

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: "901"

Other names/site number:

Name of related multiple property listing:

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



### 2. Location

Street & number: 901 Mount Lebanon Road

City or town: Rockland State: Delaware County: New Castle County

Not For Publication:

Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal 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 X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

	<b>DESHPO</b>	<b>2/20/2017</b>
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>		<b>Date</b>
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>		

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

901
Name of Property New Castle County, Delaware
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number   3   Page   1  

Certified Local Government Agency Certification

In my opinion, 901   meets   does not meet the National Register criteria.

  T.P. Gordon  

Thomas P. Gordon  
County Executive  
New Castle County, Delaware

  5.26.16  

Date

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

*Patrick Andrews*  
Signature of the Keeper

*3/28/2017*  
Date of Action

**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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>2</u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ Single Dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ Single Dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)  
Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD, STONE

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

**Summary Paragraph**

Constructed in two phases in 1950 and 1973, the contemporary house known simply as "901" (pronounced "nine-oh-one") to its owners, is located at 901 Mount Lebanon Road, in the vicinity of the unincorporated historic village of Rockland, within Brandywine Hundred, in the Wilmington vicinity of New Castle County, Delaware. The property is situated just east of the former Rockland Falls Mill Complex (part of the Rockland Historic District listed in the National Register in 1972 - #72000289) on land formerly owned by the mill, less than two miles west of Route 202 (Concord Pike), directly south and west of Brandywine Creek State Park, and just north of the DuPont Country Club. Located in the hilly piedmont region of Delaware, the house is sited on the crest of a large hill above the Brandywine Creek, enjoying a long view across its wooded valley. Sitting on a 4.22 acre parcel, and attached to an adjoining second parcel of 2.63 acres to the northwest, the property totals nearly 7 acres, and is bordered by protected land (Brandywine Creek State Park) on three sides when including the land directly across the road (Woodley Park). Adjoining the property on the southwest side is another single-family residence, which is screened significantly by mature tree growth on both parcels. The property at "901" has large open spaces of pasture and hillside grass, but a feeling of privacy and seclusion is afforded by large mature trees at the edges of the property and around the perimeter

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of the house. "901" retains a high level of integrity for location, setting, feeling, design, workmanship, materials, and association.

## **Narrative Description**

### Road Side

"901" is accessed by a long driveway that rises steadily until circling in front of the house. The circle portion of the driveway nests within the footprint of the one-story house, which resembles a half-octagon. The circle driveway features mature groundcover and a massive ash tree that towers above the low-profile house. The central, main block of the house is flanked by two main wings, each roughly equal in size to the center block, with each bending towards the road at approximately a 45 degree angle. While the south wing is rectangular, the northwest wing is shaped like a boot, the heel of which attaches to the main block. The northeast wing is adjoined by yet another rectangular wing, the garage section, which bends at an additional 45-degree angle so that the garage block is at a 90-degree angle to the main block of the house.

With walls clad in stone, the house is topped with a very low-pitched gabled roof, significantly reducing its profile and further enhancing its decidedly horizontal orientation. The front elevation of the main block totals four bays, including the principal door and three windows. The entryway, at the southernmost bay, is a large double-door with a decorative wood lintel overhead and double screen doors on the exterior. The original double-doors are heavy, wooden, with three-square panels stacked vertically and circular brass doorknobs centered within each middle panel. To the right of the door are three-square windows, spaced regularly and symmetrically. Like most exterior openings, which generally lack large mouldings or shutters, the surrounds of the three windows are minimalist, showing only thin, red wood trim and a plain lintel above. A cubic stone chimney extends above the roof between the doorway and first window, and to the far right of the main block, a small domed skylight rises above the roof near the roof junction between the main block and the northeast wing. The seam between sections is also punctuated by a downspout running vertically to the ground along the bend. Besides the area in front of the main entryway, where the driveway is paved to meet the front step, the front of the main block is landscaped with a narrow band of shrubbery and ground cover that softens the intersection between the building and the ground.

The front elevation of the south wing, which faces east, includes the original wing and a later bedroom addition, about half the size of the original wing. The original portion is two bays and includes two tripartite windows spaced far apart, making the stonewall surface the dominant visual feature. The 1970s addition, at the south end of the wing, is smaller than the original wing but features larger windows, vertical like the others on the wing but clustered into four contiguous vertical panels. The roof, with a similar low pitch as the rest of the house, is interrupted by two large rectangular skylights, which light the bedroom below.

On the other side of the main block, to the northeast, the kitchen wing elevation appears to be two sections. The larger portion, closest to the main block, displays only a single tripartite window on the right side, with simple trim and a plain wood lintel. A second, shorter portion of the wing, which contains only a sunroom that was formerly a breezeway, displays a break in the

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roofline between the first portion of the wing. The breezeway portion of the wing features a single-pane door with a plain transom window above, and to its right, a large window with six tall, vertical panes. Both the door and window feature are topped by a single plain lintel board, and both door and windows are surrounded by simple wood trim. The window unit terminates just before the stone abutment that marks the beginning of the garage addition.

The garage addition, at the eastern end of the house, bends at an additional 45-degree angle from the kitchen addition, making it perpendicular to the main, central block of the house. It is composed of three garage bays, off-center toward the house. The garage doors are separated by large, square, stone columns that represent the continuation of the wall surface of the stone house. Besides the wood band trim that runs under the eaves, there is an additional wood plank lintel spanning the three garage bays. The original 1950s house, however, had only two bays, with a greenhouse standing where the current third bay of the garage now sits. The garage was expanded in 1970s to add the third bay, with demolition of the original greenhouse.

#### Valley Side

The rear portion of the garage addition, which faces northeast, has concrete/stucco walls and features two rear entries into the garage, one of which is accessed by a set of concrete steps. The garage wing is connected to the kitchen-library segment of the house by a former breezeway that was finished into a breakfast-sunroom. The roof of the breezeway connector is lower by approximately one foot, and the exterior wall is inset from both the garage and the kitchen-library segments of the house, making the breezeway connector a visually distinct section of the house. A large window with five vertical rectangular panes dominates this elevation, abutting the kitchen-library section and running about halfway to the garage section. The window unit is topped by two wide bands of simple wood trim under the overhanging eave. Below the window, a slightly protruding band of stucco, about two feet tall, creates the appearance of a massive window sill.

The kitchen-library segment of the house is L-shaped, with the kitchen portion remaining in the half-octagon footprint and the library jutting out perpendicularly to the rear, toward the valley to the north. The north wall of the kitchen portion, is stucco covered and features four openings, including a rectangle window and a door at the basement level and two windows above, at the main floor. The windows are surrounded by minimal wood framing, are supported by narrow stone sills, and topped and the two upper windows are topped with wide bands of wood trim, which abut a similar wide band of wooden trim under the eave. The door is surrounded by wider, wooden mouldings.

The rear library extension from the kitchen section shows three elevations. The east elevation, which is perpendicular to the kitchen section, is dominated by a wide, coursed stone chimney, the full width of which interrupts the eave extends to the height of the roof peak. The elevation features just one opening, a small vertical rectangular basement window near ground level, with a brick sill and plain frame. The northern third of this elevation, from the chimney to corner, is wood sided above the basement level.

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The library section's north wall features wood clapboard siding on the main level, including the gable. The elevation is dominated by two large openings, including a large picture window on the first floor and a large slider door at the walkout basement level. The basement slider is a tripartite door with plain, wide, wooden trim flanking the sides. The picture window is also tripartite, dominated by one large rectangular window in the middle and two thin, vertical rectangular windows on the ends. The roofline here is asymmetrical, with the east side featuring a very shallow eave and short return cornice, while the west eave overhangs widely and is supported visually at the corner of the main story by a column of stone that is the end of the veneer for the west elevation. A high stone retaining wall, parallel to the north elevation, abuts the corner of the house at the main story and tapers gradually to the west, eventually interrupted by a small stairway to the lower terrace below the rear upper terrace.

The west elevation of the library section, along with the main living room section and the bedroom/office section, partially wrap around a large, terraced, multilevel patio and landscaping feature that is the focal point and primary exterior living space of the valley side of the house. The main terrace area, which abuts the house against all three of these sections, is at the same level as the main floor of the house. The terrace, constructed of stone, affords a beautiful and expansive view over the valley to the north. A flight of nine steps leads down to a secondary terrace, which includes a stone-built barbeque and stone benches, adjacent to the stairway through the north retaining wall. A sidewalk to the southwest accesses yet a lower, grassy, informal terrace at the top of the backyard, currently featuring chairs and a fire pit and used as a third outdoor living space overlooking the hill and valley. The entire terrace area, where not covered by stone, is landscaped with mature plantings, including boxwood, pachysandra, and azaleas.

The west elevation of the library section is covered by a coursed stone veneer, which intersects with the stone terrace at ground level. The wall is dominated by a large picture window that takes advantage of the view from the library, and directly abutting the window is a door with similar plain framing. Widely overhanging eaves extend several feet past the wall surface, a feature that continues in the other two house sections that abut the terrace.

The main living room section of the house is by far the longest facing the terrace, and is almost entirely comprised of a panoramic window feature, divided into four expansive panes and covering horizontally about 4/5 of the wall. The window is topped by the same wide, wooden lintel trim found over many exterior openings. The remaining 1/5 of the elevation, on the southwest end, includes a veneer stone column between the panoramic window and a double, slider door that features a massive transom window that is larger than the slider doors, topped with a wide lintel trim board. Except for in front of the slider door, mature, knee-high boxwood shrubs line the entire wall surface of the living room section, softening the intersection between the house and terrace.

The north elevation of the office portion of the bedroom/office section of the house is the last to face the terrace, though it is the shortest in length. Stone veneer covers its wall, except for a single, square window that is placed off-center to the left. Tall boxwood shrubs also sit in front



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of this wall, and near the corner of the building, another stairway of seven steps, with a wrought iron railing, leads down to the secondary terrace area.

The southwest elevation is composed of three major sections: the gabled office addition, the main bedroom wing, and the shorter bedroom addition at the far southwest end. The appearance of this entire elevation is the result of major renovations to the house made during the early-1970s. Leaving the raised terrace area, the grade tapers quickly to the south, where major excavation in 1973 enabled the rear den addition and a new basement level beneath the main floor of the entire bedroom wing. The wall surface at the outer edges is stone veneer, but the majority of the elevation is dominated by a central section formed mostly of windows and a band of horizontal wood clapboard siding between the first floor and basement level. The upstairs features three tall, vertical windows, with three shorter windows of equal width below. Above the main windows, a large, triangular transom window fills the gable, under a projecting roofline and fascia board. At the basement level, below five clapboards of horizontal wood siding, a band of four vertical windows is framed by mature bushes and shrubbery that covers the base of the addition.

Adjacent to the office addition is a full-length, rounded plexiglass sunroom added in 1973 that almost entirely obscures the main level of the original house, except for the low-pitched roof. A shorter sunroom of similar design also covers the bedroom addition at the far south end of the building. Four stone pillars support the forebay sunroom addition, which extends from the original house to be flush with the rear den addition and cantilevers over the wall surface of the basement level, which is recessed and flush with the original footprint of the house. Between the stone support pillars and the plexiglass sunroom, a two-foot wide band of vertical board siding spans the entire bedroom wing. Above the siding, the plexiglass wall extends vertically and then curves gradually to meet the roofline. The plexiglass wall is punctuated every few feet with a vertical rib, while just one horizontal support runs across the porch near the point the porch begins to curve toward the room. At both the north and south ends of the porch, air circulation is provided through a three louvered, horizontal windows. Beneath the sun porch, at the walkout lower level, a pair of French doors connects the interior bedroom area to the exterior covered terrace beneath the sunroom. The wall of the lower level, which is covered in stone veneer, features multiple vertical windows flanking both sides of the French doors. To the south, a shorter sunroom of nearly identical design covers the bedroom addition. This sunroom wall curves similarly upward toward the roofline, but terminates against the wall below the fascia board.

### Interior

The interior living space of the house was designed to be almost entirely on one, expansive level. Each of the rectangular segments of the house that are visible from the exterior represent one interior function. The living room, pierced on the southwest end by a massive stone chimney and featuring a dramatic panoramic view over the valley of the Brandywine Creek, forms the center of the dwelling. This primary section is flanked to the south by the bedroom wing, to the north by the den section, to the east by the kitchen wing, and beyond the kitchen, further east, the breezeway/garage section. To the west of the central living room, the house now includes an



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office addition extending to the west. This addition, added in 1973, was part of a large renovation that enlarged the lower-level living space below the office (creating a bedroom from a former laundry/sewing room), and enhancing the room below the library sections by turning the original mechanical room into a children's play room and moving the mechanicals to the room called "The Pit" underneath the living room. The 1973 renovation also witnessed the demolition of the greenhouse and addition of a third garage bay, as well as the addition of the "Plant Room" on the southern end of the master bedroom and reconfiguration of the master bedroom, demolishing the second middle original bedroom upstairs. The original single-story floor plan included three total bedrooms in the west wing. The 1973 renovations turned the upper story wing into a master bedroom/bath and office, and added a bedroom downstairs by cannibalizing the laundry/sewing room. By 1960, the unheated breezeway had been converted to year round living space, acting essentially as an extension of the kitchen adjacent to the garages.

The two primary living spaces, the living room and the library, retain a remarkably high level of original historic fabric from the 1950 construction. The office and kitchen areas were altered in 1973.

The main entry door enters directly from the driveway into the southwest end of the living room. This bright, expansive room features a twenty-five-foot-long panoramic window that overlooks the rear terrace area and the scenic valley to the northwest. A second dramatic feature is the 4' x 10' flagstone chimney, with a wide fireplace and raised hearth on the northwest elevation. Other original features include the tongue and groove, yellow pine floors and the long bands of horizontal trim above the panoramic window and the entire span of three square windows on the southeast elevation.

The library wing retains a remarkable level of integrity from the first period of construction. Accessed by two steps down from the living room or kitchen hallway, the library offers a striking contrast to the lighter spaces of the living room, since almost every surface of the library is clad in wood. The walls and vaulted ceiling are constructed of Phillipine mahogany planks, and the floors are hardwood. The library has large picture windows on the west and north elevations, also taking advantage of the valley view to the northwest and forest to the north. The south wall features built-in drawers and cabinet, including a sink counter, a built-in clock, and above the clock, narrow vertical slots cut into the wall as speaker vents. The east wall features a fireplace with a flagstone hearth and antique European tiles surrounding the fireplace opening.

The library and the living room both contain original contemporary style furniture, including the dining room table, chairs, and nested tables, much of it handmade by the original owner, Dr. Davis G. Durham.

#### Outbuildings

The only other structures on the property at "901" are an original tennis court and swimming pool (both 1950s) on the west side of the house, and a later, non-contributing horse stable along the driveway to the south of the house.

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### **Integrity**

**Location-** "901" retains a high level of integrity for location since the house has not been moved from its original hilltop location.

**Setting-** The setting of "901" retains a high level of integrity. The site is surrounded by state and county parkland (Woodley Park), and development has not and cannot encroach upon the site. The vistas overlooking the Brandywine Valley from "901" are also much the same as when the house was built in 1950. The actual acreage of "901" is also now under conservation easement, protecting it in perpetuity.

**Design-** "901" retains a high level of integrity of design. The original form, plan, and style of the house survives with minimal alterations. The original builders performed the only significant renovations, in 1973, in order to accommodate their growing family. These changes were in line with the original architectural vision, and continued to reflect the guiding design principles of modern and organic architecture.

**Workmanship-** Through the preservation of the stonework and woodwork, including the exterior walls of the house, the stone chimney/fireplace, the built-ins and vaulted ceiling in the den, and the continued presences of period furnishings designed in harmony with the domestic architecture, "901" retains strong integrity of workmanship.

**Materials-** The house retains integrity for materials, including original stone and woodwork. While the house was expanded in the 1970s, the homeowners utilized nearly identical examples of building materials, specifically stone and wood, creating a nearly seamless integration with the original house.

**Feeling-** "901" retains a high level of integrity for feeling. Outside, the site and setting around "901" are remarkably similar to when the house was built in 1950, and its inhabitants still enjoy long views, the privacy afforded by natural surroundings, and the relative quiet of living in a low-density, exurban location. Architecturally, the 1970s renovations to the house were compatible with its Modernist and "organic" design and the general feeling of the design was not compromised.

**Association-** With the continued ownership of the property by the Durham family, totaling more than sixty years, the dwelling house at "901" retains strong integrity of association.

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### 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.)

- A. Owned by a 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)  
ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
1950 (date of construction)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Jesse Luke Stetler  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

"901" is significant at the local level, under National Register Criterion "C." Constructed in 1950, hence the period of significance, the house is architecturally important as an example of the Contemporary style that emerged after World War II in the United States, as well as an example the "organic" architectural method as espoused by Frank Lloyd Wright and other early advocates of modern house design. The horizontal orientation of the house, its organic relationship to the surrounding landscape, its rational design based on interior space, and the forward-looking style of the house and its builders make "901" a significant, one-of-a-kind artifact of the post-World War II era in Delaware. The builders and owners, Dr. Davis Durham (a successful ophthalmological surgeon) and his wife Harriet Frorer Durham (an author and an advocate for prison reform) were distinguished residents in the village of Rockland. The architectural integrity of the original house remains high, though some modifications and expansions were made in 1973. These enhancements, being sensitive in design and materials used, neither detracted from nor compromised the integrity of the original house. They merely provided accommodations and spaces which met the changing needs of the Durham family.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Organic and Contemporary Architecture – Progressive, Forward-Looking Design**

"901" is a rare example in Delaware of the related design principles of "organic" and Contemporary architecture. The property typifies many defining characteristics of these Modernist styles of design, while at the same time reflecting customization, adaptation, and continuity by a large and growing family. "901" is still owned by a relative of the builder and retains much of its original design and feeling. The horizontal orientation of the house, its organic relationship to the surrounding landscape, its rational design based on interior space, and the forward-looking style of the house and its builders make "901" a significant, one-of-a-kind artifact of the post-World War II era in Delaware.

Contemporary or Modern architecture emerged as a popular mode of building in the United States after World War II.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary design was revolutionary in the sense that it was "consciously forward-looking" and purposely broke ties with traditional antecedents—emphasizing honesty of form, efficiency, and technological advances. This forward-looking orientation was also a collective attempt, after the horrors of World War II, to "avoid dwelling on the past" and "to re-affirm instead a faith in the future."<sup>2</sup> In rejecting historical precedents and unnecessary ornamentation, many early Modern architects rejected the very notion of style and change, instead believing in a more honest, true, and universal approach that would transcend artificial or superficial "styles" and fads.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lesley Jackson, *Contemporary: Architecture and Interiors of the 1950s* (London: Phaidon Press, 1994), 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



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Contemporary architecture did not enjoy mainstream popularity until the 1950s, but it grew from a longer tradition of progressive design movements that began to emerge during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Especially in the United States, Contemporary architecture was influenced by the earlier Prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Chicago School. Prairie architecture, most influential from about 1900 to 1920, consciously rejected the tendency of American architects to rely on European precedents, boldly advancing architectural forms indigenous to the United States. Houses designed in the Prairie style featured strong horizontal orientations (representing the long horizons of vast American prairies), including flat roofs, rectangular house segments, widely overhanging eaves, horizontal bands of windows, linear belt courses and trim, minimal ornamentation on wall surfaces, and open floor plans in the interior.<sup>4</sup> Prairie-style exteriors often exhibited continuity of line and wall surface, which accentuated the horizontalness of the building, with "a spirited interplay" of short vertical accents, such as piers, chimneys, and narrow vertical windows.<sup>5</sup> Many of these features of Prairie houses would eventually be incorporated into contemporary designs a half-century later.

A central design philosophy of many Prairie-style architects, especially Frank Lloyd Wright, was an "organic" approach to architecture. Champions of "organic architecture" aimed to design buildings that were both "coherent" and in harmony with their natural surroundings. In fact, houses were often meant to appear as though they "grew out of" their site organically. This was accomplished through compatible design with the landscape, a respect for local building traditions, and through the use of local building materials.<sup>6</sup> Since organic design was dependent on a building's ability to integrate with the land, the siting of an organic dwelling was critical to the overall aesthetic and feeling of a house. Building sites were chosen carefully and consciously to ensure that a house could be crafted to successfully reflect—and be a part of—its environment. When possible, houses would also be sited to take advantage of a dramatic view—a feature also common with the later Contemporary Style, which borrowed much from the Prairie school.<sup>7</sup>

After World War I, the influential but short-lived Prairie school of design fell out of fashion, and several decades would pass before its ideas reemerged through the Contemporary movement after World War II. The Contemporary style in America, while borrowing from Prairie examples, was born of the international "Modern" movement in architecture, which blossomed in the 1920s and 1930s in both Europe and the United States. During these early decades, Modernist architects had "striven to create a 'style without a style'" and aimed for a "complete rejection of historicist ornament and aesthetics."<sup>8</sup> Modernism was not supposed to be "yet another style in an ever-changing historical sequence," and instead, its proponents actually

<sup>4</sup> H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972, page 5.

<sup>5</sup> Allen, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Mumford "Form Follows Nature: The Origins of American Architecture," p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> See Lesley Jackson, 27, as well as "Frequently Asked Questions" on website for Frank Lloyd Wright's "Talieson," at [www.TaliesonPreservation.org](http://www.TaliesonPreservation.org), section titled "What does the term Organic Architecture mean?"

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 and 12.

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rejected "the very concept of change and style" while seeking a pure, universal, and honest form of design.<sup>9</sup>

This die-hard rejection of "style" by the early Modern architects would loosen over time, and by the time Modernist design "captured the public imagination" and become more mainstream in the late 1940s and the 1950s, after the turmoil of World War II, "Contemporary" architecture had itself become a "style" to most observers. Still, as Lesley Jackson argues, referring to Contemporary as a "style" does not "belittle its achievements in relation to the high-minded ideals of Modernism," nor does it suggest that "its creators were solely interested in aesthetics." Instead, recognizing Contemporary architecture as a style concedes the importance of its revolutionary aesthetic impact on modern house design.<sup>10</sup>

### **"901" – An Organic Home in the Contemporary Style**

"901" is a strong example of both organic architecture and post-WWII Contemporary design. When analyzing any Contemporary Style building, it can be difficult to separate distinct architectural features that are *only* organic, Prairie, Modernist, or Contemporary. In many ways, there is significant overlap between these interrelated schools of thought and design. Contemporary architecture often captures elements of all these approaches under a single umbrella. However, because the design of "901" is strongly organic, and Contemporary architecture is not always organic, the specific distinction is made here. However, in this discussion of "901" and its design, features are not necessarily labeled as strictly "Organic," or "Prairie," or "Contemporary," since they often represent all three.

Modernist design offered an aesthetic considered suitable for the emerging bourgeoisie professional class, and the Durhams—a young eye surgeon and his college-educated spouse—certainly fit within this mold.<sup>11</sup> Though often forward-looking and sophisticated, many builders of modernist architecture sought refuge from urban life by building in exurban areas, in rural, secluded settings.<sup>12</sup> This trend lent itself well to organic approaches to building, since large parcels outside the city offered visually interesting natural landscapes and the ability to select compatible building sites. The Durham's site selection for "901" was certainly a part of this broader trend, since the newly married couple had been living in the city of Wilmington before building their dream home well beyond the city's outskirts.<sup>13</sup>

The location of "901" and its relationship to its setting makes it a representative example of "Organic" architecture. "901" is sited dramatically upon the crest of a hill overlooking the scenic Brandywine Creek valley below. In order to take advantage of this vantage point, the footprint of "901" breaks away from a simple rectangular form into what resembles a half-octagon—with two additional short sections built perpendicular to the rear middle corners of the

<sup>9</sup> See Lesley Jackson, 27, as well as "Frequently Asked Questions" on website for Frank Lloyd Wright's "Talieson," at [www.TaliesonPreservation.org](http://www.TaliesonPreservation.org), section titled "What does the term Organic Architecture mean?", 11

<sup>10</sup> Lesley Jackson, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Twombly, *New Forms, Old Functions: Social Aspects of Prairie School Design*, p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>13</sup> "History of 901" by Davis Durham, and Wilmington City Directories.

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building. The half-octagon form allows the house to wrap around the hillcrest, working with the contours of the landscape, while maximizing the number of interior spaces enjoying a dramatic view over the river valley. Although the house appears to be one-story when approaching from the Mt. Lebanon Road side, it is built into the excavated hilltop so that the basement level of the bedroom, den, and garage sections are exposed on the valley side, essentially creating a two-story structure with "walkout" doors at ground level on the valley side of the hill.<sup>14</sup> Behind the main living room wing, between the rear den and office additions, terraced patios descend two levels from the main story of the house—so that the central portion of the house descends gradually to the rear slope, further intermingling house and hillside. Mature ground cover, plantings, and shrubs further enhance this blending of house and landscape. This integration of the house into the hilltop is a defining feature of organic architecture.

The low profile of the house, with its single story, with no attic, and shallow-pitched roof, ensures that the house squats low to the ground, hugging the hillside, projecting minimally above the hilltop with which it blends. Drawing on organic architecture's tendency to reflect local building traditions and materials, much of the house—especially on the roadside—features a veneer layer of Avondale stone. This aesthetic echoes the historic tradition of stone construction in the hilly and rocky piedmont region of northern Delaware. Since the building site was not directly adjacent to Mount Lebanon Road, a long driveway of over 150 yards was constructed at an angle from the road to climb gradually to the house site. At "901," site selection was obviously critical to achieve this organic dynamic and to take advantage of the panoramic view of the valley.

A dominant architectural feature of "901" is its horizontal orientation—a defining characteristic of Prairie and Contemporary architecture. This is expressed in many ways inside and outside the house, especially through its form, ornamentation, and fenestration. On the largest scale, the form of the house is dominantly horizontal and linear. On the road side, the sprawling four wings of the house span nearly 150 feet in combined length. When combined with the short height of the wall surfaces, with no visible foundation and a low-profile roof, the overall effect is a dramatically narrow, linear profile on the horizon. Further accentuating the sprawling, horizontal nature of the structure is a wide band of wood trim runs under the eaves of all four wings of the house, running in a continuous line across the top of every wall surface. Long window and door lintels act as an additional horizontal band of trim across a large percentage of the elevation. Lengthy bands of windows further punctuate the horizontal focus of the elevation. The kitchen/breezeway wing features an almost continuous band of 9 window panels and a door, with the only interruption existing where an interior wall formerly separated the kitchen and breezeway. On the bedroom wing, a similar window feature is formed by 3 panels on the main wing and 4 additional panels at the hallway section abutting the adjacent bedroom addition.<sup>15</sup> Across the living room section, three uniform, square windows are spaced evenly to stretch

<sup>14</sup> The original 1950 building had only one walkout door, under the library, which was the original furnace room. The current bedrooms under the master wing were added sometime in the late 1950s, during an excavation that created a basement level under that wing.

<sup>15</sup> The current owner notes that these windows on the façade are replacement windows, and that the original windows featured awnings.



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across most of the wall surface. Lastly, even the stacked stone of the wall surface is composed mostly of thin horizontal pieces, embodying even in the smallest detail the horizontal nature of this contemporary home.

Except for the living room section and the adjoining library and office sections, the valley side elevations are now two stories high, creating a much taller profile than the front of the house. However, the horizontal orientation does not cease here. Dramatic overhanging eaves, a clear Prairie influence, project from the low-pitched roof above the entire terrace area, which adjoins the library, living room, and office sections. A large picture window in the library and a panoramic window feature across much of the living room section enhance the linear effect. A row of boxwood shrubs at the base of the wall stretches across most of the living room section. Other wings of the house also highlight the horizontal design. The end elevation of the office section features three horizontal bands of windows, as well as wide clapboard siding. The bedroom wing, which was excavated during the 1973 renovation to add the walk-out basement level, features a plexiglass sunroom dome (added circa 1980), including a line of horizontal framing, that spans the entire length of the section. Beneath the sunroom, visually separating it from the recessed lower level, is a long, wooden trim band, about two feet tall, that also runs the entire length of the section.

Contemporary architecture often featured an increased window-to-wall ratio, and the valley side of "901" exemplifies this. With two large picture windows on the library section, the panoramic window feature across the living room section, the library addition that is dominated by windows on the main level and basement, and the entire bedroom wing featuring a sunroom and large windows at the lower level, the rear side of the house includes more windows than wall surface.

Another dramatic change that occurred with the emergence of Modernist architecture was the reorientation of interior spaces. Instead of allowing the exterior shape to dictate interior spatial arrangements, architects now adopted an inside-out approach, allowing interior organization to determine the overall shape and appearance of the house. This shift allowed the users of the space themselves, and their patterns of movement, to dictate the design and layout of the house.<sup>16</sup> The "open" floor plan was revolutionary design philosophy that became a hallmark of Contemporary architecture. Open floor plans allowed for the removal of permanent barriers and moved away from compartmentalized spaces. The reorientation of the open floor plan allowed rooms to blend seamlessly into one another. Rather than creating static, single-function rooms, open floor plans facilitated more versatility in these larger spaces.<sup>17</sup> This most often manifested in a combination of interior living spaces like the kitchen and dining room, but might also mean incorporating exterior features like garages into the house itself, adding convenience and reducing the cost and space of an additional building.<sup>18</sup> As a result of changes to interiors, the form and appearance of exteriors of structures dramatically changed.

<sup>16</sup> Lesley Jackson, p.12.

<sup>17</sup> William Lescaze, "The Meaning of Modern Architecture." *The North American Review*, Vol. 244, No. 1 (Autumn, 1937), p. 110.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 114.

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"901" is unusual and progressive for exhibiting elements of both outside-in and inside-out design. The open floor plan concept was expressed mostly through the combination of the dining room and living room, creating a primary living space at the heart of the house that enjoyed a dramatic view over the Brandywine Creek valley. However, the half-octagon form, with its 6 distinct sections, allowed for a progressive design program for interior living spaces. The house was uniquely divided into large wings that served particular functions—the two sections furthest removed from the valley view, the garage and kitchen wings, were utilized for more utilitarian service functions. The central section of the house, positioned to enjoy the best view, and accessed through the front door, was composed of a single, large, open room intended to function as the primary living space, including the large living room/dining room combination with a fireplace. The panoramic window in the living room also overlooked the rear terrace, which could function as additional primary living space in the warmer months. To the south, yet another separate wing housed all of the bedrooms, which were originally all accessed by a long hallway extending the length of the wing. Two additional sections project from the corners of the valley side to take further advantage of the view and to serve specialty functions—the library on the north side of the house and the office (expanded from an original bedroom) on the west side. This segmentation of living functions was in some ways more revolutionary than the open floor plan concept, since it exaggerated the compartmentalization of function found in more traditional houses.

The use of larger and more frequent windows to capitalize on the dramatic siting at "901" is also a reflection of organic design and Contemporary architecture. The use of the panoramic window in the living room and the other picture windows on the main level create the effect of bringing the natural landscape into the home. The reduction in visual barriers between the outdoors and the interior of the house contributes to the organic integration of spaces.

A few other features at "901" are notable for exemplifying Contemporary design. Especially in Wrightian architecture, large interior chimneys are often designed to appear to ground the structure.<sup>19</sup> At "901," a large stone chimney and hearth pierces the southwest side of the large living room/dining room section. The garage is attached and blended into the architecture of the house. The kitchen has been moved to the front of the house and faces the driveway. Other more personalized features of "901" that are reflective of modern design practices are the built-ins and custom furniture that Davis Durham himself crafted. In line with Modernist architectural traditions, many household objects relied on the simple geometric forms with minimal embellishments. Architectural elements found in the den, living room, and kitchen highlight these principles.

#### **Dr. Davis Durham and Harriett F. Durham – Progressive, Forward Thinkers**

It is perhaps unsurprising that the Durhams chose a forward-looking design for their new home. Together, and through their own individual work, they both worked to improve society through invention, philanthropy, and public policy. Both were recognized independently as "Distinguished Delawareans" by the *The News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware) for making

<sup>19</sup>[https:// westcotthouse.org](https://westcotthouse.org).



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significant contributions to "the quality of life in Delaware"— Harriett Frorer Durham received the honor in 1977 and Dr. Davis Durham the following year in 1978.

Dr. Davis Durham was honored with the Distinguished Delawarean Award "for his compassion for the elderly and children with sight problems, and his service to humanity on the U.S.S. Hope." Often assisted by Harriet, herself an orthoptic technician, he was the first head of the Eye Department of Project Hope, serving in Indonesia, Peru, Guinea and Colombia. His other overseas work included service in Alaska, Samoa, Haiti, South Africa, Nigeria, China and Thailand. He was vice-president of Aid for International Medicine.

Beyond his philanthropic service, Davis also had a passion for modern invention and technological improvement in his field. He was the first surgeon to introduce diamond knives, manufactured by the DuPont Company, in human surgery. This invention eventually became widely used, especially in cataract surgery. In conjunction with DuPont engineers, he also developed a pneumatic application tonometer for measuring eye pressure in glaucoma patients. This instrument was marketed as "space age tonometry" that offered "exciting new reaches in glaucoma detection." Dr. Durham published more than thirty scientific articles in his profession. He also was the first Delawarean to be elected to the prestigious American Ophthalmological Society and served as president of the Delaware Academy of Medicine. He served as a Battalion Aid Surgeon in WWII in the 63rd Infantry Division, Company C 363rd Medical Battalion, in Germany and northern France - the last infantry division to come into the European Theater. He was awarded the European Theatre Ribbon with two battle stars, the Bronze Medal and the Combat Medical Badge.

The Durham's penchant for Contemporary, Organic building design did not cease with the construction of "901." In 1956, Dr. Durham also commissioned a larger project known as "The Professional Building" on Augustine Cut-Off, a medical and professional complex just outside the city limits of Wilmington.<sup>20</sup> In 1954, the *Wilmington Evening Journal* touted the plans for the building, which was estimated to cost \$1,000,000, as representing "one of the most modern medical structures of its kind in the East."<sup>21</sup> The design of the Professional Building reflects "901" to a remarkable degree, including its siting, setting, form, style, and materials. The structure was described as a "four-story stone building will be built into the side of Brandywine gorge, so that only one story will be seen from the cut-off."<sup>22</sup> Like "901," the Professional Building was a sprawling, low-profile, one-story, stone-clad building with multiple narrow wings. The building was also considered progressive at the time because of its modern amenities, including ample off-street parking, air conditioning, and wheel-chair access.<sup>23</sup> The architectural plans had "been designed so that the building [could] be expanded without affecting the style of the building,"<sup>24</sup> and several sympathetic additions were made over the first decade.

<sup>20</sup> Durham first applied for a building permit in 1948, for a "building to be occupied by doctor's offices" at 1201 Pennsylvania Avenue in Wilmington. Why Durham changed the location for the office building is unclear.

<sup>21</sup> *Wilmington Evening Journal*, Oct 7, 1954.

<sup>22</sup> *Wilmington Evening Journal*, Oct 7, 1954.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

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For all of the building phases for this project, Durham employed Cantara Construction and a local Wilmington Architect J. Ellis Preston to carry out his vision.

Harriet Frorer Durham was best known as an author and as an advocate for penal reform in Delaware. She was chairman of the state Advisory Council on Adult Corrections under four different commissioners. According to one observer, working to improve the correction system in the state of Delaware could be a "hard, frustrating and thankless task," and Harriet "fought for decent, basic conditions—particularly for good medical services."<sup>25</sup> Durham wrote letters to the state's Board of Parole to give convicted prisoners every possible consideration on their reviews and prodded prison officials for years to improve medical services in state prisons. She ignored the advice of the administrators that prison was "too dangerous" for a woman and visited prisoners regularly.<sup>26</sup> She was a board member of the Delaware Council on Crime and Justice, Planned Parenthood, Child Guidance Center, and Children's Home. A longtime chairman of the Advisory Council on Adult Corrections, Durham was also chairwoman of Friends Service Committee. Her Distinguished Delawarean award in 1977 recognized her dedication to reform in the field of adult and juvenile correction, to racial harmony, and to literature.

Harriet earned a bachelor's degree in English literature/history at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. She later was certified as an orthoptic technician in 1950 after a summer school of the American Orthoptics Council at Nason College in Maine. Durham was a member of Society of Friends, the Junior League of Wilmington, and Greenville Country Club. She was also the author of several books, including a history of Caribbean Quakers, a travel book on St. Lucia, and a biography of Dr. William Thornton, an early American architect. She wrote numerous articles for various publications, including book reviews for *The News Journal*.

#### **Site History and Background to "901" Construction**

"901" was constructed on a parcel long-associated with milling operations on the Brandywine Creek, in the village of Rockland, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> The Jessop & Moore Paper Company owned and operated the Rockland mills for the longest period, from 1860 until the company filed for bankruptcy in 1933.<sup>28</sup> After that time, the mill operation itself was transferred to Doeskin Products, which produced tissue paper there until 1971. The plant closed permanently in 1973, and the mill building was sold to Bissell-Vinton Associates, who converted the structures into a condominium complex. The Rockland Mills complex was added to the National Register as the Rockland Historic District in 1972 (#72000289).

The parcel of land on which "901" sits was acquired by two trustees of the Jessop & Moore Paper Company in 1925, who received 121.2-acres as part of the bankruptcy proceeding.<sup>29</sup> In 1937, after a series of deed transactions, the former president of the Rockland Paper Company,

<sup>25</sup> *Delaware Women Remembered*, Edited by Mary Sam Ward; 1977, The Modern Press, Inc. Wilmington, DE, "Criminal Justice" section, page 35.

<sup>26</sup> *The News Journal*, Wednesday, January 23, 1991.

<sup>27</sup> The Rockland Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, #72000289.

<sup>28</sup> NCC Deed, Book K, Volume 39, Page 130, [www.paperindustryweb.com/rockland](http://www.paperindustryweb.com/rockland).

<sup>29</sup> NCC Deed, Book K, Volume 39, Page 130.

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Charles A. Ernst Jr., acquired a 39.82-acre parcel from the larger tract of former company land. He sold this entire parcel in April of 1949 to Davis and Harriet Durham.

Apparently introduced to the land by her father, James Robert Frorer, Harriet Durham was in many ways the driving force behind the Durham's acquisition of the property. Davis Durham later admitted that he was "skeptical of its potential," especially because of its appearance after "30 years of scrub growth," but Harriet "had the vision to see its possibilities."<sup>30</sup> After her father took the Durhams to inspect the site, Harriet continued to investigate the property by following up at the New Castle County courthouse to research the land ownership. Her research revealed that the land was owned by Charles and Jacqueline Ernst in Chester, Pennsylvania. Whether the Ernst family was initially willing to part with their well-located building lot is not clear, however, Davis Durham recalled that they were "good Quakers" and "let us proceed with its purchase." The parcel totaled nearly 40 acres, and the Ernsts would only sell the entire parcel rather than selling a smaller piece coveted by the Durhams. On April 27, 1949, the Durhams acquired the land, nearly forty acres, for \$10,000, or \$250 an acre. They would later sell the land south of Mt. Lebanon Road and a portion of the remaining acreage on the "901" side, north of Mt. Lebanon Road.

#### **Architect: Jesse Luke Stetler**

The Durhams hired a Philadelphia-area architect named Jesse Stetler to design the house. How the Durhams met and hired Stetler is unknown, but what is clear is that "901" was a marked departure from Stetler's previous known works. A Pennsylvania native, Stetler was 63 at the time of the commission,<sup>31</sup> and received a Certificate of Proficiency in architectural training from the University of Pennsylvania in 1911. Stetler's movements after he left the University of Pennsylvania are not entirely clear, but in 1917 he reported to Penn's General Alumni Catalogue that he was working with the Stetler Mingle Company back in his hometown of Reading. He joined the U.S. Navy in the Bureau of Aeronautics in 1918, and served until 1922. After his service, Stetler decided to return to Philadelphia and, from 1922 to 1929, he partnered with real estate developer Harvey Deyscher<sup>32</sup> to form the firm Stetler & Deyscher. His business was mainly focused on designing and developing apartment houses, especially along the Main Line of Philadelphia. Some of his best-known commissions were the Walnut Park Hotel (1928) and Kentwell Hall Apartments (1929) at 6640 Sprague Street in Philadelphia. Yet it was perhaps during the Great Depression of the 1930s when Stetler apparently switched his focus from apartment buildings to stylish single-family homes along the Main Line. From 1943 to 1946, he worked with the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) as assistant chief architect for eastern Pennsylvania and the state of Delaware. After this time, however, at least one source suggests Stetler retired from "the practice of architecture." In 1946, Stetler was appointed as superintendent of the Lower Merion Township Buildings Regulations, which he continued until 1952, when he was appointed to the Planning Board in the same township. From 1956 to 1961,

<sup>30</sup> "History of 901," Davis Durham recollections, written letter in possession of family.

<sup>31</sup> Davis Durham's personal recollections.

<sup>32</sup> PhiladelphiaBuildings.org, Stetler and Deyscher.

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he continued his public service career as secretary of property and supplies in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

According to Davis Durham, even though Stetler "drew up the plans for the house . . . the design was essentially ours."<sup>33</sup> The Durhams wished to design a house that would capitalize on the panoramic view from their hilltop building site. Construction on "901" began in 1950. The Durhams moved into the house in 1951, before the house was completely finished. Dr. Durham remembers that his parents wished to give the young couple a house-warming present. While Durham hinted that money would be appreciated, his parents wanted to give them "something to remember them by." So, as Dr. Durham recalls, "we had a swimming pool completed in 1953 ~ before we had any furniture!"

<sup>33</sup> "History of 901," Davis Durham recollections.



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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Center for Historic Architecture and Design; Durham Family records

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** N14638

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 4.22 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 39.798527 | Longitude: -75.570290 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

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**Or**  
**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The proposed National Register boundary contains 4.22-acres, and coincides with one legal tax parcel boundary on which the house is located. The parcel is identified as # 0607500006 as depicted on the official tax parcel maps of New Castle County, Delaware.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the land that is historically associated with the dwelling.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Michael J. Emmons, Jr. Graduate Research Assistant  
organization: Center for Historic Architecture and Design  
street & number: 330 Alison Hall, University of Delaware  
city or town: Newark state: DE zip code: 19716  
e-mail mjej@udel.edu  
telephone: (419) 630-8895  
date: February 17,2017

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Comprehensive Planning Information:

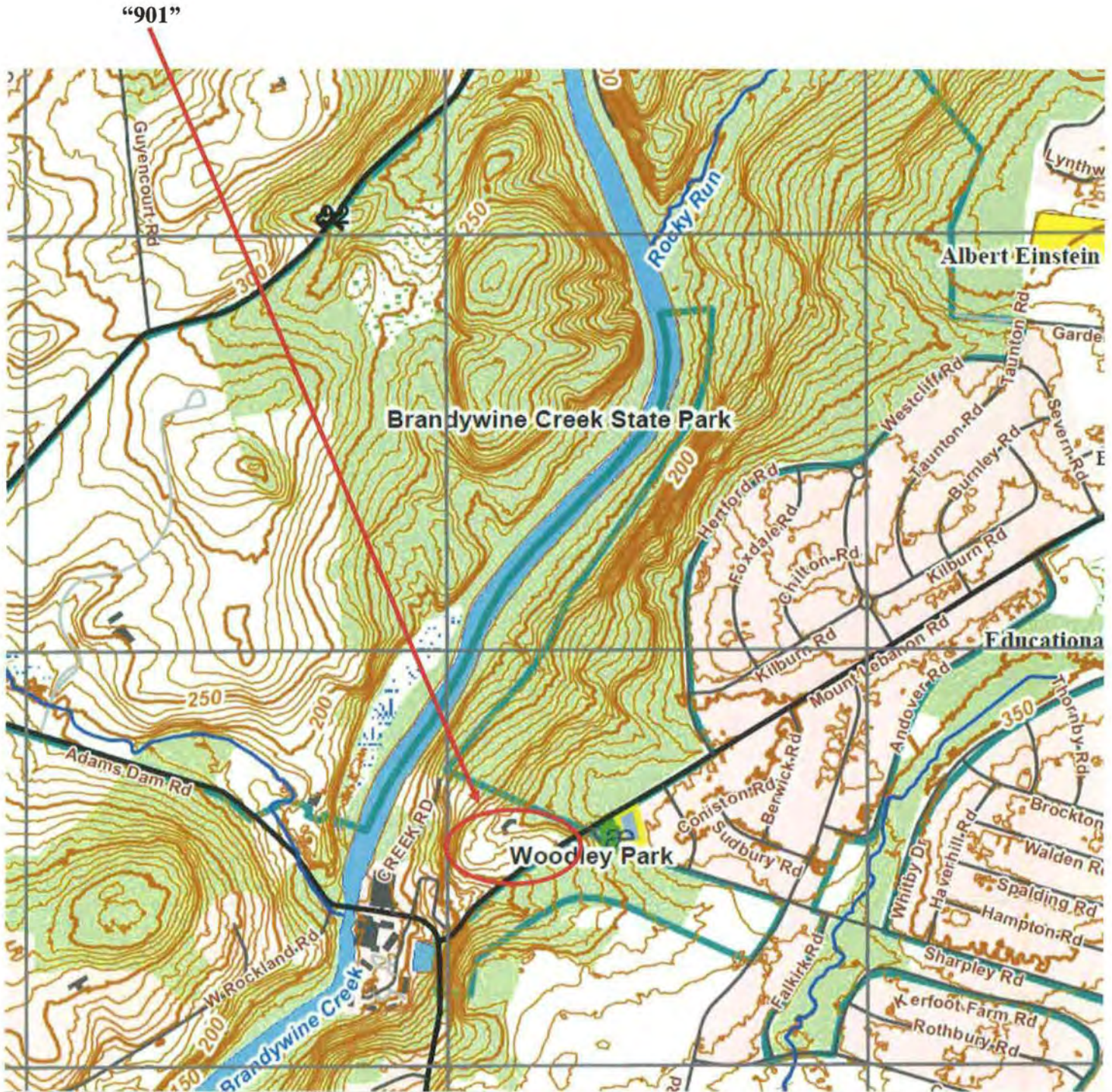
Zone: Piedmont  
Period: 1940 – 1960 +  
Theme: Architecture, Engineering and Decorative Arts  
Property Type: Building



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**USGS Quad Map**





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**1937 Aerial ("901" in red)**



"901"  
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**1954 Aerial ("901" in red)**





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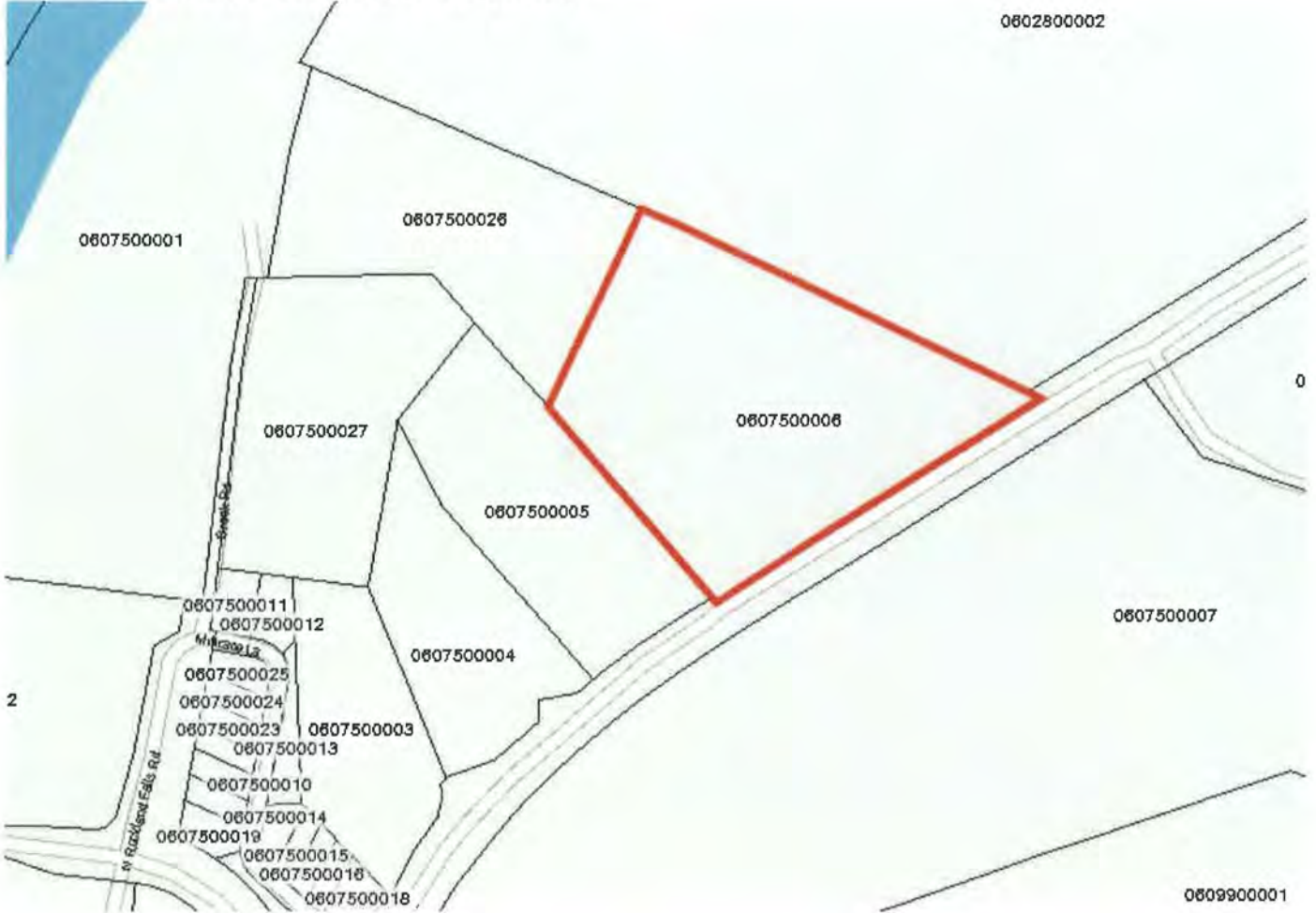
**1968 Aerial ("901" in red)**



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**New Castle County Parcel Map ("901" in red)**

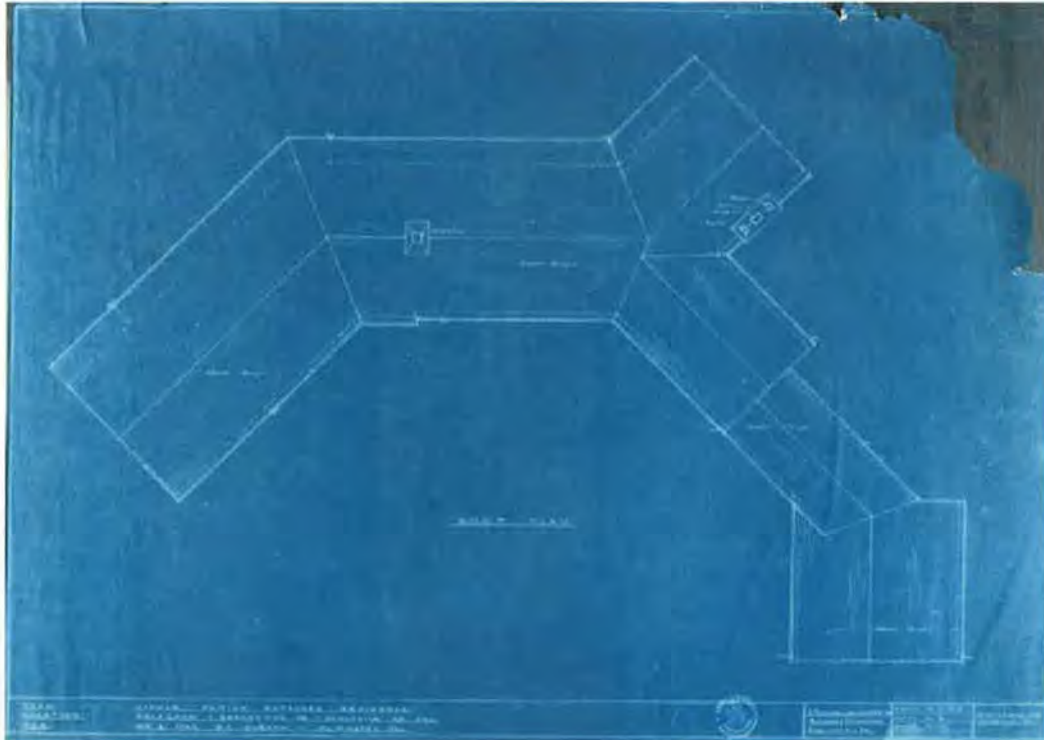




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The original architectural drawing of the "Roof Plan" at 901 reveals the original, half-octagonal footprint. The later garage extension and office addition are not represented here.



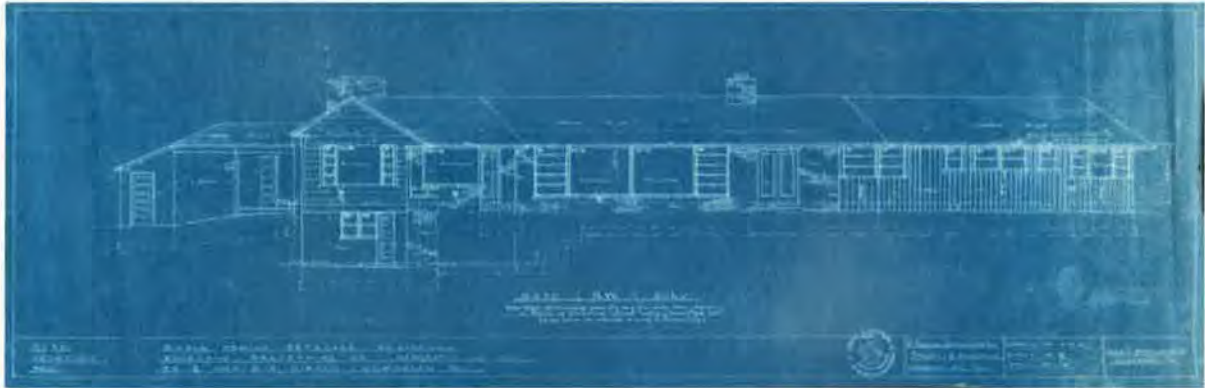
The original architectural drawing for the northeast elevation shows how the foundation (represented as the dotted line) was designed to "stair step" down the hill.



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Original architectural drawing of the "Rear (N.W.) Elevation" highlights the dominant horizontal orientation of "901," and shows the bedroom wing (right side) before the 1973 excavations to create a second story at the lower level. The bedroom wing is also now covered by a full-length sunroom, which was also added in 1973.



Detail of original architectural drawing of a "plot plan," showing the siting of "901" in relation to the steep topography descending to the Brandywine Creek below.



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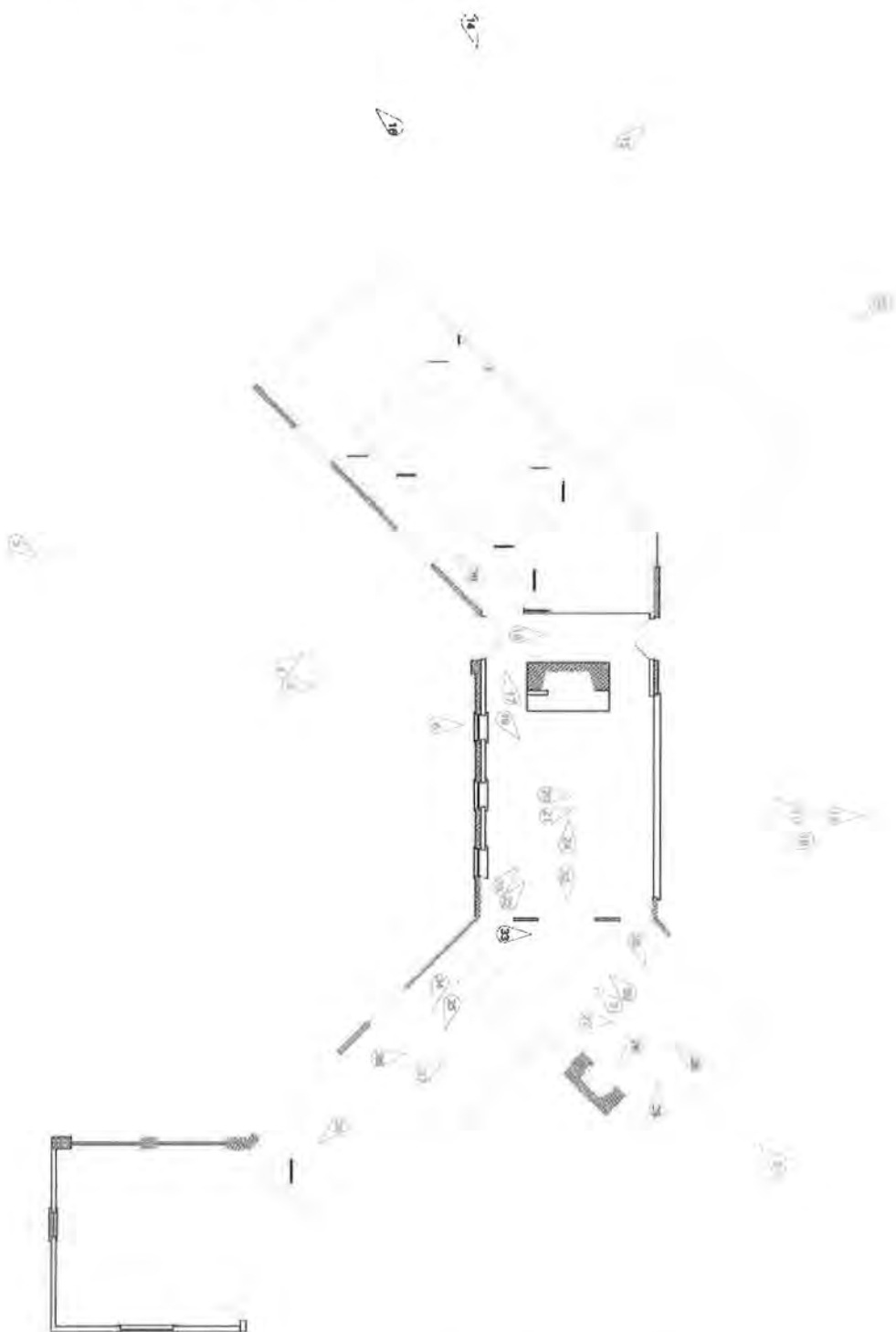
Aerial photograph of "901" (center) before the 1973 alterations. Also visible is the Du Pont Country Club's golf course (at top of photo) to the south, protected wooded land to the south and east of "901," and a road/trail at the bottom of the hill, which is part of the Brandywine Creek State Park.



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**901 Photokey (Drawing by Catherine Morrissey)**





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### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: "901"

City or Vicinity: Rockland Vicinity

County: New Castle County

State: Delaware

Photographer: Michael J. Emmons, Jr.

Date Photographed: 9/20/2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 01 of 39 Environmental view of the house, stable, and pasture, taken from Mount Lebanon Road, looking northwest.
- 02 of 39 Environmental view of the house, pasture and tree-lined driveway, from Mt. Lebanon Road, looking northwest.
- 03 of 39 Perspective view of house on Mt. Lebanon Road side, showing bedroom wing, living room section, kitchen section, garage wing, and circle driveway, looking northwest.
- 04 of 39 View of the east elevation of the bedroom wing, looking west.
- 05 of 39 View of the southeast elevation of the central living room section, showing main entryway and western half of circle driveway, looking northwest.
- 06 of 39 Detail view of a fixed window on the southeast elevation of the central living room section, looking northwest.

"901"

New Castle, Delaware

Name of Property

County and State

- 07 of 39 View of southeast elevation of kitchen section, southwest elevation of garage wing, and eastern half of circle driveway, showing a doorway into kitchen wing and three garage bays, looking northwest.
- 08 of 39 South elevation showing three-bay garage, looking south.
- 09 of 39 View of north elevation of rear den section, showing slider door to lower level, and stone retaining wall for elevated rear patio area, looking south.
- 10 of 39 View of west elevation of den section, northwest elevation of living room section, and rear patio area, showing doorway to den section, panoramic window from living room, and steps down to lower patio and barbeque area, looking east.
- 11 of 39 View of northwest elevation of living room section, north elevation of rear office section, and rear patio area, showing panoramic window from living room, doorway to the living room, and steps down to lower patio and barbeque area, looking east.
- 12 of 39 View of Brandywine Creek valley from the rear lower patio area, looking northwest.
- 13 of 39 View of west elevation of den section, northwest elevation of living room section, rear patio area, and west elevation of rear office section, showing south steps down to lower patio and backyard, looking east.
- 14 of 39 View of west elevation of den section and bedroom wing showing large sunroom addition on bedroom wing and recessed entrance to lower level bedrooms, looking northeast.
- 15 of 39 View of swimming pool, at north corner, looking south.
- 16 of 39 View of tennis court, at north corner, looking south.
- 17 of 39 Interior, first floor, detail view of main entry door, accessed from west side of circle driveway and entering southern end of living room section, showing original door with centered door knob, looking south.
- 18 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, view of area southwest of chimney, renovated in 1973 to create stairway to new lower-level, showing stairway, lowered door to rear patio, stairs to main living room, and southwest side of stone chimney, looking northwest.

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- 19 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, perspective view of northwest and northeast walls, showing panoramic window, doorway to den, and doorway to hallway, looking north.
- 20 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, view of northwest wall, showing panoramic window with view of valley, looking northwest.
- 21 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, 1955 *Better Homes and Garden* photo, of northwest wall, showing panoramic window with view of valley, looking northwest.
- 22 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, perspective view of southwest and northwest walls, showing door to office section, stone fireplace, stairway to lower level and rear door to patio area, and panoramic window overlooking Brandywine Creek valley, looking southwest.
- 23 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, historic perspective view, circa 1955, of southwest and northwest walls, showing stone fireplace, rear door to patio area, and panoramic window overlooking Brandywine Creek valley, looking southwest.
- 24 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, view of southwest wall, showing front doorway, hallway to bedroom wing, stone fireplace, stairs to lower level and rear door, looking southwest.
- 25 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, perspective view of north and east walls, showing picture window, built-ins, vaulted ceilings, and false exposed rafters and ties, looking northeast.
- 26 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, detail view of east wall fireplace, looking east.
- 27 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, perspective view of west and north walls, showing doorway to rear patio, picture windows, vaulted ceilings, and false exposed rafters and ties, looking northwest.
- 28 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, view of south wall, showing door to hallway, original built-in features, door to living room, vaulted ceilings, and false rafters and ties, looking south.
- 29 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, *Better Homes and Garden* 1955 photo of south and west walls, showing original built-ins, door to living room, and exterior doorway to rear patio, looking south.
- 30 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, detail view of south wall, showing original built-in clock, speaker slots, and false rafters and ties, looking south.

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New Castle, Delaware

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- 31 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, detail view of south wall, showing wet bar, original built-ins, and hardware, looking south.
- 32 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, detail view of original circa 1950 door hardware on south wall, looking south.
- 33 of 39 Interior, first floor, stair hallway, detail view of spiral staircase to lower level, a part of renovations during the early 1970s, looking northwest.
- 34 of 39 Interior, first floor, kitchen, perspective view of north and east walls, showing renovations from the early 1970s, including finished breezeway space, looking northeast.
- 35 of 39 Interior, first floor, kitchen, *Better Homes and Garden* 1955 photo of north and east walls, showing arrangement before the 1970s renovations, showing door to breezeway, looking northeast.
- 36 of 39 Interior, first floor, kitchen, perspective view of west and north walls, showing doorway to spiral stair hallway and renovations from the early 1970s, looking west.
- 37 of 39 Interior, first floor, kitchen, *Better Homes and Garden* 1955 photo showing built-in ironing board.
- 38 of 39 Interior, first floor, kitchen, view of north, east, and south walls of finished breezeway area, showing doorway to garages, looking east.
- 39 of 39 Interior, first floor, hallway, view of hallway spanning bedroom wing from front entry, showing entrance to master bedroom, looking south.





901 Mt. Lebanon Road \_New Castle County\_DE  
Environmental view of house, stable, pasture taken from Mt. Lebanon Road  
looking northwest



901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_ New Castle County\_ DE

Environmental view of house, stable, pasture taken from Mt. Lebanon Road  
looking northwest



901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Perspective view of house on Mt. Lebanon Road side looking northwest  
(bedroom wing, living room, kitchen, garage, circle driveway) 03 of 39





901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
East elevation of bedroom wing looking west





901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Southeast elevation of the central living room section with main entrance and  
circle driveway looking northwest



901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE

Detailed view of a fixed window on the southeast elevation of the central living  
room section looking northwest



901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Southeast elevation of kitchen section, garage wing, and driveway  
looking northwest





901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Southeast elevation of three-bay garage





901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
North elevation of rear den section with sliding door to lower level and stone retaining wall for elevated rear patio area looking south



901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
West elevation of den section, northwest elevation of living room section, rear  
patio area looking east



901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Northwest elevation of living room section, north elevation of rear office section,  
rear patio section looking east





901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
View of Brandywine Creek valley from the rear lower patio area looking  
northwest 12 of 39





901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
West elevation of den section, northwest elevation of living room section, rear patio area, and west elevation of rear office area looking east 13 of 39



901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
West elevation of den section, bedroom wing, sunroom addition, recessed  
entrance to lower level bedrooms looking northeast



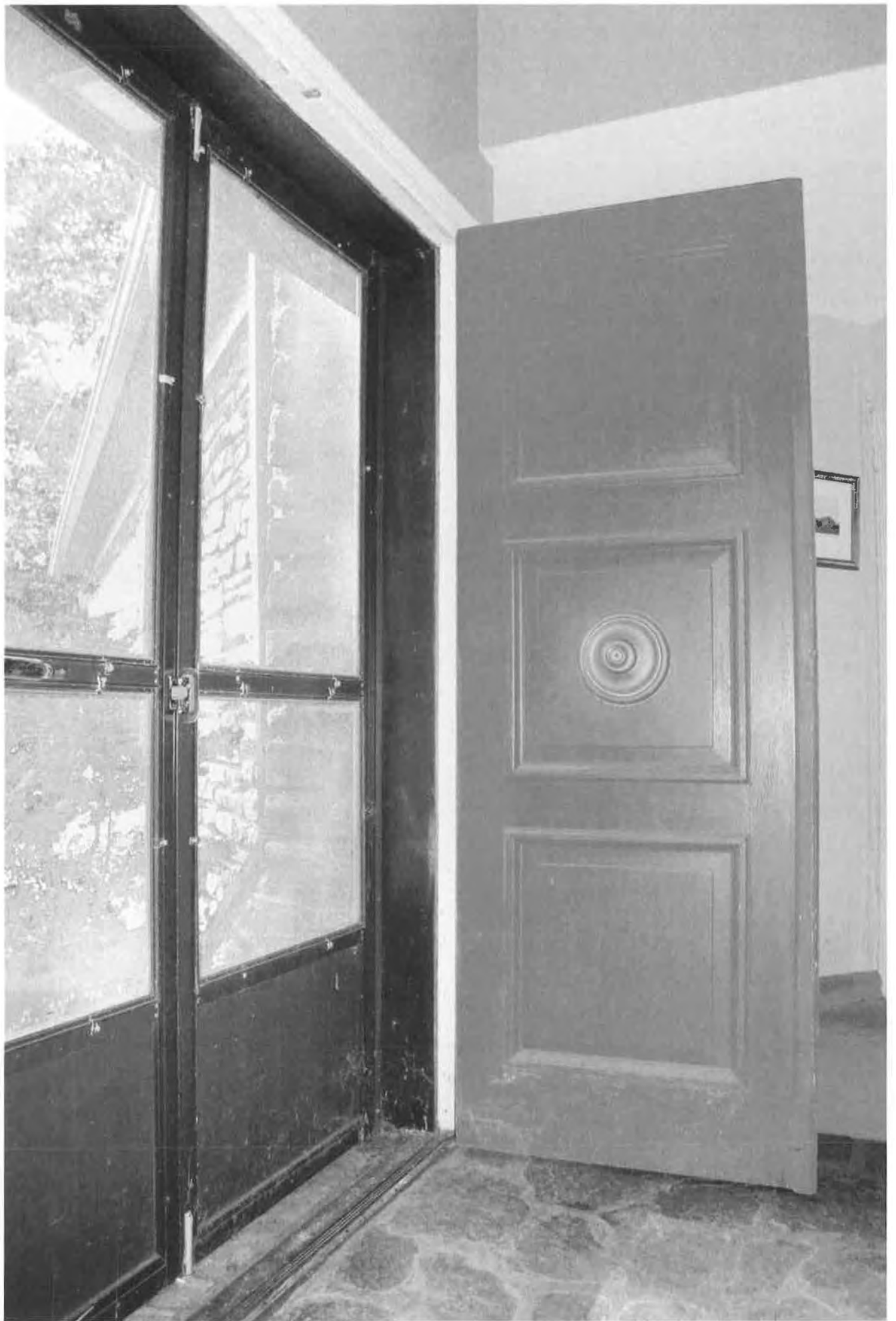


901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
View of swimming pool at north corner of property looking south

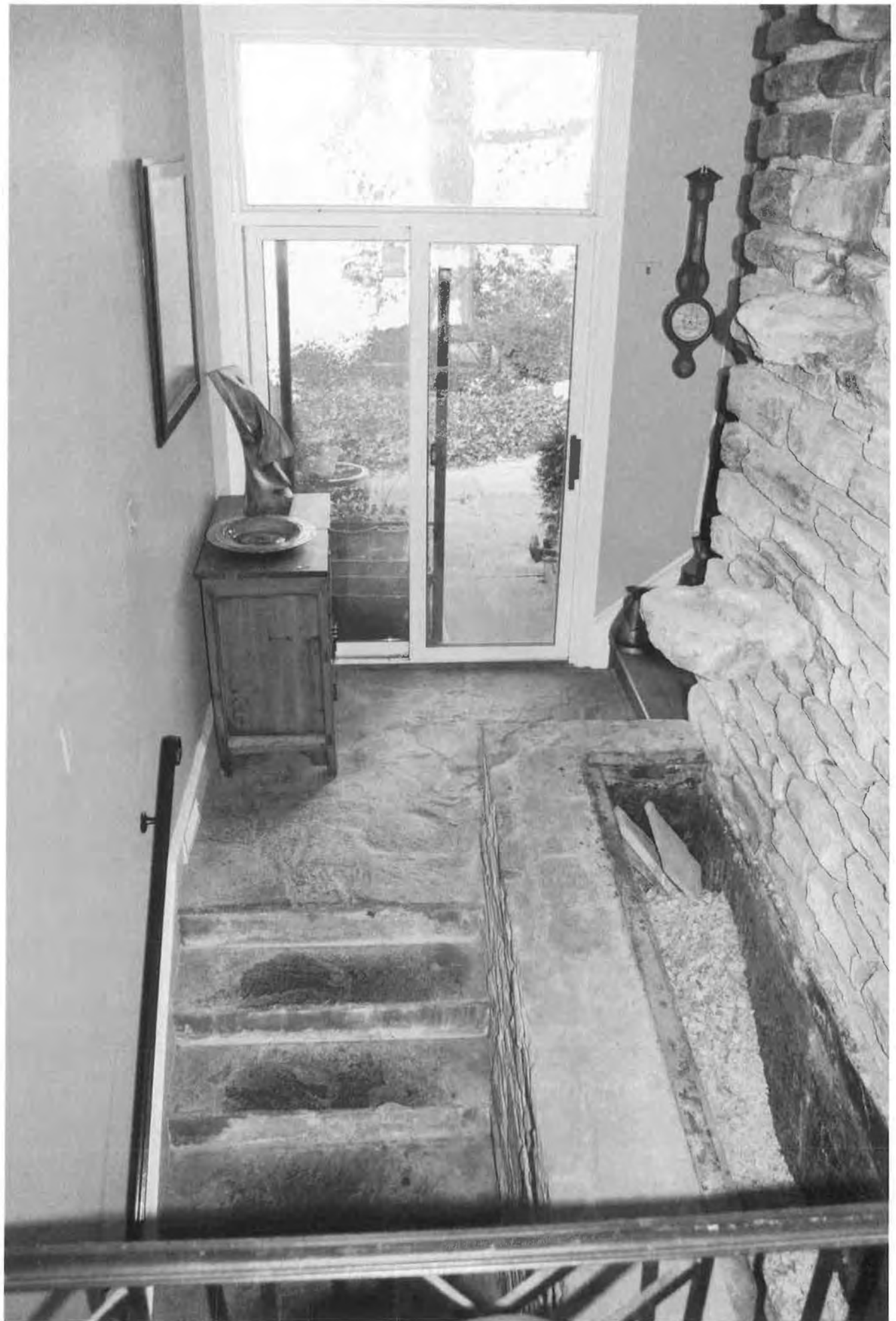


901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Tennis court at north corner of property looking south





901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
Main entrance with centered door knob opening into the southern end of the  
living room section looking south 17 of 39



901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
Southwest corner of chimney in living room showing 1973 renovated area with  
stairway leading to lower level looking northwest 18 of 39



901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
Perspective view of living room showing northwest and northeast walls, doorway into den, and doorway into hallway looking north  
19 of 39



901Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Living room with view of northwest wall and panoramic window overlooking the valley  
20 of 39





901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
1955 *Better Homes and Garden* photograph of living room with panoramic window  
and view of the valley



901Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Living room with perspective view of southwest and northeast walls showing  
fireplace



901 Mt. Lebanon Road \_New Castle County\_DE

1955 *Better Homes and Garden* photograph of living room

23 of 39



901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Living room view of southwest wall looking southwest





901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
First floor den, perspective view of west and north walls



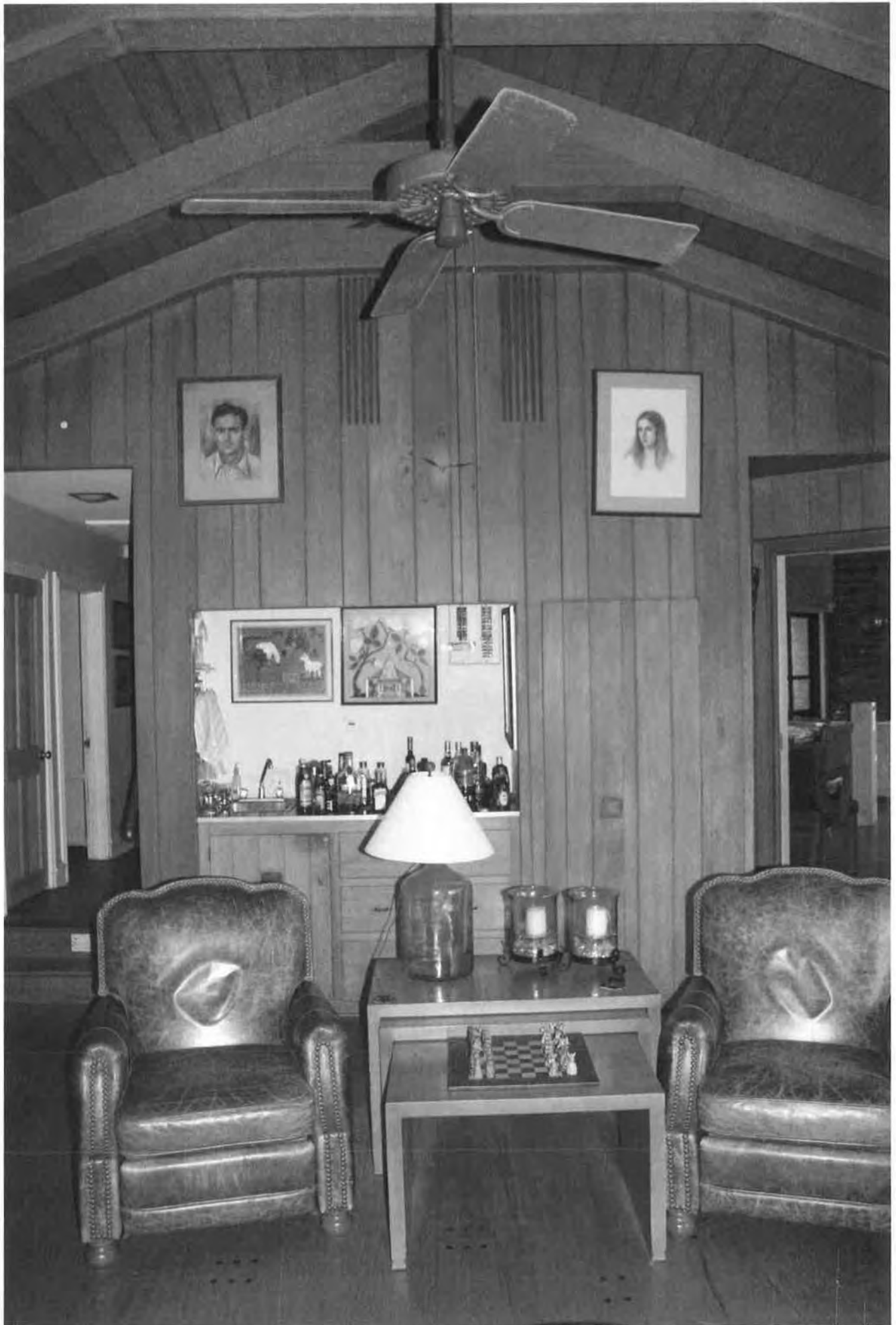
901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
Den - fireplace on east wall with original decorative tiles



901 Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE

Den - perspective view of west and north walls showing doorway to rear patio, false exposed rafters and ties, and vaulted ceiling

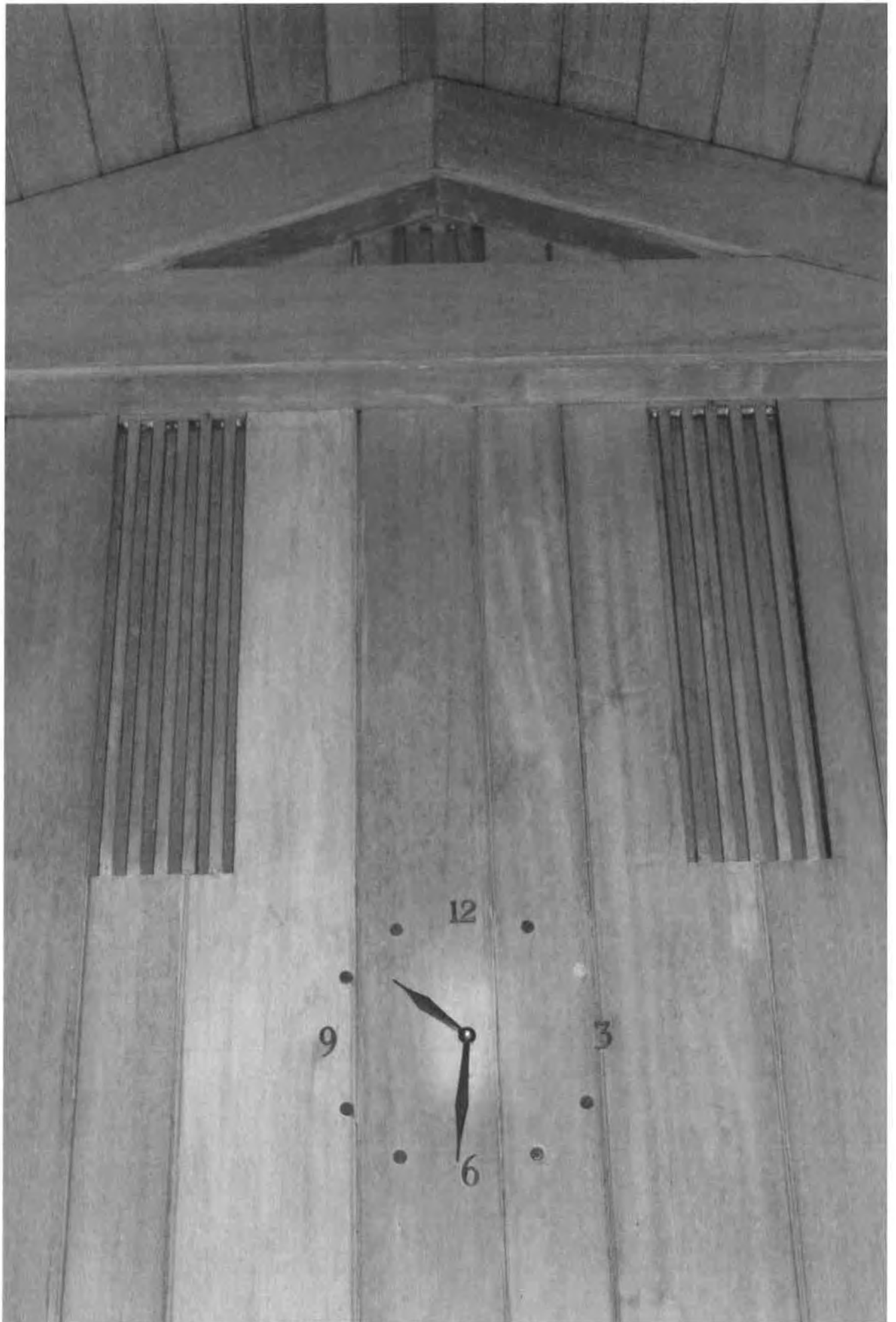




901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
Den - view of south wall showing door to hallway, original built-in features, vaulted ceiling and false rafters and ties  
28 of 39



901Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
1955 *Better Homes and Garden* photograph of first floor den, south and west walls  
showing original built-in features

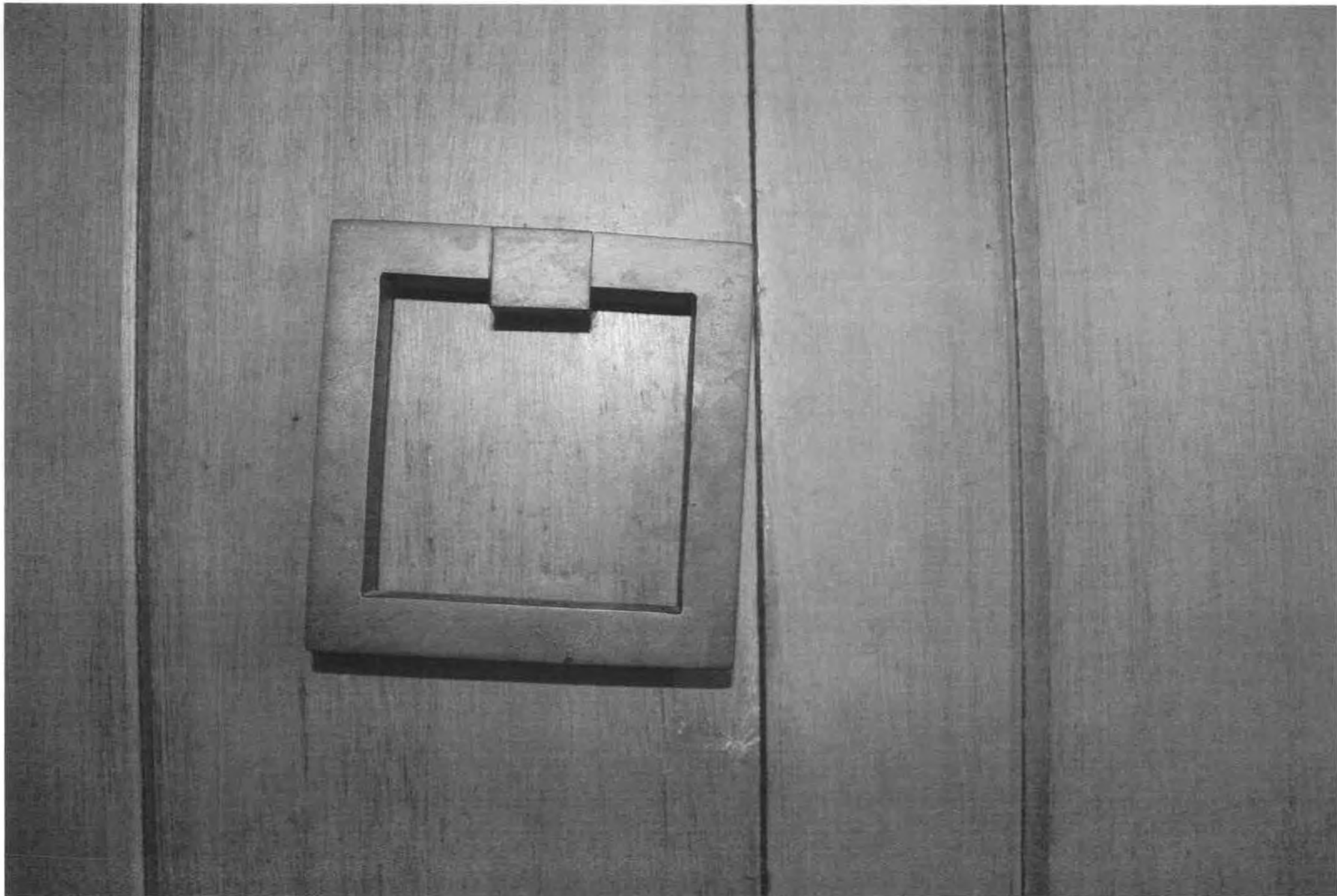


901Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
First floor den, detail view of south wall showing original built-in clock, speaker  
slots, and false rafters and ties 30 of 39





901Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
First floor den, detail view of south wall showing wetbar, original built-ins and  
hardware



901Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
First floor den, detail view of original c. 1950 door hardware on south wall 32 of 39



901Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
First floor stair hallway with spiral staircase to lower level, part of renovations made  
in the 1970s, looking northwest





901Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Kitchen, perspective view of north and east walls showing renovations from the  
1970s including breezeway space 34 of 39



901Mt. Lebanon Road \_New Castle County \_DE  
1955 *Better Homes and Garden* kitchen photo with breezeway entrance 35 of 39



901Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
Kitchen, perspective view of west and north walls showing doorway to spiral stair  
hallway and renovations from the 1970s



901Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
1955 *Better Homes and Garden* kitchen photo





901 Mt. Lebanon Road, New Castle County, DE  
North, east, and south walls of finished breezeway showing doorway to garages



901Mt. Lebanon Road\_New Castle County\_DE  
Hallway spanning bedroom wing showing entrance to master bedroom - looking south  
39 of 39

























































































































12

9

3

6































INCOMING AIRMEN  
REPORT HERE WEEK DAYS  
HOLIDAYS AND AFTER 1630 HRS.  
REPORT REAR UPSTAIRS









National Register of Historic Places  
Memo to File

# Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination Resubmission

Property Name: House at 901 Mt. Lebanon Rd.

Multiple Name:

State & County: DELAWARE, New Castle

Date Received:  
2/18/2017

Date of Pending List:

Date of 16th Day:

Date of 45th Day:  
4/4/2017

Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100000656

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

Accept     Return     Reject    3/28/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Recommendation/  
Criteria    Nomination must be returned. The Period of Significance is defined as extending to 1973, but the nomination form does not address the issue of this being a property achieving significance within the past fifty years (National Register Criteria Consideration G). See attached National Register Return Sheet for detailed comment.

On resubmission, the state revised the nomination by defining the period of significance as 1950 to reflect the architectural importance of the building under National Register Criterion C. Accept.

Reviewer    Patrick Andrus

*Patrick Andrus*

Discipline    Historian

Telephone    (202)354-2218

Date

3/28/2017

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



State of Delaware  
Historical and Cultural Affairs

21 The Green  
Dover, DE 19901-3611

Phone: (302) 736.7400

Fax: (302) 739.5660



December 28, 2016

Ms. Stephanie Toothman, Keeper of the National Register  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye Street NW (2280)  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Toothman:

Enclosed please find the following nomination for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:

□ 901 Mt. Lebanon Road – Rockland, DE

If there are any questions regarding this document, please contact Madeline E. Dunn, National Register Coordinator-Historian for the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office at 302-736-7417 or [madeline.dunn@state.de.us](mailto:madeline.dunn@state.de.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Timothy A. Slavin".

Timothy A. Slavin, State Historic Preservation Officer  
and Director Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Enclosures



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

56-656

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: "901" Mt. Lebanon Road

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 901 Mount Lebanon Road

City or town: Rockland State: Delaware County: New Castle County

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

Returned

<u>DE - SHPO</u>	<u>December 28, 2016</u>
	Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

901
Name of Property
New Castle County, Delaware
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number   3   Page   1  

Certified Local Government Agency Certification

In my opinion, 901   meets   does not meet the National Register criteria.

  T.P. Gordon  

Thomas P. Gordon  
County Executive  
New Castle County, Delaware

  5.26.16  

Date

Returned

"901"  
Name of Property

New Castle, Delaware  
County and State

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

---

#### 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

Returned



"901"  
Name of Property

New Castle, Delaware  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>2</u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ Single Dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ Single Dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Returned

“901”  
Name of Property

New Castle, Delaware  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD, STONE

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

---

### Summary Paragraph

Constructed in two phases in 1950 and 1973, the contemporary house known simply as “901” (pronounced “nine-oh-one”) to its owners, is located at 901 Mount Lebanon Road, in the vicinity of the unincorporated historic village of Rockland, within Brandywine Hundred, in the Wilmington vicinity of New Castle County, Delaware. The property is situated just east of the former Rockland Falls Mill Complex (part of the Rockland Historic District listed in the National Register in 1972 - #72000289) on land formerly owned by the mill, less than two miles west of Route 202 (Concord Pike), directly south and west of Brandywine Creek State Park, and just north of the DuPont Country Club. Located in the hilly piedmont region of Delaware, the house is sited on the crest of a large hill above the Brandywine Creek, enjoying a long view across its wooded valley. Sitting on a 4.22 acre parcel, and attached to an adjoining second parcel of 2.63 acres to the northwest, the property totals nearly 7 acres, and is bordered by protected land (Brandywine Creek State Park) on three sides when including the land directly across the road (Woodley Park). Adjoining the property on the southwest side is another single-family residence, which is screened significantly by mature tree growth on both parcels. The property at “901” has large open spaces of pasture and hillside grass, but a feeling of privacy and seclusion is afforded by large mature trees at the edges of the property and around the perimeter



"901"

Name of Property

New Castle, Delaware

County and State

of the house. "901" retains a high level of integrity for location, setting, feeling, design, workmanship, materials, and association.

## **Narrative Description**

### Road Side

"901" is accessed by a long driveway that rises steadily until circling in front of the house. The circle portion of the driveway nests within the footprint of the one-story house, which resembles a half-octagon. The circle driveway features mature groundcover and a massive ash tree that towers above the low-profile house. The central, main block of the house is flanked by two main wings, each roughly equal in size to the center block, with each bending towards the road at approximately a 45 degree angle. While the south wing is rectangular, the northwest wing is shaped like a boot, the heel of which attaches to the main block. The northeast wing is adjoined by yet another rectangular wing, the garage section, which bends at an additional 45-degree angle so that the garage block is at a 90-degree angle to the main block of the house.

With walls clad in stone, the house is topped with a very low-pitched gabled roof, significantly reducing its profile and further enhancing its decidedly horizontal orientation. The front elevation of the main block totals four bays, including the principal door and three windows. The entryway, at the southernmost bay, is a large double-door with a decorative wood lintel overhead and double screen doors on the exterior. The original double-doors are heavy, wooden, with three-square panels stacked vertically and circular brass doorknobs centered within each middle panel. To the right of the door are three square windows, spaced regularly and symmetrically. Like most exterior openings, which generally lack large mouldings or shutters, the surrounds of the three windows are minimalist, showing only thin, red wood trim and a plain lintel above. A cubic stone chimney extends above the roof between the doorway and first window, and to the far right of the main block, a small domed skylight rises above the roof near the roof junction between the main block and the northeast wing. The seam between sections is also punctuated by a downspout running vertically to the ground along the bend. Besides the area in front of the main entryway, where the driveway is paved to meet the front step, the front of the main block is landscaped with a narrow band of shrubbery and ground cover that softens the intersection between the building and the ground.

The front elevation of the south wing, which faces east, includes the original wing and a later bedroom addition, about half the size of the original wing. The original portion is two bays and includes two tripartite windows spaced far apart, making the stonewall surface the dominant visual feature. The 1970s addition, at the south end of the wing, is smaller than the original wing but features larger windows, vertical like the others on the wing but clustered into four contiguous vertical panels. The roof, with a similar low pitch as the rest of the house, is interrupted by two large rectangular skylights, which light the bedroom below.

On the other side of the main block, to the northeast, the kitchen wing elevation appears to be two sections. The larger portion, closest to the main block, displays only a single tripartite window on the right side, with simple trim and a plain wood lintel. A second, shorter portion of the wing, which contains only a sunroom that was formerly a breezeway, displays a break in the

"901"

New Castle, Delaware

Name of Property

County and State

roofline between the first portion of the wing. The breezeway portion of the wing features a single-pane door with a plain transom window above, and to its right, a large window with six tall, vertical panes. Both the door and window feature are topped by a single plain lintel board, and both door and windows are surrounded by simple wood trim. The window unit terminates just before the stone abutment that marks the beginning of the garage addition.

The garage addition, at the eastern end of the house, bends at an additional 45-degree angle from the kitchen addition, making it perpendicular to the main, central block of the house. It is composed of three garage bays, off-center toward the house. The garage doors are separated by large, square, stone columns that represent the continuation of the wall surface of the stone house. Besides the wood band trim that runs under the eaves, there is an additional wood plank lintel spanning the three garage bays. The original 1950s house, however, had only two bays, with a greenhouse standing where the current third bay of the garage now sits. The garage was expanded in 1970s to add the third bay, with demolition of the original greenhouse.

### Valley Side

The rear portion of the garage addition, which faces northeast, has concrete/stucco walls and features two rear entries into the garage, one of which is accessed by a set of concrete steps. The garage wing is connected to the kitchen-library segment of the house by a former breezeway that was finished into a breakfast-sunroom. The roof of the breezeway connector is lower by approximately one foot, and the exterior wall is inset from both the garage and the kitchen-library segments of the house, making the breezeway connector a visually distinct section of the house. A large window with five vertical rectangular panes dominates this elevation, abutting the kitchen-library section and running about halfway to the garage section. The window unit is topped by two wide bands of simple wood trim under the overhanging eave. Below the window, a slightly protruding band of stucco, about two feet tall, creates the appearance of a massive window sill.

The kitchen-library segment of the house is L-shaped, with the kitchen portion remaining in the half-octagon footprint and the library jutting out perpendicularly to the rear, toward the valley to the north. The north wall of the kitchen portion, is stucco covered and features four openings, including a rectangle window and a door at the basement level and two windows above, at the main floor. The windows are surrounded by minimal wood framing, are supported by narrow stone sills, and topped and the two upper windows are topped with wide bands of wood trim, which abut a similar wide band of wooden trim under the eave. The door is surrounded by wider, wooden mouldings.

The rear library extension from the kitchen section shows three elevations. The east elevation, which is perpendicular to the kitchen section, is dominated by a wide, coursed stone chimney, the full width of which interrupts the eave extends to the height of the roof peak. The elevation features just one opening, a small vertical rectangular basement window near ground level, with a brick sill and plain frame. The northern third of this elevation, from the chimney to corner, is wood sided above the basement level.



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New Castle, Delaware

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The library section's north wall features wood clapboard siding on the main level, including the gable. The elevation is dominated by two large openings, including a large picture window on the first floor and a large slider door at the walkout basement level. The basement slider is a tripartite door with plain, wide, wooden trim flanking the sides. The picture window is also tripartite, dominated by one large rectangular window in the middle and two thin, vertical rectangular windows on the ends. The roofline here is asymmetrical, with the east side featuring a very shallow eave and short return cornice, while the west eave overhangs widely and is supported visually at the corner of the main story by a column of stone that is the end of the veneer for the west elevation. A high stone retaining wall, parallel to the north elevation, abuts the corner of the house at the main story and tapers gradually to the west, eventually interrupted by a small stairway to the lower terrace below the rear upper terrace.

The west elevation of the library section, along with the main living room section and the bedroom/office section, partially wrap around a large, terraced, multilevel patio and landscaping feature that is the focal point and primary exterior living space of the valley side of the house. The main terrace area, which abuts the house against all three of these sections, is at the same level as the main floor of the house. The terrace, constructed of stone, affords a beautiful and expansive view over the valley to the north. A flight of nine steps leads down to a secondary terrace, which includes a stone-built barbecue and stone benches, adjacent to the stairway through the north retaining wall. A sidewalk to the southwest accesses yet a lower, grassy, informal terrace at the top of the backyard, currently featuring chairs and a fire pit and used as a third outdoor living space overlooking the hill and valley. The entire terrace area, where not covered by stone, is landscaped with mature plantings, including boxwood, pachysandra, and azaleas.

The west elevation of the library section is covered by a coursed stone veneer, which intersects with the stone terrace at ground level. The wall is dominated by a large picture window that takes advantage of the view from the library, and directly abutting the window is a door with similar plain framing. Widely overhanging eaves extend several feet past the wall surface, a feature that continues in the other two house sections that abut the terrace.

The main living room section of the house is by far the longest facing the terrace, and is almost entirely comprised of a panoramic window feature, divided into four expansive panes and covering horizontally about 4/5 of the wall. The window is topped by the same wide, wooden lintel trim found over many exterior openings. The remaining 1/5 of the elevation, on the southwest end, includes a veneer stone column between the panoramic window and a double, slider door that features a massive transom window that is larger than the slider doors, topped with a wide lintel trim board. Except for in front of the slider door, mature, knee-high boxwood shrubs line the entire wall surface of the living room section, softening the intersection between the house and terrace.

The north elevation of the office portion of the bedroom/office section of the house is the last to face the terrace, though it is the shortest in length. Stone veneer covers its wall, except for a single, square window that is placed off-center to the left. Tall boxwood shrubs also sit in front

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of this wall, and near the corner of the building, another stairway of seven steps, with a wrought iron railing, leads down to the secondary terrace area.

The southwest elevation is composed of three major sections: the gabled office addition, the main bedroom wing, and the shorter bedroom addition at the far southwest end. The appearance of this entire elevation is the result of major renovations to the house made during the early-1970s. Leaving the raised terrace area, the grade tapers quickly to the south, where major excavation in 1973 enabled the rear den addition and a new basement level beneath the main floor of the entire bedroom wing. The wall surface at the outer edges is stone veneer, but the majority of the elevation is dominated by a central section formed mostly of windows and a band of horizontal wood clapboard siding between the first floor and basement level. The upstairs features three tall, vertical windows, with three shorter windows of equal width below. Above the main windows, a large, triangular transom window fills the gable, under a projecting roofline and fascia board. At the basement level, below five clapboards of horizontal wood siding, a band of four vertical windows is framed by mature bushes and shrubbery that covers the base of the addition.

Adjacent to the office addition is a full-length, rounded plexiglass sunroom added in 1973 that almost entirely obscures the main level of the original house, except for the low-pitched roof. A shorter sunroom of similar design also covers the bedroom addition at the far south end of the building. Four stone pillars support the porch sunroom addition, which extends from the original house to be flush with the rear den addition and cantilevers over the wall surface of the basement level, which is recessed and flush with the original footprint of the house. Between the stone support pillars and the plexiglass sunroom, a two-foot wide band of vertical board siding spans the entire bedroom wing. Above the siding, the plexiglass wall extends vertically and then curves gradually to meet the roofline. The plexiglass wall is punctuated every few feet with a vertical rib, while just one horizontal support runs across the porch near the point the porch begins to curve toward the room. At both the north and south ends of the porch, air circulation is provided through a three louvered, horizontal windows. Beneath the sun porch, at the walkout lower level, a pair of French doors connects the interior bedroom area to the exterior covered terrace beneath the sunroom. The wall of the lower level, which is covered in stone veneer, features multiple vertical windows flanking both sides of the French doors. To the south, a shorter sunroom of nearly identical design covers the bedroom addition. This sunroom wall curves similarly upward toward the roofline, but terminates against the wall below the fascia board.

### Interior

The interior living space of the house was designed to be almost entirely on one, expansive level. Each of the rectangular segments of the house that are visible from the exterior represent one interior function. The living room, pierced on the southwest end by a massive stone chimney and featuring a dramatic panoramic view over the valley of the Brandywine Creek, forms the center of the dwelling. This primary section is flanked to the south by the bedroom wing, to the north by the den section, to the east by the kitchen wing, and beyond the kitchen, further east, the breezeway/garage section. To the west of the central living room, the house now includes an office addition extending to the west. This addition, added in 1973, was part of a large



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renovation that enlarged the lower-level living space below the office (creating a bedroom from a former laundry/sewing room), and enhancing the room below the library sections by turning the original mechanical room into a children’s play room and moving the mechanicals to the room called “The Pit” underneath the living room. The 1973 renovation also witnessed the demolition of the greenhouse and addition of a third garage bay, as well as the addition of the “Plant Room” on the southern end of the master bedroom and reconfiguration of the master bedroom, demolishing the second middle original bedroom upstairs. The original single-story floor plan included three total bedrooms in the west wing. The 1973 renovations turned the upper story wing into a master bedroom/bath and office, and added a bedroom downstairs by cannibalizing the laundry/sewing room. By 1960, the unheated breezeway had been converted to year round living space, acting essentially as an extension of the kitchen adjacent to the garages.

The two primary living spaces, the living room and the library, retain a remarkably high level of original historic fabric from the 1950-51 construction. A high level of architectural integrity is also present from the 1973 additions, especially in the renovated kitchen and the office addition.

The main entry door enters directly from the driveway into the southwest end of the living room. This bright, expansive room features a twenty-five-foot-long panoramic window that overlooks the rear terrace area and the scenic valley to the northwest. A second dramatic feature is the 4’ x 10’ flagstone chimney, with a wide fireplace and raised hearth on the northwest elevation. Other original features include the tongue and groove yellow pine floors and the long bands of horizontal trim above the panoramic window and the entire span of three square windows on the southeast elevation.

Then library wing retains a remarkable level of integrity from the first period of construction. Accessed by two steps down from the living room or kitchen hallway, the library offers a striking contrast to the lighter spaces of the living room, since almost every surface of the library is clad in wood. The walls and vaulted ceiling are constructed of Phillipine mahogany planks, and the floors are hardwood. The library has large picture windows on the west and north elevations, also taking advantage of the valley view to the northwest and forest to the north. The south wall features built-in drawers and cabinet, including a sink counter, a built-in clock, and above the clock, narrow vertical slots cut into the wall as speaker vents. The east wall features a fireplace with a flagstone hearth and antique European tiles surrounding the fireplace opening.

The library and the living room both contain original contemporary style furniture, including the dining room table, chairs, and nested tables, much of it handmade by the original owner, Dr. Davis G. Durham.

### Outbuildings

The only other structures on the property at “901” are an original tennis court and swimming pool (both 1950s) on the west side of the house, and a later, non-contributing horse stable along the driveway to the south of the house.

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### **Integrity**

Location- “901” retains a high level of integrity for location since the house has not been moved from its original hilltop location.

Setting- The setting of “901” retains a high level of integrity. The site is surrounded by state and county parkland (Woodley Park), and development has not and cannot encroach upon the site. The vistas overlooking the Brandywine Valley from “901” are also much the same as when the house was built in 1950. The actual acreage of “901” is also now under conservation easement, protecting it in perpetuity.

Design- “901” retains a high level of integrity of design. The original form, plan, and style of the house survives with minimal alterations. The original builders performed the only significant renovations, in 1973, in order to accommodate their growing family. These changes were in line with the original architectural vision, and continued to reflect the guiding design principles of modern and organic architecture.

Workmanship- Through the preservation of the stonework and woodwork, including the exterior walls of the house, the stone chimney/porch, the built-ins and vaulted ceiling in the den, and the continued presences of period furnishings designed in harmony with the domestic architecture, “901” retains strong integrity of workmanship.

Materials- The house retains integrity for materials, including original stone and woodwork. While the house was expanded in the 1970s, the home owners utilized nearly identical examples of building materials, specifically stone and wood, creating a nearly seamless integration with the original house.

Feeling- “901” retains a high level of integrity for feeling. Outside, the site and setting around “901” are remarkably similar to when the house was built in the early 1950s, and its inhabitants still enjoy long views, the privacy afforded by natural surroundings, and the relative quiet of living in a low-density, exurban location. Architecturally, the 1970s renovations to the house were compatible with its Modernist and “organic” design, and the general feeling of the design remains strongly intact.

Association- With the continued ownership of the property by the Durham family, totaling more than sixty years, the dwelling house at “901” retains strong integrity of association.



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### 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.

Returned

#### Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
1950-1973 (date of construction and renovations)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Jesse Luke Stetler  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

“901” is significant at the local level, under National Register Criterion “C.” Constructed in 1950, the house is architecturally significant as an example of the Contemporary style that emerged after World War II in the United States, as well as an example the “organic” architectural method as espoused by Frank Lloyd Wright and other early advocates of modern house design. The horizontal orientation of the house, its organic relationship to the surrounding landscape, its rational design based on interior space, and the forward-looking style of the house and its builders make “901” a significant, one-of-a-kind artifact of the post-World War II era in Delaware. The house is also significant at the local level due to its association with Davis Durham, a successful ophthalmological surgeon, and his wife, Harriet Frorer Durham, who was an author and an advocate for prison reform. The period of significance for “901” is 1950-1973, starting with its initial construction and ending with the last major alteration to the structure made by the original owners.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Organic and Contemporary Architecture – Progressive, Forward-Looking Design**

“901” is a rare example in Delaware of the related design principles of “organic” and Contemporary architecture. The property typifies many defining characteristics of these Modernist styles of design, while at the same time reflecting customization, adaptation, and continuity by a large and growing family. “901” is still owned by a relative of the builder and retains much of its original design and feeling. The horizontal orientation of the house, its organic relationship to the surrounding landscape, its rational design based on interior space, and the forward-looking style of the house and its builders make “901” a significant, one-of-a-kind artifact of the post-World War II era in Delaware.

Contemporary or Modern architecture emerged as a popular mode of building in the United States after World War II.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary design was revolutionary in the sense that it was “consciously forward-looking” and purposely broke ties with traditional antecedents—emphasizing honesty of form, efficiency, and technological advances. This forward-looking orientation was also a collective attempt, after the horrors of World War II, to “avoid dwelling on the past” and “to re-affirm instead a faith in the future.”<sup>2</sup> In rejecting historical precedents and unnecessary ornamentation, many early Modern architects rejected the very notion of style and change, instead believing in a more honest, true, and universal approach that would transcend artificial or superficial “styles” and fads.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lesley Jackson, *Contemporary: Architecture and Interiors of the 1950s* (London:Phaidon Press, 1994), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 11.

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Contemporary architecture did not enjoy mainstream popularity until the 1950s, but it grew from a longer tradition of progressive design movements that began to emerge during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Especially in the United States, Contemporary architecture was influenced by the earlier Prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Chicago School. Prairie architecture, most influential from about 1900 to 1920, consciously rejected the tendency of American architects to rely on European precedents, boldly advancing architectural forms indigenous to the United States. Houses designed in the Prairie style featured strong horizontal orientations (representing the long horizons of vast American prairies), including flat roofs, rectangular house segments, widely overhanging eaves, horizontal bands of windows, linear belt courses and trim, minimal ornamentation on wall surfaces, and open floor plans in the interior.<sup>4</sup> Prairie-style exteriors often exhibited continuity of line and wall surface, which accentuated the horizontalness of the building, with “a spirited interplay” of short vertical accents, such as piers, chimneys, and narrow vertical windows.<sup>5</sup> Many of these features of Prairie houses would eventually be incorporated into contemporary designs a half-century later.

A central design philosophy of many Prairie-style architects, especially Frank Lloyd Wright, was an “organic” approach to architecture. Champions of “organic architecture” aimed to design buildings that were both “coherent” and in harmony with their natural surroundings. In fact, houses were often meant to appear as though they “grew out of” their site organically. This was accomplished through compatible design with the landscape, a respect for local building traditions, and through the use of local building materials.<sup>6</sup> Since organic design was dependent on a building’s ability to integrate with the land, the siting of an organic dwelling was critical to the overall aesthetic and feeling of a house. Building sites were chosen carefully and consciously to ensure that a house could be crafted to successfully reflect—and be a part of—its environment. When possible, houses would also be sited to take advantage of a dramatic view—a feature also common with the later Contemporary Style, which borrowed much from the Prairie school.<sup>7</sup>

After World War I, the influential but short-lived Prairie school of design fell out of fashion, and several decades would pass before its ideas reemerged through the Contemporary movement after World War II. The Contemporary style in America, while borrowing from Prairie examples, was born of the international “Modern” movement in architecture, which blossomed in the 1920s and 1930s in both Europe and the United States. During these early decades, Modernist architects had “striven to create a ‘style without a style’” and aimed for a “complete rejection of historicist ornament and aesthetics.”<sup>8</sup> Modernism was not supposed to be “yet another style in an ever-changing historical sequence,” and instead, its proponents actually

<sup>4</sup> H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972, page 5.

<sup>5</sup> Allen, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Mumford “Form Follows Nature: The Origins of American Architecture,” p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> See Lesley Jackson, 27, as well as “Frequently Asked Questions” on website for Frank Lloyd Wright’s “Talieson,” at [www.TaliesonPreservation.org](http://www.TaliesonPreservation.org), section titled “What does the term Organic Architecture mean?”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 9 and 12.



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rejected “the very concept of change and style” while seeking a pure, universal, and honest form of design.<sup>9</sup>

This die-hard rejection of “style” by the early Modern architects would loosen over time, and by the time Modernist design “captured the public imagination” and become more mainstream in the late 1940s and the 1950s, after the turmoil of World War II, “Contemporary” architecture had itself become a “style” to most observers. Still, as Lesley Jackson argues, referring to Contemporary as a “style” does not “belittle its achievements in relation to the high-minded ideals of Modernism,” nor does it suggest that “its creators were solely interested in aesthetics.” Instead, recognizing Contemporary architecture as a style concedes the importance of its revolutionary aesthetic impact on modern house design.<sup>10</sup>

### **“901” – An Organic Home in the Contemporary Style**

“901” is a strong example of both organic architecture and post-WWII Contemporary design. When analyzing any Contemporary Style building, it can be difficult to separate distinct architectural features that are *only* organic, Prairie, Modernist, or Contemporary. In many ways, there is significant overlap between these interrelated schools of thought and design. Contemporary architecture often captures elements of all these approaches under a single umbrella. However, because the design of “901” is strongly organic, and Contemporary architecture is not always organic, the specific distinction is made here. However, in this discussion of “901” and its design, features are not necessarily labeled as strictly “Organic,” or “Prairie,” or “Contemporary,” since they often represent all three.

Modernist design offered an aesthetic considered suitable for the emerging bourgeoisie professional class, and the Durhams—a young eye surgeon and his college-educated spouse—certainly fit within this mold.<sup>11</sup> Though often forward-looking and sophisticated, many builders of modernist architecture sought refuge from urban life by building in exurban areas, in rural, secluded settings.<sup>12</sup> This trend lent itself well to organic approaches to building, since large parcels outside the city offered visually interesting natural landscapes and the ability to select compatible building sites. The Durham’s site selection for “901” was certainly a part of this broader trend, since the newly married couple had been living in the city of Wilmington before building their dream home well beyond the city’s outskirts.<sup>13</sup>

The location of “901” and its relationship to its setting makes it a representative example of “Organic” architecture. “901” is sited dramatically upon the crest of a hill overlooking the scenic Brandywine Creek valley below. In order to take advantage of this vantage point, the footprint of “901” breaks away from a simple rectangular form into what resembles a half-octagon—with two additional short sections built perpendicular to the rear middle corners of the building. The half-octagon form allows the house to wrap around the hillcrest, working with the

<sup>9</sup> See Lesley Jackson, 27, as well as “Frequently Asked Questions” on website for Frank Lloyd Wright’s “Talieson,” at [www.TaliesonPreservation.org](http://www.TaliesonPreservation.org), section titled “What does the term Organic Architecture mean?”, 11

<sup>10</sup> Lesley Jackson, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Twombly, *New Forms, Old Functions: Social Aspects of Prairie School Design*, p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>13</sup> “History of 901” by Davis Durham, and Wilmington City Directories.

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contours of the landscape, while maximizing the number of interior spaces enjoying a dramatic view over the river valley. Although the house appears to be one-story when approaching from the Mt. Lebanon Road side, it is built into the excavated hilltop so that the basement level of the bedroom, den, and garage sections are exposed on the valley side, essentially creating a two-story structure with “walkout” doors at ground level on the valley side of the hill.<sup>14</sup> Behind the main living room wing, between the rear den and office additions, terraced patios descend two levels from the main story of the house—so that the central portion of the house descends gradually to the rear slope, further intermingling house and hillside. Mature ground cover, plantings, and shrubs further enhance this blending of house and landscape. This integration of the house into the hilltop is a defining feature of organic architecture.

The low profile of the house, with its single story, with no attic, and shallow-pitched roof, ensures that the house squats low to the ground, hugging the hillside, projecting minimally above the hilltop with which it blends. Drawing on organic architecture’s tendency to reflect local building traditions and materials, much of the house—especially on the roadside—features a veneer layer of Avondale stone. This aesthetic echoes the historic tradition of stone construction in the hilly and rocky piedmont region of northern Delaware. Since the building site was not directly adjacent to Mount Lebanon Road, a long driveway of over 150 yards was constructed at an angle from the road to climb gradually to the house site. At “901,” site selection was obviously critical to achieve this organic dynamic and to take advantage of the panoramic view of the valley.

A dominant architectural feature of “901” is its horizontal orientation—a defining characteristic of Prairie and Contemporary architecture. This is expressed in many ways inside and outside the house, especially through its form, ornamentation, and fenestration. On the largest scale, the form of the house is dominantly horizontal and linear. On the road side, the sprawling four wings of the house span nearly 150 feet in combined length. When combined with the short height of the wall surfaces, with no visible foundation and a low-profile roof, the overall effect is a dramatically narrow, linear profile on the horizon. Further accentuating the sprawling, horizontal nature of the structure is a wide band of wood trim runs under the eaves of all four wings of the house, running in a continuous line across the top of every wall surface. Long window and door lintels act as an additional horizontal band of trim across a large percentage of the elevation. Lengthy bands of windows further punctuate the horizontal focus of the elevation. The kitchen/breezeway wing features an almost continuous band of 9 window panels and a door, with the only interruption existing where an interior wall formerly separated the kitchen and breezeway. On the bedroom wing, a similar window feature is formed by 3 panels on the main wing and 4 additional panels at the hallway section abutting the adjacent bedroom addition.<sup>15</sup> Across the living room section, three uniform, square windows are spaced evenly to stretch across most of the wall surface. Lastly, even the stacked stone of the wall surface is composed

<sup>14</sup> The original 1950 building had only one walkout door, under the library, which was the original furnace room. The current bedrooms under the master wing were added sometime in the late 1950s, during an excavation that created a basement level under that wing.

<sup>15</sup> The current owner notes that these windows on the façade are replacement windows, and that the original windows featured awnings.



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mostly of thin horizontal pieces, embodying even in the smallest detail the horizontal nature of this contemporary home.

Except for the living room section and the adjoining library and office sections, the valley side elevations are now two stories high, creating a much taller profile than the front of the house. However, the horizontal orientation does not cease here. Dramatic overhanging eaves, a clear Prairie influence, project from the low-pitched roof above the entire terrace area, which adjoins the library, living room, and office sections. A large picture window in the library and a panoramic window feature across much of the living room section enhance the linear effect. A row of boxwood shrubs at the base of the wall stretches across most of the living room section. Other wings of the house also highlight the horizontal design. The end elevation of the office section features three horizontal bands of windows, as well as wide clapboard siding. The bedroom wing, which was excavated during the 1973 renovation to add the walk-out basement level, features a plexiglass sunroom dome (added circa 1980), including a line of horizontal framing, that spans the entire length of the section. Beneath the sunroom, visually separating it from the recessed lower level, is a long, wooden trim band, about two feet tall, that also runs the entire length of the section.

Contemporary architecture often featured an increased window-to-wall ratio, and the valley side of "901" exemplifies this. With two large picture windows on the library section, the panoramic window feature across the living room section, the library addition that is dominated by windows on the main level and basement, and the entire bedroom wing featuring a sunroom and large windows at the lower level, the rear side of the house includes more windows than wall surface.

Another dramatic change that occurred with the emergence of Modernist architecture was the reorientation of interior spaces. Instead of allowing the exterior shape to dictate interior spatial arrangements, architects now adopted an inside-out approach, allowing interior organization to determine the overall shape and appearance of the house. This shift allowed the users of the space themselves, and their patterns of movement, to dictate the design and layout of the house.<sup>16</sup> The "open" floor plan was revolutionary design philosophy that became a hallmark of Contemporary architecture. Open floor plans allowed for the removal of permanent barriers and moved away from compartmentalized spaces. The reorientation of the open floor plan allowed rooms to blend seamlessly into one another. Rather than creating static, single-function rooms, open floor plans facilitated more versatility in these larger spaces.<sup>17</sup> This most often manifested in a combination of interior living spaces like the kitchen and dining room, but might also mean incorporating exterior features like garages into the house itself, adding convenience and reducing the cost and space of an additional building.<sup>18</sup> As a result of changes to interiors, the form and appearance of exteriors of structures dramatically changed.

"901" is unusual and progressive for exhibiting elements of both outside-in and inside-out design. The open floor plan concept was expressed mostly through the combination of the dining

<sup>16</sup> Lesley Jackson, p.12.

<sup>17</sup> William Lescaze, "The Meaning of Modern Architecture." *The North American Review*, Vol. 244, No. 1 (Autumn, 1937), p. 110.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 114.

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room and living room, creating a primary living space at the heart of the house that enjoyed a dramatic view over the Brandywine Creek valley. However, the half-octagon form, with its 6 distinct sections, allowed for a progressive design program for interior living spaces. The house was uniquely divided into large wings that served particular functions—the two sections furthest removed from the valley view, the garage and kitchen wings, were utilized for more utilitarian service functions. The central section of the house, positioned to enjoy the best view, and accessed through the front door, was composed of a single, large, open room intended to function as the primary living space, including the large living room/dining room combination with a fireplace. The panoramic window in the living room also overlooked the rear terrace, which could function as additional primary living space in the warmer months. To the south, yet another separate wing housed all of the bedrooms, which were originally all accessed by a long hallway extending the length of the wing. Two additional sections project from the corners of the valley side to take further advantage of the view and to serve specialty functions—the library on the north side of the house and the office (expanded from an original bedroom) on the west side. This segmentation of living functions was in some ways more revolutionary than the open floor plan concept, since it exaggerated the compartmentalization of function found in more traditional houses.

The use of larger and more frequent windows to capitalize on the dramatic siting at “901” is also a reflection of organic design and Contemporary architecture. The use of the panoramic window in the living room and the other picture windows on the main level create the effect of bringing the natural landscape into the home. The reduction in visual barriers between the outdoors and the interior of the house contributes to the organic integration of spaces.

A few other features at “901” are notable for exemplifying Contemporary design. Especially in Wrightian architecture, large interior chimneys are often designed to appear to ground the structure.<sup>19</sup> At “901,” a large stone chimney and hearth pierces the southwest side of the large living room/dining room section. The garage is attached and blended into the architecture of the house. The kitchen has been moved to the front of the house and faces the driveway. Other more personalized features of “901” that are reflective of modern design practices are the built-ins and custom furniture that Davis Durham himself crafted. In line with Modernist architectural traditions, many household objects relied on the simple geometric forms with minimal embellishments. Architectural elements found in the den, living room, and kitchen highlight these principles.

### **Dr. Davis Durham and Harriett F. Durham – Progressive, Forward Thinkers**

It is perhaps unsurprising that the Durhams chose a forward-looking design for their new home. Together, and through their own individual work, they both worked to improve society through invention, philanthropy, and public policy. Both were recognized independently as “Distinguished Delawareans” by the *The News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware) for making significant contributions to “the quality of life in Delaware”— Harriett Frorer Durham received the honor in 1977 and Dr. Davis Durham the following year in 1978.

<sup>19</sup>[https:// westcotthouse.org](https://westcotthouse.org).



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Dr. Davis Durham was honored with the Distinguished Delawarean Award “for his compassion for the elderly and children with sight problems, and his service to humanity on the U.S.S. Hope.” Often assisted by Harriet, herself an orthoptic technician, he was the first head of the Eye Department of Project Hope, serving in Indonesia, Peru, Guinea and Colombia. His other overseas work included service in Alaska, Samoa, Haiti, South Africa, Nigeria, China and Thailand. He was vice-president of Aid for International Medicine.

Beyond his philanthropic service, Davis also had a passion for modern invention and technological improvement in his field. He was the first surgeon to introduce diamond knives, manufactured by the DuPont Company, in human surgery. This invention eventually became widely used, especially in cataract surgery. In conjunction with DuPont engineers, he also developed a pneumatic application tonometer for measuring eye pressure in glaucoma patients. This instrument was marketed as “space age tonometry” that offered “exciting new reaches in glaucoma detection.” Dr. Durham published more than thirty scientific articles in his profession. He also was the first Delawarean to be elected to the prestigious American Ophthalmological Society and served as president of the Delaware Academy of Medicine. He served as a Battalion Aid Surgeon in WWII in the 63rd Infantry Division, Company C 363rd Medical Battalion, in Germany and northern France - the last infantry division to come into the European Theater. He was awarded the European Theatre Ribbon with two battle stars, the Bronze Medal and the Combat Medical Badge.

The Durham’s penchant for Contemporary, Organic building design did not cease with the construction of “901.” In 1956, Dr. Durham also commissioned a larger project known as “The Professional Building” on Augustine Cut-Off, a medical and professional complex just outside the city limits of Wilmington.<sup>20</sup> In 1954, the *Wilmington Evening Journal* touted the plans for the building, which was estimated to cost \$1,000,000, as representing “one of the most modern medical structures of its kind in the East.”<sup>21</sup> The design of the Professional Building reflects “901” to a remarkable degree, including its siting, setting, form, style, and materials. The structure was described as a “four-story stone building will be built into the side of Brandywine gorge, so that only one story will be seen from the cut-off.”<sup>22</sup> Like “901,” the Professional Building was a sprawling, low-profile, one-story, stone-clad building with multiple narrow wings. The building was also considered progressive at the time because of its modern amenities, including ample off-street parking, air conditioning, and wheel-chair access.<sup>23</sup> The architectural plans had “been designed so that the building [could] be expanded without affecting the style of the building,”<sup>24</sup> and several sympathetic additions were made over the first decade. For all of the building phases for this project, Durham employed Cantara Construction and a local Wilmington Architect J. Ellis Preston to carry out his vision.

<sup>20</sup> Durham first applied for a building permit in 1948, for a “building to be occupied by doctor’s offices” at 1201 Pennsylvania Avenue in Wilmington. Why Durham changed the location for the office building is unclear.

<sup>21</sup> *Wilmington Evening Journal*, Oct 7, 1954.

<sup>22</sup> *Wilmington Evening Journal*, Oct 7, 1954.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

“901”

New Castle, Delaware

Name of Property

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Harriet Frorer Durham was best known as an author and as an advocate for penal reform in Delaware. She was chairman of the state Advisory Council on Adult Corrections under four different commissioners. According to one observer, working to improve the correction system in the state of Delaware could be a “hard, frustrating and thankless task,” and Harriet “fought for decent, basic conditions—particularly for good medical services.”<sup>25</sup> Durham wrote letters to the state’s Board of Parole to give convicted prisoners every possible consideration on their reviews and prodded prison officials for years to improve medical services in state prisons. She ignored the advice of the administrators that prison was “too dangerous” for a woman and visited prisoners regularly.<sup>26</sup> She was a board member of the Delaware Council on Crime and Justice, Planned Parenthood, Child Guidance Center, and Children’s Home. A longtime chairman of the Advisory Council on Adult Corrections, Durham was also chairwoman of Friends Service Committee. Her Distinguished Delawarean award in 1977 recognized her dedication to reform in the field of adult and juvenile correction, to racial harmony, and to literature.

Harriet earned a bachelor’s degree in English literature/history at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. She later was certified as an orthoptic technician in 1950 after a summer school of the American Orthoptics Council at Nason College in Maine. Durham was a member of Society of Friends, the Junior League of Wilmington, and Greenville Country Club. She was also the author of several books, including a history of Caribbean Quakers, a travel book on St. Lucia, and a biography of Dr. William Thornton, an early American architect. She wrote numerous articles for various publications, including book reviews for *The News Journal*.

#### Site History and Background to “901” Construction

“901” was constructed on a parcel long-associated with milling operations on the Brandywine Creek, in the village of Rockland, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> The Jessop & Moore Paper Company owned and operated the Rockland mills for the longest period, from 1860 until the company filed for bankruptcy in 1933.<sup>28</sup> After that time, the mill operation itself was transferred to Doeskin Products, which produced tissue paper there until 1971. The plant closed permanently in 1973, and the mill building was sold to Bissell-Vinton Associates, who converted the structures into a condominium complex. The Rockland Mills complex was added to the National Register as the Rockland Historic District in 1972 (#72000289).

The parcel of land on which “901” sits was acquired by two trustees of the Jessop & Moore Paper Company in 1925, who received 121.2-acres as part of the bankruptcy proceeding.<sup>29</sup> In 1937, after a series of deed transactions, the former president of the Rockland Paper Company, Charles A. Ernst Jr., acquired a 39.82-acre parcel from the larger tract of former company land. He sold this entire parcel in April of 1949 to Davis and Harriet Durham.

<sup>25</sup> *Delaware Women Remembered*, Edited by Mary Sam Ward; 1977, The Modern Press, Inc. Wilmington, DE, “Criminal Justice” section, page 35.

<sup>26</sup> *The News Journal*, Wednesday, January 23, 1991.

<sup>27</sup> The Rockland Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, #72000289.

<sup>28</sup> NCC Deed, Book K, Volume 39, Page 130, [www.paperindustryweb.com/rockland](http://www.paperindustryweb.com/rockland).

<sup>29</sup> NCC Deed, Book K, Volume 39, Page 130.



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Apparently introduced to the land by her father, James Robert Frorer, Harriet Durham was in many ways the driving force behind the Durham’s acquisition of the property. Davis Durham later admitted that he was “skeptical of its potential,” especially because of its appearance after “30 years of scrub growth,” but Harriet “had the vision to see its possibilities.”<sup>30</sup> After her father took the Durhams to inspect the site, Harriet continued to investigate the property by following up at the New Castle County courthouse to research the land ownership. Her research revealed that the land was owned by Charles and Jacqueline Ernst in Chester, Pennsylvania. Whether the Ernst family was initially willing to part with their well-located building lot is not clear, however, Davis Durham recalled that they were “good Quakers” and “let us proceed with its purchase.” The parcel totaled nearly 40 acres, and the Ernsts would only sell the entire parcel rather than selling a smaller piece coveted by the Durhams. On April 27, 1949, the Durhams acquired the land, nearly forty acres, for \$10,000, or \$250 an acre. They would later sell the land south of Mt. Lebanon Road and a portion of the remaining acreage on the “901” side, north of Mt. Lebanon Road.

### **Architect: Jesse Luke Stetler**

The Durhams hired a Philadelphia-area architect named Jesse Stetler to design the house. How the Durhams met and hired Stetler is unknown, but what is clear is that “901” was a marked departure from Stetler’s previous known works. A Pennsylvania native, Stetler was 63 at the time of the commission,<sup>31</sup> and received a Certificate of Proficiency in architectural training from the University of Pennsylvania in 1911. Stetler’s movements after he left the University of Pennsylvania are not entirely clear, but in 1917 he reported to Penn’s General Alumni Catalogue that he was working with the Stetler Mingle Company back in his hometown of Reading. He joined the U.S. Navy in the Bureau of Aeronautics in 1918, and served until 1922. After his service, Stetler decided to return to Philadelphia and, from 1922 to 1929, he partnered with real estate developer Harvey Deysher<sup>32</sup> to form the firm Stetler & Deysher. His business was mainly focused on designing and developing apartment houses, especially along the Main Line of Philadelphia. Some of his best-known commissions were the Walnut Park Hotel (1928) and Kentwell Hall Apartments (1929) at 6640 Sprague Street in Philadelphia. Yet it was perhaps during the Great Depression of the 1930s when Stetler apparently switched his focus from apartment buildings to stylish single-family homes along the Main Line. From 1943 to 1946, he worked with the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) as assistant chief architect for eastern Pennsylvania and the state of Delaware. After this time, however, at least one source suggests Stetler retired from “the practice of architecture.” In 1946, Stetler was appointed as superintendent of the Lower Merion Township Buildings Regulations, which he continued until 1952, when he was appointed to the Planning Board in the same township. From 1956 to 1961, he continued his public service career as secretary of property and supplies in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

According to Davis Durham, even though Stetler “drew up the plans for the house . . . the design was essentially ours.”<sup>33</sup> The Durhams wished to design a house that would capitalize on the

<sup>30</sup> “History of 901,” Davis Durham recollections, written letter in possession of family.

<sup>31</sup> Davis Durham’s personal recollections.

<sup>32</sup> PhiladelphiaBuildings.org, Stetler and Deysher.

<sup>33</sup> “History of 901,” Davis Durham recollections.

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panoramic view from their hilltop building site. Construction on "901" began in 1950. The Durhams moved into the house in 1951, before the house was completely finished. Dr. Durham remembers that his parents wished to give the young couple a house-warming present. While Durham hinted that money would be appreciated, his parents wanted to give them "something to remember them by." So, as Dr. Durham recalls, "we had a swimming pool completed in 1953 ~ before we had any furniture!"

Comprehensive Planning Information:

Zone: Piedmont  
Period: 1940 – 1960 +  
Theme: Architecture, Engineering and Decorative Arts  
Property Type: Contemporary Style Residence

Returned



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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

### Primary Sources

New Castle County Recorder of Deeds, Wilmington, Delaware.

United States Geographical Survey, *Wilmington North* Quadrangle, Delaware (map), 7.5-minute series, Delaware DataMIL, 2011.

USDA Agricultural Adjustment Administration. *Delaware* (air photo). 1:20,000. 1937.

USDA Agricultural and Commodity Stabilization Service. *Delaware* (air photo). 1:20,000. 1954.

USDA Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (FSA). *Delaware* (air photo). 1:20,000. 1968.

*Wilmington, Delaware City Directories*, 1946-1955.

### Secondary Sources

Brooks, H. Allen, Jr. "The Early Works of Prairie Architects." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (March, 1960), pp. 2-10.

Jackson, Lesley. *Contemporary: Architecture and Interiors of the 1950s*. London: Phaidon Press, 1994.

Lescaze, William. "The Meaning of Modern Architecture." *The North American Review*, Vol. 244, No. 1 (Autumn, 1937), pp. 110-120.

Mumford, Mark. "Form Follows Nature: The Origins of American Organic Architecture." *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Spring 1989), pp. 26-37.

Twombly, Robert. "Forward: New Forms, Old Functions: Social Aspects of Prairie School Design." *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1995), pp. 85-91 + 182.

White, Charles E., Jr. "Are There Two American Schools of Architecture?" *The Art World*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (May, 1917), pp.178-182.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: Center for Historic Architecture and Design; Durham Family records

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

Returned

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 4.22 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 39.798527 Longitude: -75.570290
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:



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**Or**  
**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Returned

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The proposed National Register boundary contains 4.22-acres, and coincides with one legal tax parcel boundary on which the house is located. The parcel is identified as # 0607500006 as depicted on the official tax parcel maps of New Castle County, Delaware.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the land that is historically associated with the dwelling.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Michael J. Emmons, Jr. Graduate Research Assistant  
organization: Center for Historic Architecture and Design  
street & number: 330 Alison Hall, University of Delaware  
city or town: Newark state: DE zip code: 19716  
e-mail mjej@udel.edu  
telephone: (419) 630-8895  
date: February 5, 2016

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

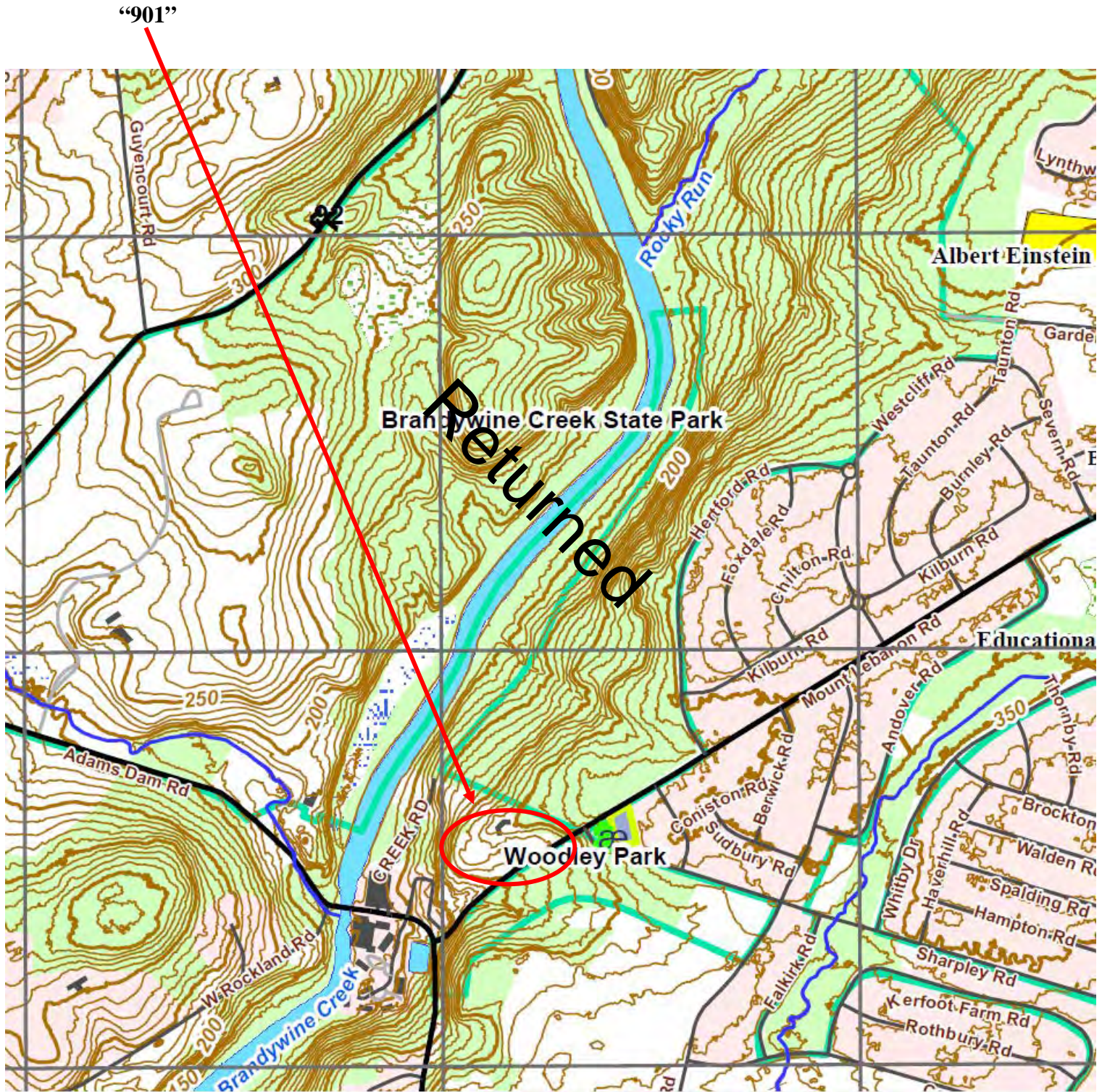
Returned



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### USGS Quad Map

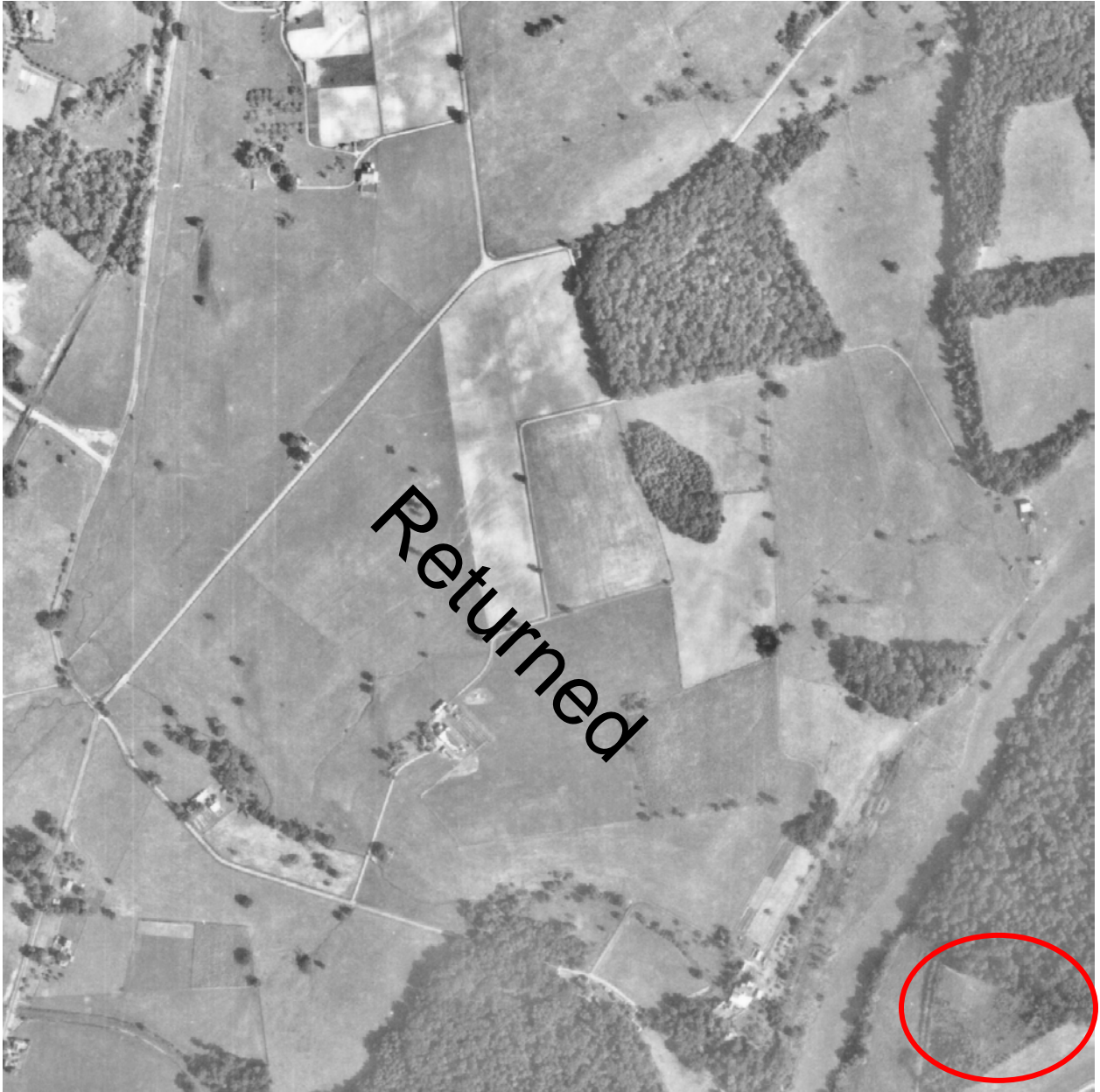




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**1937 Aerial ("901" in red)**





“901”  
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**1954 Aerial (“901” in red)**



“901”  
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**1968 Aerial (“901” in red)**

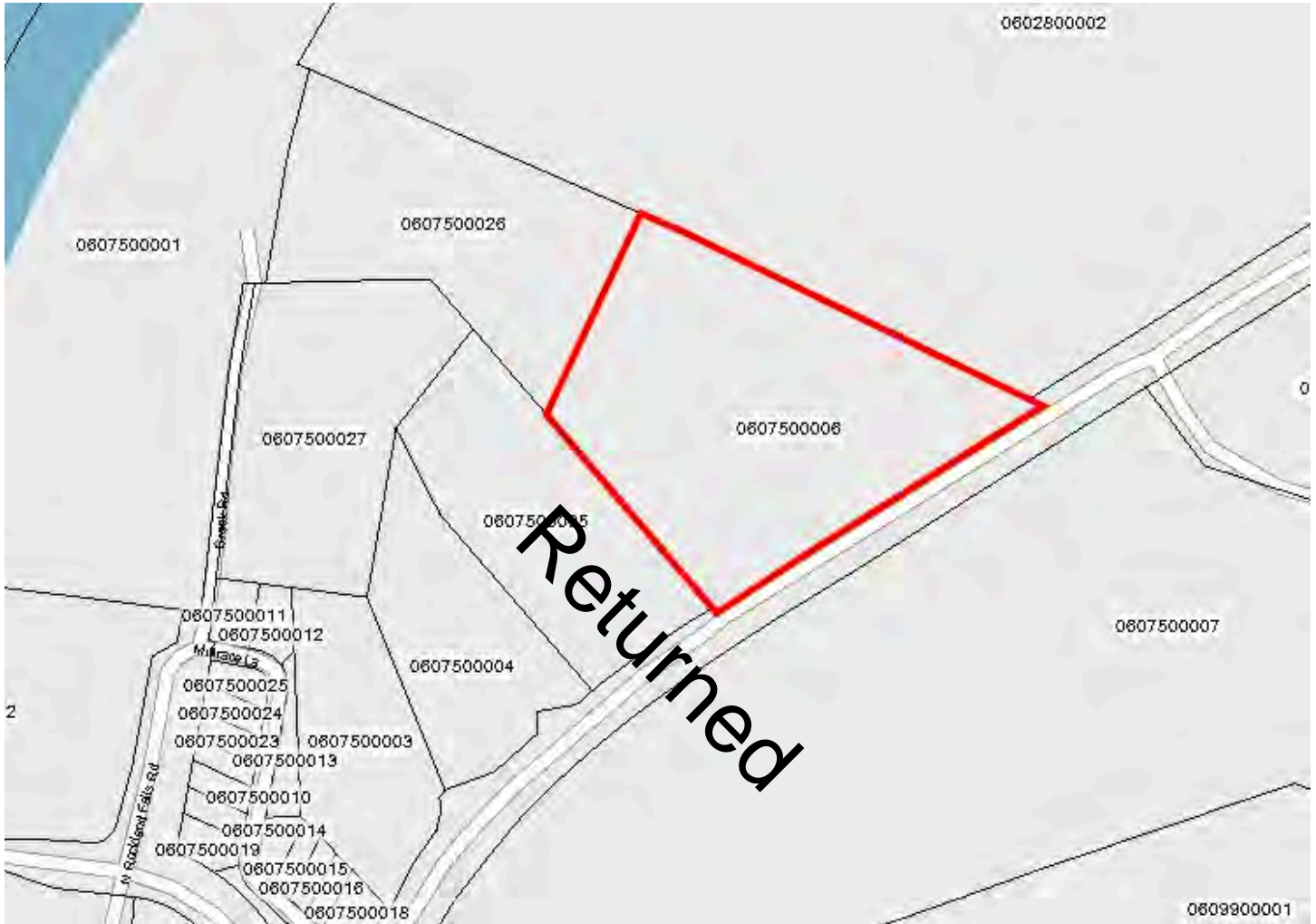




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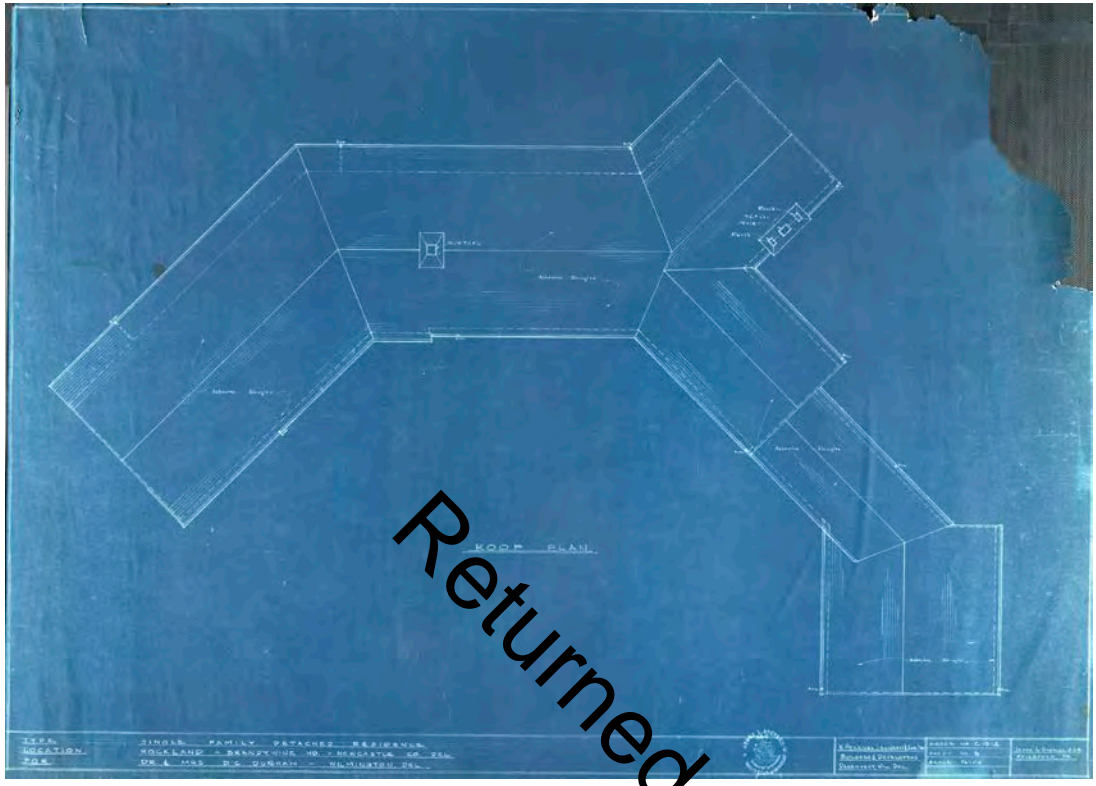
**New Castle County Parcel Map ("901" in red)**



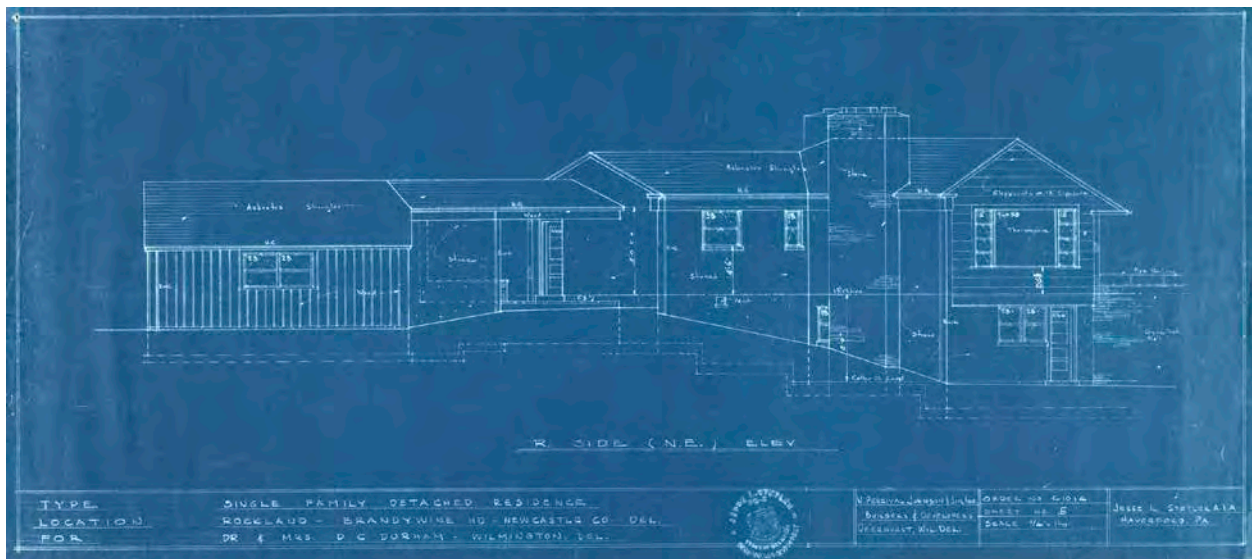
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The original architectural drawing of the “Roof Plan” at 901 reveals the original, half-octagonal footprint. The later garage extension and office addition are not represented here.



The original architectural drawing for the northeast elevation shows how the foundation (represented as the dotted line) was designed to “stair step” down the hill.

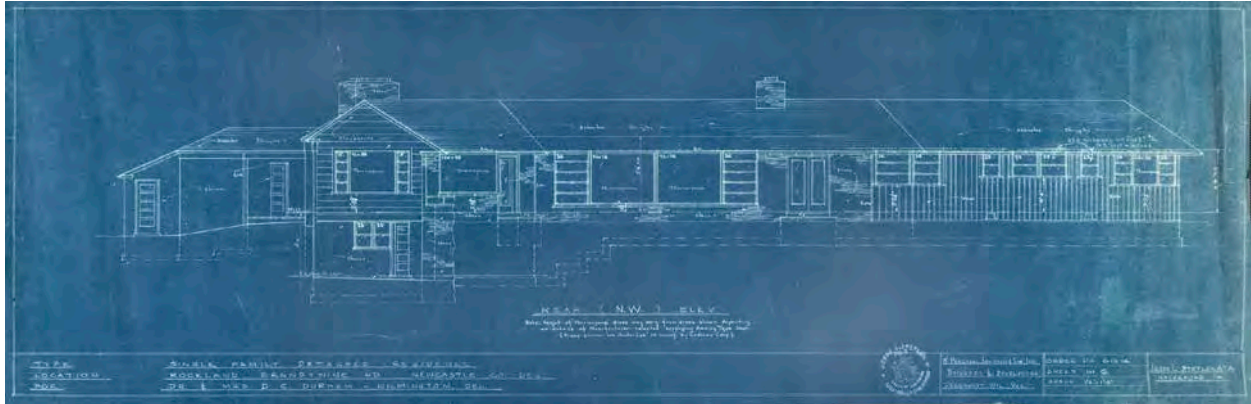




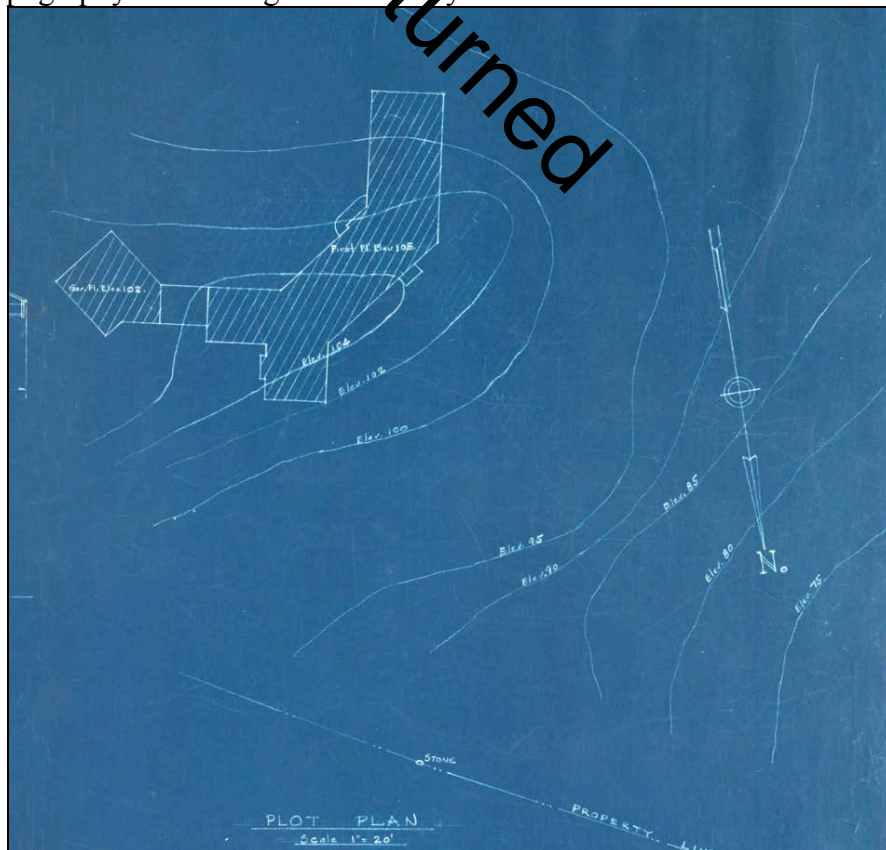
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Original architectural drawing of the “Rear (N.W.) Elevation” highlights the dominant horizontal orientation of “901,” and shows the bedroom wing (right side) before the 1973 excavations to create a second story at the lower level. The bedroom wing is also now covered by a full-length sunroom, which was also added in 1973.



Detail of original architectural drawing of a “plot plan,” showing the siting of “901” in relation to the steep topography descending to the Brandywine Creek below.



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Aerial photograph of “901” (center) before the 1973 alterations. Also visible is the Du Pont Country Club’s golf course (at top of photo) to the south, protected wooded land to the south and east of “901,” and a road/trail at the bottom of the hill, which is part of the Brandywine Creek State Park.

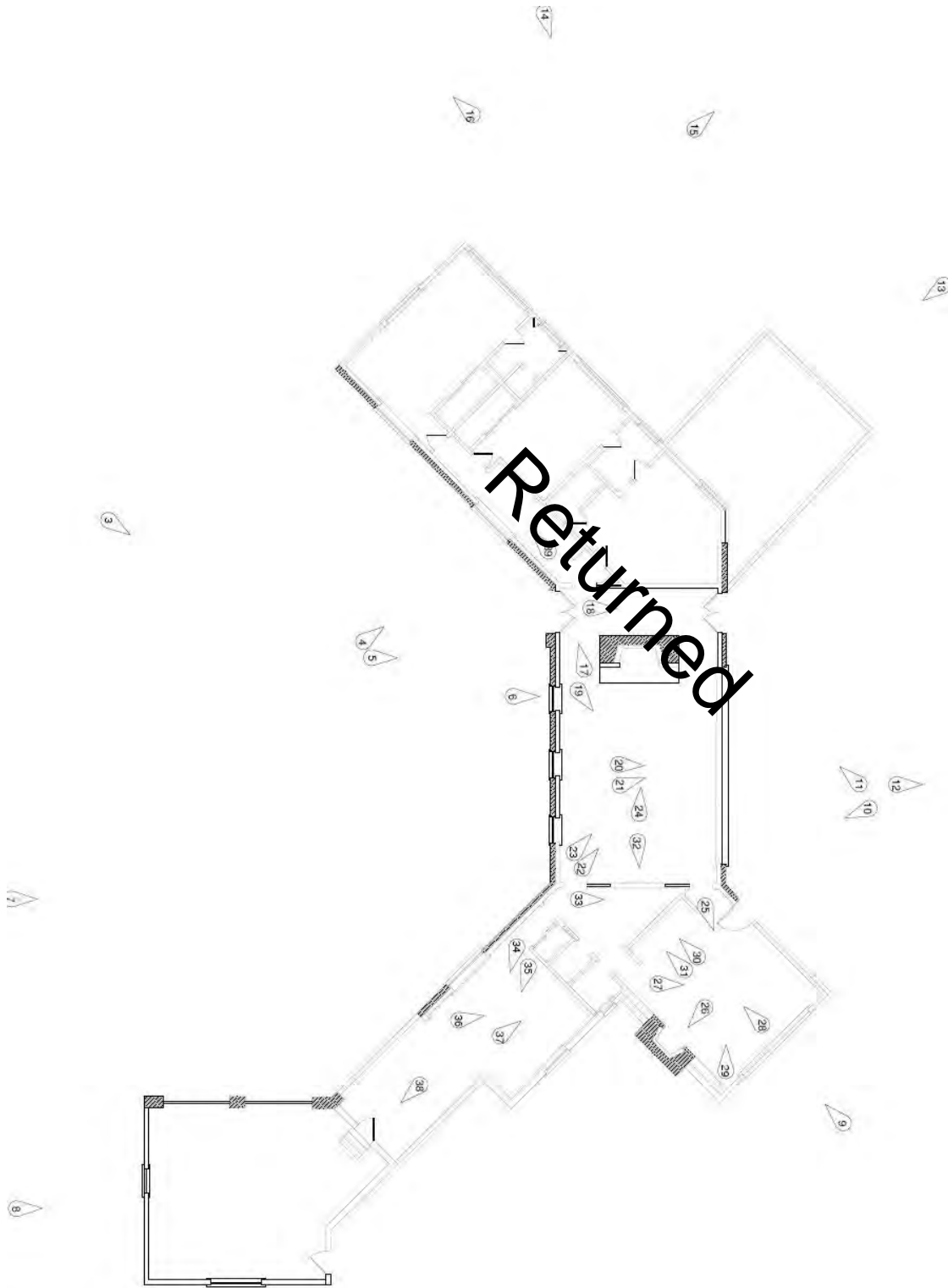




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**901 Photokey (Drawing by Catherine Morrissey)**



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### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: “901”

City or Vicinity: Rockland Vicinity

County: New Castle County

State: Delaware

Photographer: Michael J. Emmons, Jr.

Date Photographed: 9/20/2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 01 of 39 Environmental view of the house, stable, and pasture, taken from Mount Lebanon Road, looking northwest.
- 02 of 39 Environmental view of the house, pasture and tree-lined driveway, from Mt. Lebanon Road, looking northwest.
- 03 of 39 Perspective view of house on Mt. Lebanon Road side, showing bedroom wing, living room section, kitchen section, garage wing, and circle driveway, looking northwest.
- 04 of 39 View of the east elevation of the bedroom wing, looking west.
- 05 of 39 View of the southeast elevation of the central living room section, showing main entryway and western half of circle driveway, looking northwest.
- 06 of 39 Detail view of a fixed window on the southeast elevation of the central living room section, looking northwest.



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- 07 of 39 View of southeast elevation of kitchen section, southwest elevation of garage wing, and eastern half of circle driveway, showing a doorway into kitchen wing and three garage bays, looking northwest.
- 08 of 39 South elevation showing three-bay garage, looking south.
- 09 of 39 View of north elevation of rear den section, showing slider door to lower level, and stone retaining wall for elevated rear patio area, looking south.
- 10 of 39 View of west elevation of den section, northwest elevation of living room section, and rear patio area, showing doorway to den section, panoramic window from living room, and steps down to lower patio and barbeque area, looking east.
- 11 of 39 View of northwest elevation of living room section, north elevation of rear office section, and rear patio area, showing panoramic window from living room, doorway to the living room, and steps down to lower patio and barbeque area, looking east.
- 12 of 39 View of Brandywine Creek valley from the rear lower patio area, looking northwest.
- 13 of 39 View of west elevation of den section, northwest elevation of living room section, rear patio area, and west elevation of rear office section, showing south steps down to lower patio and backyard, looking east.
- 14 of 39 View of west elevation of den section and bedroom wing showing large sunroom addition on bedroom wing and recessed entrance to lower level bedrooms, looking northeast.
- 15 of 39 View of swimming pool, at north corner, looking south.
- 16 of 39 View of tennis court, at north corner, looking south.
- 17 of 39 Interior, first floor, detail view of main entry door, accessed from west side of circle driveway and entering southern end of living room section, showing original door with centered door knob, looking south.
- 18 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, view of area southwest of chimney, renovated in 1973 to create stairway to new lower-level, showing stairway, lowered door to rear patio, stairs to main living room, and southwest side of stone chimney, looking northwest.

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- 19 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, perspective view of northwest and northeast walls, showing panoramic window, doorway to den, and doorway to hallway, looking north.
- 20 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, view of northwest wall, showing panoramic window with view of valley, looking northwest.
- 21 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, 1955 *Better Homes and Garden* photo, of northwest wall, showing panoramic window with view of valley, looking northwest.
- 22 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, perspective view of southwest and northwest walls, showing door to office section, stone fireplace, stairway to lower level and rear door to patio area, and panoramic window overlooking Brandywine Creek valley, looking southwest.
- 23 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, historic perspective view, circa 1955, of southwest and northwest walls, showing stone fireplace, rear door to patio area, and panoramic window overlooking Brandywine Creek valley, looking southwest.
- 24 of 39 Interior, first floor, living room, view of southwest wall, showing front doorway, hallway to bedroom wing, stone fireplace, stairs to lower level and rear door, looking southwest.
- 25 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, perspective view of north and east walls, showing picture window, built-ins, vaulted ceilings, and false exposed rafters and ties, looking northeast.
- 26 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, detail view of east wall fireplace, looking east.
- 27 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, perspective view of west and north walls, showing doorway to rear patio, picture windows, vaulted ceilings, and false exposed rafters and ties, looking northwest.
- 28 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, view of south wall, showing door to hallway, original built-in features, door to living room, vaulted ceilings, and false rafters and ties, looking south.
- 29 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, *Better Homes and Garden* 1955 photo of south and west walls, showing original built-ins, door to living room, and exterior doorway to rear patio, looking south.
- 30 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, detail view of south wall, showing original built-in clock, speaker slots, and false rafters and ties, looking south.



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- 31 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, detail view of south wall, showing wet bar, original built-ins, and hardware, looking south.
- 32 of 39 Interior, first floor, den, detail view of original circa 1950 door hardware on south wall, looking south.
- 33 of 39 Interior, first floor, stair hallway, detail view of spiral staircase to lower level, a part of renovations during the early 1970s, looking northwest.
- 34 of 39 Interior, first floor, kitchen, perspective view of north and east walls, showing renovations from the early 1970s, including finished breezeway space, looking northeast.
- 35 of 39 Interior, first floor, kitchen, *Better Homes and Garden* 1955 photo of north and east walls, showing arrangement before the 1970s renovations, showing door to breezeway, looking northeast.
- 36 of 39 Interior, first floor, kitchen, perspective view of west and north walls, showing doorway to spiral stair hallway and renovations from the early 1970s, looking west.
- 37 of 39 Interior, first floor, kitchen, *Better Homes and Garden* 1955 photo showing built-in ironing board.
- 38 of 39 Interior, first floor, kitchen, view of north, east, and south walls of finished breezeway area, showing doorway to garages, looking east.
- 39 of 39 Interior, first floor, hallway, view of hallway spanning bedroom wing from front entry, showing entrance to master bedroom, looking south.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: House at 901 Mt. Lebanon Rd.

Multiple Name:

State & County: DELAWARE, New Castle

Date Received:  
1/6/2017

Date of Pending List:

Date of 16th Day:

Date of 45th Day:  
2/21/2017

Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100000656

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

<i>Submission Type</i>	<i>Property Type</i>	<i>Problem Type</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years

Accept  Return  Reject 2/14/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria: Nomination must be returned. The Period of Significance is defined as extending to 1973, but the nomination form does not address the issue of this being a property achieving significance within the past fifty years (National Register Criteria Consideration G). See attached National Register Return Sheet for detailed comment.

Reviewer: Patrick Andrus

*Patrick Andrus*

Discipline: Historian

Telephone: (202)354-2218

Date:

*2/14/2017*

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.





# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

## United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Evaluation/Return Sheet

Property Name: House at 901 Mt. Lebanon Road  
State and County: DELAWARE, New Castle  
Reference Number: SG100000656

Reason for Return: The nomination is being returned for substantive and technical problems.

National Register Criteria Consideration G: The Period of Significance for the nominated property has been defined as extending to 1973, but the nomination form does not address the issue of National Register Criteria Consideration G (properties which have achieved significance within the past fifty years). Properties achieving significance within the past fifty years must be shown to be of exceptional importance in order to be listed in the National Register. The form does not have Criteria Consideration G checked, nor does it evaluate exceptional importance.

Please either address the issue of National Register Criteria Consideration G by explaining the exceptional importance of the building, or redefine the period of significance to greater than fifty years.

National Register Criterion B: The property is nominated solely under National Register Criterion C for architectural significance. The nomination, however, contains a statement which indicates that the property is also being nominated under National Register Criterion B (associated with the lives of persons significant in our past), although B is not checked on the form and no areas of significance are provided for B. In Section 8, page 13, of the form, it states "The House is also significant at the local level due to its association with Davis Durham, a successful ophthalmological surgeon, and his wife, Harriet Frorer Durham, who was an author and an advocate for prison reform."

Please clarify if the property is being nominated under National Register Criterion B. If it is, please check B on the form and provide Areas of Significance for Davis and Harriet Durham.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Evaluation/Return Sheet**

Property Name: House at 901 Mt. Lebanon Road  
State and County: DELAWARE, New Castle County  
Reference Number: SG100000656

p. 2

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Section 3 of the Form: This section of the form is not fully filled in. Please check the section of the form indicating whether this is a nomination or a determination of eligibility and certify whether in the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Officer the property meets or does not meet the National Register Criteria.



Patrick Andrus, Historian  
National Register of Historic Places  
202-354-2218  
[patrick\\_andrus@nps.gov](mailto:patrick_andrus@nps.gov)  
2/14/2017





Andrus, Patrick <patrick\_andrus@nps.gov>

---

## 901

1 message

**Andrus, Patrick** <patrick\_andrus@nps.gov>  
To: Madeline Dunn <madeline.dunn@state.de.us>

Tue, Feb 14, 2017 at 7:46 AM

Hello Madeline: as discussed, attached is the National Register nomination Return Sheet for 901 Mt. Lebanon Road. I have addressed two more issue that we did not discuss. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Patrick

—  
Patrick Andrus, Historian  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
(202) 354-2218  
patrick\_andrus@nps.gov

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**901MountLebanon.pdf**  
103K

State of Delaware  
Historical and Cultural Affairs

21 The Green  
Dover, DE 19901-3611

Phone: (302) 736.7400

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February 20, 2017

Ms. Stephanie Toothman, Keeper of the National Register  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye Street NW (2280)  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Toothman:

Enclosed please find the **revised nomination for 901 Mt. Lebanon Road** which is located in Rockland, Delaware. The nomination was edited in consideration of the constructive feedback received from National Park Service staff.

The Delaware State Historic Preservation Office requests that your office expedite the review of the revised nomination, if possible, and hope that a final decision regarding the property's listing in the National Register of Historic Places can be done quickly. If there are any questions regarding this document, please contact Madeline E. Dunn, National Register Coordinator-Historian for the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office at 302-736-7417 or [madeline.dunn@state.de.us](mailto:madeline.dunn@state.de.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Slavin".

Timothy A. Slavin, State Historic Preservation Officer  
and Director Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Enclosures

