of the time adopted these principles and executed symmetric, axial designs in the tradition of the Italian Villa. The lines of the house were extended into the grounds. Architectural features and classical garden ornaments became focal points in contrast to the vegetation.

Another important influence in Coffin's professional career was architect Charles Platt (1861-1933), the leading advocate of formalism in America. Platt visited and studied Italian gardens and villas of the Renaissance in 1892. Upon his return to the United States, he published his extremely influential book *Italian Gardens* in 1894, in which he introduced to American architecture and landscape architecture the ideal of the Italian villa, the house and garden designed as a whole - organized as a series of indoor and outdoor rooms.

These classical influences in Coffin's education were strengthened further by a summer abroad during which she studied landscape design in Italy and France. She also went on field trips to notable estates in the Boston area such as Sprague's Faulkner Farm in Brookline, designed by Platt in 1897. Elements of Platt's design, like the semicircular closing of the vista at the end of a rectangular garden, and the arrangement of both a long terrace and a formal garden parallel to the long axis of the house, correspond to Coffin's design for Gibraltar's flagstone terrace and formal garden.

Coffin graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1904 as the only woman among 500 students. Strong prejudices against women in the male-dominated profession forced her to open her own office in New York City. On leaving school she expected the world would welcome landscape architects, but unfortunately the idea of taking a woman into an office was unheard of. The query of what she would do about supervising the work on the ground became such a constant and discouraging question that she decided to open her own firm.

During the first decade after graduation, Coffin worked mostly on smaller, suburban commissions and traveled extensively in Europe. During a trip to England she met with Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1933) whose work left a lasting impression on Coffin. Jekyll's painterly use of color was clearly reflected in many of Coffin's floral designs.

Both her family connections and the conditions of history were favorable to Coffin's subsequent success. The Country Place era was at its peak, resulting in an increasing demand for elaborate estate designs in the European, particularly Italian Renaissance, tradition. Coffin was one obvious choice for such commissions. She was a woman of "taste" from an esteemed family. She had traveled widely and received professional training at a respected school. Her social contacts with families like the duPont's gave her access to many prospective clients.

At first, Coffin designed floral gardens for small residential properties. However, by 1912, her design for the residence of Edward Sprague in Flushing, New York, was published in *Country Life of America* and more challenging commissions followed. By the end of the first World War, Coffin had moved and enlarged her office from the original two-room office at 15 Gramercy Park to a larger space at 830 Lexington Avenue. In addition, she had hired architect James Scheiner to help her with the preparation of plans and the design of the architectural features of her commissions.

By the early 1920's, based on the number of commissions executed at this time, Coffin was one of the most sought after landscape architects on the east coast. Most of the gardens she designed were in the fashionable suburbs of New York City. Coffin did extensive work on Long Island and in parts of Westchester County, New York and Connecticut. Due to her friendship with members of the duPont family, she also had many commissions in Delaware. This pioneer female landscape architect was a friend of Henry Francis duPont who was a cousin of Mrs. Sharp. Miss Coffin worked with Henry Francis duPont to perfect the gardens at Winterthur.

The period from about 1916 to 1930 can be regarded as the peak of Coffin's career. The vast majority of her commissions were executed at this time. Her work was extensively photographed and published in popular magazines and professional publications such as *Country Life in America*, *Architectural Record*, and *House and Garden*. She was elected a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1918. In 1930, she received the Medal of Honor, the Architectural League of New York's highest award for landscape architecture, for her designs for the Wing estate in Millbrook, New York and the Bassick estate in Fairfield, Connecticut. Coffin maintained her practice in New York City until 1927, when a hip infection prompted her to permanently move to New Haven, Connecticut.

The stock market crash of 1929, and the following depression marked the end of the Country Place era and, with it, the end of large residential commissions. Afterwards, most of Coffin's work on smaller suburban gardens hardly paid enough to meet expenses. During this slow period, she occupied herself with writing, and published one book, *Trees and Shrubs for Landscape Effects*, in 1940, in which she described her approach to landscape design at length. A second book, called *The Seeing Eye*, was never published, and the completed manuscript was lost after her death.

After World War II she designed gardens at Mt. Cuba for Mr. Lammond duPont Copeland. In addition, to her work for High Rodney Sharp at Gibraltar, Mr. Sharp assisted Miss Coffin in receiving a commission to develop landscape plans for the renovation of the University of Delaware's main campus.

Coffin's success was a tribute to her talent and business acumen, courage and fierce determination. Marian Coffin is recognized as one of America's pioneering landscape architects for the quality of her designs and the fact that she became a professional when "ladies" didn't work. Throughout her career, Coffin designed more than 130 commissions, among them fifty of the finest private estate gardens along the east coast. Her clients came from the most prominent families. They included the Fricks, the Vanderbilt, the Huttons, and several family members of the duPont's, who recognized her work for its sophistication and sensitive approach to the natural attributes of the land.

In 1946, Coffin received an honorary doctorate of letters from Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, she designed several plans for the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx, and traveled extensively to Europe and South America. The completion of the "April Garden" at Winterthur, for her lifetime friend, Henry Francis duPont, marked the end of her professional career. Marian Coffin died on February 2, 1957 in her house in New Haven at the age of 81.

Gibraltar: The Brinkle Years

Gibraltar had been the family home to the Brinkle family since 1844. The first Brinckles to settle in Wilmington, on a farm on the Kennett Pike were Dr. John Brinkle (1764-1835), born in Dover, Delaware, and his wife Elizabeth Gordon Brinkle, niece of Caesar Rodney (1728-1784), the first governor of Delaware, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Their fourth child, John Rodney Brinkle (1794-1875), built the original core of the existing house and named the property "Gibraltar" because the house stood on a high rocky prominence overlooking the city. Then, the property covered a tract that is roughly defined by what is now Pennsylvania Avenue (the former Kennett Turnpike), Mount Salem Lane, 18th Street and Weedlawn Avenue (extending over approximately eighty acres of land).

Legend says that John Rodney Brinkle, a manufacturer and prosperous cotton broker in Philadelphia, built the house in 1844 to win the hand of an attractive Philadelphia woman. Yet it appears that the marriage never came to pass. For the next few years John used the house as his bachelor retreat and a show place where he entertained his friends and relatives and indulged his hobby for horticultural experiment.

In C. 1848, John Brinkle invited his brother, the Reverend Samuel Crawford Brinkle (1796-1863), to move to Gibraltar from Philadelphia and reside in the house with his wife, Julia Rumsay Brinkle and their eight children. The head of Grace Church and Assistant Minister of the United Swedish Churches, Samuel Brinkle returned from Philadelphia in 1848, to settle at Gibraltar and sow the seeds of Christian faith in the area near the Brandywine Mills north of Wilmington. Most of the workers in this region came from the duPont Powder Mills, and with the support of Alexis Irene duPont, Brinkle formed the parish of Christ Church, Christiana Hundred.

Samuel purchased the Gibraltar farm from his brother in May 1862. He was also an ardent horticulturist and planted and landscaped the grounds around Gibraltar's mansion. After Samuel's death the estate passed to his widow Julia, and upon her death in 1878, went to their surviving children. In September 1909, the remaining family, including Samuel's daughters, Elizabeth and Susan Brinkle, their cousin Fanny Rodney Brinkle, and Gertrude Brincloe who was a friend and travel companion of the Sharps, sold a larger tract of land that included what is now the remaining 6.11 acre parcel with the main house and outbuilding of the original Gibraltar estate to Hugh Rodney Sharp and his wife Isabella Mathieu duPont Sharp.

Gibraltar: The Sharp Years

In June 1908, Hugh Rodney Sharp married Isabella Mathieu do Pont (1882-1946), sister to Pierre Samuel duPont (1870-1954) of Longwood Gardens, at St. Amour, the home of Isabella's mother, Mary Belin duPont. Following their honeymoon, the young couple lived at 2906 Woodland Avenue in Wilmington. Searching for a home for their new family, the Sharps recalled Gibraltar. It is very likely that Isabella was intimately familiar with the Gibraltar property since childhood from visits to the elderly Brinkle sisters Elizabeth and Susan who occupied Gibraltar at this time. Both Isabella and her mother Mary Belin duPont had long been acquainted with the Brinkle family. Isabella had been a bridesmaid in the 1902 wedding of Anna Hall Moncure to William Draper Brinkle. Mr. and Mrs. Sharp knew that Gibraltar was the house they wanted.

In 1909, they purchased Gibraltar from the Brinkle family. During the decades following their purchase of the property, the Sharps transformed Gibraltar into an elegant estate representative of the industrial affluence of the early twentieth century. They undertook considerable renovations and extensions of the house in 1916 and 1927, and hired New York landscape

architect Marian Cruger Coffin to design the complex and romantic gardens in the fashion of the American Country Place era. Marian Cruger Coffin worked on the design Gibraltar's gardens from 1916 to 1925.

Mr. Sharp became one of Delaware's preeminent preservationists and philanthropists. He was a man with high personal standards and a perfectionist's sense for detail. He gave meticulous attention to everything he did, particularly to horticulture as evidenced in his involvement in the design and development of the gardens at Gibraltar.

Renovations to Gibraltar

The Brinkle's had enjoyed the simple farm-style living, the house which they had built in the 1840's had no central heat or plumbing. Mr. and Mrs. Sharp, undertook considerable renovation of Gibraltar. During the C. 1915 renovations of the house, designed and directed by the Philadelphia architecture firm De Armond, Ashmead and Bickley, the original three-story, square core was enlarged to the west with a three-story addition. Expanding to the north, the dining room was enlarged and a two-story service wing was added. The south and east elevations and the third level of the north elevation of the original building remained intact. Both chimneys remained in their original roof locations, but it may have been during these renovations that the east elevation porch was altered, with only the central portico remaining. The original Doric Order columns were changed to the present square columns.

The C. 1927 renovation of the house, designed by Wilmington architect Albert Ely Ives, consisted of an extension to the south to enlarge the original living room, and the addition of a Conservatory next to the living room and library. An extension to the west porch was added at this time as was a two-story service wing to the north. Alan Lauretsen was the contractor for the 1927 renovations.

The two renovations of Gibraltar resulted in an irregular plan with a three-story main core and several two-and one-story additions. The east elevation changed into a three-story three bay central core flanked on the south with a two-story single bay addition. The north facade was irregular, consisting of a recessed one-story porch with square columns. Its entry lead to the kitchen and service areas. The west elevation was most altered. Several additions to the original three-bay facade resulted in an asymmetrical, nine-bay elevation. In the south, the elevation was dominated by the conservatory. Although the house was greatly renovated, the marvelous original staircase was preserved. Additions were constructed of stone from the original quarry found nearby.

The extensive renovations nearly tripled the size of the house. The country estate representing the conservative nineteenth century tradition was transformed into an elegant estate representing the affluence of the industrial wealth of the early twentieth century. Due to the great care taken by the Sharps and their architects, the house retained a high level of integrity in materials, workmanship, and general appearance. Mr. Sharp later referred to the changes at Gibraltar as a "restoration," but this had clearly not been his original intention. Rather, these changes reveal his own taste for what was fashionable yet compatible with his way of life and sympathetic in style to the original building. The Sharp renovations were architect designed and compatible with the original house and thus the dwelling retains a high level of structural integrity. Architecturally Gibraltar is significant under Criteria C as an example of the transition in style between the Italianate and Classical Revival.

Because of the renovations, the house has an irregular plan with a three-story main core and several two-and-one-story additions. The east elevation changed into a three-story three bay central core flanked on the south with a two-story single bay addition. The north facade was irregular, consisting of a recessed one-story porch with square columns. Its entry led to the kitchen and service areas. The west elevation was most altered. Several additions to the original three-bay facade resulted in an asymmetrical, nine-bay elevation. In the south, the elevation was dominated by the conservatory.

"Restoration" of Gibraltar was a labor of love for Mr. Sharp as he had considerable concern for preservation. However, while the architecture of Gibraltar is noteworthy with original Italianate core and Colonial Revival renovations and additions by early twentieth century architects; De Armond, Ashmead and Bickey of Philadelphia, and Albert Ely Ives of Wilmington, its significance under Criteria C is for its high degree of the intact landscape designs by Marian Cruger Coffin.

Landscape Design of Gibraltar

The remodeling of Gibraltar's house and outbuildings was accompanied by the transformation of its nineteenth century farm landscape into a complex of romantic gardens designed and carried out by Marian Cruger Coffin. The setting of the mansion was greatly enhanced with landscaping and formal gardens.

Mr. Sharp hired Miss Coffin in C. 1915 to design the landscape features and formal gardens. Coffin's scheme for Gibraltar represented both the neoclassical taste and style of the Country Place era. The neoclassical design principles popular

during the early years of the twentieth century strongly influenced and guided Coffin's design for Gibraltar. The layout consisted of a series of garden rooms designed and built over a period of eight years from 1916 until 1923.

Coffin's design style and philosophy are well represented at Gibraltar. The entirety of the Gibraltar estate reads as a sampler of Ms. Coffin's design technique. The placement of the formal gardens parallel to the long axis of the house rather than at right angles; and garden areas spatially organized into individual "garden rooms", accented by classical architectural features and garden ornaments speaks of Coffin's classical influence.

While her work was similar to that of her contemporaries, her designs as represented by her work at Gibraltar, distinguished her by her strong sense of scale and proportion, knowledge of plants and a gift for envisioning the possibilities of a place. She was most successful, as evidenced at Gibraltar, in the integration of the site and the house into the designed landscape, balancing architectural features and formal garden layouts with naturalistic plantings and exuberant flower beds.

Her choice of plants for Gibraltar reflected her concern for their scale in relation to the surrounding plantings, buildings, and overall design scheme. Based on her horticultural knowledge Coffin chose plants with strong form and structure, and good foliage, keeping in mind their value to the composition at maturity. A comparison between Coffin's design, surviving plant purchase lists and historic photographs affirms that her designs were installed under her supervision. For areas where no planting plan exists, photographs and records show that Coffin's plantings were similar to the current plantings.

Since the completion of Coffin's work the changes to the landscape at Gibraltar have been subtle and ruled by the desire to improve its appearance. There were no fundamental alterations of Coffin's spatial layout and plantings. Rather, single plants or a few species were rearranged or moved within the gardens, dead plants replaced and weak areas done over. Garden ornaments shifted and tried in different settings.

Significance

Gibraltar is significant under Criterion B for its association with Philanthropist Hugh Rodney Sharp, and under Criterion C for the terraced landscape and gardens designed by prominent female landscape architect Marian Cruger Coffin; and for the distinctive Colonial Revival architectural details exhibited in the residence and accessory buildings of the estate. Renovations at Gibraltar were undertaken by regionally renowned architects; De Armond, Ashmead and Bickley of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Albert Ely Ives of Wilmington.

The Gibraltar estate is an excellent example of an architecturally evolved estate of a Wilmington-based significant industrial family. During the early twentieth century Gibraltar evolved from the county home of the Brinkle family into the grand estate industrial affluent philanthropist and preservationist, Hugh Rodney Sharp.

Gibraltar has from its beginnings been associated with prominent Delaware families. Built c.1844, as the country estate of John Rodney Brinkle, a prominent cotton merchant and grand nephew of Caesar Rodney, first Governor of Delaware and signatory of the Declaration of Independence. By 1848 his brother Reverend Samuel Crawford Brinkle with his wife, Julia Rumsey Brinkle and their children were residing at Gibraltar. Samuel purchased the property in 1862. In 1909 Gibraltar became the home of Hugh Rodney and his wife Isabella Mathieu duPont Sharp. Mr. Sharp, one of Delaware's preeminent preservationists and philanthropists was associated with the early twentieth century growth of the duPont Company.

Gibraltar is important for its American Country Place era landscape design by pioneer woman landscape architect Marian Cruger Coffin. The outstanding landscape design supports the substantial residence and support building which embody the distinctive characteristics of type and period. The Colonial Revival mansion is enhanced by the elegant formal landscaping and gardens which exhibit distinctive stylistic influences while also reflecting the successful and affluent expression of early twentieth century industrial wealth. The structures and gardens of the Gibraltar estate exhibit high levels of master design and workmanship and they retain integrity of design.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS:)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record
- See continuation sheet for additional HABS/HAER documentation.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
-
-
-
-
-

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 6.11

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	450720	440120	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Mary Anna Ralph, former Historic Preservation Planner

organization: City of Wilmington Planning Department

date: 5/31/1995

street & number: 800 North French Street

telephone: (302) 571-4130

city or town: Wilmington

state: Delaware

zip code: 19801-

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name: Preservation Delaware, Inc.

street & number: 2600 Pennsylvania Avenue

telephone: (302) 651-9617

city or town: Wilmington

state: Delaware

zip code: 19806-

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget. Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9. Major Bibliographical References

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10. Geographical Data

Page 1.

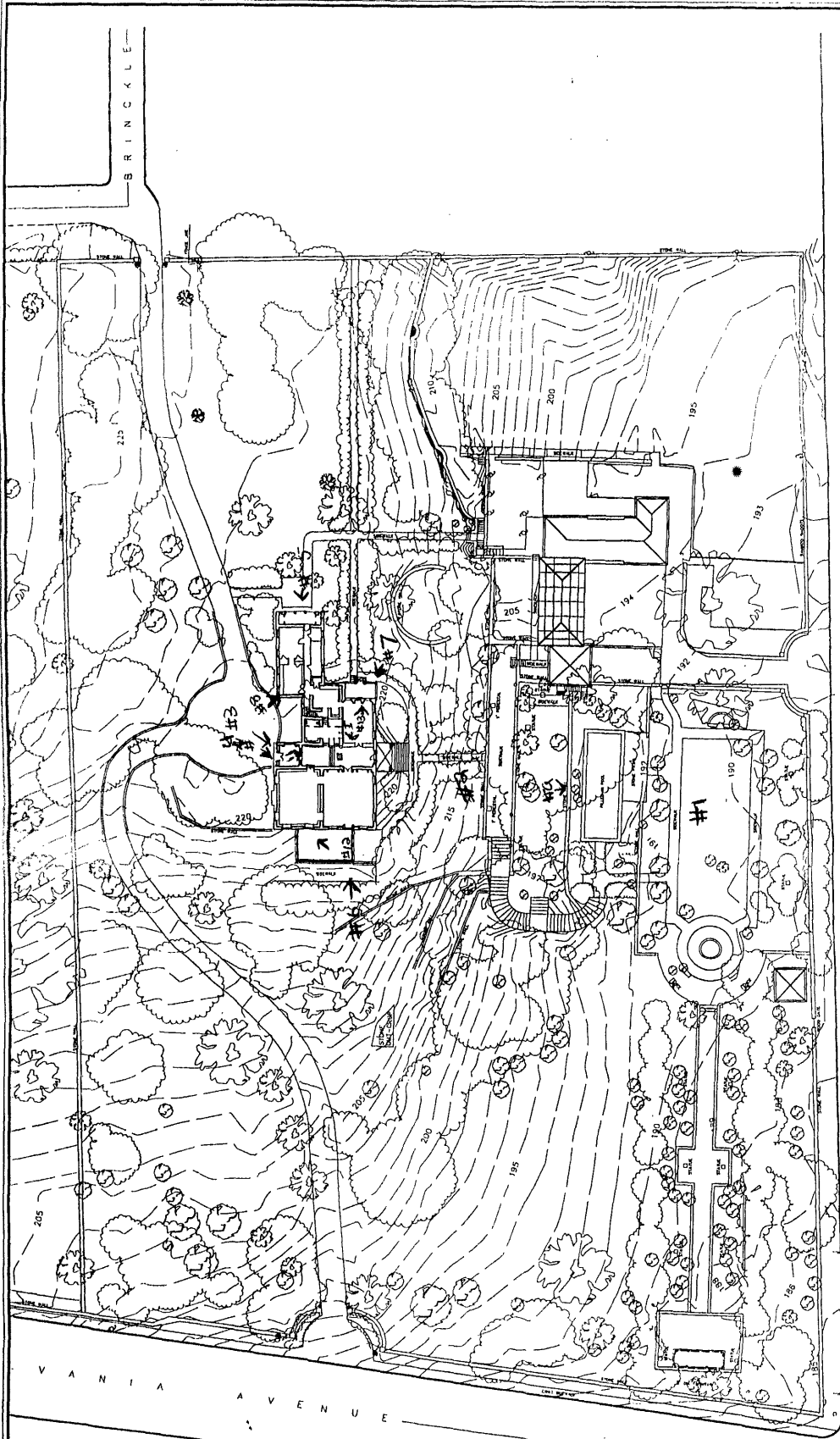
Gibraltar
New Castle County, Delaware

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property associated with the Gibraltar Estate contains approximately 6.11 acres more or less, follows the legal property lines for 2501 Pennsylvania Avenue, Wilmington parcel 2601220004 containing within such metes and bounds, as indicated on maps 12.1 & 12.2 of the New Castle County Property Map dated January 1990

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the remaining portions of the Gibraltar estate historically associated with the residence of Hugh Rodney Sharp and the landscape design of Marian Cruger Coffin



G R E E N H I L L A V E N U E

Gibraltar
3501 Dewey/Leavica Ave
Wilmington, DE

GIBRALTAR
SITE PLAN

HOMSEY
ARCHITECTS



SCALE: 1" = 30'