

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: Johnson Home Farm

other name/site number: CRS# N-4247

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2. Location

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street & number: County Road 453 and State Road 9

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Taylor's Bridge, Blackbird Hundred

vicinity: X

state: DE county: New Castle code: 003 zip code: 19734

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Dwellings of the Rural Elite in Central Delaware, 1770-1830 +/-

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

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Johnson Home Farm, N-4247

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

Dennis Greenhouse

Dennis Greenhouse  
County Executive  
New Castle County  
Delaware

7/11/07

Date

=====  
4. State/Federal Agency Certification  
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  X  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. \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Daniel M. [Signature]  \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official Date  7/24/92

Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs   
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

=====  
5. National Park Service Certification  
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  Patrick Andrews   9/11/92   
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper Date  
of Action

=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

Current : Domestic Sub: single dwelling

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7. Description  
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Architectural Classification:

Early Republic/Federal

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation Stone, Brick roof Wood/Shake  
walls Asphalt, Wood/ other Post and Plank  
Weatherboard

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

The Johnson Home Farm is located in Blackbird Hundred, New Castle County, northeast of Taylors Bridge about 2500 feet east of Route 9 on Cedar Swamp Road (County Road 453). A dwelling, barns, sheds, a corn crib, a granary, and other outbuildings are arranged around a courtyard at the edge of 155 acres of cultivated farmland and marsh.

Built about 1790, the house is a two-story, five-bay, gable-roof, post-and-plank building with interior brick chimneys at each gable end. The Johnson house faces north, fronting Cedar Swamp Road. A two-story, wood-frame kitchen wing added in the mid-nineteenth century abuts the east wall. Behind the house is a courtyard ringed with agricultural buildings. The barns, sheds, corn cribs, and outbuildings date from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries and do not contribute to the historic context covered in the nomination.

The house is built on a center-passage plan with overall dimensions of 39' wide x 22' deep and stands on a brick foundation above a modern cellar. The common-rafter gable roof is sheathed with a heavily weathered wood shingle roof. The exterior walls are covered with composite shingling resembling red brick. The modern shingle is applied over nineteenth-century white-painted wood weatherboard which replaced the original siding.

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The front (north) elevation is symmetrically fenestrated with a five-bay arrangement including four windows and a centrally-placed door with a transom window on the ground floor. A one-story shed-roof porch shelters the three ground floor center bays. The rear (south) elevation has four windows and a central door on the first floor and five windows on the second floor. A bulkhead door leading to the basement is on the eastern side of the wall to the right of the door. The west elevation has one window on the first floor and two windows in the attic.

A section of asphalt shingle and clapboard missing from the south corner of the wall exposes the plank construction underneath. The visible planks are 7 inches wide and 3 inches thick and incised with carpenter's Roman numerals in a manner consistent with the Heller-Wilson House in nearby Odessa.

A two-story wood frame wing added in the early nineteenth century abuts the east side of the main portion of the house. Like the main block, its walls are covered with clapboard and asphalt shingle. The wing, built as a kitchen with second story sleeping chambers, is constructed on a one-room plan with opposing entries in the north and south walls. The second floor is divided into two chambers--possibly for servants--that were originally segregated from the main block. A one-story enclosed porch with a shed roof built in the twentieth century extends the entire length of rear elevation of the kitchen wing.

The paneled front entry door with the four-light transom window matched the paneled rear-entry door, although the transom light above the rear entry was later sealed. An open-string staircase with turned balusters installed about 1800 stands against the southeast corner and replaces an earlier winder stair that occupied roughly the same location. The filled-in transom window above the second landing and a small window above the first landing suggest that the current stair was built shortly after the house was completed. The design of the balustrades, newel post, handrail, and string indicate this change was made about 1800. Underneath the stair, a paneled doorway leads to the cellar, which features the technique of drop-mortising 1 inch by 2 inch strips of oak across the floor joists and sealing the joints in the floor boards above.

In the west wall of the entry, a paneled door opens to the parlor, which measures 21' x 14' and is trimmed with a baseboard, chair rail, and cornice. The centrally placed fireplace on the west wall is accented by a wooden mantle with reeded Doric pilasters and a keystone supporting a moulded cornice and shelf. Small cupboards built into both jambs of the chimney breast possess paneled doors and four shelves each.

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Across the entry hall to the east are two rooms: a dining room in the front and an office to the rear. The 15' x 12' dining room features a corner fireplace with simply planed trim in the southeast corner. A doorway in the northeast corner leads down to the first floor of the kitchen wing; a doorway in the south wall opens into the office. The northeast corner of the 15' x 9' office is occupied by a fireplace trimmed with a simple moulding. The office fireplace shares a common chimney pile with the dining room. Although the partition dividing the two rooms is modern, the rooms exhibit the original plan and trim of the late eighteenth century.

On the second floor are four rooms and an entry. The parlor chamber is trimmed with a moulded cornice and baseboard. The central fireplace in the east wall features a crossetted surround surmounted by punch-and-gouge-carved flattened Doric capitals supporting a moulded cornice and shelf. A cupboard built into the southern jamb is fitted with a raised panel door. To the north of the fireplace, a modern closet was installed between the breast and the exterior wall in the twentieth century.

The dining room chamber has a fireplace with a raised panel overmantle in the southeast corner. The office chamber has a paneled endwall on the east featuring two closets and an enclosed winder stair leading to the unfinished attic above. The small room above the entry was converted into a bathroom in the twentieth century.

Contributing Structures  
dwelling

Noncontributing Structures  
barns  
sheds  
corn cribs  
outbuildings

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Dr. William Johnson, the builder of Johnson Home Farm, was among this new class of farmers. The earliest reference to the house and its owner is found in the 1816 tax list, where Johnson's property assessment includes 500 acres with a "two story wooden dwelling, good barn and stables" appraised at \$3600. His total assessment of \$8199 placed him in the top decile of wealth in Appoquinimink Hundred.<sup>1</sup>

William Johnson's economic and social aspirations are suggested in his 1817 inventory.<sup>2</sup> The presence of ten horses, three yoke of oxen, 213 sheep, 32 cows, and 33 hogs in his fields and barns show his enormous investment in husbandry. His "lot of miscellaneous books" and "49 volumes of medical books" mark him not only as educated but also as a professional physician. His silver watch, \$30 clock and case, and sword were the belongings of a gentleman and served as visible symbols to his neighbors and colleagues of his status.

Like other members of the rural elite, William Johnson turned his attention from cultivating the soil to building new houses and outbuildings. Significant portions of farm income were invested in these new buildings. The new houses increased the value of the farms as well as symbolizing economic and social success.

These aspirations are found in Johnson's house, which provided the most visible sign of his wealth and social station. The two-story house containing 2400 square feet is among the largest houses built in central Delaware during the federal period. Its stair-passage plan divided the dwelling into special rooms for meeting, working, entertaining, eating, and sleeping, and provided the Johnson family with the luxury of varying degrees of privacy. By contrast, most of his neighbors combined these activities into one or two rooms.

By the federal period, stair-passage plan dwellings had come into general acceptance among the most affluent members of the society. The presence of a substantial interior passageway physically distanced rooms and functioned to control and direct movement through the house. Rooms were no longer separated just by walls, but also by space, reflecting the owner's ability to afford specialized rooms and the luxury of privacy. Although the addition of a stair-passage did not expand domestic activity to more than one or two rooms, it did redefine the former common room or hall with a more specific use and furnishing scheme. In Johnson's case, it was divided into a dining room and office. This form remained the symbolic property of the wealthy and was not adopted by other income groups.

The construction of the house sets it apart from other wood houses. During the federal period, the majority of dwellings were of log or frame construction; a significantly lesser number were made of brick. Hewn log walling was the most widely used form of construction and was used for structures ranging from stylish two-story houses to chicken coops, yet few of these buildings survived the nineteenth century rebuilding cycles which

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redefined the local landscape. The log buildings that remain, however, represent the best of log-building technology. As a plank building, the Johnson house employed one of the most labor-intensive techniques for building houses.

Upon his death, William Johnson left his estate to his wife, Catherine.<sup>3</sup> When Catherine died in 1841, the property was divided by the New Castle County Orphans Court among his son William, daughter Mary, and grandson Robert. When the estate was surveyed in 1849, the property was described as "clear land, with a two storied dwelling house, kitchen, barn, stabling, carriage, corn cribs, etc theron erected and containing 170 acres, 128 perches".<sup>4</sup> The property remained in the Johnson family until 1946, when it was sold to John and Mary Steller.<sup>5</sup>

The Johnson Home Farm has integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association.

Attachment A contains relevant historic and present day maps: Rea & Price's 1849 Map of the State of Delaware, Beers' 1868 Map of the State of Delaware, Hopkins' 1881 Map of New Castle County, present-day highway maps for New Castle and Kent counties.

Footnotes

1. NCTA, Appoquinimink Hundred, 1816. Statistical analysis by the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware.
2. NCPR, inventory of William Johnson, 1817.
3. NCRW, will of William Johnson (1817), Book R, page 183.
4. NCOC, Division of Lands Book B, p. 185 (1849).
5. NCRD, Book K, Volume 46, page 186 (1946).

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

N/A preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

N/A previously listed in the National Register

N/A previously determined eligible by the National Register

N/A designated a National Historic Landmark

N/A recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

N/A recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data:

X State historic preservation office

\_ Other state agency

\_ Federal agency

\_ Local government

X University

\_ Other -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreeage of Property: Approximately 1 acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A 18 449800 4362400 B \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: X See attached map.

The boundary of the Johnson Home Farm is shown on the accompanying New Castle County tax parcel map (tax parcel 14.4.25) and outlined in bold black lines. The nominated property is a roughly rectangular 300 by 600 foot plot fronting the south side of County Road 453 approximately 2500 feet east of its intersection with State Route 9 and containing approximately 1 acre. Beginning at a point on the south side of County Road 453 approximately 2350 feet east of its intersection with Route 9, then proceed

Boundary Justification: \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the farmhouse and yard that have been associated historically with the Johnson Home Farm and maintain historic integrity. The rest of the farm and yard are being partitioned off into a separate property parcel.

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Primary Sources

- KCCC. Kent County Court of Chancery, Dover, Delaware.
- KCOC. Kent County Orphans Court Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- KCPR. Kent County Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- KCRD. Kent County Recorder of Deeds, Dover, Delaware.
- KCTA. Kent County Tax Assessments, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- NCOC. New Castle County Orphans Court Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- NCPR. New Castle County Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- NCRD. New Castle County Recorder of Deeds, Wilmington, Delaware.
- NCRW. New Castle County Recorder of Wills, Wilmington, Delaware.
- NCTA. New Castle County Tax Assessments, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

Secondary Sources

- Black, Samuel Henry. 1820. "An Essay, On the Intrinsic Value of Arable Land; With some General Remarks on the Science of Agriculture." American Farmer 2: 9-51.
- Bordley, J. B. 1801. Essays and Notes on Husbandry and Rural Affairs. Philadelphia: Budd and Bartram for Thomas Dobson.
- Bushman, Claudia. 1982. "The Wilson Family in Delaware and Indiana." Delaware History 20: 28-9.
- Cunnington, C. Willett, and Cunnington, Phillis. 1964. Handbook of English Costume in the 18th Century. London: Faber and Faber.
- Delaware Register. 1838. "Rural Life." The Delaware Register and Farmers' Magazine (April) 1:3, p. 195-198.

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- Ferguson, David. 1981. "Architectural Survey Site Designated Number 1 Stellar Farm near Taylor's Bridge." Unpublished paper.
- Herman, Bernard L. 1987. Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware 1700-1900. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.
- Munroe, John. 1979. History of Delaware. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press.
- Munroe, John. 1973. Louis McLane: Federalist and Jacksonian. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Pryor, Clifford. 1975. The Forest of Appoquinimink. Milford, DE: Shawnee Printing.
- [Rush, Benjamin.] 1786. "An Account of the progress of Population, Agriculture, Manners, and Government in Pennsylvania, in a letter from a citizen of Pennsylvania, to his friend in England." Columbia Magazine 1:3, p. 117-122.
- Scharf, Thomas J. 1888. History of Delaware, 1609-1888. Philadelphia: J. Richards & Company.
- Spurrier, John. 1793. The Practical Farmer: Being A New and Compendious System of Husbandry, Adapted to the Different Soils and Climates of America. Wilmington, DE: Brynberg and Andrews.
- Sweeney, John. 1959. Grandeur on the Appoquinimink: The House of William Corbit at Odessa, Delaware. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press.

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east along the south side of Road 453 for approximately 300 feet. Then turn south for approximately 600 feet, before turning west parallel to Road 453 and proceeding 300 feet. The parcel is completed by turning north and proceeding 600 feet back to the starting point. The location of the property is at UTM reference point 18 449800 4362400.

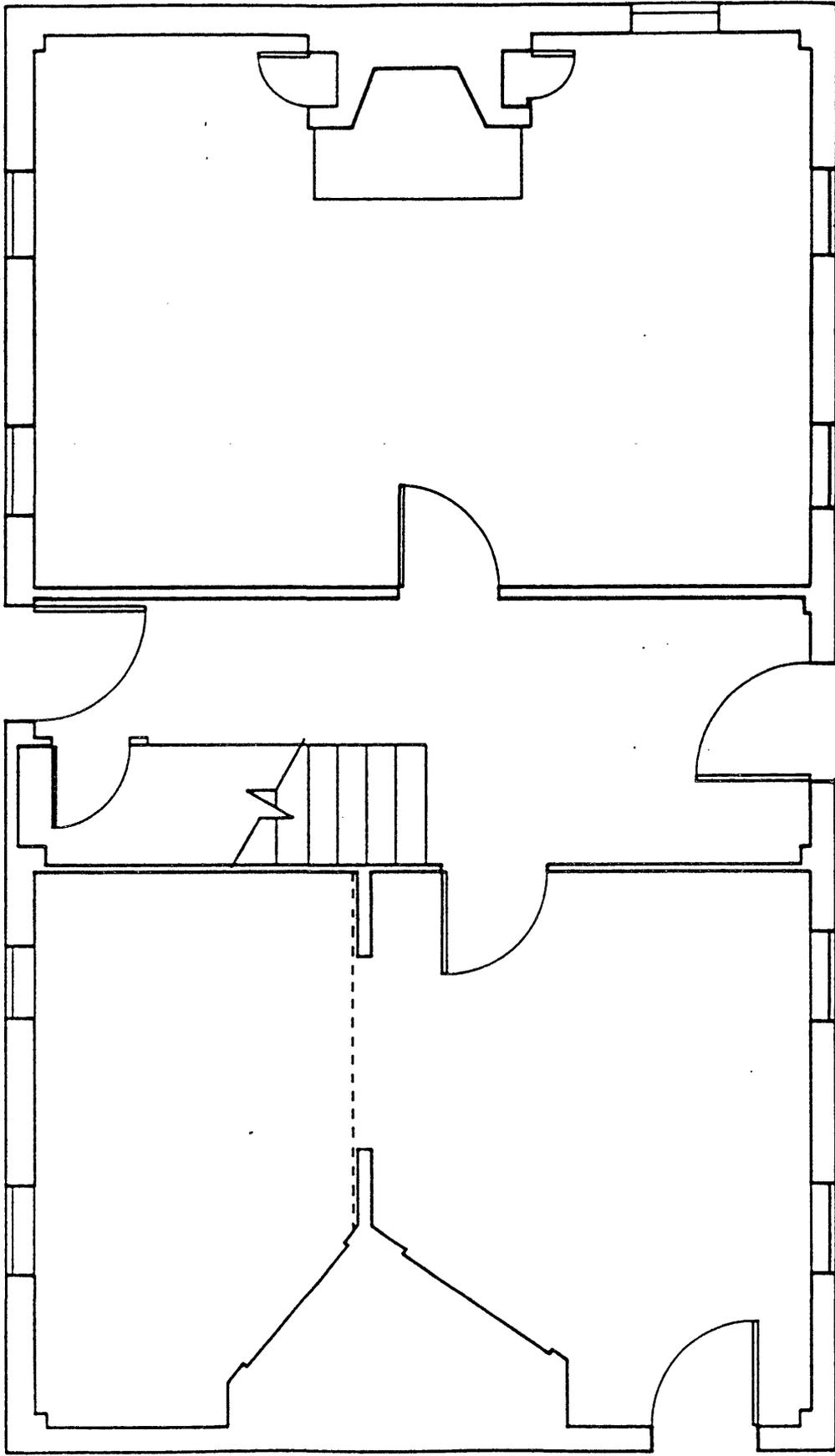
=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====

Name/Title: Bernard L. Herman, Rebecca J. Siders and Max Van Balgooy

Organization: Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering

Street & Number: University of Delaware Telephone: (302) 451-8097

City or Town: Newark State: DE ZIP: 19716

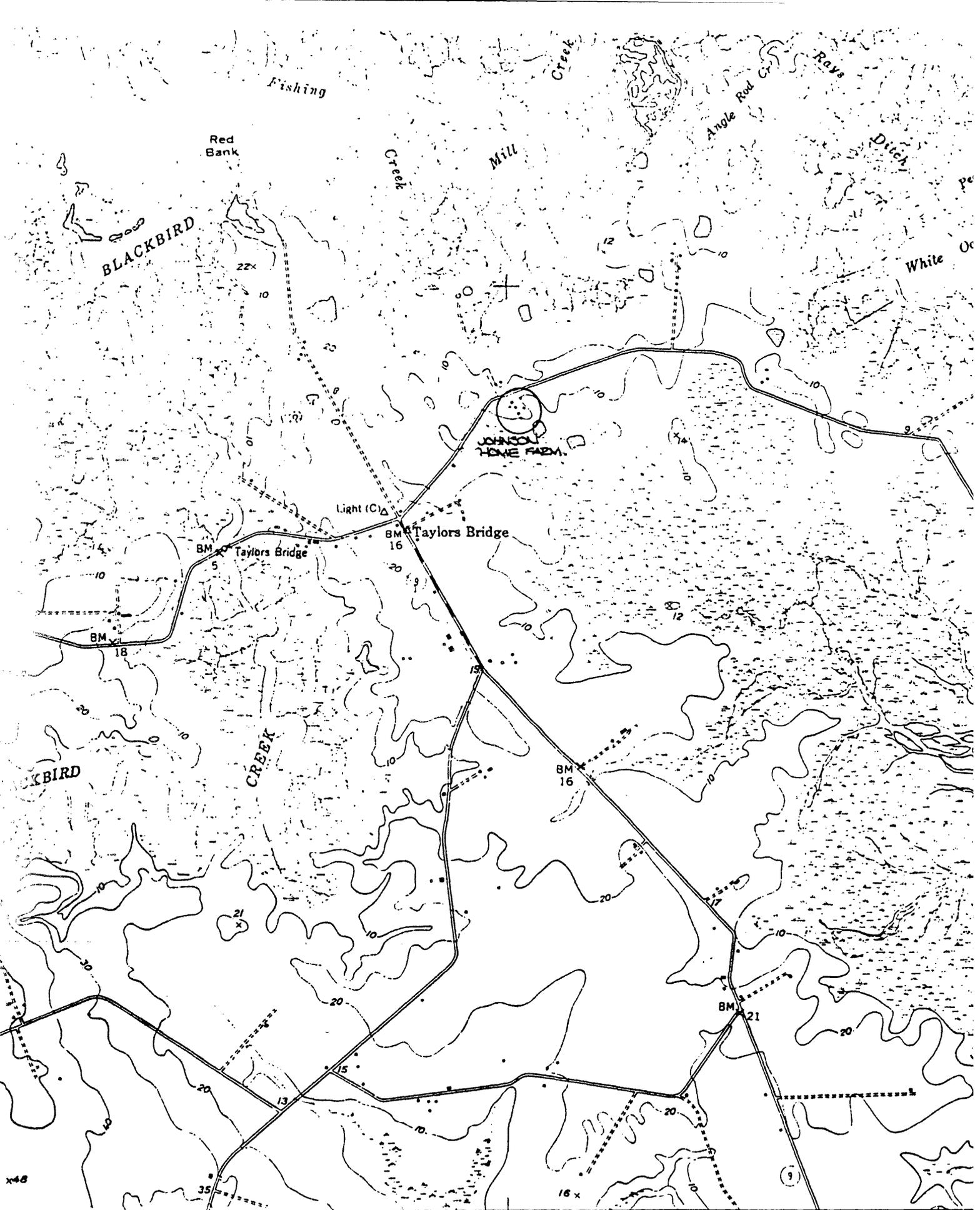


22'8"

39'

JOHNSON HOME FARM (PERIOD I)  
TAYLOR'S BRIDGE VICINITY, NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE





4.2 MI. TO U.S. 13 450 000 FEET (DEL.)  
 SMYRNA 5.5 MI. ↓

49

35'

450

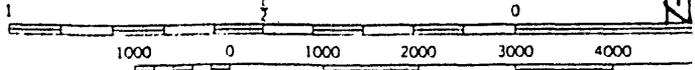
FLEMINGS LANDING 17 MI. (SMYRNA)  
 5862 1 SE

452

odetic Survey  
 Geological Survey  
 USCE  
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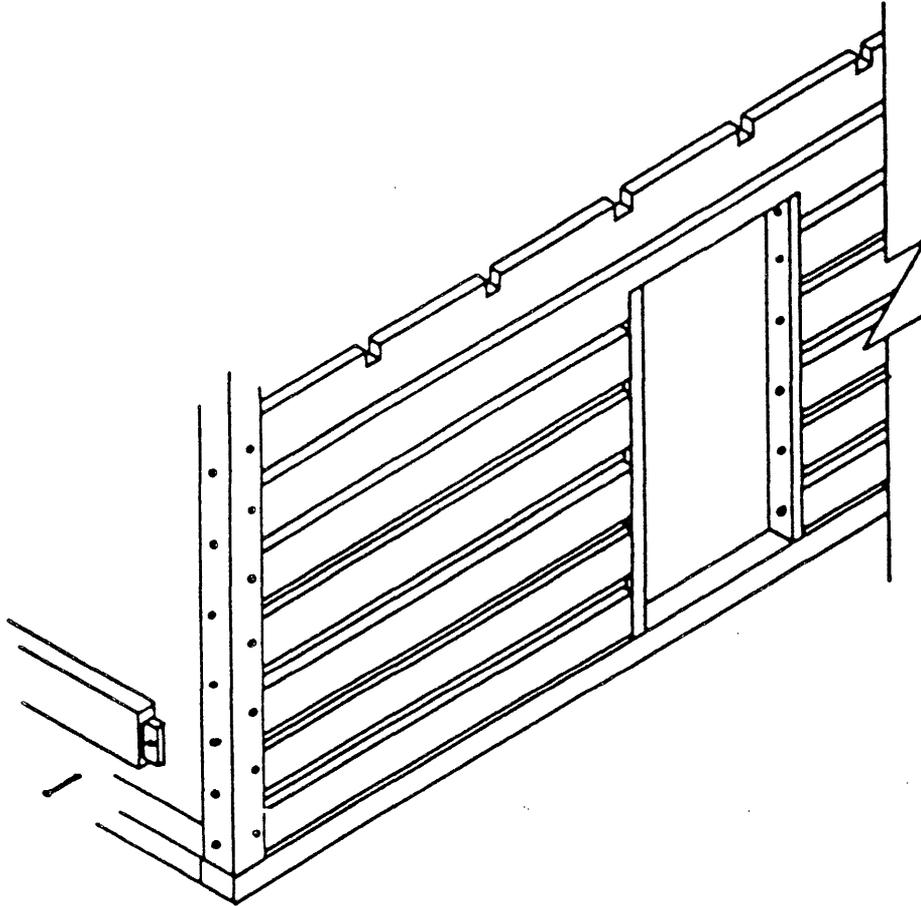
UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
 SCALE: 1:24000

SCALE 1:24000

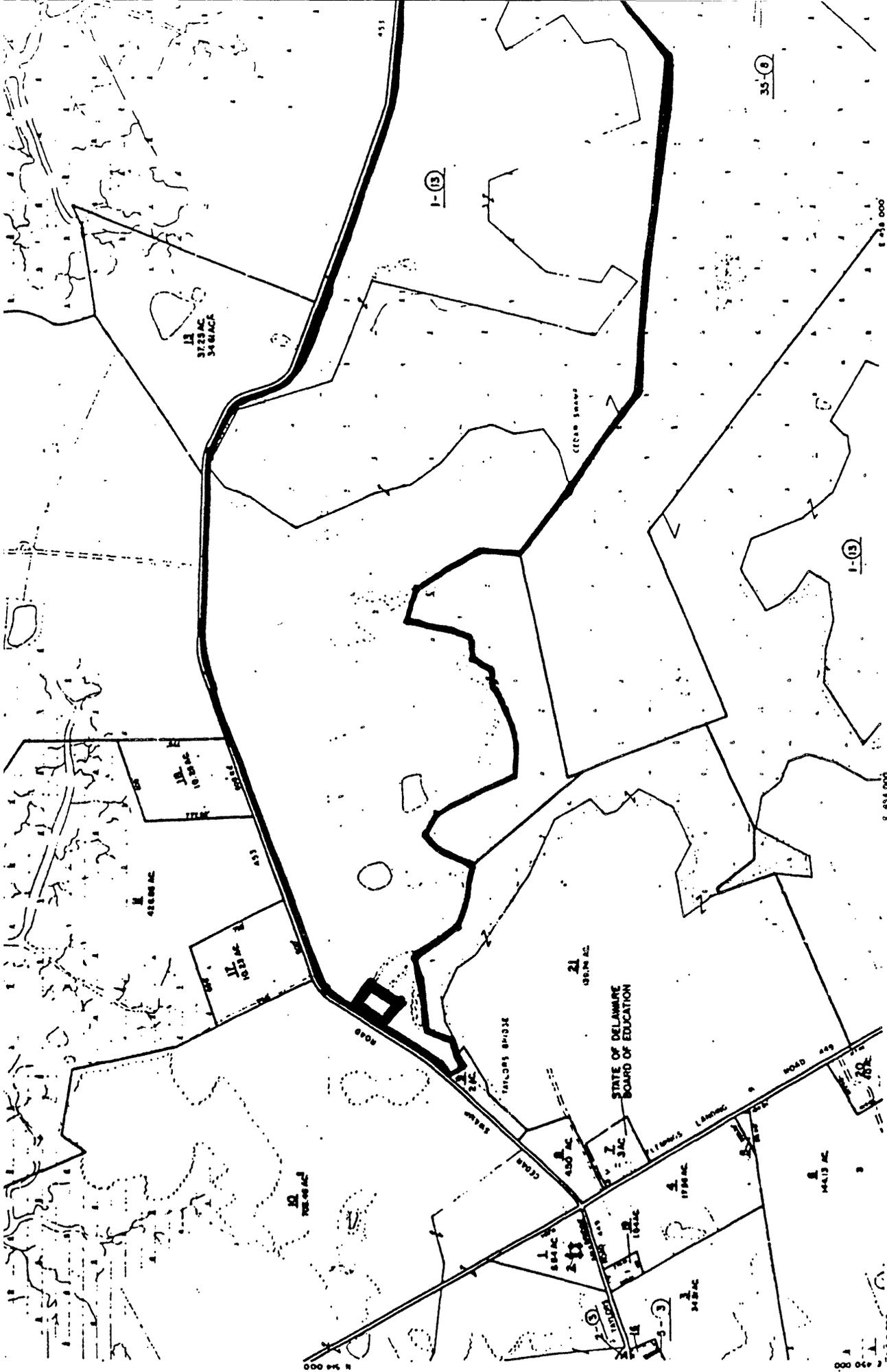


MN  
 (GN)





Sawn Plank Construction. From Bernard L. Herman, Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware, 1700-1900.



**LEGEND**

	STATE LINE		CEMETERY
	COUNTY LINE		CHURCH
	TOWNSHIP LINE		SCHOOL
	CORPORATE LIMITS		WOODED AREA
	BRIDGE		FENCE
	STREAM		MARSH
	RAIL ROAD		BENCH MARK
	POND		SURVEY BLOCK SECTION
	FIELD LINE		

**MAP LOCATION**

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10

SCALE MAP PREPARED BY  
 L. ROBERT HIBBALL  
 Consulting Engineer  
 Land Surveying, Mechanical-Plumbing

THIS MAP IS MADE FROM THE BEST AVAILABLE DATA AND IS NOT TO BE CONSIDERED AS A GUARANTEE OF ACCURACY. ANY DISCREPANCIES WILL BE SETTLED BY THE ENGINEER.

JOHNSON HOME FARM

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